

# The Wintonbury Drummer



## *Newsletter of the Wintonbury Historical Society*

*Bloomfield, Connecticut*

*March 2011*

**Next meeting:** April 6, 2011 7:00 p.m.

**Location:** Prosser Public Library, 1 Tunxis Ave., Bloomfield, CT

**Program:** Music in Bloomfield and Hartford 1850-1900 with the Wintonbury String Quartet

**Presenter:** Brief illustrated lecture by Dick Pierce

### **Past Perambulations:**

Woodland Avenue, both below and above Mills Lane, was the location of the hundred-acre Willoughby Farm on which I grew up during the 1940s. My grandfather, William B. Willoughby, had about three dozen cows and was able to support a family on the farm's income. Loose hay was raked into rows in the field, pitchforked onto a wagon, and stowed in the barn for the cows and horses to chew on all winter. We also had a silo full of chopped corn gathered in from our own fields. I loved the outdoor life and rode my horse, Lucky, all over town.

Of course, there were many small family farms in Bloomfield in those years. The Farmer's Exchange on Jerome Avenue did a thriving business. There were about five thousand people in town, and milk trucks from several dairies delivered milk in glass bottles right to people's doorsteps. At Willoughby's, we drank raw milk and later got a pasteurizer and a cream separator. I remember my Uncle Alfred using the bottling machine. We churned our own butter right there in the milkroom.

Uncle Bill lived on the farm. All the kids in the neighborhood (the Burnhams, the Clarks, and the Snyders) all hung around the farm, and Uncle Bill put them to work (lots of free labor).

One of my grandfather's seasonal workers was Waldo "Scotty" Clough, who was often seen riding his bicycle around town. He was proud of being the first person to spend a night in a jail cell at the local police station—probably because he was inebriated. Dubbed the "mayor of Bloomfield" by his many acquaintances, he always treated us kids nicely.

I was often over at my grandmother's house, next door. She had been a teacher and bought the *World Book Encyclopedia* so that her grandchildren could use it while they did their homework at her dining room table. Our extended family always gathered at her house on Thanksgiving and on Christmas Eve.

Growing up, I worked in the old Prosser Library for twenty-five cents an hour. That was when Mrs. Powers was librarian. I did a lot of babysitting because there were children all up and down the street. For several years I walked up to Prospect Street and took piano lessons from Mrs. Mabel Mann, who seemed to teach most of the kids I knew. She got one dollar for a half-hour lesson. Mrs. Mann was a music teacher in the local schools, leading choruses and directing operettas at both elementary schools, the one on Jerome Avenue and the one on Rockwell Avenue. She was also director of music at the Federated Church. Later I used my skills to play piano for the dancing classes of Mary Doucey Walsh at the Masonic Temple. *(continued on page 3)*

NOTE: You are invited to fill this space! I'd like to see your memories, clippings, or excerpts from your reading. Hand them to me or send by fax, mail or email to [rpierce@hartford.edu](mailto:rpierce@hartford.edu) and I'll edit them for the newsletter. There may be a limit of about 300 words.

## Society Directory

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### HISTORY CENTER CURATORS

Ralph & Louise Schmoll

## 2011 TAG SALE COMING

Our major fund raiser, the annual tag sale, will be held at the History Center/Old Farm School complex on Saturday, April 30 from 9:00 to 3:00. The rain date is Saturday, May 7. Items will be sold by vendors and by the Society. Lots of volunteers are essential to making this work, and we need donations of items to be sold to benefit the Society. Drop-off dates are two Saturdays, April 16 and 23, from 10:00 to 12:00 noon, and Friday, April 29, from 2:00 to 4:00 pm. Donations of clean, saleable items are needed, but we cannot accept clothing, shoes, books or outdated computer monitors. We can handle only a limited amount of furniture, and it must be in good condition. Because of the renovations at neighboring Metacomet School, it is suggested that members park at the Alvin Wood Center (old Junior High), 330 Park Avenue, and walk from there.

## BLOOM HILL FARM NEEDS SUPPORT

This winter, snow and wind destroyed the two-hundred-year-old barn at Bloom Hill Farm on Cottage Grove Road. The community is rallying to support the owners, Miro and Kathy Palascak, whose livelihood was severely impacted. The Historical Society's Board of Directors recommends that individual members send contributions to the "Bloom Hill Farm Trust" at Simsbury Bank, 864 Cottage Grove Road in Bloomfield.

## APRIL MEETING

On Wednesday, April 6, 2011 at 7:00 P.M. **Entertainment 19th Century Style.** This program is co-sponsored by Prosser Public Library and the Wintonbury Historical Society (WHS). A brief historical society meeting at 7:00 P.M. will be followed by entertainment. WHS president Dick Pierce will tell us stories about music in Bloomfield and environs during the 19th century. The audience will be entertained by the Wintonbury String Quartet. Registration is appreciated, call 860-243-9721.

## JUNE MEETING

On Wednesday, June 1, 2011 at our Annual Meeting at Sacred Heart, in addition to our pot luck dinner at 6:00 PM and election of officers, there will be a presentation on the **Arlington National Cemetery** by Carolyn Ivanoff of Shelton. This program fits in with the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of the Civil War and the dedication of a Civil War Memorial on the town green.

## When/where was this taken?



Photo courtesy of the Shorpy Historic Photo Archive

## HAVE YOU PAID YOUR DUES?

Send your check to the Society, P.O. Box 5474, Bloomfield, CT 06002

- \$15. Individual
- \$25. Family
- \$40. Supporting
- \$150. Life

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## Our Publications

Wintonbury to Bloomfield (\$16.50), Images: Old Bloomfield (\$20., or to a member \$18.); History of the Bloomfield Catholic Church (\$15); **NEW** Bloomfield & the Civil War (\$12); **NEW** Not Lost ... Gone Before: A History of Latimer Hill Cemetery (on CD \$25); Barnard Genealogy (\$10.); Good Old Days (\$10.); Cook Book (\$7.); Over Tunxis Trails (\$5.); Bicentennial Activities (\$3); Note Paper (8 pk - \$3.); Filley House T shirts (\$12.); Brown Drums and Brown family (\$10.).

## Board of Directors Highlights

At its meeting on March 23, the Board of Directors learned that a new exhibit on Industries in Bloomfield is planned for an early June opening. The people preparing the exhibit include Fannie Gabriel, Angela Hauptmann, Fred Hesketh, Ralph and Louise Schmoll, and Gail Tinto.

The Collections Committee is working on a long-term plan. Chairperson Diana Barnard has contacted John Woods Appraisers of South Windsor, and Mr. Woods did a free appraisal of our collection on March 25. Cheryl Fox and Jean Perreault have resigned from the Committee, and Diana will leave the Committee in June.

Ralph Schmoll, History Center Coordinator, said that so much progress has been made in sorting and shelving that cataloging will be the next big job. Ralph and Louise and others are generally at the History Center working on Monday afternoons. It is hoped to have the History Center open on Sunday afternoons in the summer when the Old Farm School is open.

Local artist Ralph Jurries is donating the use of one of his barn paintings. We will have postcards made of it and offer them for sale.

The Tag Sale was discussed (see separate article). All vendor spots are already reserved. Parking will be tight this year, so extra precautions need to be taken.

The much-awaited revision of *Over Tunxis Trails* is almost ready for the printer, and we expect an initial printing of one hundred copies.

The Society's annual meeting in June at Sacred Heart Church will begin with a potluck supper at 6:00, followed by the program and business meeting. Carolyn Ivanoff will be speaking on a Civil War era topic, the Arlington National Cemetery.

## Past Perambulations *(continued from page 1)*

Since we weren't more than a mile from school, we had to walk to elementary school on Jerome Avenue (an office building occupies the site now) and later to high school on Park Avenue (where the police station now is). I graduated from Bloomfield High School in the class of 1950, a class of some fifty-two students. In our junior and senior years, the building was overcrowded and we had double sessions, upperclassmen in the morning and underclassmen in the afternoon. The boys (but not the girls) played baseball, soccer, and basketball. We had our proms right there in the gym, spending all day decorating it to make it look special.

You never worried about safety in those days, even if you decided to go out for a walk with your best friend at midnight. I rode my bike to Hartford many times, to go to Elizabeth Park or to the Lenox Theater on Albany Avenue (where a Saturday afternoon double feature cost fourteen cents). At the age of twelve I had a paper route, delivering the *Hartford Times* with my bicycle.

About 1947 or 1948 Bloomfield had a town-wide Halloween party and parade. The Governor's Horse Guard was there to march and its members were fed a fine supper afterwards at the Federated Church. The Grange was very active in those days, and the Federated Church had frequent events-fairs, chicken pie suppers and more. Sunday School with Mrs. Brewer was in the basement because the additions to the building had not yet been built.

Winnie Granger

## From the Curator's Corner

• From an issue of *Travelers Record* in 1864, quoted in the April, 1939, 75th Anniversary edition: Distinguished Policyholder William Lloyd Garrison has been interrupted in writing his *History of the American Anti-Slavery Movement* for nearly three months past, by a severe accident which disabled him from the use of a pen. He is insured by The Travelers for \$3,000 and draws \$15 a week. • A copy of *Lincoln Literature*, a class newspaper written by Mrs. Watkins' class, among other things notes that the Alaskan Pipelines are to be completed in August 1977. Can anyone identify which Mrs. Watkins this is and where she taught? • The Spring 2011 edition of *Bloomfield Continuing and Adult Education Program* features cover art of the Old Farm School by Sharon Taylor, daughter of member Bea Taylor. Sharon, who did the drawing in the 80s, is still doing art design.

## Member News

• We are pleased to welcome Ellen Thomas-Jones as a new member. She is first violinist with the Wintonbury Quartet and lives in Bloomfield. She is especially interested in enhancing the knowledge of the Gillette House within our town, as it is one of the few identifiable stops on the Underground Railroad in Connecticut.

• We are sorry to hear of the passing of long-time active member Helen Cross.

Fannie Gabriel (f.gabriel@att.net)

## Calendar of Events

2011

Apr 6	<b>WHS Regular Meeting</b> (Prosser Library) - Entertainment 19th Century Style: the Wintonbury Quartet <b>Presenter:</b> Dick Pierce
Apr 30	<b>Tag/Bake Sale Old Farm School grounds</b> (rain date May 7)
Jun 1	<b>WHS Annual Meeting with election of Officers &amp; Pot Luck Supper</b> (Sacred Heart Church) <b>Presenter:</b> Carolyn Ivanoff on the Arlington National Cemetery
Sept 7	<b>WHS Regular Meeting</b>
Nov 2	<b>WHS Regular Meeting</b>

### Book Review

Isabel Wilkerson's *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* is a remarkable new book. The first black woman to win a Pulitzer Prize in Journalism, Wilkerson is now Professor of Journalism and Director of Narrative Nonfiction at Boston University. It is a long book, about 550 pages, yet never seems long in the reading. The literary style is delightful: warm, natural, colorful, and clear. It is a book of history, but it provides a realistic portrait of the many people whose story it tells, unblinkingly setting forth their suffering, their hope, their courage, their failures and successes.

This is history with a difference. Wilkerson chooses three people who emigrated from the South, one who went to Los Angeles, one to Chicago, and one to New York City. Using extensive interviews and research, she tells about their lives before and after migration. You get to know Robert, Ida Mae, and George, how they escaped from the South, and what they faced in the North. Along the way you meet many others, some well known and some not, and you learn about a less familiar aspect of American history during the 20th century. It is, however a history most of us and our neighbors have lived through.

Wilkerson writes, "The earliest departures were merely the first step in a divorce that would take more than half a century to complete. At the time it was misunderstood as a temporary consequence of war and declared over when the war ended. But [. . .] instead of the weakening stream that observers predicted, the Great Migration actually gathered steam after World War I. It continued into the twenties with the departure of some 903,000 black southerners, nearly double the World War I wave. [. . .] World War II brought the fastest flow of black people out of the South in history—nearly 1.6 million" (pages 217-218).

This is a book that helps you to understand the country we live in and equips you to face the times we live in.

Dick Pierce

[Come across some gems from your own reading? Share them in the newsletter by emailing to [Wintonbursociety@att.net](mailto:Wintonbursociety@att.net) or using surface mail.]

### Leaving A Legacy

The Wintonbury Historical Society is a charitable and non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of historical sites of Bloomfield, and the memory of the ones who created them.

The Society is in dire need of funds or gifts in order to continue the restorations, and preservations in progress. We are therefore, soliciting the commitment of citizens who value the history of Bloomfield now and in the years ahead.

Listed are a few ways to leave a legacy:

1. Set aside a gift in your will to the Society
2. Name the Society as beneficiary of an insurance policy.
3. Remember your loved ones with a gift in their honor.
4. Name the Society as a beneficiary of your IRA or 401K.

There are several other means, just talk with your financial advisor.

Financial Development Committee