

The Wintonbury Drummer



Newsletter of the Wintonbury Historical Society

Bloomfield, Connecticut

January 2011

Next meeting: February 2, 2011 7:00 p.m.

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

Program: African Americans in the Revolution, including Lemuel Haynes of Bloomfield

Presenter: Billie Anthony

Past Perambulations:

It was December 31, 1955. Charlie and I had waited for hours that day, but finally the movers arrived to bring our belongings from East Hartford to Bloomfield. It was almost dark by the time they finished, but there we were at last in our brand new house on Julie Lane. But how isolated we felt! Only one other house was occupied, the Johnson's next door, with several other homes in various stages of construction. The street was not even paved. My mom's cousin, when she visited, looked out the back door at the woods and exclaimed, "I wouldn't stay here for one night!" The builder was a Harris Smith from Windsor, and the sales agent was Isham. The development was named Farm View, and one of Isham's secretaries named the three streets, Julie and Hiram Lanes, and Barn Hill Road. Part of the area had been one of A. C. Petersen's corn fields.

As spring came on that year, however, we met other families on the street and found out what a good neighborhood we were in. There were a lot of two year olds, who were to grow up together. They all went to Vincent School prior to redistricting in 1970. Before the street was finally paved, we had to bump our strollers out to Terry Plains Road to take the children for a walk. I remember how Bonnie Johnson, just a toddler, once fell face down on the wet street and got her pink snowsuit all muddy. But there was a great sense of community. The kids just had to go outside, and there would always be somebody to play with. As they got older, they would romp through the woods, and in the winter they had a small skating pond over there which they all called (curiously) "Red Hot."

Today we see in our yards various wild animals, such as turkey, bobcat, bear, and coyote, but in those days we never saw any. Instead we had cows. Petersen's Imperial Farm was at the end of our street, and we would go over to see the cows and horses. Once in a while a cow would get loose and come running down Julie Lane, much to the children's delight and the farmers' vexation. In the summers Emil Voyer and other farmers would let the cows into the woods behind our house, where they would forage around until late in the day and then plod back to the barn single file. Our kids, though we didn't know it at the time, even rode their bicycles through the dairy barn.

We had good neighbors. Two or three times the neighbors even gathered upon our front lawn for block parties. Eventually some families moved on and houses changed hands, but there were always more kids. It was a great place to live, and some of us are still there.

Lois Robert

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

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FEBRUARY MEETING

On Wednesday, February 2, the Wintonbury Historical Society will present a lecture entitled "African Americans in the Revolution, including Lemuel Haynes of Bloomfield." The speaker will be Billie Anthony, recently retired after a teaching career in the Hartford and Bloomfield public schools. Billie often taught honors-level classes in American History and was known for motivating her students to do original research in African-American History. There is no admission fee, but contributions will be accepted for the John E. Rogers African-American Cultural Center in Hartford. The program is open to the public and will begin at 7:00 PM in Meeting Room 306 of the Bloomfield Senior Center, 330 Park Avenue. After the lecture, a brief business meeting of the Historical Society will be followed by refreshments.



APRIL MEETING

On Wednesday, April 6, 2011 at 7:00 P.M. **Entertainment 19th Century Style.** This program is co-sponsored by Prosser Public Library and the Wintonbury Historical Society (WHS). A brief historical society meeting at 7:00 P.M. will be followed by entertainment. WHS president Dick Pierce will tell us stories about music in Bloomfield and environs during the 19th century. The audience will be entertained by the Wintonbury String Quartet. Registration is appreciated, call 860-243-9721.

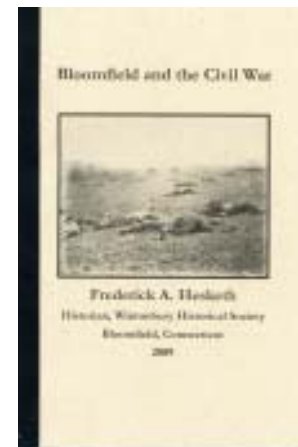
HAVE YOU PAID YOUR DUES?

Send your check to the Society, P.O.
Box 5474, Bloomfield, CT 06002

- \$15. Individual
- \$25. Family
- \$40. Supporting
- \$150. Life

JUNE MEETING

On Wednesday, June 1, 2011 at our Annual Meeting at Sacred Heart, in addition to our pot luck dinner at 6:00 PM and election of officers, there will be a presentation on the **Arlington National Cemetery** by Carolyn Ivanoff of Shelton. This program fits in with the 150th anniversary of the start of the Civil War and the dedication of a Civil War Memorial on the town green.



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 January Board meeting was held on the 19th in Fannie's apartment at Seabury because that day the History Center was without heat, a situation that has since been corrected. President Dick Pierce announced the finalization and signing of the lease agreement with the town for our three properties. We lease the Southwest District School, the Old Farm School, and the History Center; and we no longer have any lease on the Filley House. Leasing provides us with important advantages. We are covered by town insurance, and our grounds are maintained by the town. In return, we serve the town by researching, recording, and publicizing its history.

At the next several membership meetings, the program will start at 7:00 with business following. It is hoped that this will be more convenient for visitors who come just for the program. Also we're hoping to hold some classes this year, such as Jean Perreault's popular genealogy seminar. Enrollment fees for classes form a part of our society's income.

Upcoming programs include, besides Billie Anthony's noted elsewhere in this newsletter, the Wintonbury String Quartet on April 6 at Prosser Library and at our annual meeting on June 1 at Sacred Heart, a presentation on the Arlington National Cemetery by Carolyn Ivanoff of Shelton. This program fits in with the 150th anniversary of the start of the Civil War and the dedication of a Civil War Memorial on the town green.

Ralph Schmoll announced that the new edition of *Over Tunxis Trails* will be published later this year. Also, Fannie circulated a copy of a barn painting by Ralph Jurries which he will allow us to make into a postcard as a fund raiser.

Tag Sale plans are beginning, so save April 30 (rain date May 7), and helpers are needed.

From Jean Perrault

Footprints Across Connecticut From East Granby and Granby 1930 Census 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

"A people is defined and unified . . . by shared memory," wrote Robert Pinsky, poet and Boston University professor. I heard these words quoted in a lecture about a year ago, and they capture something about the importance of history.

When we speak of a "people" we mean any of a variety of human groups: an ethnic group, a regional group, a town, a nation. The recent tragedy in Arizona, for example, has raised a question about the American people, about our character as a nation, and whether or not that character squares with the memories we all share from America's past.

Moreover, February is Black History Month, a time which highlights the shared memories of African-American people. Billie Anthony, our speaker on February 2, will enlarge the scope of such shared memories as she describes the way African Americans served during the Revolutionary War.

This is where we history buffs can weigh in. We are vitally interested in the "shared memories" of our nation—or at least of a part of it—and what those memories can teach us about who we are. Some of the stories from the past reveal a very flawed society, and others show glimpses of heroism and idealism. Whether humiliating or glorious, our history won't go away; it is ours, it defines who we are, and it sets an agenda for the future.

As a historical society, we not only collect and preserve local history, but we add to it by collecting current history for the benefit of future generations. On the front page of this issue, my neighbor Lois Robert shares some of her memories of living in Bloomfield. I appeal to readers of this newsletter to contribute their own memories. Write them down, or just tell me about them and I'll do the writing. If our history defines who we are, it's a good idea to share it as widely as possible.

Dick Pierce

Calendar of Events

2011

Feb 2	WHS Regular Meeting - African Americans in the Revolution, including Lemuel Haynes Presenter: Billie Anthony
Apr 6	WHS Regular Meeting (Prosser Library) - Entertainment 19th Century Style: the Wintonbury Quartet
Apr 30	Tag/Bake Sale Old Farm School grounds (rain date May 7)
Jun 1	WHS Annual Meeting with election of Officers & Pot Luck Supper (Sacred Heart Church) Presenter: Carolyn Ivanoff on the Arlington National Cemetery
Sept 7	WHS Regular Meeting
Nov 2	WHS Regular Meeting

Marian Anderson Remembers

How refreshing it is to come across individuals who realize they have their parents to thank for so much of what they have in life. Marian Anderson was one of those individuals. She had a magnificent contralto voice that gave her worldwide acclaim. On one occasion a reporter asked her to name the greatest moment in her life. Those in the room hearing the question wondered what she would say. There were so many great moments, like the night Arturo Toscanini said publicly, "A voice like hers comes once in the century." Or there was that time back in 1955 when she became the first African-American to sing with the Metropolitan Opera Company in New York. Or she could have pointed to the following year when her autobiography, *My Lord, What a Morning*, made the *New York Times* best-seller list. Or when she was selected by the president of the United States to be a delegate to the United Nations. She also had been invited to the White House to sing for the president and the queen of England and her royal husband. In 1963 she was awarded the coveted Presidential Medal of Freedom. And she would never forget the day she stood in the shadow of the Lincoln statue and sang before seventy-five thousand people in Washington, D.C., including cabinet members, all the Supreme Court justices, and most of the members of Congress. But she named none of these. Her answer? She smiled and looked at the reporter as she replied, "The greatest moment of my life was the day I went home and told my mother she wouldn't have to take in washing anymore." How great is that? How rare is that! She never forgot her roots.

—Charles Swindoll, *The Church Awakening* (2010), pp. 160-161

[Come across some gems from your own reading? Share them in the newsletter by emailing to Wintonbursociety@att.net or using surface mail.]

Leaving A Legacy

The Wintonbury Historical Society is a charitable and non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of historical sites of Bloomfield, and the memory of the ones who created them.

The Society is in dire need of funds or gifts in order to continue the restorations, and preservations in progress. We are therefore, soliciting the commitment of citizens who value the history of Bloomfield now and in the years ahead.

Listed are a few ways to leave a legacy:

1. Set aside a gift in your will to the Society
2. Name the Society as beneficiary of an insurance policy.
3. Remember your loved ones with a gift in their honor.
4. Name the Society as a beneficiary of your IRA or 401K.

There are several other means, just talk with your financial advisor.

Financial Development Committee