

The Wintonbury Drummer



Newsletter of the Wintonbury Historical Society

Bloomfield, Connecticut

November 2022

HISTORIC PRESERVATION WITHIN REACH

Friday, November 18, 2022, 3:00 PM via Zoom

The November 18 program will feature Mary Dunne speaking about Certified Local Government. Why should we in Bloomfield hear her? You might be surprised! Do we have old houses that need protection? You bet!

Local governments may strengthen their local historic preservation efforts by achieving Certified Local Government (CLG) status from the National Park Service. This program creates a local, state, and federal partnership that promotes historic preservation at the grassroots level. It seeks to develop and maintain local historic preservation programs that will influence the zoning and permitting decisions critical to preserving historic properties. It also works to ensure the broadest possible participation of local governments in the national historic preservation program while maintaining the preservation standards established by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior.



The Oliver Ellsworth House
40 Wintonbury Avenue
Built about 1765
R. Pierce photo

Mary Dunne is Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer with the Historic Preservation Office of the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development. She is an experienced Certified Local Government and Grants Coordinator. In addition to the CLG program, her office provides funding for historic preservation, basic operational support for nonprofits, and survey and planning grants.



This is a Zoom program. To attend, please register ahead of time at <https://bplct.org>. Click on Event Calendar and register. The library will send you the necessary link.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE: **Page 2:** Board of Directors Highlights. **Page 3:** Financial Report for the previous fiscal year; BHS anecdote from 1937. **Pages 4-5:** One-room Schoolhouse by Joan Goetjen. **Pages 6-7:** Cow Hill, A Happy Location, by Mabel Mann. **Page 7:** Celebrate Bloomfield a Success. **Page 8:** Penny Lightner's Fascinating Family History Project.

DIRECTORY**President**

John Cappadona

Past President

William Weissenburger

Vice-presidents

Elizabeth Merrow

Ruthanne Marchetti

Treasurer

Susan Vancour

Secretary

Marilyn Johnston

Curators

Ralph & Louise Schmol

Genealogists

Jean Perreault

Janis Langston

Prosser Liaison

Allison Wilkos

Board of Directors**2023**

Tobie Katz

Ron Marchetti

David Roones

Vacancy

2024

Homer Guilmartin

Richard Hughes

Mara Whitman

Vacancy

2025

Paula Baram

Halesteen Graham Days

Mary Laiuppa

Wendy Wolcott

BOARD OF DIRECTORS HIGHLIGHTS

The Board met virtually on October 17 with thirteen people present. John Cappadona called for the secretary and treasurer reports, which were accepted. The treasurer's report is placed "on file," and an audit should be conducted on an annual basis.

The Board moved to send an expression of thanks along with flowers to outgoing treasurer Judy Dahlgren-Dechand for her many years of service. A trained accountant, she has also been a willing volunteer for many Society functions.

John attended a program sponsored by the Connecticut League of History Organizations (CLHO) introducing CT Collections, an opportunity for local history societies to post their catalogues online. We will be examining whether this would benefit our Society. Also upcoming is a chance to apply for a 2023 grant from Connecticut Humanities, similar to what we received for 2022.

David Roones spoke of the "Making Bloomfield Home" video from the Jewish Historical Society. Rabbi Debra Cantor has given us permission to put a link to this video on our website. David also discussed the Witness Stones project. The name is now copyrighted, but we can receive free training from the West Hartford Historical Society.

John spoke of what he, as new president, would like to focus on. He sees a need to increase membership and create wider interest in the Society. He hopes to visit nearby historical societies to promote cooperative endeavors.

The next Board meeting will be on November 14, 7:00 PM, via Zoom. One agenda item is whether or not to have a flea market next spring.

ATTENTION!!!

The Wintonbury Drummer invites readers to contribute articles, personal reminiscences, book reviews, photographs, etc. Material for publication in the February issue should be received by January 6, 2023.

**OUR BUSINESS MEMBERS**

Many Rivers Community Acupuncture, 3 Barnard Lane
Printmark Services, 21 Old Windsor Road
Wade's Farms, 498 Simsbury Road

The Wintonbury Drummer

is published five times a year by
Wintonbury Historical Society, Inc.
151-153 School Street, P.O. Box 7454
Bloomfield, CT 06002
Tel. 860-243-1531
Editor: Richard Pierce
Email: wintonburyhistory@gmail.com
Web: www.bloomfieldcthistory.org

Wintonbury Historical Society:

Report for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2022

Windsor Federal Checking:	
Beginning balance 7/1/2021	\$9,156.39
Plus: Operating Income	\$14,168.91
Less: Operating Expenses	\$(11,389.18)
Ending balance 6/30/2022	\$11,936.12 Unrestricted

FY2022 Income	Actual	Budget to Date	Variance
Dues	\$5,125.00	\$4,000.00	\$1,125.00
Fundraising		1,000.00	(1,000.00)
Donations	3,865.40	4,500.00	(634.60)
In-Kind donations		900.00	(900.00)
Memorials	100.00		100.00
Publications	263.82	250.00	13.82
Miscellaneous income	7.60		7.60
Bank interest	8.90	10.00	(1.10)
HFPG (Walker Fund)	523.19		523.19
CT Humanities Grant	<u>4,275.00</u>	<u>5,180.00</u>	<u>(905.00)</u>
Totals	14,168.91	15,840.00	(1,671.09)
FY 2022 Expenses			
Electricity	1,098.08	1,600.00	501.92
Telephone/Internet	1,357.03	1,500.00	142.97
Water	280.95	700.00	419.05
Heating oil	1,167.38	1,500.00	332.62
Natural gas	<u>1,483.68</u>	<u>1,800.00</u>	<u>316.32</u>
Total utilities	5,387.12	7,100.00	1,712.88
USPS box	182.00	150.00	(32.00)
History org. memberships	120.00	140.00	20.00
Meetings/speakers	100.00	1,500.00	1,400.00
Printing	1,743.00	1,500.00	(243.00)
Postage	740.53	800.00	59.47
PayPal fees	10.13	50.00	39.87
Gardens/supplies		900.00	900.00
Office/filing fees	339.76	600.00	260.24
Fundraising/advertising		150.00	150.00
House Committee	2,760.05	2,700.00	(60.05)
Collections Committee		150.00	150.00
Curators	<u>6.59</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>93.41</u>
Total expenses	11,389.18	15,840.00	4,450.82

Restricted funds for Old Farm School in checking account:

\$3,799.52	Artful Garden Tour income
3,000.00	Duncaster Grant
<u>400.00</u>	Donations for Old Farm School
7,199.52	Total OFS Fund

Assets:

Vanguard Dividend Growth	\$340,302.43
Windsor Federal checking	19,135.64
Petty cash account	<u>50.00</u>
Total assets:	359,488.07

Inconvenient Power Outage 85 Years Ago

“[The Bloomfield High School] 1937 graduation was different. Yes, indeed. A terrific thunderstorm came up, and Roberta Randall started her valedictory address. The official dignitaries were seated on the stage, not knowing just what to do. The audience was shrieking at every crash of lightning, and the lights went off. I stepped up to Roberta and asked her to sit and wait. Then I sat in the dark at the piano and played every possible song, and how they all sang for half an hour or so. Then Fran started the car brigade. He put his headlights to shine in the front door, and others put their cars at side windows. Roberta resumed her address. Finally, the lights came on, diplomas were awarded, and folks went home in the mud and the rain.” –from *Music for Every Child* by Mabel Mann, page 47.



Old Bloomfield High, Park Avenue
WHS archives photo

One-room Schoolhouse 1920s

By Joan Goetjen

Reprinted from *The Bloomfield Journal*, June 15, 1984

Little did I realize as I sat at my desk in that one-room schoolhouse at 32 Duncaster Road more than sixty years ago, listening to the story of how Abraham Lincoln wrote on a shovel in front of the fireplace, that someday I would be writing about my own learning experiences and they would seem just as crude.¹

It was a new building that I attended. The old school, which had set some fifty feet away, had been moved to West Street to become a home for the Moore family. As I remember, there were two rows of desks for each of the four grades, totaling about 24 students. The first graders were farthest from the wall with the long row of windows, perhaps because they would be closer to the door leading to the outdoor facilities. I have one of the desk and chair sets, but I don't know what became of George Washington's picture which hung on the front wall as an inspiration to all of us.²



Old Duncaster School building
Relocated to 44 West Street as a home
R. Pierce photo

Younger brothers and sisters visited often and stayed the entire day. I went with my sister whenever possible and made life miserable for my parents when I couldn't go. During the course of one year there was a vacant desk, so I was allowed to go to school regularly at an early age. I'm sure that my abilities and the effect this would have on my life were not evaluated as they would be today.

At the beginning of each day the teacher, Miss Philbrick, read us Burgess's nature story.³ Someone was assigned the responsibility of clipping it out of the newspaper. I can remember the thrill of being handed my first reading book and the paper with widely spaced lines on which to form our first letters—things we would practice while the teacher moved on to the next class.

As the bus was not allowed up Duncaster Road beyond the school, those of us who lived in that direction walked both ways. My sister and I walked from Penwood Park (then known as Penwood Farm) via Gun Mill Road. On real bad days, we had the comfort of a horse and buggy or sleigh. In the fall there was always a branch from one of Henry Rookes' apple trees that hung temptingly close to the road. A strong arm and a metal lunch box took care of any teasing boys along the way, even at the risk of a broken thermos bottle. Arriving at the school early, we quite often waited for the teacher, who arrived on the school bus, at the home of Henry and Ida Rooke who lived across the street.⁴ They furnished us with a container of drinking water to fill the large crock which stood on a tall metal stand—water which the children drank using a single metal cup.

During the year, we had little contests like finding out who could bring in the greatest varieties of wildflowers or the largest number of tent caterpillar egg masses.

Memorizing and reciting a poem was a weekly assignment, and we always looked forward to Mrs. Mann's visit to teach us a new song, often accompanying (continued—>)

us on her little organ. Most likely we would use these songs in the little entertainments we prepared for our parents and young brothers and sisters. In those days, it was mostly mothers in their neat afternoon dresses.



32 Duncaster Road
Now a private home, once the Grange Hall and before that the Duncaster School. R. Pierce photo

On hot summer days we held classes outdoors under the apple trees. They were great for climbing, and some of the more daring boys suffered some broken bones. “Rover, Rover, come over” was a favorite game during recess. Those who wanted a quiet time (girls) scratched lines among the surface roots at the base of the large maple tree imagining various rooms of a house. In winter we could make slippery slide tracks on the slope and try going down standing up. If our courage failed, then sitting down worked fine, except that it left a shiny circle on the back of our coats. Or worse. It was one reason Mother and her beaded sewing basket were seldom parted on a winter evening. If the weather was bad, we were allowed to go down to the dark, coal-binned basement

where we made up games running around the supporting posts.

If you finished your assignments and received a gold star, you might be asked to go to the little back room and help the teacher make some duplicates by rubbing paper over a block of hard gelatin and getting purple ink all over you, or you could help some of the younger children having difficulty forming their letters or doing simple addition.

We were a closely knit group, and getting on the school bus to enter the fifth grade at the Masonic Hall in Bloomfield Center was a big step in our lives. The thought crossed our minds often as summer vacation came to a close.

We were fortunate to have Frank Guilmartin as our bus driver all those years, and we loved and respected him. His smile and constant chuckle helped to ease any anxieties we had those first days. I know he felt sorry having to leave some of us off at Duncaster School to walk the rest of the way home, but anyone who caused a disturbance on the bus soon found themselves alongside the road, after reasonable warning. Our open bus seats consisted of two long hard benches down each side. In winter there was a roll of leathery material to be let down to keep out some of the cold breezes.⁵

As the years passed, I joined Tunxis Grange No. 13 and they eventually were able to buy Duncaster School, which had been vacant for some time. The exterior has been covered with vinyl siding and the neatly kept interior completely paneled. The once dark basement, carpeted and painted, makes an adequate dining hall. So, I still go regularly to the old schoolhouse, open the same door, and am reminded once more of how important and how wonderful were those simple basic teachings in our lives.

1. For an overview of the history of Bloomfield schools, see *The Wintonbury Drummer*, September 2021, pages 4-7.

2. A similar picture of Washington is displayed in the Old Farm School’s upper classroom.

3. Thornton W. Burgess of Massachusetts (1874-1965) wrote over 15,000 children’s stories for a daily newspaper column and was known as the “Bedtime Story Man.”

4. Henry and Ida Rooke were farmers, born about 1880 and 1888 respectively.

5. See *The Wintonbury Drummer* for September 2021, page 6, for an appreciation of Frank Guilmartin.

Cow Hill: A Happy Location

By Mabel F. Mann

Editor's note: Mabel Mann was a music teacher in Bloomfield schools from 1921-1943. Her memoir, *Music for Every Child*, is for sale at the Gabriel History Center. Francis Edward Mann (1891-1977) is buried in Mountain View Cemetery alongside his wife Mabel (1894-1989). Their son, Edward Guild Mann, lived from 1917-1984. This article was originally published in *Our Town*, February/March 1994, page 20.

Why did we, the Mann family—Fran, Mabel and little Ed—leave our comfortable five-room flat on Wethersfield Avenue in Hartford, move to Bloomfield in 1920, and buy that little house on Cow Hill?

“It was always called Cow Hill,” David Butler, whose dad was the rural mailman, wrote recently in the Journal. “I never heard it called by any other name.”

Cows grazed in the meadow below all the way to Will Hubbard's red barn on Cottage Grove Road. We loved the open countryside. We owned an open four-passenger Model T Ford, which told us one day, “Let's drive up that narrow dirt road. See the sign ‘Cow Hill.’ See ‘House for Sale, \$500 down,’ and see all that beautiful land!”

“Welcome, come in,” said Mr. Fred Mansur, who was renting the house from Lily and Fred Granger. His family gathered behind him—Betsy, Lincoln, Iantha, and Elinor. Lincoln became a policeman and Iantha a schoolteacher for many years. The owners of that “fortune of land” were Lily and Fred Granger. “We are anxious to sell. We need money. Our taxes are very high.”

Fran arranged two mortgage loans, one from his friendly company, the Hartford Fire Insurance Company, and the other from the Bloomfield Congregational Church. Perhaps you didn't know, but the churches “let out” money in those days. I phoned our town secretary recently for information. First, she found “no records so far back.” Now, another report: house built in 1910, our purchase was in 1920, tax rate 23 mills, and of further interest, tax for my piano was \$75.

The big subject was water. “We must have water.” “Yes,” said Lily, “this little house has water. Plenty.” Old folks knew how to find water with a divining rod. Then they made an artesian well—185 feet down, down, down. Pump the water by hand up into a tub in the attic, and then into pipes down, down into the modern bathtub and toilet. Of course, you must remember to pump first! Then Fran secured a gasoline engine which he later sold to Carl Mexcur, who was building his house on Tunxis Avenue. I remember that house with the stone porch.

Tony, our plumber from Steinberg Company, was recently repairing a faucet in my kitchen sink. “That's a likely story,” said he. “May I go down to the cellar and look?” “Sure,” said I, and he came back smiling. “You are right,” he said. “I found the well, sealed, of course, and the cement block for the engine, and do you know those pipes are copper? Unusual for those years.”

Across the street was a little house painted green, the home of Harriet Burnham, with her grape arbor across the front lawn. How we loved to sample those grapes! She was a teacher in Hartford, going back and forth by trolley at the foot of our hill. (continued on next page —>)



Home of Mabel and Francis Mann today
68 Prospect Street, R. Pierce photo

The Vincents lived in the big white house up the street a little. Ted, the builder, and Carrie, Ernestine, Joe, Ed and lovely little Miriam. They had a fresh water deep well, and a rain barrel at the corner of the House to catch soft rainwater.



Michael Riley's cows
Cow Hill
69 Prospect St., R. Pierce photos

Across from the Vincents' was the little red brick house with the Lynch family—Walter, Bob, Tommy and Anna. Mr. Lynch used the trolley to get to his job at the Aetna and always stopped in front of our house, turned and waved goodbye to Mother, at exactly 7:30 a.m. About a month ago, Anna came to visit me. She told me she was only three years old when they came to Cow Hill. She is now 75, and thrilled to see her little house, especially those huge maple trees whose leaves Mrs. Pires raked up all these many years. The Pires family followed the Lynchs—two boys and twin girls, Anna and Alice. Beyond the Lynchs was one more—the Garsden cottage which Billy and Helen O'Connor rented with their two children. That is all—five houses and eleven. children. Manns, Burnham, Vincents, Lynchs and O'Connors.

About the empty lot next to us: people often ask why. It seems that Lily added a few feet here and again, leaving only 65 feet frontage, and how the total does not meet the town requirements of 75 feet so it must be kept as a right of way and not a house lot.

We moved into our house in the spring, and, as more homes were built, the street was widened, huge pipes put in, and there was great joy and expense with the metropolitan water system.

The children walked to school on Jerome Avenue in rain, snow, and mud. Ernestine Vincent graduated valedictorian from the small high school in 1926, one of a class of seven. They played ball together, had Flexible Flyers to slide in any direction, had parties, picnics and firecrackers, and grew up happily.

We had a strong Cow Hill Association, and our last picnic and meeting, about 1945, was held at the lovely brick house of Dom Maselli up at the other end of the street. Seventy-three houses now. "Your house is our house," that is what we all remember. Togetherness on Cow Hill, and many wonderful memories. As Anna Lynch turned to leave me recently, she said, "Goodbye, darling. I'll be back to see you and my beloved Cow Hill next year."

Celebrate Bloomfield Event a Success

Marilyn Johnston orchestrated the Historical Society's participation in Celebrate Bloomfield on August 27. The Society had a table under a green canopy borrowed from Seabury, along with a heavy-duty easel and five table display stands borrowed from Prosser Library. Libbie Merrow did a great job arranging for people to staff the table throughout the day. Marilyn Stockton and Halesteen Graham Days took the morning shift, and Tobie Katz, Mary Laiuppa, John Cappadona, and Bill Weissenburger shared morning and afternoon shifts. Shirley Thompson was indisposed but conscientiously sent along her son, Bill, who was an invaluable aide, manning the table and cheerfully helping out the cleanup/set up crew (Marilyn and Ray Johnston) at closing time.

Louise Schmoll prepared a lovely poster board display of WHS publications, covered samples of our books, and photocopies of other materials—not to mention hand-pressed lapel buttons to give out. Bill Weissenburger saw to the purchase of a distinctive tablecloth which made the Society name clearly visible. John Cappadona invited centenarian Vera Taylor (see September *Drummer*, pages 3-4) to our table, and she was a gracious presence, adding living history to our table.

We met a lot of townspeople, some new to town. Several kids tried out the toys. We gathered twenty-one email addresses of people we can send future publicity to. Everyone felt it was a very successful outreach.



Standing, L-R: Marilyn Stockton, Halesteen Graham Days, Marilyn Johnston, Mary Laiuppa, Jean Pierce, Dick Pierce
Seated: Tobie Katz

FASCINATING FAMILY HISTORY PROJECTS

Penny Lightner of Bloomfield has recently shared an interesting family history project which she completed about twenty years ago. It is composed of a series of letters written by her grandfather between 1907 and 1910. She typed up all the letters, trying to preserve original mistakes, grammar, and spelling—even a few passages in the German language. The letters were given to Penny by her parents, and by typing them she has preserved glimpses into everyday life in the past which might otherwise have been lost. Penny added a few other letters, photographs, and copies of clippings, including a newspaper account of her grandparents' wedding in New Zealand. She used her word processor to create a digital file and print out copies for other family members.

Penny's grandfather, the Rev. George Frederick Hoyer (1884-1958) was sent to New Zealand by his church. Before leaving, he had met Otilie Amelia Bock (1887-1973); and they had decided to get married. However, Hoyer's travel arrangements had already been made, and he had to leave before the wedding could take place. The plan was that Bock would travel to New Zealand later, and the couple would be married there. This is when Hoyer starting writing to his fiancé. As has been the case more than once, letters from the past that have been saved for many years have brought to life vivid images of forgotten people and events.



George and Tillie Hoyer
40th wedding anniversary 1950
Photo courtesy of P. Lightner

“The most interesting local event for many years took place at Upper Moutere [N.Z.] on Wednesday last,” says a newspaper clipping of the time, “when the Rev. G. F. Hoyer, pastor of the Lutheran churches in Upper Moutere and Ranzau, and Miss Otelia [sic] Amelia Bock, were married at St. Paul's Lutheran Church. Before the hour fixed for the ceremony, the large church was crowded, numbers having to stand.” It's the culmination of a great romantic story Penny Lightner has preserved for her family.

Have you ever done a family history project? Would you be willing to share it with *The Wintonbury Drummer*? Or who knows? Maybe you'll see one here that gives you an idea! We'd love to print more. Please let us know. (Contact details on page 2.)



Obviously, a lot can be done using a computer for such a project. But a lot can be done without one, too. Oral histories are done by telling your stories to someone else. (Examples of this are available at the Gabriel History Center.) Typing services and copying machines are available. (Ask your reference librarian.) Simply collecting materials, labeling them, and storing them safely will keep your family history safe.

Notes from My Reading

“The human mind seems to require a usable past because historical memory is a key to self-identity, a way of comprehending one's place in the stream of time, and a means of making some sense of humankind's long story.” —*History on Trial: Culture Wars and the Teaching of the Past*, by Gary B. Nash, Charlotte Crabtree, and Ross E. Dunn (1997), page 8.