

Cheshire Historical Society News

Volume 43, No. 1

Keeping Cheshire's History Alive!

Spring 2020

Membership Renewal: Members are Our Strength

Our Farming History: Society Theme for 2020

We will be focusing our many annual activities to highlight 325 years of farming in Cheshire. Our Annual Meeting, our Memorial Day Parade entry, CT Open House Day, our off-site displays, and our Holiday Open House will all reflect and celebrate over three centuries of farming in Cheshire.

Membership Renewal Envelopes are enclosed with your Society newsletter. We had an overwhelming response within days of our Membership Appeal last January. If this year is anything like last year, our postal carrier better get some sleep. Seriously, if anything shows how much you support our Society, this is it. ("You like us! You really like us!"). If you have joined the Society or paid your membership dues between August 1, 2019 and today, you are paid up for 2020 unless you wish to make an additional donation which is always very much appreciated.

Our newly revised By-Laws now include **volunteer hours** as another way of maintaining your Society membership. If you wish to commit to volunteering in the coming year, please write that on your membership form in lieu of payment. Include what service area you would like to be involved with and commit to a minimum of ten hours in the coming year.

Please be sure to include your **e-mail address** (especially if you do not currently receive e-mails from the Society). We send about six e-mails a year. You can add your **cell phone number**. We only text you for one activity: Give Local in April.

The Society does not share your information with any other individual or organization.

Questionnaire for You: Developed by Cheshire Academy Students

Enclosed with this newsletter is a questionnaire that we hope will better shape our goals and our future direction as we finalize our strategic plan. Cheshire Academy students volunteered their time in Fall 2019 and created this brief list of questions. We very much thank these hardworking CA students and hope that you will take a few moments to complete this form and return it in the enclosed membership renewal envelope.

We continue to research the history of the Hitchcock-Phillips House, our Society House Museum, built in 1785 by Cheshire merchant, Rufus Hitchcock. Mary Hitchcock Blinderman of Texas visited the Society in June 2019. She is a descendent of Rufus Hitchcock's cousin. We hope that you find Mary's narrative as interesting as we do!

Cheshire Connections

By Mary (Hitchcock) Blinderman

It all started when a family member gave me a copy of the genealogy of the Hitchcock family who descended from Matthias Hitchcock. I guess you would say "all the rest is history."

In June 2019, I traveled to New York for a family wedding and decided to take a day trip to Cheshire where my ancestors settled. So, on a rainy, cool day my son, daughter, granddaughter and I went to Cheshire to make some connections to the past. The highlight of the day was visiting Hillside Cemetery where many of our ancestors are buried.



Matthias Hitchcock, my eighth great-grandfather, came to New Haven in 1635 during the Puritan Great Migration. His great-grandson, Peter Hitchcock, was born in Cheshire in 1712. Peter was a carpenter by trade, and he built his homestead in Cheshire in 1737. It was the birthplace of Amasa Hitchcock (1739-1827), my fourth great-granduncle, and David Hitchcock (1751-1829), my 4th great-grandfather. Amasa and David were Revolutionary soldiers. Their names are on the Revolutionary Soldiers Memorial Plaque at the entrance to Hillside cemetery. David, a captain in the Revolutionary army, served as First Lieutenant in Col. McLellan's regiment.

Amasa's son, Amasa Hitchcock, Jr. (1768-1835), my first cousin five times removed, was Cheshire's first postmaster. The first post office was kept in the house he built in 1795.



Cheshire Connections (Continued from Page One)

According to a story in **The Landmarks of Old Cheshire**, Amasa’s duties as postmaster were not very arduous. The story goes that letters were so few that he would tack them to the front window sash so that a person could walk by the house and check to see if there were mail for him without interrupting the postmaster. The original house is no longer standing. It was demolished and is now the site of Hartford Health Care Rehabilitation Network, 28 South Main Street.

Amasa Jr.’s son, Commodore Robert Bradley Hitchcock, was born in the house in 1804. He was my second cousin four times removed. He was a naval officer of considerable distinction. In 1825 he was appointed mid-shipman from Connecticut. He received a commission as commodore in 1862. His last command was the USS Merrimack. His last days were spent in Brooklyn, where he died in 1888.

As time passed, some of my ancestors set out from Cheshire to head to the Northwest Territory, a wilderness northwest of the Ohio River, and settled in what is now Ohio. In 1806, Peter Marshall Hitchcock (1781-1853), my first cousin five times removed, left Cheshire and forty days later arrived in Burton, Ohio. He was the thirteenth Chief Justice on the Supreme Court of Ohio. He was buried in Welton Cemetery, Burton, Ohio.

My great-great-grandfather, Abner D. (1804-1879), was living in Waterbury in 1811 when his father, Abner, died at the age of 32. Abner D. emigrated from Waterbury to Tallmadge, Ohio in 1817. He was one of the early settlers of Tallmadge. Abner D. and his older brother, Lucius Warner, purchased land to farm. I found a biographical sketch of Abner D. in Charles Cook Bronson’s History of Tallmadge and the Western Reserve, 1633-1866. The story goes that Abner D. and Lucius set out on foot for Ohio and arrived at Buffalo. They paid passage to board a schooner sailing to Cleveland. A storm arose and the schooner ran into the harbor of Dunkirk. Abner D. had enough of maritime adventures to last him, and he positively refused to go any

farther on the schooner. The brothers debarked and came to Tallmadge on foot. He ends the line of my grandfathers who were born in Cheshire.

My great-grandfather, Lucius Edwin (1834-1914), was born in Tallmadge, Ohio. Lucius lived in Ohio; Illinois; Iowa; Minnesota; and Salem, South Dakota where he is buried with his wife, Ellen Hitchcock. He saw many places in his life but did not make it to Cheshire.

My grandfather, Edwin Tillman (1867-1932), was born in Galesburg, Illinois and lived the majority of his life in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. He was Traffic Manager and Secretary of T.M. Sinclair Packing Company. As far as I know, he never returned to the birthplace of his ancestors in Cheshire. Nor did my father, Albert Edwin, who was born in Cedar Rapids, Iowa in 1903. He was a watchmaker who graduated from the Elgin Watchmakers College in Elgin, Illinois. After returning from my Cheshire visit to my home in Texas, I continued my research. I am related to Rufus Hitchcock (first cousin six times removed) who built the house which now is the home of the Cheshire Historical Society.

Mary (Hitchcock) Blinderman resides in Amarillo, Texas, with her husband, Bob, and their two Burmese cats. She is a retired home economist and a member of the Cheshire Historical Society. Her e-mail is bobbli@arn.net.

Our Special Thanks to these new members:
CORPORATE MEMBER
MAIER Design Group, LLC, Architecture & Interiors, David and Karin Arai
SPONSOR MEMBER
Cheshire Horse Council, Bob Larosa, President

Mark Your Calendar!

Board Meetings: Third Monday night of the month, 7:30 p.m., no meetings in July, August, and December.

Board meetings are 7:30 p.m. at the Society.

Easter Sunday: April 12 – Society is closed

Annual Meeting: Monday, April 20, 7:30 p.m.

YES – YOU ABSOLUTELY SHOULD COME TO THIS

Give Local (fundraiser): April 21-22

Great Give (fundraiser): May 5-6

Memorial Day Sunday: May 24 – Society is closed.

We are in the Memorial Day Parade on that day!

June 13 Saturday: CT Open House Day & Society

Marketplace / Boutique-in-the-Shed Opening Day

June 27-28: World War II Event at Society

July 4: Society is part of the Bennett Family’s

Fourth of July Celebration on the Church Green

Spirits Alive Tickets go on sale AUGUST 15TH

for Society Members only

September 1: SA tickets on sale to general public

SPIRITS ALIVE CEMETERY TOUR

OCTOBER 9-10-11

HISTORIC HILLSIDE CEMETERY

OUR LARGEST ANNUAL FUNDRAISER!

Donations since August 2019

We are grateful to the following for their generosity:

Michael and Shirley Brady

Lorraine Brandolini

Nick and Kerry Chaconis

Carol Christmas

Cathy Greene

Vern and Cheryl Guetens

Elaine Hitt

Lady Fenwick Chapter DAR

Lea Luddy

Peter Merriman

Alan and Barbara McWhirter

Steve and Joyce Mulholland

Eric Nelson

Quinnipiac Valley Audubon Society

From Parlor to Parlor

Our Engagement Manager re-enacts the First House Mother which required a local beauty parlor to also “Step Back in Time”

By Ana Arellano

It was Christmastime in 1935 and the building now known as the Hitchcock-Phillips House of the Cheshire Historical Society was then Phillips Hall, a newly opened dormitory of Cheshire Academy. Playing my part, I would be welcoming company to our annual holiday party. From the Phillips Hall Parlor, I would be greeting guests together with the Phillips Hall Housemaster, my husband Sam Dunlop. To have my hair done in authentic 1930s style, I had to visit a different kind of parlor: a beauty parlor. Mimi’s Salon, 197 Highland Avenue, in Cheshire, graciously accommodated my request.



Pin curls are among the oldest forms of hairstyling. They triumphed in the 1930s because of the thriftiness adopted by women during the Great Depression. No rollers and no perm chemicals



were required. The styles were popular with women of all ethnic backgrounds. Above are examples of two performers from the thirties wearing pin curls: Jean Harlow (r.) and Josephine Baker (l.). My stylist at Mimi’s recommended the “barrel” roll rather than the “flat” pin. She was originally from Europe and this was the first styling technique she had learned. She began by spraying my hair with water and also used setting lotion. The stylist then took a segment of hair, turning it over and over itself on

her finger to keep the cylindrical shape until it was against the scalp. She then used an “alligator” clip to hold it in place for drying. This was repeated in row patterns across my head. Once these were complete, a typical woman or girl from the 1930s would wait for the curls to



dry na-turally, but we had the convenience of a hair dryer. And luckily so as the “Phillips Hall” Christmas party was in one hour. After my hair was brushed out, parted, and hair-sprayed, I was ready

to “host” the Christmas Party with Sam in the Parlor of “Phillips Hall.”

Holiday Open House 2019: A huge success as we rolled the date back to 1935

The Hitchcock-Phillips House was decorated for a 1935-era Christmas Holiday. Sam Dunlop and his wife and Board Member, Ana Arellano, re-enacted the House Master and his wife. They shared the story of homesick boarding school students anxious to go home for the holidays to see family and friends. House Mother Ana had knitted each boy a blue and white scarf to take home (Cheshire Academy colors) and wrapped all the packages under the tree for the boys. Butterbeer was served to all (a sublime mixture of cream soda and whipped cream).

The Suburban Garden Club decorated several rooms at the Society, including Putz Houses on the fireplace mantles. Garden Club members Ginni Donovan and Tony Poitras each created floral interpretations. Diane and Dave Calabro had a Gingerbread display in the Dining Room. Tracey Ajello worked with her Doolittle student volunteers to create handmade ornaments for the tree in the stairwell.

Photos follow on Page 4. These photographs were taken by Al Valerio of the Cheshire Herald and used with their kind permission.

Cheshire Historical Society 2019 Holiday Open House: Step Back in Time to 1935, the First Year the Cheshire Academy used the Hitchcock-Phillips House as a Student Dormitory they called “Phillips Hall”

The Society would like to thank Photographer Al Valerio and the Cheshire Herald for the photos displayed on this page.



Gingerbread House Display made by Diane & Dave Calabro loaded with candy and treats for guests to enjoy.



Ana Arellano dressed the part of a 1935 House Mother in charge of some 30 students living in the then called “Phillips Hall.”



An example of a dormitory room that Cheshire Academy students would have had curated by Thomas Mulholland in 2015.



Floral Interpretation by Ginni Donovan includes 1935 vintage erector set pieces.

Lilyan and Daniel Margary tried out an antique typewriter donated by Wesli Dymoke.



Board member José Rodriguez and his wife Aida stand in front of a floral interpretation by Suburban Garden Club’s Tony Poitras.

A feather tree in the stairway includes ornaments made by Doolittle School student volunteers.



Diane Calabro, Society President, with Rita Giannotti from Suburban Garden Club with Rita’s sled design. Photos by Al Valero, Cheshire Herald, December 22, 2019. Used with permission from the Cheshire Herald.



Putz Houses on display on the mantle in the Parlor. Diane Calabro sewed these stockings.



Stockings and Putz Houses in the Keeping Room. Putz Houses were crafted by the Suburban Garden Club.

CHESHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY – OPEN SUNDAYS FROM 2 TO 4 PM EXCEPT HOLIDAY WEEKENDS
43 CHURCH DRIVE – CHESHIRE, CT 06410-3104 (203) 272-2574 cheshirehistory@che.necoxmail.com
www.cheshirehistory.org Like us on Facebook View us on Instagram