

# The Wintonbury Drummer



## *Newsletter of the Wintonbury Historical Society*

*Bloomfield, Connecticut*

*October 2011*

**Next meeting:** November 2, 2011 7:00 p.m.

**Location:** Senior Center, 330 Park Ave., Bloomfield, CT

**Program:** “The Wide Awakes and the Songs Lincoln Loved.”

**Presenter:** Mike McGarry, publisher of *The Journal*

### **NOVEMBER PROGRAM FEATURES MIKE McGARRY**

Mike McGarry will speak at our November 2 membership meeting on the topic “The Wide Awakes and the Songs Lincoln Loved.” Mike is publisher of *The Journal* and active in Hartford and state political circles.

### **Past Perambulations: The Flood of ‘55**

Bloomfield was a small town in the summer of 1955—5,000 people and at least twice as many cows. Our house on Park Avenue was fairly isolated except for the McLaughlin farm to our east (the house still stands, but the Middle School occupies most of the dairy farm) and the Corrigan (Mr McLaughlin’s sister and her family) across the road where the church is now. The rains were heavy at the start of the flood but no one knew what was to come. There was no Doppler radar and few of us had TVs. I was quite young, so much of what I recall are snapshots of events. Beaman’s Brook, next to the Manor House apartments, was a free-flowing waterway that we fished in the summer. Our house was at a higher elevation than the brook, but as the waters rose, our basement flooded and we lost power. I remember huddling in the living room around the one fireplace as my mother heated formula for my baby sister over the wood fire. But my most vivid memory is of the rowboats traveling down Park Avenue at the height of the flooding.

I know we were spared the devastation that struck Windsor Locks when the dike burst. (Years later, when one of our Copaco office employees told us how she leapt from her second floor bedroom into the flood waters to escape being washed away with her house, I realized what a tragedy the flood had been for so many in the state.) We must have gotten power back soon because my father offered to let the Corrigan store whatever food that hadn’t spoiled in our fridge.

As for the flood’s legacy, preventative measures were taken so that the feeder streams and brooks going into the Hog, Farmington, and Connecticut Rivers would not rise so high ever again. As a child, that meant that I never again saw fish or even frogs in Beaman’s Brook.

Bonnie Bercowetz

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](mailto:rnpirce@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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860-243-1531

www.bloomfieldcthistory.org

## From the Curator's Corner

- November 28, 1949: Mrs. Mary Pinney, postmaster, noted that third class mail will now be two cents.

- From February 11, 1950: The lower room of the Bloomfield Town Hall is being converted into a kindergarten for pupils of the Grammar School. Also, an oil burner is being installed in the Town Hall to replace the coal stoker which has been in use for several years.

- From January 22, 1951: According to Town Clerk John Milvae, the Town Council has voted to lease the stone schoolhouse on Simsbury Road to the Wintonbury Historical Society.

- From February 18, 1951: According to the February edition of "Your School," work for repairing the three public schools cost \$16,091.63 and the cost of educating each of the pupils was \$231.23.

- From April 21, 1951: Under the direction of Phillips Brown, Vice-president of the Bloomfield Businessmen's Association, and Marcia Zabriskie, Guidance Director, several businessmen provided background on their businesses. Participants were Dr. A. R. MacDonald (veterinarian), Herbert Schremmer (electrician), Gordon Willoughby (insurance), Fedora Ferraresso (social work), Raymond Watkins (gas station operation), Everett Wadhams (agriculture), Irving Bercowetz (animal husbandry), William Scott (landscaping), and Mrs. J. Miller Detrick (interior decorating).

Fannie Gabriel (f.gabriel@att.net)

*A new exhibit is coming at the Bloomfield History Center!*

## FROM KITCHEN AND LAUNDRY

Everyday items from households of an earlier time

Sunday, November 13, 2011, 2:00 to 4:00 PM

153 School Street

860-243-1531

## Notes from my reading

The following excerpt is from *A History of the Amish* by Steven M. Nolt (2003). I can't vouch for its accuracy, but the author seems very erudite. The first selection provides an interesting analysis of the period during which the town of Bloomfield was incorporated.

Between about 1790 and 1850, there was a remarkable cultural shift in the United States which affected not only how people lived, but how they thought about how they lived. Americans began to aspire to living in a style that they called *refined*. In about a generation or two, gentility triumphed, and being respectable came to mean something other than plain and simple.

*continued on page 4*

## 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

The Board met on October 12 at the History Center. The Treasurer's Report showed \$2,986 in receipts so far this fiscal year, of which \$1,855 (62%) came in through memberships. The Financial Oversight Summary showed expenditures of \$2,274.84, of which \$1,474.39 was taken from the Hoff Fund. Utilities expense for the Old Farm School was \$261.66 and for the History Center was \$581.32.

The President announced that members may view the improvements to the Filley House on Wednesday, November 9, at 10:00 AM, when Scott Short of Public Works will be there to show us around.

The Historian told of an archaeological find on Tunxis Avenue just north of Cobey Road. While excavating for a foundation in 1999 the contractor uncovered a large amount of pottery shards. State archaeologist Nick Bellantoni came in and removed most of the artifacts, some of which went to UConn and some to Jim Trocchi of the Windsor Historical Society. Jim is offering to give his collection to our Society.

The House Committee announced that the furnace at the History Center has been converted from propane to natural gas. This will prevent more problems with propane delivery and save money over the long run.

The President raised the question of establishing a membership category for businesses and organizations. After discussion, this was tabled until the next meeting.

Since long-time member Angela Hauptmann is moving away from town, the Board voted a resolution of appreciation for her many years of devoted service to the Society.

### **2nd REVISION OF OVER TUNXIS TRAILS TO BE PUBLISHED**

Revision of *Over Tunxis Trails* has been completed after many months of hard work by Ralph and Louise Schmoll and Angela Hauptmann. The original edition was published in 1935 and revised and republished in 1965. The 2011 edition will be for sale for the first time at our November 2 meeting. The price will be \$15.

**HISTORICAL RESEARCH:** From the *Hartford Courant*, December 1, 1935, page B1:

#### **Bloomfield Farm Bought From Indians Is Sold**

The Filley farm on Brown Street, Bloomfield, which was bought by Captain Oliver Filley five generations ago from the Massaco tribe of Indians, was sold last week to the Highland Dairy Company by Oliver Dwight Filley, a direct descendant of Captain Filley. The sale was negotiated by A. Stroh, realtor.

When the farm was purchased by the first Filley, the consideration was Mexican half-dollars, but the exact number that were given is not known now. However, the stone where the coin was counted out was preserved for many years. The date of the purchase could not be learned, but it was some time prior to 1817, when the homestead was built.

It is the purpose of the Highland Dairy Company to produce its own Grade A milk on the premises and an addition to the present large cow barn will be built. The present barn has a capacity of 60 cows. The addition will house 100 cows. This new building will be one of the most modern dairy barns in Connecticut. Construction of the new barn will be started soon.

The farm contains about 136 acres, about 100 acres of which is tillable and the remainder devoted to pasture. The buildings include the large homestead, a 60-cow barn and two other houses.

The homestead contains 17 rooms, three baths and nine fireplaces, some of which are in bedrooms. The building is of frame, and is of the Colonial farmhouse style. Another house is of 10 rooms and is the most modern of the several buildings. Across from the homestead is a seven-room house, which was formerly used as a tin shop and later converted into a residence. This latter building is probably more than 100 years old.

On the top of a hill there is a beautiful grove of hickory trees with a brook running through it. This is to be made into a recreation grounds for the employees and customers of the dairy company.

The buildings on the farm will be used to house the farm help who will work on the place. It is possible that Alfred Acker, treasurer of the High Dairy Company, will live in the homestead.

Attorney Charles Stroh represented Mr. Filley and Attorneys Freedman and Rosenblum, the Highland Dairy Company, in the transaction.

## Calendar of Events

2011

Nov 2      **WHS Regular Meeting** - The Wide Awakes & the songs Lincoln loved - Mike McGarry

2012

Feb 1      **WHS Regular Meeting**

Apr 11     **WHS Regular Meeting**

Jun 6      **WHS Annual Meeting with election of Officers & Pot Luck Supper**

### Notes from my reading (continued from page 2)

In an ironic way, the fact that white America was relatively free from social class and rank distinctions meant that suddenly the possibility was open for anyone to be an aristocrat. In a society that prized individual liberty, the race was on to the top of the social ladder. Publishers issued exacting guidebooks (based on the old manuals of Renaissance-era nobility) to instruct Americans on how to talk, walk, eat, laugh, and write a letter like a gentleman or a lady. Genteel activities demanded genteel surroundings, including houses with carpets, mirrors, and display objects such as dishes that one did not use, but had only “for show.” Ordinary people worked long and hard to give the appearance of not working at all. Refined people read novels, had more clothes than they could wear, and found creative ways to demonstrate that they possessed excess wealth. This refinement of America, as one historian has called it, combined with a market economy to produce a budding consumer culture and joined with popular revivalism to promote a religious endorsement of progress, betterment, and good taste. (pages 136-140)

Institution-building occupied the time and energy of a great many Americans during the late nineteenth century. States organized university systems. Banks and businesses formed dozens of new corporations, trusts, and holding companies. Charitable organizations created inner-city settlement houses. Special interest groups—from the National Geographic Society to the American Federation of Labor—formed during this period. Churches were not immune from the spirit of the age, forming national denominational offices, publications, schools, and programs at a rate until then unparalleled in American history. (page 201)

Submitted by Dick Pierce

### President's Letter

Do you ever wonder why you support our Historical Society? Well, suppose one day somebody said this to you: “Thank you for reminding us to remember.” Would that explain it?

I found that statement in the *Courant* on October 12, 2011, page A4, in a story about Mia Farrow. It seems that Farrow went over to the Darfur section of Sudan to videotape the traditions and rituals of the victims of persecution, drought, and famine. Refugee camp leaders were incredulous; to them, food, water, and health care were the important things. Farrow hung around for a month and finally got her chance. She taped thirty-five hours of “farming methods, dances and song, children’s stories and wedding ceremonies.” She gave children growing up in those camps far from home “a chance to learn about their own heritage.” That’s when one of the camp leaders said, “Thank you for reminding us to remember.”

When you’re crushed by the millstone of the present time, you may lose touch with the past (as well as the future). Is the daily news full of irksome political invective? History tells us that it was worse two centuries ago. Yet the nation survived then and can survive now. Has your life been staggered by a personal or family crisis? History shows, not only that you have a lot of company, but that others managed to endure. Your heritage is bigger than you are. It is uniquely yours and helps shape who you are.

That’s what we’re about as a Society: reminding people to remember. It’s a big job. We have wonderful people working on it, and we have room for more.

Dick Pierce, October 2011