

The Wintonbury Drummer



Newsletter of the Wintonbury Historical Society

Bloomfield, Connecticut

October 2010

Next meeting: November 3, 2010 7:00 p.m.

Location: Marilyn Michaelson Senior Center, 330 Park Ave., Bloomfield, CT

Program: The United Empire Loyalists: A Canadian Point of View

Presenter: Attorney Lorne Rozovsky

Past Perambulations: Terry Plains Childhood

I suppose everyone has memories of their growing-up years—some remembered fondly, some they'd rather forget. When I think back to those days in the 1940s and 50s on Terry Plains Road in Bloomfield, I have a warm and happy feeling. Families shared tools and lawn equipment and helped each other with projects as they built and improved their new homes. We kids all found friends in the neighborhood and spent most of our free time together.

Summer was a time spent mostly at home. I remember neighborhood baseball games on the Cohen's back lot where we all played, the youngest and less athletic always assigned far out in the outfield where no ball was ever hit! It seems that every house with kids had some sort of activity available for us to play, and we made the rounds. The Janeses had a great swing set and badminton, the Petersens had a basketball hoop over the garage door, and the Radins had croquet. Equipment for the games was never locked away, and we could use it even if no one was home at the time.

Hot summer nights were spent collecting fireflies and sleeping outside. My sister and I and usually a neighbor friend slept in the jungle hammocks strung in the willows in our side yard—a pillow, a blanket and a flashlight were all we needed. The back door was left unlocked so we could run inside if it stormed or the wolf (Shep, the neighbor's dog) was howling. Later my dad built bunks on the little porch on the side of the tool shed, and that became the summer bedroom for the Radin girls.

Another highlight of the summer was the 4th of July fireworks display in the Janeses' back yard. Mr. Janes would light off an assortment of fireworks down in the back by the pasture, and we kids (and parents) would play with sparklers up near the house. That was when fireworks were still legal.

The summer also brought canning time for the garden harvest and the available fruits and vegetables. My favorite was canning peaches when we kids, neighbors included, got to slip the skins off the peaches after they had soaked in boiling water for a few minutes. After the canning process was complete, everyone who had helped got to take a jar home to enjoy at some winter dinner. (*cont'd on pg. 4*)

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 rnpirce@hartford.edu and I'll edit them for the newsletter. There may be a limit of about 300 words.

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NOVEMBER MEETING

In our November 3 meeting, Attorney Lorne Rozovsky will speak on "The United Empire Loyalists: A Canadian Point of View." The meeting will begin at 7:00 PM at the Bloomfield Senior Center, 330 Park Avenue (the rear portion of the Wood Human Resources Center), Route 178 in Bloomfield. There is no charge.

The topic covers agonizing human drama. After the Revolutionary War, some 100,000 Americans who remained loyal to the King left the United States and moved to British colonies north of the border. A significant portion of these were African-American. Some families were even split between patriots and loyalists, including the Merritt family of Bloomfield.

Mr. Rozovsky, a Canadian citizen now living in Bloomfield, has lectured extensively in Canada on historical subjects and served on the Board of the Nova Scotia Heritage Trust.

News Notes for November: Thanks to Mary Murray, we were able to have a table at the Classic Car event at Sacred Heart Church, October 3. We had some good visibility and distributed membership applications. In November the Society will be hosting an exhibit on "Bloomfield Goes to War." If you have any memorabilia—of any war—which you are willing to lend for this exhibit, please call Curator Fannie Gabriel at 242-1016. Dates and details will be announced at our November membership meeting. On display at the History Center are sketches of area barns made by Bert Smith of West Hartford. Several Bloomfield barns are included. The first anniversary of the Dedication of the History Center will be on April 18, 2011. Items which characterize Bloomfield in 2010 are going to be put in a Memory Box, and we still need more material. Please bring items to the History Center (open Sundays 1-4), to the November meeting, or call.

Congratulations on their 60th wedding anniversary to Jerry and Carolyn Jones. We wish speedy recovery to Jeanne Hunciker, who is recuperating from a broken leg. We trust that Richard Hoff is really on the mend after his fall. We hope that Bob McComb is no longer feeling the symptoms of shingles. Our sympathies go to Kenneth Caswell after the passing of Rae.

Historical Nuggets: In 1895 the First Baptist Church of West Hartford held Sunday School classes at the Sash and Blind Shop, where the entrance to Kenmore Road is today. Dr. Eugene Bestor bought his house atop Whirlwind Hill on Mountain Avenue from John Coolidge, son of President Calvin Coolidge.

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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

Meeting on October 20, the Board of Directors heard reports and made some decisions. The minutes will be filed with the Town Clerk's office.

President Dick Pierce reported that a digital projector and an external hard drive have been purchased. The projector is for use at programs, and the hard drive will back up our computer.

The Collections Committee has received a report on the Archival Assessment carried out on June 7 by the Connecticut State Library on behalf of the Connecticut State Historical Records Advisory Board. The report, which gave us a favorable evaluation, will be available at the History Center. Committee chair Diana Barnard distributed a draft policy for the use of the History Center by the public. This was approved and will be posted on our website.

Judy Dechand had good news about insurance. With our new agreement with the town, we are able to reduce our insurance costs from about \$3,000 to about \$700 a year. The Board expressed its great appreciation to Judy for her effective work on this issue.

Two interesting programs were announced for early 2011. On February 2 at the Senior Center, Billie Anthony will speak on the role of African-Americans in the Revolutionary War, with special attention to Lemuel Haynes of Bloomfield. On April 6, at Prosser Library, the Wintonbury String Quartet will play following a brief talk by Dick Pierce on Music in Bloomfield: 19th Century Style. These programs will begin at 7:00 PM.

History Center Coordinator Ralph Schmoll reported that most of our new shelving is assembled and we are in need of more volunteers to help sort through our materials and get them filed. With the help of the Connecticut State Library, we are looking to acquire cataloguing software so as to provide easy access to our collection.

From Jean Perrault

Footprints Across Connecticut From East Granby and Granby 1930 Census that was just sent to the publisher last week. The East Granby/Granby book contains information on the lives of their 2,387 residents in 1930 and was compiled copying the format used in the Simsbury book. This book should be available for sale by the holidays.

My first book Footprints Across Connecticut From Simsbury 1930 Census was published in 2007. In this book I researched all 3624 residents to learn about their personal histories using public records that revealed their origins, their military service, their occupations, their families, and their eventual demise. Vital statistics, prior census records, town directories, newspaper articles and obituaries were a few of the many sources used to document the lives led by those early 20th century Simsbury residents. This book received Awards of Merit from both "The American Association for State and Local History" and "The Connecticut League of History Organizations", and the First Prize in "New England Genealogical Resource Publications" from "The Connecticut Society of Genealogists."

Next year I will begin research on the 3,248 residents living in Bloomfield during 1930, which is expected to take two to three years to complete.

President's Letter

Dear fellow history buff: When during last summer Jean and I visited the Mystic Aquarium, our attention was drawn by the exhibits in Robert Ballard's Institute of Underwater Exploration. There were, of course, photographs and objects from the *Titanic*, but also a display concerning his exploration of the lost cities on the bottom of the Black Sea. We picked up *Noah's Flood* by William Ryan and Walter Pitman, which I found to be an in-depth look into the secrets of the Black Sea, now beginning to be revealed by Ballard's exploration. It is fascinating to learn about people of the past—real people with real experiences even if so long ago. But that's what our Historical Society is all about, isn't it?

As I begin my term as president of our Society, I will be walking in the shadow of all who in the recent past have made up this organization, particularly past-president Fannie Gabriel who continues to guide me. I will depend upon the members of the Board of Directors, all of whom bring impressive knowledge, experience, and skills to our Society—more so than I can hope to match. This is in some respects a watershed year; the History Center is up and running, the Filley House is behind us, and we are posed to function as the organization envisioned by our founders over sixty years ago. There are many opportunities for involvement. Working together we can meet the challenges which remain.

Dick Pierce

Calendar of Events

2010

- Nov 4 **WHS Regular Meeting - Bloomfield Loyalists after the Revolution**
 Presenter: Attorney Lorne E. Rozovsky
- Nov 14 **New Exhibit at the History Center - Wintonbury to Bloomfield Goes to War**

2011

- Jan 17 **Fred Hesketh to speak at the East Granby Historical Society (see below)**
- Feb 2 **WHS Regular Meeting**
- Apr 6 **WHS Regular Meeting**
- TBD **Tag/Bake Sale Old Farm School grounds (rain date TBD)**
- Jun 1 **WHS Annual Meeting with election of Officers & Pot Luck Supper**

NEW EXHIBIT

Wintonbury to Bloomfield Goes to War

A new exhibit at the History Center will open on November 14th from 2:00 - 5:00 p.m. Other times by appointment.

NEW MEMBER

Kathy Curran

Search Your Attics and Closets

Historian Fred Hesketh has been working hard to fill in some of the gaps in the history of our organization. We have been unable to locate the record of minutes of society meetings and board meetings for the period of April 2, 1984 to October 21, 1991; and that leaves a big gap. Any past officer or member who can supply a copy of minutes for one or more meetings in that time period will be greatly appreciated.

Terry Plains Childhood *(Continued from Page 1)*

Winter was, and still is, my favorite time of year. We had sledding, tobogganing, and skiing on the Janeses' hill. Skating was on the pond just before the second hill on Terry Plains or the one in back of Petersens' in the cow pasture. When it snowed we walked to the pond armed with snow shovels as well as skates. We learned to skate over bumps and ruts and cracks on ill-fitting, hand-me-down skates that probably had never been sharpened. Extra socks made loose-fitting skates fit. Walking home with frozen fingers and toes didn't matter; we knew someone's mom would have hot chocolate waiting for us—maybe with marshmallows if we were lucky. Or there might be popcorn and a warm fire in the basement fireplace at the Radins'.

Probably the winter times everyone liked most were when we were able to slide down the road from the top of the hill by the Cohens' house to the bottom by Tunxis Avenue. When the snow was fresh and the plow hadn't been by, we kids would all race down the road with our sleds. My dad or Mr. Janes would drive his car down; and we would rope our sleds into a long train, hitch the first sled to the bumper of the car, and get towed up the hill. In those days there was little traffic, few houses beyond our neighborhood, and the Petersen farm trucks seemed to be on the lookout for us.

Very few people in our neighborhood moved away when we were kids, and we all became close friends. Although now we are scattered, some still stay in touch and whenever an occasion brings us together we enjoy reliving those days on Terry Plains.

Elaine Radin McKay