

The Wintonbury Drummer



Newsletter of the Wintonbury Historical Society
Bloomfield, Connecticut *Summer 2001*

***NEXT MEETING : Wednesday, September 12, 2001,
Methodist Church, Wintonbury Ave. & School Street***

***PROGRAM: Adelaide Mitchelson, her life and
times, presented by Mary Jane Springman, Trustee of
Simsbury Free (Genealogy) Library.***

President's Message:

Taken from an earlier WHS newsletter (1965): "Annual Meeting will be held June 3rd at 6:30 at home of G. Harold Humphrey - 77 Maple Avenue - following pot luck supper, business meeting, a tour of Mr Humphrey's home will be made." Sound familiar? In the year 2001, also on June 3rd, another tour of 77 Maple Avenue - now owned by Don and Jan Baker - took place. Thank you to the Bakers who did a beautiful job hosting the latest event - a tour of their David Grant House, a traprock house built in 1832 and an excellent model for our own Capt. Oliver Filley House restoration/rehabilitation project. Our sincere thanks to Louise Schmoll and her committee, to Mary Murray and her docents, and to all who provided tasty deserts - a hearty thank you for a lovely day.

I trust that members will visit the adult area of Prosser Library to see the vintage clothing exhibit of Ruth Nelson's 1890s garments.

See you at the September 12th meeting.

Fannie R. Gabriel

FILLEY FEST FAMILY DAY II -- SAT., SEPT. 8 -- 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.!

THE DAVID GRANT HOUSE TOUR A GREAT SUCCESS!

The David Grant House Tour was a huge success, raising more than \$ 3500 for the Capt. Oliver Filley House Fund and a great big THANK YOU to all who helped. First and foremost to Jan and Don Baker for offering their home for this event. They were wonderful to work with and put in many hours of cleaning, painting, gardening, historical research, and creating and printing brochures. Also, more than 35 Wintonbury Historical Society members helped out with docent duties, donating food, hauling tables, set-up, clean-up, printing tickets and publicity and many more sold tickets. This is the kind of effort that ensures results and you should all congratulate yourselves. Again, many thanks!
Louise Schmoll

FROM HOSPITALITY COMMITTEE

The Hospitality Committee needs help for November, February, April, and June meetings. As hostess, I would like you to help me set up, provide refreshments, and help clean up. If you are able to help, please call me at 243-2720.

Doris Jordan

WEBSITE COMMITTEE FORMING – JANIS LANGSTON IS OUR NEW WEBMASTER!

Janis Langston, our computer and graphics expert, has graciously accepted the position of webmaster for our website, parts of which are “under construction.” If you would like to serve on her website committee, please see her at our September 12th meeting or call Fannie Gabriel. Thank you, Janis!

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Angela R. Hauptman
Barbara Godard

CONDOLENCES

With deep sympathy we send our condolences to the families of Margaret Andrews and Elma Bidwell.

CALENDAR:

September 8 - Filley Fest at Capt. Oliver Filley House
September 12 - Regular Meeting, Methodist Church
October 6 - Bloomfield Drum Festival

THANK YOU!

To the garden club for their generous donation in memory of Ruth Moore for the future Julia's Garden at the Filley House.

To Bloom Hill Farm for their generous donation of many plants for Julia's Garden at the Filley House.

To Ron Wade for his generous donation of many red geraniums for the Filley House.

FILLEY FEST IS ALMOST HERE!

And we still need lots of volunteers – docents to give tours of the house (you will be provided with the information), children's games supervisors, horse and wagon rides, people to play music, craftspeople to demonstrate and sell their work – we welcome your help and suggestions to make Saturday, September 8th a pleasant community day for us all! Please call either Sharon Steinberg (286-1066) or Fannie Gabriel (242-1016) if you want to help. Thanks!

THANK YOU TO OUR SATURDAY VOLUNTEERS!

To Bruce Hale, Sr., Bob Stiles, Rich Dudenhofer, and Bruce Hale, Jr., a hearty thank you for all the great work you have done on the well house – if anyone can swing a hammer and wants to help roof and side the little building, please either come up to the house on Saturday morning at around 10, or call Sharon Steinberg at 286-1066 or Virginia Hallisey at 243-1065 and volunteer – Thank you!

Architect's Progress Report

By Eloise Marinos,
Summarized
by Virginia Hallisey

While one may need to look closely to see the physical progress on the Capt. Oliver Filley House and the Southwest District School, the research, recording, planning, and designing has been done for the actual construction work. Concurrently, an all-volunteer effort has been underway since spring to restore the well house and plant a few flower beds. I invite everyone to stop by any Saturday morning to encourage more volunteers and observe the changes taking place.

The well house foundation has been reworked, repaired, and stabilized by contractor Faraci Concrete. Volunteers are replacing deteriorated framing members with in-kind native lumber purchased at cost from Moore's Sawmill. The well pump has been replaced with a submersible pump and there is potable water for construction and gardening. **NEEDED:** Volunteers who are skilled carpenters/roofers for a few hours of donated time to assist with the replacement roofing.

Work by Eloise's office is underway with the Town of Bloomfield to facilitate the underground utilities from Mountain Avenue to the stone house for electric power, water, cable, and telephone. Final engineering work is underway and the electrical work can be put out to bid by the Town this summer. The Town will excavate the trench and private contractors will do the other work.

Eloise's office is working on Construction Documents for Phase III, which includes Structural Stabilization, work on the wood

frame, basement structure, and permanent roofing. Concurrently, Phase IV, masonry restoration will be analyzed. This phase includes "envelope" restoration of the exterior windows and doors. This work is scheduled for the current fiscal year.

The Urban Action Grant application was filed by this office and accepted by the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD). Additional financial information was requested and has been submitted for review. After the required legal reviews and acceptance documentation by the Town, it is our hope that grant monies will be available for application and disbursement for Phase III use early this fall.

The Historical Restoration Fund Matching Grant for the Southwest District School has been finally approved and the Construction Documents are being reviewed by the Connecticut Historical Commission. The Town has the construction work in the out-to-bid process and the actual construction work is slated to commence in August. **NOTE:** There is still a small fundraising shortfall to fully match the HTF grant for this work.

The National Register nomination application is in the final stages and will be distributed to WHS for final review sometime in August before submission for formal consideration by the Connecticut Historical Commission.

Please send all newsletter submissions to Sharon Steinberg, Editor, at cd000910@mindspring.com or 286-1066, or contact Fannie Gabriel at 242-1016.

Ruth Shapleigh-Brown, Presenter of Our Ancient Cemeteries Program

by Sharon Steinberg

On Saturday, July 21, historian and ancient cemetery expert and conservator Ruth Shapleigh-Brown of the Connecticut Gravestone Network gave a program sponsored by the Wintonbury Historical Society and funded in part by the Greater Hartford Arts Council – we are grateful for their support and also thank Judi Sitkin for organizing this event.

Ruth gave a slide presentation about many fascinating methods of reading and cleaning our priceless historical headstones. These stones tell stories of love and family, and mark the final resting places of people whose names we have inscribed on our streets and buildings: Bidwell, Loomis, Grant, Hitchcock, to name just a few. Using a mirror to harness the sun's light, Ruth aimed the rays on stones that were difficult to read. Immediately, we were amazed to see that the letters came to life because of the intensity of the contrast created between the shadow of the carving and the words themselves. We went from stone to stone, reading names and poetry, appreciating the carving of angels, urns, spectres, and designs such as the "Death's Head" and the "Angel's Head."

Ruth warned that the old stones often are hollow because the material "wicks up" water from the ground to the middle of the stone. She gently demonstrated that tapping on one of the stones and produced a hollow sound. Great care must be taken, she stressed, if anyone wants to take a rubbing or even clean the stone. She came with a large, soft brush to demonstrate that with just a little water and nothing else, rubbing the stone with that brush will gently remove some of the algae, lichen, and discoloration. Most importantly, she stressed that cemeteries are genealogical sources, sculptural museums, and places to contemplate life and learn history. She recommended that with careful mowing and monitoring for weather and other damage, the stones will last longer and continue to be a vital part of our history.

Ruth is a passionate advocate of preservation and conservation of our old burial grounds and cemeteries. We came away from this enlightening program with great appreciation for Ruth's tireless and dedicated commitment not only to the preservation of cemeteries, but to the education of us all about our great historical resources and people gone but not forgotten. Ruth can be reached in Manchester at 643-5652 or at shapbrown@home.com.