



# The Wintonbury Drummer

Newsletter of the Wintonbury Historical Society

Bloomfield, Connecticut

September 2018

## THE WAY IT WAS:

### HARTFORD'S NORTHEND, 1900-1965

Wednesday, September 5, 2018, 6:00 PM at Prosser

***THE WAY IT WAS---HARTFORD'S NORTHEND, 1900-1965***, rare photos with commentary by Bloomfield resident Dennis Sullivan (author of *Irving Street & Other Hartford Memories*, Amazon 2016).

Do you remember the “CHapel 2” telephone exchange (now 242) which covered Bloomfield and the Blue Hills section of Hartford? Time travel with the author back to the early days of Keney Park, Albany Avenue, the Gentlemen’s Driving Park, Buffalo Cody’s many appearances in the north end, Northwest-Jones Junior High, Garden Street, Weaver High, the Adams and Goodwin Tavern and Inn, the development of Homestead Park, local celebrities, a short circus fire film, and much more.

Come to Prosser Public Library Community Room, 1 Tunxis Avenue, at 6:00 PM on Wednesday, September 5. Free admission; register at [prosserlibrary.info](http://prosserlibrary.info) or 243-9721.



Dennis Sullivan (YouTube photo)



Irving Street  
& Other Hartford Memories  
-Dennis Sullivan-

**READ IT IN THIS ISSUE:** Page 2: 2018-2019 Program year described; Page 3: Bloomfield’s First Art and Architecture Tour; Pages 4-5: Congregation B’Nai Tikvoh Sholom; Pages 6-7: The Fagan Farm; Page 8: Financial report for FY 2017-2018; 7 Ways History is Essential; Art & Architecture Tour poster.

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**PROGRAM YEAR 2018-2019 DESCRIBED**

Ruthanne Marchetti has released a schedule of programs for the 2018-2019 year. After Dennis Sullivan on September 5 (see page 1), Genealogist Jean Perreault will speak on November 7, discussing her recently published book, *Footprints Across Connecticut from Bloomfield 1930 Census*. In her book, Jean has gathered information about everyone living in town in the census year.

On February 6, author Sara Franklin, Ph.D., will discuss her 2018 book, *Edna Lewis: At the Table with an American Original*. Edna Lewis (1916-2006) wrote some of America's most resonant, lyrical, and significant cookbooks, including the now classic *The Taste of Country Cooking*. Lewis cooked and wrote as a means to explore her memories of childhood on a farm in Freetown, Virginia, a community first founded by black families freed from slavery.

On March 6, WHS member Barbara Beeching, Ph.D., will speak on "Mrs. Auerbach, Mrs. Woodhouse, and the Service Bureau for Women's Organizations: The Golden Age of Women Who Didn't Realize They Weren't Liberated."

On April 3, Ralph Schmoll, M.D., and Ron Marchetti will present their latest video on Bloomfield's Trap Rock Houses.

On May 15, WHS secretary Marilyn Johnston will present a report called "Bloomfield: The All-American City: A Retrospective 2001-2018: Unchanging Aim for a Better Community."

June's Annual Meeting program is in the works, but not ready for announcement. Most of the program listed will be held at Prosser Public Library, 1 Tunxis Avenue.

**OUR BUSINESS MEMBERS**

Carusos Auto and Body, 36 Tunxis Avenue  
 Sir Speedy Printing, 21 Old Windsor Road  
 Geissler's Supermarket, 40 Tunxis Avenue  
*(And there's room for more!)*

Right: Al LeFebvre presents framed logo of his own design at WHS Annual Meeting, June 6, 2018. Photo by Dennis Hubbs

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## BLOOMFIELD'S FIRST ART & ARCHITECTURE TOUR

History. Architectural heritage. Beautiful art in home settings. Enjoy all this on Bloomfield's First Art & Architecture Tour on Sunday, October 21, 11:00 am to 3:00 pm. Select homeowners will allow rare access to explore architectural gems in Bloomfield. The self-guided tour begins at the Fannie Gabriel History Center at 151 School Street, where visitors can buy an admission booklet (with map) used as a ticket. After touring the nearby Old Farm School (1796), built when George Washington was President, visitors can drive at their own pace and visit in any order several remarkable homes spanning four centuries.

Visitors will tour the interior of each beautiful home and gain a unique perspective on Bloomfield's history. There will also be time to savor fine artworks that grace the walls. The houses include the Colonial-style Rev. Hezekiah Bissell house (built in 1750 when Bloomfield was still Wintonbury Parish), Hoskins Tavern (1832), a one-time tavern set on the old stagecoach route running through Bloomfield, a mid-century Modern Ranch built in 1965, and a 20<sup>th</sup> century rustic log cabin with a fabulous 21<sup>st</sup> century addition.

The admission booklets are available at the door on the day of the tour, or they may be reserved if paid for in advance. Make checks payable to Wintonbury Historical Society and send with request to WHS, P.O. Box 7454, Bloomfield, CT 06002. The per-booklet price for members of organizations shown below is always \$30.00. For non-members, the price is \$30.00 if paid in advance, \$35.00 the day of the tour. Admission booklets may be picked up at the History Center, 151 School Street, Bloomfield, most Mondays (call first 860-243-1531). Children (without strollers) are welcomed with supervision of parent or guardian. The event is rain or shine.



The oldest home featured on Bloomfield's First Art & Architecture Tour, the Colonial-style Rev. Hezekiah Bissell House (1750). (Photo by Dennis Hubbs)

Proceeds will benefit the tour presenters: Ironwood Community Partners (whose mission encompasses "Renewal through Preservation" projects) and the Wintonbury Historical Society. Both are Bloomfield non-profit organizations. Funds realized by Ironwood will help support the Oliver Filley Farmyard Project now underway. The aim of this work is to save two rear barn roofs in need of structural stabilization as well as support a community garden now built in the footprint of the old Dairy Barn on that property once owned by Captain Oliver Filley. (His adjacent 1834 stone house is on the National Registry of Historic Places.) So come along! While you enjoy an exciting tour experience, you will also be helping to keep Bloomfield's heritage alive for future generations. (For more information, please see [www.bloomfieldcthistory.org](http://www.bloomfieldcthistory.org).)



# CATALOG OF CONGREGATIONS, #17 of a series

## CONGREGATION B'NAI TIKVOH SHOLOM, 180 STILL ROAD

B'nai Tikvoh-Sholom, known as BTS, is a young synagogue—having come into being in 2011—but it has its roots in two venerable congregations: Congregation B'nai Sholom of Newington and Congregation Tikvoh Chadoshoh of Bloomfield, each with its own proud history.

Congregation Tikvoh Chadoshoh was started by families who had fled persecution in Nazi Germany. On November 8, 1942, a group of eighteen men met in the vestry of the Bedford Street Synagogue in Hartford to establish the new shul. A Board of Directors was elected to guide and manage the organization. The purposes of the congregation were originally declared to be: to conduct services as often as possible, especially Friday evening, to take care of the dead, and to teach the children.

Rabbi Hans Bodenheimer, himself a survivor, became the founding spiritual leader of



Tikvoh Chadoshoh in 1975

WHS file photo

Tikvoh Chadoshoh. The growing congregation continued to meet in the vestry of the Bedford Street Synagogue for both Sabbath and holiday services until 1957 when they moved into a per-

manent synagogue building on Cornwall Street. In 1969, the congregation relocated to a beautiful new building in Bloomfield.

Congregation B'nai Sholom was founded in 1955 by a handful of families from Newington, West Hartford and Elmwood who wanted to observe the High Holidays in their new community. They began meeting in a rented hall with a student rabbi and, less (continued on page 5)

### RABBI DEBRA CANTOR

An Ellington native, Debra Cantor earned her BA from Brandeis University and was ordained by Jewish Theological Seminary in 1988, the first Connecticut woman to become a Conservative rabbi. Cantor returned to Connecticut in 1992 to serve as rabbi of Congregation B'nai Sholom.

In an interview with the *Jewish Ledger*, Cantor said, “I grew up in a little Yankee town with a small, close-knit Jewish community where I was the only Jewish kid in school until the end of high school, and I felt very, very



Rabbi Debra Cantor

From btsonline.org

fortunate to be Jewish. Not every Jewish kid would have reached that conclusion in that kind of environment. But it's because of the way I was raised: my mother made every holiday so special and would send me to school before each Jewish holiday with props—a box of matzah before Passover; candles and chocolate gelt before Chanukah—and I would give a lecture to my class because I was the only Jewish kid. My family, and especially my

mother, made it such a positive, joyful thing to be Jewish and I felt sorry for all my friends who were just like anybody else, “just Christian.” It was not a sense of superiority. I saw Judaism and Jewish life as being wonderful and so special.

“I was a Judaic and Near Eastern studies major at Brandeis and became convinced in the middle of sophomore year that I really could become a Conservative rabbi. Two years later, as a senior, I was taken aback that the Jewish Theological (continued on page 5)

than a year later, purchased a building on Francis Avenue. In 1971, the congregation dedicated their new building at 26 Church Street.

Several years ago, the merger of these two Conservative synagogues was celebrated with a public procession of Torah scrolls and a gala “wedding.” Located in the former home of Tikvoh, on 180 Still Road (at the corner of Mountain Road, on the West Hartford/Bloomfield line), BTS is led by Rabbi Debra Cantor, formerly the rabbi of B’nai Sholom. Rabbi Cantor is a graduate of the first rabbinical class of the Jewish Theological Seminary to ordain women; she is a popular speaker and renowned Jewish educator and has long been involved in interfaith and social justice initiatives. Cantor has an extensive background in Jewish education, with expertise in adult learning, teacher-training, synagogue change, leadership development, and Jewish outreach.

BTS is known for its friendly members, lively services and commitment to Jewish learning. This year BTS is launching Neshama Center for Lifelong Learning. A collaborative project of B’nai Tikvoh-Sholom and the Mandell Jewish Community Center, Neshama offers multi-week courses as well as single session programs and workshops. (The Hebrew word *neshama* means “soul” and is related to the word *neshima*, meaning “breath.”) The program welcomes people of all backgrounds to take a breather from the fast-paced world in which we live and engage in creative, inspiring, joyful Jewish learning.

BTS says it is a synagogue that’s large enough to bring great programming to people and small enough for people to know one another. It describes itself as an “anytime, any-age, friendly, laughing, spontaneous, casual, so-you-can-just-be-yourself-and-pray” synagogue. It is also a place for inspiring, creative Jewish learning. BTS is a welcoming and inclusive congregation.

From <http://www.btsonline.org/about/> (accessed August 9, 2018) Thanks to the Tikvoh-Sholom office for permission to use this material.

Seminary still wasn’t accepting women. I went to the seminary for an interview and said that I really would love to go to rabbinical school. I was told to come to the seminary as a graduate student in Talmud and rabbinics, almost all taught in the rabbinical school, and someday, when women were admitted, I’d get credit for that. And that’s what happened, but not right away. In between, I left the seminary, got married, and worked in the Soviet Jewry movement and for Hillel in greater New York City. I came back five years later as part of the first rabbinical school class that included women. (Cantor is married to James Beede; and they have two children, Max and Penina.)

“In college, I thought the world was changing; now, I know it is, and so much more so. This is a time of great ferment in terms of ideas, the bifurcation of the political landscape—and a similar thing is happening in Israel. The society is undergoing such tremendous social ferment and political change, and not from outside threats, but from inner turmoil.

“What happens in times of great change is that, even as new vistas and opportunities open up, there’s also this pushback. People think about what they can hold onto in a time when it seems that the ground beneath is ever-shifting. I think that, at times like this, we can either be excited or terrified or a combination of both. Let’s try to figure out what is authentic, rich, and beautiful in our tradition, and worth really keeping at the center. How can we keep our eye on what’s essential and continue to build on that and be creative, while at the same time not saying that it’s got to be the way it’s always been?”

Adapted from the June 12, 2013 *Jewish Ledger* article written by Cindy Mindell.

See <http://www.jewishledger.com/2013/06/conversation-with-rabbi-debra-cantor/>



From btsonline.org

## THE FAGAN FARM

One hundred years ago in Bloomfield, James E. Fagan was doing just fine. A prosperous farmer, he was one of three town selectmen and had recently represented Bloomfield in the General Assembly. He drove a sporty Model T Ford around town, and everybody knew who he was.



Internet photo of a Model T

Fagan was one of the sons of Thomas Fagan and Mary Cullen Fagan. Thomas had been born in Ireland about 1816. This would make him about thirty when the so-called Great Potato Famine occurred. We don't know the year he moved to Bloomfield, but when he did he started out on the right foot by marrying into the Cullen family. The Cullens occupied a farm between upper Duncaster Road and the Talcott ridge. Their house was across the street from the present Forsythe House at 217 Duncaster. Thomas and Mary inherited some of these acres and established their own farm somewhat to the south and abutting Talcott ridge, along today's Gun Mill Road up to about Adams Road. Their five children, including sons Thomas H. and James E. were born there in the old farm house about 1850-1860.

In the days of Thomas Fagan and his children, the differences between Roman Catholics and Protestants were more pronounced in the public consciousness than they are today. Thus it was important for Catholics to have their own organization and sense of community.



Typical team of oxen  
From Audubon.org

Fagan, straight from Ireland, took the lead in promoting the establishment of a Catholic church in Bloomfield. As reported in *From Wintonbury to Bloomfield* (p. 29), in 1878 nine men donated funds to buy land on Woodland Avenue. Thomas Fagan, one of those men, then brought his yoke of oxen to excavate the basement of the church. (See *The Wintonbury Drummer*, June 2018, for an article on Sacred Heart Church, including a photo of the Woodland Avenue building.)

James Fagan's birthplace was probably a farm house built in 1730 by the Eno family (well-known in Simsbury history, for this area was part of Simsbury until 1843). The Fagan farm was part of a large tract subsequently acquired by Curtis Veeder in the early 1900s. When in 1944 Veeder gave 800 acres to the state as Penwood Park, he gave an additional 60 acres to his two daughters. In November 1947 the daughters sold the property to a Dr. Hopper. But Hopper's health soon deteriorated, and he sold fifty acres to Frances S. Stout in 1952, six acres along Duncaster Road to Henry Kneeland, and the balance—in the Duncaster Lane area—to a member of the Wadhams family.<sup>1</sup> The house at 75 Duncaster, once owned by Kneeland, is still spoken of as the Thomas Fagan House, although the (continued on page 7)

nearby 1730 house burned down in 1938.

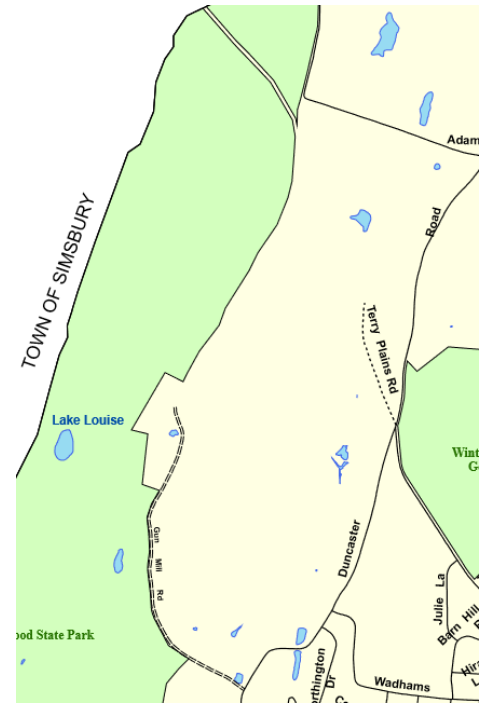
Like his father, James was active in the community. Fagan held political office starting in 1895, first as assessor, then as member of the Board of Relief, and then, in 1900, as Selectman. On October 1, 1906, James was elected First Selectman, defeating the Republican candidate by twenty votes. When the town's boys wanted a scout troop in 1918, he was part of the interfaith committee which organized it.

On August 19, 1904, the *Hartford Courant* wrote: "Selectman James E. Fagan, while superintending the work of building a bridge near the old Goodwin's corner, Saturday, saw a large blue heron, flying from the mountain side, northward, which alighted in a pasture close by. Mr. Fagan borrowed a gun of Marius Johnson and shot the bird. It was a fine specimen measuring six feet from tip to tip and standing nearly four feet high. The bird is to be stuffed and placed in Mr. Fagan's collection." Before readers rise to condemn Fagan, let us remember that shooting nongame birds was not forbidden in those years. In 1896 Massachusetts, Harriet Hemenway was so upset by the widespread slaughter of birds for women's ornamental hats that she and her cousin formed the Massachusetts Audubon Society. The Audubon group was vital in getting the Migratory Bird Conservation Act passed in 1913 (nine years after Fagan's deed), ending the indiscriminate killing of birds.

James Fagan married Julia Etta Shea, who died in June 1935 at age 66. They had no children. His brother Thomas H. died in October 1940, apparently never having married. Thomas left all his property to his brother, and James lived until January 1942, age 83. He died at the home of his niece, Mary Louise Feeley,<sup>2</sup> on Tunxis Avenue. The Fagans were buried in the family plot in St. Bernard Cemetery, Tarriffville.

1. William A. Wadhams, born in Goshen, moved to Bloomfield in 1896. The buyer may have been one of his sons, Moses Allyn, Dwight Benedict, or Everett Calhoun Wadhams, all born in the 1890s. The daughters of M. Allyn Wadhams, Faye Smith and Carol Wolcott, have lived on Duncaster Lane for many years.
2. Mary Louise Case Feeley was the daughter of Hezekiah Edwin Case and Mary Ann Fagan (James's sister). She died in October 1944. She was predeceased by her husband, John P. Feeley. They had married in 1897.

This article was written by Richard Pierce, who is responsible for any errors or omissions. Extensive research by Janis Langston supplied most of the material. Many thanks to Bloomfield residents John Stout and Claudia Gwardyak for their input. Several articles from the *Hartford Courant* have been accessed through ProQuest Historical Newspapers, found at the Connecticut State Library's site, <https://researchitct.org/>. If any readers can add more information about the Fagans, please communicate with the Society at the address on page 2.



Section of town of Bloomfield map showing Duncaster Road and Penwood Park (in green) between Adams and Gun Mill Roads (from bloomfieldct.gov)



## FINANCIAL REPORT, FY2017-2018

Beginning balance 7/1/2017	\$ 4,674.20
Plus: Income	\$11,716.65
Less: Expenses	\$(9,190.18)
Ending balance 6/30/2018	\$ 7,200.67

FY 2018 Income	Actual	Budget to date	Variance
Dues	\$5,780.00	3,500.00	2,280.00
Fundraising	791.00	1,000.00	(209.00)
Donations	4,870.04	4,000.00	870.04
Memorials	—	500.00	(500.00)
Program support	47.00	100.00	(53.00)
Publications	219.35	150.00	69.35
Investment income	—	2,442.00	(2,442.00)
Bank interest	9.26	8.00	1.26
Totals	\$11,716.65	\$11,700.00	\$16.65

### FY 2018 Expenses

Utilities			
Electricity	\$1,019.94	\$1,100.00	\$80.06
Telephone/internet	1,183.03	1,200.00	16.97
Water	219.40	250.00	30.60
Heating oil	1,512.86	250.00	(1,262.86)
CT Natural Gas	1,255.22	1,100.00	(155.22)
Total utilities	5,190.45	3,900.00	(1,290.45)
USPS box	96.00	100.00	4.00
Memberships	100.00	100.00	—
Meetings/speakers	557.54	600.00	42.46
Printing	1,015.00	1,200.00	185.00
Postage	710.30	900.00	189.70
Townwide mailing	—	2,500.00	2,500.00
Office/filing fee	373.21	300.00	(73.21)
Fundraising/Advert	225.00	250.00	25.00
Hesketh paver	130.00	—	(130.00)
House Committee	631.49	1,500.00	868.51
Collections Comm	—	250.00	250.00
History Ctr/Curator	161.19	100.00	(61.19)
Totals	9,190.18	11,700.00	2,509.82

### Assets

Vanguard (Hoff/Barnard)	\$212,884.05
C. Walker bequest	11,233.72
C. Barnard bequest	5,518.20
WFS checking	7,200.67
Petty cash account	50.00
Total	\$236,886.64

## SEVEN WAYS HISTORY IS ESSENTIAL, #5

ENGAGED CITIZENS » History helps people craft better solutions. At the heart of democracy is the practice of individuals coming together to express views and take action. By bringing history into discussions about contemporary issues, we can better understand the origins of and multiple perspectives on the challenges facing our communities and nation. This can clarify misperceptions, reveal complexities, temper volatile viewpoints, open people to new possibilities, and lead to more effective solutions for today's challenges.

*--issued by the History Relevance Campaign, a group of history professionals who met from 2013 to 2015 to formulate these principles. Participants included the American Association for State and Local History. Visit the site at [www.historyrelevance.com](http://www.historyrelevance.com).*

Ironwood Community Partners & the Wintonbury Historical Society  
proudly presents:

BLOOMFIELD'S FIRST



# Art & ARCHITECTURE

## TOUR

Sunday, Oct. 21, 2018  
11:00 am - 3:00 pm

**A Self-Guided Tour**  
includes an old Schoolhouse &  
4 Bloomfield Homes Spanning 4 Centuries!

Tours begin at the Fannie Gabriel History Center at the  
Wintonbury Historical Society  
151 School St, Bloomfield, CT 06002

Tickets available at the door on the day of the tour

For more information go to:  
[www.bloomfieldcthistory.org](http://www.bloomfieldcthistory.org)