



The Wintonbury Drummer

Newsletter of the Wintonbury Historical Society

Bloomfield, Connecticut

September 2020

OCTOBER PROGRAM HONORS SUFFRAGIST LEADER

Susan Campbell will speak about her book, *Tempest Tossed: The Spirit of Isabella Beecher Hooker*, at 6:00 pm on Wednesday, October 14, 2020. This is likely to be a Prosser Library virtual meeting through ZOOM, so people will need to register in advance at the library in order to receive the necessary internet link. Go to <https://bplct.org/>.



Susan Campbell
Univ. of New Haven
photo

Susan Campbell is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, a widely read Hartford Courant columnist, and the author of two books with a third forthcoming. She's worked across the media landscape as an award-winning print journalist, a regular commentator on WNPR, and a guest on CBS' "Sunday Morning," the BBC, WTNH-TV, and the local news show "Face the State."

She has taught at the University of New Haven and Central Connecticut State University and conducted workshops in writing and in theology at Wesleyan University, the University of Connecticut, and the University of Hartford.

Born in Kentucky and raised in southwest Missouri, Campbell received her bachelor's degree from the University of Maryland and a master's degree from the Hartford Seminary.

WHS ANNUAL MEETING: SEPTEMBER 9, 3:00 pm VIA ZOOM. See page 3.

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS HIGHLIGHTS

The Board met via Zoom conferencing technology on Wednesday, June 10, from 11:00 to 12:00 AM with fifteen people logging on.

Treasurer Judy Dahlgren-Dechand reported about \$7,000 in the checking account. She will start working on a 2020-2021 budget and needs committees to send her their budget requests by the end of June.

Our request to the town for \$15,000 to replace the ramp at the History Center has not been included in the new town budget. The ramp remains in limbo.

Leisure Services is selling for \$15 lawn signs thanking essential workers, part of the proceeds going to support the town's food bank. The directors agreed to purchase a sign.

The History Center gardens have been edged and weeded, and watering hoses have been installed. More work needs to be done on the Old Farm School gardens. There was discussion about a bronze plaque honoring the memory of George Merrow, to be placed in the gardens. Also, the OFS front walk still needs improvement, and we may have the funds to complete work on it.

The Old Farm School has been heated all winter in recent years. The directors seemed to favor winterizing it and shutting off the heat. Bill will talk with Metacomet School teachers about how this would impact school visits.

ATTENTION!

The Wintonbury Drummer invites readers to contribute articles, personal reminiscences, book reviews, photographs, etc. Materials for publication in the November issue should be received by October 12, 2020. (Or better yet—do it now!) Send directly to the editor at 14 Julie Lane in Bloomfield or attach to an email. Thank you.

OUR BUSINESS MEMBERS

(renewals currently on hold)

Bloomfield Garage, 986 Park Avenue

Bloomfield Village Pizza, 34 Tunxis Avenue

Geissler's Supermarket, 40 Tunxis Avenue

GINZA Japanese Cuisine, 14 Wintonbury Mall

Isaac's Bagel Café, 16-B Mountain Avenue

Pasticceria Italia, 10 Wintonbury Mall

Thai Palace, 18 Wintonbury Mall

Romano and Fetterman, P. C., 55 Woodland Avenue

Sir Speedy Printing, 21 Old Windsor Road

Wade's Farms, 498 Simsbury Road

(And there's room for more!)

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Bloomfield, CT 06002

Tel. 860-243-1531

Editor: Richard Pierce

Email: wintonburyhistory@gmail.com

Web: www.bloomfieldcthistory.org

The Extraordinary Life of Edward Stockton, Citizen of Bloomfield

Ed was an Ohio guy who moved to Connecticut in 1961 and chose Bloomfield very deliberately to be his town of residence for the next fifty-nine years. Right up to his death in May 2020, he loved the town with a passion.

He served as Mayor from 1969 until 1974. During that time, at his suggestion, Beatrice Wood became the first African American woman to serve as Deputy Mayor. In 1971 Bloomfield was selected as an “All-America City” for school desegregation activities, and the town celebrated with a parade and a ball.

In 1975 Ella Grasso chose Ed to be her Commissioner of Economic Development. It was a natural fit, as Ed brought a new international focus to the department. He led trade missions to a newly opening China and to Europe. He opened an office in Tokyo and one in Germany. He was always seeking to bring new companies to Connecticut, both foreign and domestic. His efforts were highly successful.

Ed served as Commissioner through Governor Grasso’s death in 1980, and continued with Governor William O’Neill until 1981, when he resigned to start his own consulting firm, ECONNomics.

Ed and Marilyn were global travelers for both business and pleasure, but no matter how far from home they went, they were always happy to return to their Bloomfield home. After thirty-five years in a Laurel Park split-level, they built their dream house in High Hill, where they lived for thirty years. Ed’s final three years were spent happily at Duncaster Retirement Community.

Even in their “senior years,” the Stocktons could be found at the summer Concerts on the Green, Prosser Library reading area, or at the Bloomfield Town Pool on a warm afternoon.

Thanks to Marilyn Stockton for supplying this article and photograph.



Ed Stockton as mayor of Bloomfield

ANNUAL MEETING 2020

Nominations:

President: Bill Weissenburger

Vice-presidents: Libbie Merrow and Ruthanne Marchetti

Treasurer: Judy Dahlgren-Dechand

Directors:

Class of 2021 (to fill vacancy): John Cappadona

Class of 2023: Tobie Katz, Ron Marchetti, Nick Panke, vacancy

By-laws revision: The revision of the by-laws has been sent to members with this newsletter. Please read it over and be prepared to vote to accept or reject.

A ZOOM link will be sent to all members for use with computer or phone.

Bloomfield Was Once a Summer Retreat

By Ralph Schmoll

In the early part of the twentieth century, several prominent Hartford and West Hartford families made their summer homes in Bloomfield, no doubt to escape the non-air-conditioned summer heat of the city and to enjoy the countryside.

The land at the western end of Juniper Road was in the Humphrey family even when it was part of Farmington before the formation of Wintonbury Parish in 1736. In 1901 the property was bought by James Miller who, about 1914, sold it to Sylvester Dunham, the second president of the Travelers Insurance Company. (The founder and first president of Travelers was James G. Batterson, a Bloomfield resident.) Mr. Dunham, whose principal residence was on Prospect Avenue in Hartford, built a house on the Juniper Road site to be used as a summer home. On his death the house was bought by Walter G. Cowles, a vice-president of the same company.

Jack Hawkinson of New York City married Miss Laura Whitney of Hartford in 1928 and moved to her home city. He soon accumulated a large tract of land “on the Mountainside, near the West Hartford town line, east of Reservoir No. 6 and west of Simsbury Road” to be “converted to a fine country estate,” as reported by *The Hartford Courant*. Some 136 acres had been purchased from such Bloomfield landowners as F. W. Shackley, Edward Sinnott, and Alice Watkins. In the early 1930s, Mr. Hawkinson, a photographer and artist, had formed a partnership with Grantland Rice to produce “Sportlight” movie shorts of famous sports personalities, and some of these were filmed in Bloomfield. The home he built here, which he called the Studio, became a family retreat. It was surrounded by flowers and lawns and was the scene of some of the biggest parties given in the Hartford area. In the 1960s, the property was sold to Sven Carlson, who developed the subdivision of High Hill.



Hawkinson's "Studio"
WHS archives photo

In 1925 George Auerbach of G. Fox and Company purchased the Benvenuto Farm from Thomas Perkins. This estate became more than a summer residence, since the model, efficient dairy farm Mr. Perkins had created, continued in operation under Mr. Auerbach. Two years after he bought the farm, however, George died; and his wife, Beatrice Fox Auerbach, took charge, although she had no knowledge of farming. Eggs and dairy products were produced here and sold in their department store in Hartford. The Auerbachs built and maintained a house here that descendants of the Auerbach family still enjoy, although most of the original land was donated to the 4-H organization and is now a 4-H Education Center affiliated with UCONN. (*continued on next page—>*)

On the top of the mountain dividing Bloomfield and Simsbury, inventor and industrialist Curtis H. Veeder of Veeder-Root purchased nearly 800 acres in 1913. He built what *The Hartford Courant* described as a “palatial bungalow on the crest of the mountain with a fine panorama of the Farmington River Valley.” He called his estate Penwood since the word *Veeder* is the Holland-Dutch translation of the word *pen* and the abundant woods on the property provided the end of the name. In 1944, Mr. Veeder donated the land to the state and it became Penwood State Park, “to be kept in a natural state so that those who love nature may enjoy this property as I have enjoyed it.”

But not only the well-to-do were interested in getting out of the city during those hot summers. The owners of the beautiful old colonial Sanford House on Maple Avenue rented out rooms to Hartford families so they could enjoy the country. Mother and children stayed all summer long with father coming out by trolley from Hartford to the center of Bloomfield to join them on weekends.



Sanford House
Town of Bloomfield photo

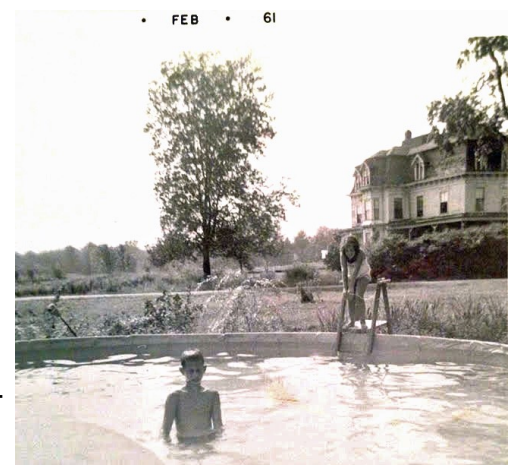


Goodman Hotel
WHS archives photo

Going east on Cottage Grove Road, just past the railroad track, is Goodman Street, now closed to traffic. But in the early part of the twentieth century, it was an active, thriving area of farms and greenhouses. The confluence of brooks through town forms the North Branch of the Hog River, now called the Park River, which flowed by the south end of Goodman Street. Here, a man named Beuford ran a ten-room summer hotel close to the Cottage Grove Railroad Station. How successful this enterprise was is not clear, but it was advertised in New York papers as being “In the Country, right on

the train route. Private bathing for men and women.” The bathing was in the widening of the stream, with a clump of bushes for men and another clump for the women for privacy while changing clothes.

At the time of the beginning of trolley service to Bloomfield in 1909, a Rev. William Reidy, as recorded in the *Courant*, praised the physical location of Bloomfield. “The Talcott Mountains, the glowing sunsets, and the peaceful nights develop children which are a credit to the town. The rails which unite the town to the city should not bring about a loss of identity but would invite residents of the city into the peace and vitality of the country.” The town has grown, but its beauty remains.



Goodman Hotel and “pool” 1961?
WHS archives photo



FRANCES ELLEN BURR AND WOMEN'S VOTING RIGHTS



One hundred years ago on September 14, Connecticut ratified the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution; and, as a result, women had the right to vote in that year's national elections. It was the culmination of a movement that had begun in 1848 in Seneca Falls, N.Y. Were Bloomfield women involved in that long struggle? We know of one with a Bloomfield connection.

Frances Ellen Burr was a Hartford woman with Bloomfield roots. Her cousins were signers of the 1736 petition which resulted in the formation of Wintonbury Parish. John Burr, Jr., Nathan, and Stephen Burr, brothers, were signers; and their brother Noah's wife also signed. Frances was their second cousin, once removed. All of them were great-grandchildren of Benjamin Burr, who emigrated from England about 1630 and was one of the first settlers of Hartford. Of Benjamin, it is said, "He appears to have been a thrifty, well-to-do settler, as he owned another house lot in the northwest part of the village, besides houses and lands at Greenfield [which became Wintonbury Parish], in Windsor."* The name of Bloomfield's Burr Road bears witness to the large Burr family who lived in that vicinity for many years.

In the late 1860s, when Frances was in her mid-thirties, she started to collect signatures on a petition in support of women's right to vote. The response was considerable. In a meeting at the Roberts Opera House in Hartford on October 28 and 29, 1869, the Connecticut Woman Suffrage Association was organized. The list of attendees is impressive. "Called to order by the Hon. John Hooker and a group of community leaders including Isabella Beecher Hooker, Frances Ellen Burr, Catharine E. Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, the meeting was addressed by such eminent people as the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Julia Ward Howe and William Lloyd Garrison."** The well-connected Isabella Hooker, named as the first director, led the Association for thirty-six years.

Frances Ellen Burr, recording secretary of the association for forty-one years, kept handwritten records until 1910. The vitality and determination of the group, registering 138 members on October 28, 1869, and swelling to 21,000 by 1914, is evident in the many scrapbooks of mounted newspaper clippings assembled by Frances Burr. While association records in this collection actually begin in 1869, Miss Burr's newspaper clippings documenting the early suffrage movement are dated as early as 1849 and have been preserved by the CT State Library.

According to the CT Women's Centennial Suffrage Commission, "As a writer, speaker, reporter, stenographer, journalist, and activist, Francis Ellen Burr has done more to popularize the question of Women's Suffrage than anyone else in the state of Connecticut. She died peacefully in her home in Hartford, Connecticut on February 9, 1923, at the age of 92, but not before she was able to see her dream realized in August of 1920 when women across the nation were granted the right to vote."***

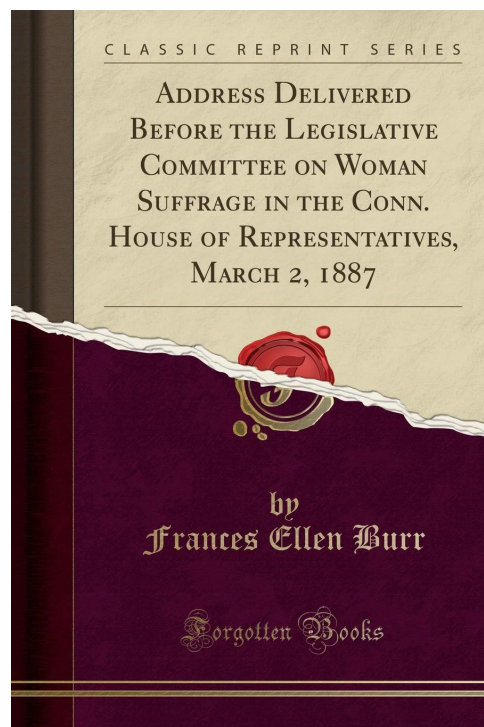
—Thanks to Janis Langston for genealogical help with this article.

Sources:

*A *General History of the Burr Family in America. with a genealogical record from 1570 to 1878* by Charles Burr Todd. Printed by E. Wells Sackett & Bro., NY, 1878.

**<https://ctstatelibrary.org/RG101.html>

***<https://votesforwomenct.com/ct-suffragettes/>



Cover of Burr's book

Available on Amazon for \$35.99

ANOTHER HISTORIC BELL IN TOWN

Interesting inquiries are always coming in to the Gabriel History Center. Recently John Flanagan wrote, “I am trying to find out where the Meneely Bell is in Bloomfield, as I know one of the descendants of the original owner of the Bell factory. He lives in Florida and I want to forward a picture of it with me in it.” Flanagan sent us a photo from Wikipedia. The bell looked vaguely familiar, but there was a lot of head-scratching at the History Center. We had never heard of this bell anywhere in town. Shortly afterwards, however, Louise Schmoll went out to do an errand and saw the bell—right outside the Bloomfield Center Fire Department headquarters, 18 Wintonbury Avenue. Eureka! We were able to tell Mr. Flanagan where to find it.



Wikipedia photo



The Academy, rebuilt as a firehouse
WHS archives photo

Meneely bells were made in New York state by one of two foundries. The first was established in 1826 in West Troy (now Watervliet) by Andrew Meneely and was operated later by two of his sons. The second Meneely foundry was established in 1870 by a third son across the Hudson River in Troy, New York. The two foundries competed vigorously (and sometimes bitterly) with each other, producing some 65,000 bells before they both closed in 1952. (from Wikipedia.org).

How did the bell come to be in front of the fire house? Fire Commissioner George McMahon inquired of a longtime member of the department, Chief Bill Riley, who in turn asked former chief Adolph Jacobson. Jacobson said that the bell used to belong to The Academy. The bell was used to call children to school and, when needed, the fire department used it. If there was a fire, someone would call Minnie Russo, who lived next door to the Academy, and she would hurry over and ring the bell.

The Academy had been built as a private school in 1854. In 1873 the town bought its building, which was on the site of today’s fire house, to replace the old Center School on Whirlwind Hill. When the school closed, the building was repurposed as a firehouse. (See *From Wintonbury to Bloomfield*, pages 141-142, 144, 152, 154-155, 188)



Bloomfield Center Fire House with bell
Janis Langston photo



HAPPY 275TH BIRTHDAY! Oliver Ellsworth, born on 1745, had a law office in this historic house at 40 Wintonbury Avenue. He was the third United States Chief Justice, a framer of the Constitution, and, with Roger Sherman, suggested the “Connecticut Compromise” which saved the new republic.



A New Perspective from a Pandemic: Social Gratitude

By Marilyn Johnston

April 6, 2020. It is still early in the government's directive to shelter in place except for essential errands. Hand sanitizer and masks are impossible rarities. On this mild April day, I institute a new way of grocery shopping. I arrive at my Bloomfield Geissler's, take a few minutes to wrap my nose and mouth in a thick woolen scarf, pull on brown leather gloves, collect my container of wet wipes and head for the entrance. Quickly I grab a cart, wipe down the bar and rim and begin steering and picking up the items on my list, glad to be keeping a six-foot distance from all others. I haven't gone down too many aisles when a woman heads my way, comes abreast of me with her cart quite close, reaches out and touches my gloved hand with her hand. In my startled state, I notice her other hand is pointing at the "One Way" sign pasted on the floor which I have completely overlooked. "Oh, dear!" I exclaim apologetically, "I'm going the Wrong Way down a one-way street!" She draws her hand back and we both laugh.



She has kind eyes and our exchanges last only a few minutes. Still, though I realize that we weren't strictly following the new guidelines for this epidemic, we both enjoyed the camaraderie and I appreciated her help in guiding me in this new world. I tell myself: it's all happened so fast and we are slow learners, new at learning how to keep apart, especially in my town. I turn my cart around and head back to the main aisle. Slow learners we may be, but I'm proud of our instincts, that we are wired for cooperation and kindness here, now as always, as I have always found in my thirty-five years in Bloomfield. When I finish shopping and I'm back at my car, I pile all the bags in, remove my leather gloves, clean them and the steering wheel with a wet wipe.

It has been a tough week. I carry the weight of my niece's grief, whose father-in-law has just died of Covid19, as well as the isolation of my mother's friend who must quarantine herself even more strictly since her son-in-law's diagnosis of a severe case of the virus. But I think we are seeing each other with new eyes during this difficult time. We get to perceive what really matters, what we take for granted during the fast-paced life we call "normal." Our routine activities are being de-familiarized in a new perspective. I believe the epidemic has shown us our common need and our common frailties. We try to believe we can be in control, each alone, each struggling to take care of his or her own household, alone, when in fact we rely on social connectivity every day to help us live. It's natural. I recall the sympathetic eyes of my sister-shopper today, steering me straight. When I get home and after I finish putting away the groceries, I suddenly have one more task to do. I go up to my attic of stored holiday boxes. Remembering my sister-shopper, I dig out and put an electric candle in my front window and then I dig out and tape a big red paper heart on my front door.



Removing statues: What do you think?

This summer a *Courant* editorial said, "Getting rid of statues of Columbus is not about erasing history but about clarifying it. Statues and monuments should be tributes to the best of our past, to the sacrifices and heroic deeds that deserve preservation." (*Hartford Courant*, June 28, 2020, page C2)



What do you think? Send your opinions and comments to the *Drummer* at P.O. Box 7454 or email wintonburyhistory@gmail.com.