

The Wintonbury Drummer



Newsletter of the Wintonbury Historical Society
Bloomfield, Connecticut *August 2000*

Meeting: Wednesday, September 13, 2000 at 7:30 p.m., Methodist Church, corner School Street and Wintonbury Avenue.

Program: The Nielsen Family - 70 Years of Dairy Farming in Bloomfield. Leslie Nielsen, Donna Nielsen and Gayle Nielsen Peterson will recount their family's history from the arrival in Bloomfield in 1904, the development of their farm and dairy on Hall Blvd., and some of their individual contributions to Bloomfield's history.

From Our President:

Shouts and Whistles, Roman Candles in the Air: to celebrate the hard work done by my Board and Members, upon knowledge that the \$200,000 grant had been accepted, and matched by the Town Council, at their June 26th meeting. Also matched was the \$50,000 - as a result of the financial donations made to the society, in kind and volunteer efforts - towards the Restoration of the Capt. Oliver Filley House. This officer does thank the members of the Board, who since then have given of their summer relaxing time - several meetings to bring the Society in line with needed adoptions to provide input to the National Registry and grant writing, which of course will only enhance the restoration process.

With this in mind - we would like to send out a call for HELP - serving as welcomer at Town Hall's information desk; volunteering at the Saturday work gatherings at the Filley House; and committees Acquisitions and Collections, Research and Education; docents at the Old Farm School. Please call me at 242-1016 if interested in any of the above - or maybe one of your choosing.

Our September 13th meeting at the Methodist church - 7:30 p.m - will prove to be a fascinating presentation by the Nielsen Family - Les and his niece Donna - Remember the fabulous ice cream from their place on the corner of Hall Boulevard and Simsbury Road!!

Fannie Gabriel, President

Calendar

- 9/13 Regular meeting, Methodist Church, 7:30 p.m., corner
School Street and Wintonbury Avenue
- 10/7 Drum Festival, Bloomfield Center
- 11/1 Regular meeting – Ed Stanley presents his research and slides on
“The Traprock Houses of Bloomfield, Granby, and Simsbury”

**First Saturday after Labor Day, 2001 – Filley Fest! To join Filley Fest 2001
Committee, call Sharon Steinberg at 286-1066.**

Hospitality chair is looking for two (2)
members to provide refreshments for
the following meetings:

November
February
April
June

Please call me at 243-2720 or tell me at
the September meeting.

Doris L. Jordan, Hospitality Chair

Old Farm School Docents Needed!

Be a docent! You as a docent at the Old
Farm School will receive excellent training
and education about the history of the Old
Farm School, how it was run and built, what
school was like for an 18th century Wintonbury
student, what toys these children played with,
what kinds of books they were given, and
what they learned in school. We have a
wide variety of childrens' artifacts that you
will learn about and share this knowledge
with people who come on Sunday
afternoons to see our Old Farm School from 1-
4 through October 15th.

Please contact Mary Murray at 242-0323.

A Hearty Thank You! to Southwest District School Donors (as of 14 August 2000)

Donated \$ 4,925.00

Allison, Carrie & Alfred

Angoli, Nancy & Louis

Anonymous

Benson, Seymour

Brown, Sandra & Peter

Clarke, Ronald & Martha

Coolbrith, Alison & Lastra, Barry

Fierberg, I. Martin

Godar, Thomas & Mary

Laibson, Sidney & Barbara

McDonough, Mary-Gertrude

Neaverson, Julianne

Stanley, Edward

Steingiser, Bess & Saralyn

Sundback, Karen & Owens, John

Tierney, Peter & Carol

Toomey, Michele

Watkins, Leslie

Wilder, Robert & Louise

Zyla, Barbara

Captain Oliver Filley House Donors
(from 1 April through 16 August 2000)

| Donated | Matching Funds Applied For | Pledged |
|--|--|-------------|
| \$ 34,787.85 | \$ 2,550.00 | \$ 6,650.00 |
| Adams, Mercedes Allison, Carrie & Alfred Anonymous (In loving memory of Jane Bunker Medbery) Anonymous Armstrong, Katharine Atwood, William & Margaret Avenia, Bridget Bartlett, Janice (In loving memory of Richard Bartlett) Bernstein, Sara & Shortall, Joseph Berliner, Benjamin & Esther Brainerd, Judith P. Brill, Helen Brown, Jean / Daley, Hilda Buck, Margaret Butler, Sarah T. Cameron, Shirley Carstensen, Fred & Mildred Childs, Kent & Gwen Ciccarillo, Tom / Ellison, Beth Crampton, Barbara Culligan, Thomas & Mary Curran, Edmund Davis, Stephen & Suzanne Detrick, Louise Dowaliby, Maryann Dudenhofer, Aldona & Richard Eddy, David Edwards, Mary W. Fazzano, Martha S. Filley, III, Oliver D. Filley, Jr., Col. Oliver D. & Marion First Congregational Church (Concert Proceeds) Godard, Barbara Gossling, Harry & Marion Gough, George & Jones, Paula Granger, Winifred Hall, Sanford & Terry Hallisey, M. Virginia Hamilton, T. Stewart & Amy Haslinger, Mary Wilkins Hauptman, Angela R. | Hendrickson, Alice Herson, Victor & Gail Hesketh, Frederick & Yolande Hollander, Ross Hunciker, Jeanne Huyghue, Sadie & Hersul (In Appreciation for Mrs. Roberta Kania) Jones, Jeremy & Carolyn Langston, Janis Lapham, Elise S. Luchina, Mary Ellen Maine, Richard & Angela Manternach, Elizabeth M. McLane, Katherine Merrow, Mr. & Mrs. George Meyer, Catherine & Seligman, Steven Neaverson, Julianne Oliver, Phyllis Parrish, Lois Phelps, Eileen B. Pierce, Jean & Richard Powell, Llewellyn Richter, Dale A. Ruggles, Harriet/Wenck, Marian Schmoll, Dr. & Mrs. Ralph Schonberger, Philip Schwartz, Mr. & Mrs. Nat Searles, Laura & Hotchkiss, Jeanne Shea, Beatrice A. Smith, Jeanette Karpie Space, Theodore M. Stanley Works, The Stanley, Edward Stanwood, Robert & Margaret Stockton Edward & Marilyn Stout, Frances & Samuel Sullivan, Anthony Swallow, Harold & Claire Walker, Charles & Patricia Weissenburger, William & Lois Whalen, Robert & Penelope Wood, Pamela | |

Oliver Dwight Filley and Marion Filley – Our Visit to Leesburg, Virginia

Sharon Steinberg and Ed Stanley

It is quite amazing how the Capt. Oliver Filley House has made many of us in the Wintonbury Historical Society feel almost as if we were part of the Filley Family — we have become so committed to its restoration and its history, we have read the Filley Papers at the Connecticut Historical Society and at the Connecticut State Library, and we have studied the Filley House, searching for its history. Ed Stanley and I knew that Capt. Oliver Filley's great-great grandson, Col. (Ret.) Oliver Dwight Filley and his wife, Marion, lived in Leesburg, Virginia, and we had been talking for a long time about meeting him. It was a dream that meant that we were connecting the past with the present. So, Ed contacted O.D. and Marion, who became excited about our impending visit, and one stormy weekend in July, we (Ed, that is) drove to Leesburg, Virginia, to visit them. We had been amassing papers and photos, newsletters and articles, for some weeks, and even put together a long list of questions to ask them as an oral history.

What a wonderful welcome! O.D. and Marion greeted us as if we were long-lost relatives – and that's exactly how we felt about them. For weeks before the visit, Ed and O.D. (who refers to himself as O.D. South, to differentiate himself from a distant cousin, also Oliver Dwight Filley, who lives in New Jersey and is referred to as O.D. North) talked a great deal on the telephone, and we realized that the Filleys were excited about our visit. O.D. and Marion have supported the restoration for a long time, and visited the house when they came to Bloomfield a few years ago. But neither Ed nor I had actually met them, so we were excited as well.

Our feelings upon actually meeting the great-great grandson of Capt. Oliver Filley and Annis Humphrey Filley ranged from elation to amazement to affection to great attachment for O.D. and Marion themselves as well as for their daughter, Barbara Jay Gardner and her husband, Bob, who has done a great deal of Filley genealogical work. Barbara was particularly excited about the work on Julia's diaries, and I left some of my research papers about those diaries with her with a promise to send her more years as I finished them.

Col. O.D. is retired from the Air Force. During World War II he flew as a crew member in B17 bomber aircraft, and later went to pilot training. He then served a short tour to the South Pacific in B52 aircraft. He has enjoyed a highly successful and exciting career in the military, has a wealth of wonderful stories, and tells them with great energy as he recreates those amazing experiences.

Marion and O.D. have been married for 61 years (!), and they met at a dance at the Masonic Hall in Bloomfield. Marion and her family were living in what we now call the "Roberts House" when she was known as Marion Shaffer. She was one of 6 sisters, and her sister, Debbie Cave still lives in Hartford. She and her sisters were very popular, and their vivaciousness is remembered by many Bloomfieldites today.

The Filleys live in a beautiful house within walking distance of historic Leesburg and of Barbara's group antique shop. But even though they live in Virginia and have lived in many areas of the country, most recently South Dakota, O.D. and Marion are the keepers of their New

England family's legacy. On the staircase landing are two portraits: one of Capt. Oliver and one of his wife, Annis, painted by one Philip Hewins, a prominent 1830s portrait painter in Hartford, known for his good likenesses. Their eyes watch you wherever you go. The background and style of Captain Oliver and Annis' portraits bear a striking resemblance to the portraits of Julia and Jay (which currently reside in storage at the Connecticut Historical Society) as well, so I am assuming that they were done at the same time by the same painter, between 1834 and 1846, the year of Capt. Oliver's death. Julia looks young in the portrait, she was born in 1808, married in 1833, and she looks about 30 in the picture; because Capt. Oliver died in 1846, I'm estimating that the paintings were done around 1838 or a little later. Next to the portraits is a framed document: the Commission signed in 1812 by Roger Wolcott that gives Capt. Oliver his title.

The Filleys showed us beautiful tinware that came from Capt. Oliver's shop – the pieces look as if they had been finished yesterday. Marion pointed out that the special cherries painted on the ware were distinctly a Filley product. We also were shown another framed document – an award given to Oliver Filley for the best cultivated farm in Hartford, accompanied by a silver tankard inscribed with his name and the date: 1830. The Filley pride is alive and well in Virginia!

We brought O.D. and Marion copies of my latest transcriptions of his great-great grandmother Julia Ann Newberry Filley's diaries from 1852, 1853, 1854, and some of 1857 (the intervening years are missing), color photographs of the portraits of Jay and Julia, copies of some of the Filley Papers from the Connecticut Historical Society's collection, two Bloomfield mugs with the Filley House on them, two T-shirts, copies of newspaper articles about the restoration and the Society's successes at raising funds for the House – and I know that O.D. and Marion were happy to receive these things. Ed gave them a copy of his thorough and fascinating research paper, "The Traprock Houses of Granby, Simsbury, and Bloomfield," which I know they will enjoy. (Ed will present his paper, complete with slides, at our November meeting.)

O.D. is a great storyteller – his words draw scenes from another time:

- In their dining room is a large, beautiful, cherry tall case clock. O.D. said that when he was a boy, his father (Oliver Dwight), brought him up to a remote section of one of the barns on the second floor. In the corner, painted "fire engine" red, was this old clock. His father said that it had been Capt. Oliver's, took out a knife, and scraped a little of the paint off. "Cherry," he said, and declared that the clock must be restored. It continues to ring the hours in O.D.'s house, and he and Marion have carried it with them wherever O.D. was stationed.
- I asked O.D. how he came to be a flyer. He said that he remembered when he was a boy of about 10, living in the huge family farmhouse on Brown Street (which burned to the ground in 1955), he would watch the skies for planes and long to be up there. He got himself to Brainard Field and took a ride in a plane and was hooked forever more.

Ed and I are very grateful for O.D. and Marion's hospitality, friendship, affection, stories, and laughter, and we will cherish this visit. They want to relay their appreciation at all the work that everyone in the Wintonbury Historical Society has done on restoring the Filley ancestral home – the Capt. Oliver Filley House. We continue to keep them apprised of our progress, and look forward to and hope for a visit from them very soon.

Thank you, O.D., Marion, Barbara, and Bob for a wonderful visit, and for sharing with us the treasure that is your family's heritage.

More stories to come in subsequent issues... All the best -- Sharon Steinberg



Col. (Ret.) Oliver D. Filley, Jr. and his wife, Marion Shaffer Filley in front of their Leesburg, Virginia home. They are celebrating 61 years of Marriage!



"A woman of great worth and ability" (Stiles)
A portrait of Annis Humphrey Filley (1786-1868), wife of Captain Oliver Filley, mother of Jay Humphrey, grandmother of Louis James, great grandmother of Oliver Dwight, great-great grandmother of O.D. Jr.

The Wintonbury Historical Society
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