

CHESHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

Volume 33, No. 2

Fall 2010

PROGRAM

Monday, September 27, 7:30 p.m.

**“Julia A. Humiston,
Cheshire’s Unsung Benefactress”
Ed Kania**

Ed Kania, Society treasurer, will open the fall meeting series with a talk on Julia Humiston, whom he describes as the town’s “unsung benefactress.” Many Cheshire residents do not know the story behind the naming of Humiston School. Even fewer are aware that Miss Humiston continues to benefit the town right up to the present day through her fund for the beautification of town center and to maintain a town clock.

Kania, who is now senior trustee of the Julia A. Humiston Fund, has served as one of the three trustees for the fund since 1992. Fifteen Cheshire residents have served as fund trustees since it was first established in 1912.

Monday, October 25, 7:30 p.m

“St. Peter’s Church 250th Anniversary ”

**The Rev. Sandra Stayner and
Charles Waggoner**

St. Peter’s Episcopal Church, Main Street, is celebrating its 250 anniversary this year. The Rev. Stayner, rector, and Charles Wagner, 250th Anniversary chairman, will discuss the church’s rich history in Cheshire by recounting the lives of some of the church’s notable parishioners and clergy since the first church building was dedicated in 1760.



Monday, November 22, 7:30 p.m

**“Becoming White in 19th Century Cheshire”
Christine Pittsley**

Christine Pittsley will give a presentation on the fascinating history of the Hammick family, a freed
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Fall Calendar

Sept. 20	Monday 7:30 p.m.	Board Meeting
Sept. 27	Monday 7:30 p.m.	Membership Meeting & Speaker
Oct. 18	Monday 7:30 p.m.	Board Meeting
Oct. 25	Monday 7:30 p.m.	Membership Meeting & Speaker
Nov. 15	Monday 7:30 p.m.	Board Meeting
* Nov. 22	Monday 7:30 p.m.	Membership Meeting & Speaker
Nov. 25	Thursday	Thanksgiving Day
Dec. 19	Sunday 2—4 p.m.	Holiday Open House
Dec. 25	Friday	Christmas Day

The Hitchcock-Phillips House will be open to the public on Sunday afternoons, 2—4 p.m., except on the Sundays after Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day.

Jeannette Rumberg Williams Donates Mother’s Collection of Pressed Glass to Society

At the end of May, Jeannette Rumberg Williams of East Aurora, NY, made the 7-hour drive to Cheshire to bring her mother’s beautiful collection of antique pressed glass to the Society. The glass was collected by her mother, Mona Rumberg (1910-1998), and her father, Ernest Rumberg (1909-1987), both longtime Cheshire residents. Donor Jeannette and her husband Dick Williams, son of Lucille and Nelson Williams of Cheshire, also grew up in Cheshire.

It was an exciting day at the Society. The collection includes over 50 pieces of Mardi Gras pat-
(continued on pg. 2)

...Donates Mother's Collection

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tern pressed glass made by the George Duncan & Sons Glass Co. of Pittsburgh, PA, circa 1889 and later by Duncan & Miller, Washington, PA, circa 1899. Among other items, Jeannette also brought the Society three antique Hitchcock chairs and two trays stenciled by her late mother-in-law, Lucille Williams. (See Dick Williams' remembrance of his mother on pg. 4)

Began Collecting in the 1960s

Mona and Ernest Rumberg began collecting antiques it in the 1960s. Both enjoyed searching for pieces in the Duncan Mardi Gras pattern in shops throughout New England. It is a lovely, old design, sometimes described as "paneled English hobnail with prisms." Jeannette says that her parents enjoyed entertaining and that her mother used the Mardi Gras glassware for guests frequently. According to Jeannette, Mona felt very strongly that the glassware was meant to be used. Jeannette said that she knows her mother would be happy if the Society actually used some of the pieces for special events in the future.

Mona was born in Minnesota and lived in Chicago and Brooklyn, NY, before she and Ernest moved to Cheshire in 1940. Their first Cheshire

home was at 8 Flagler Ave. In the 1960s, they moved to a new house at 226 Nob Hill Road, the first house on the then new street. Both were members of the First Congregational Church, where Mona was active in the ladies' organizations and served on several church boards.



Ernest and Mona Rumberg

Ernest, who retired when they lived in Cheshire. Ernest, who retired in 1971 as director of industrial engineering for Scovill Manufacturing Company, Waterbury, was very active in both professional organizations and civic affairs. He was a member of the Planning and Zoning Commission for 14 years, served on the Board of Selectmen before the advent of the manager-council form of government, and as temporary town manager before the first professional town manager was hired.

In recognition of his support for rezoning for elderly housing, the Town Council named the access road to the Beachport housing development Rumberg Road.

A covered butter dish from the Mardi Gras collection has been displayed on the dining room table at the Society this summer. It was much admired. The complete collection will go on display in the Exhibit Room this month.

...Becoming White in 19th Cen.

(continued from pg. 1)

slave family and their descendents, who lived in Cheshire during the 19th century.

Christine first spoke to the Cheshire Historical Society about her research on blacks in Cheshire five years ago. At the time, she was undertaking an independent study project at Central Connecticut State University. Since then, she has continued her research and has uncovered considerable new information and insights. Christine, who now works for the Connecticut State Library, is corresponding secretary of the Society.

New Members, Contributors

Welcome and thanks to the following new members and special contributors since our last newsletter:

New members:

Elizabeth Ryduchu, new Supporting Member,
56 Alison Ave., Wallingford

Scott and Catlin Henderson, 1635 24th Ave.,
Vero Beach, FL

Jeffrey Panasci, 9 Cobblefield Court,
Wolcott.

Additional Contributors

Reed Durand and Joan Rinaldi, Supporting Memberships; William Suter, donation in addition to annual dues.

Other Recent Gifts

Among other recent gifts to the Society since the last newsletter are:

- Ecu crocheted bedspread, popcorn design, made by Celia Borzillo Fusco, for her “hope chest” before her marriage to Daniel Fusco of Cheshire in 1939.
Gift from her daughter, Alice Santello, Cheshire
- Documents (1791-1860s) that relate to life of Streat Todd, a Cheshire resident.
Berlin Historical Society, Berlin, CT
- Photograph of Nettie Smith as a young woman from the Jesse Durand papers.
Reed Durand, Owego, NY
- Yearbooks and other memorabilia from the Women’s Group at the Hull Baptist Church in the 1950s and 60s.
Laura Willhite, Cheshire
- World War II naval uniform worn by Seaman 1st Class William W. Gager, Jr. (1926-2009)
Eleanor Gager, Cheshire
- 8 x 10 black/white photograph of the Congregational Church before addition of the wing.
Chip Dayton, Cheshire
- Photographs of Humiston Grammar School classes of 1916, 1919, and 1920 and of the Pliny Hitchcock house (744 South Main St.) when it was owned by the William Faull Family in early 1900s.
Joyce Gensler, Middlebury, from the papers of her mother, Katherine (Scott) Leaman.

Additions to Library

- Water Over the Dam by Marguerite Allis, 1947. Classic novel set in a fictional town near Cheshire during the building of the Farmington Canal.
Purchased with funds from the JEB Johnson Book Fund.
- 1951 and 1957 Cheshire Academy Year Books
Joseph Robinson, Cheshire
- Civil War Union Monuments, Daughters of Union Veterans publication, 1978, and presentation edition, The Holy Bible
Mildred Adams, Cheshire, from collection of her mother Loula (Butts) Setterstrom

ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENT

April 1, 2009—March 31, 2010

If you require
specific information
about our financial statement
please contact our Treasurer,
Ed Kania, available at e-mail:
edwinkania@cox.net

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Lucille D. Williams Remembered . . .

by her son, *Richard L. Williams*

My mother, Lucille Williams, was born Lucille Frances Dulac in Waterbury, CT in 1894 and was the youngest of twelve children. Her parents had emigrated from Quebec Province because her father was seeking work and friends told him that there were jobs available in Waterbury for those who were skilled at driving work horses on construction sites, which was my grandfather's trade in Canada. Her mother died in an influenza epidemic when she was in second grade and was then cared for by her sisters.



Lucille Williams,
c. 1910

She was educated in the Waterbury public school system until she was 16 years old, when she and her siblings were required by their father to quit school, get a job and help support the family until they married or moved away. She was hired by Connecticut Light & Power Co. as a bookkeeper because she had good handwriting! She worked there for two years but resigned because she realized that she had little opportunity for advancement and really wanted to find employment in an art-related to field.

Audited Yale Art Courses

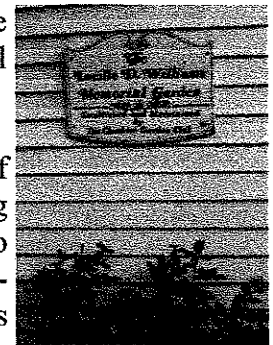
She moved to New Haven and first found work as a nanny for a succession of Yale professors, which provided her with housing as well as income. Through her Yale contacts, she was able to gain permission to audit courses at Yale Art School at no charge and took full advantage of this opportunity. At the time, Yale dorm rooms were unfurnished; students would buy the furniture they wanted – much of it from stores that catered to their needs and when they graduated, they would sell the furniture back to the stores to start another cycle. My mother was hired by one of these stores as an interior decorator. She would go with the students to view and measure the rooms and then help them make their decisions regarding furniture, drapes and rugs, etc. The store would make up new drapes to order and do

any needed alterations to the ones on display.

She did have a social life after she was able to afford one – there were many opportunities in the city for young unmarrieds. My dad was an excellent basketball player and was co-captain of his team in his senior year at Lewis High School in Southington. New Haven had many active evening sports leagues in which he competed. She met him at one of the games and before long they were engaged. They were married in Marquart Chapel on the campus of Yale Divinity School in 1923 and moved to an apartment in Hamden, CT. I came along ten years later and we moved to Cheshire eight years after that.

Cheshire Garden Club President

My mother continued her active interest in art and floral design and later was President of the Cheshire Garden Club. She always had extensive home gardens for both vegetables and flowers. She also served on PTA boards in Hamden and Cheshire and on the board of the Cheshire Library. She was also active with the Ladies Aid Committee of the First Congregational Church.



Close to the end of WWII, she began traveling by train every other week to learn Early American decoration from Esther Stevens Brazier. Mrs. Brazier taught students these techniques in her home and augmented those studies with visits behind

Cheshire Garden Club maintains Society's colonial garden in her memory

the scenes at the Metropolitan Museum of Art where she served as a curator. Mrs. Brazier died shortly after WWII and, with the assistance of the Museum, the Esther Stevens Brazier Guild of Early American Art was formed. My mother was elected as a Charter Member of that organization and decided to teach these techniques in her home as a way of "Spreading the Gospel" if you will. Later, she expanded her business to hold a sale in her

(continued on pg. 5)

BOUTIQUE-IN-THE-SHED HAS BEST SEASON EVER

Congratulations to Boutique Chairman Kathy Connolly and to all those who donated items to sell in the shop! This year, the Boutique-in-the-Shed had its best season ever with over \$800 in sales. Since there was no overhead expense, every penny collected in the Shed has gone directly to support Society programs.

Much credit must go to Kathy, who worked extra hard to obtain contributions from members and also solicited items from many of her own friends. The Boutique opened June 12 for the Strawberry Festival and has been open regularly since, along with the Hitchcock-Phillips House, on Sunday afternoons from 2 to 4 p.m. Opening day sales were over \$400 and shop income has been steady since then. The shop has had some good publicity. Diane Calabro designed an attractive flyer which was posted in local stores earlier in the summer, and The Cheshire Herald ran a news release on the shop in several issues.

The biggest boost, however, came from an almost full-page feature in the Meriden Record-Journal July 31 with the photo below and the appealing headline "Nostalgia for sale." The text stressed the bargain shopping opportunity with an interesting historical context—and it brought in a new group of shoppers, many from Meriden.



Meriden Record-Journal photo
NOSTALGIA FOR SALE: In July, Sunday volunteer Shirley Brady shows off some of the interesting donated items in the Boutique-in-the-Shed.

Kathy is already thinking of next year. We all will have to work very hard to equal 2010. The shop will continue to be open on Sunday afternoons as long as the good weather continues, probably through the end of September.

Web Site Has Information On Early RR Stations in Cheshire

Did you know from the 1850s through the early 1900s Cheshire was served by two railroad lines stopping at six, possibly seven, local railroad stations? Running north-south, the Canal Line had stops at Brooksvale (and possibly a Brooks) station and Cheshire Depot (West Main Street). Crossing from east to west, the track from Meriden to Waterbury stopped at Hough's Mill, Cheshire Street, Southington Road (Creamery Rd. and Rt. 10) and West Cheshire (the Notch).

Take a look at maps and photographs of these stations on web site www.tylercitystation.info. Historian and webmaster Robert Belletzkie of Prospect has undertaken the interesting project of documenting all of the early Connecticut railroad stations. He was at the Cheshire Historical Society recently to update information on some of the site's Cheshire photos and data. It's a fun site to visit.

....Lucille D. Williams (continued from pg. 4)

home of toleware and other Early American articles which she had redecorated. She held it just before Thanksgiving each year.

Each summer, my parents and I would spend a week of my dad's vacation driving back woods roads throughout New England visiting antique stores and farms that put items out for sale to buy and repaint for her sale. Can you imagine how much fun this was for a teen-age boy!

My mother continued to teach until her health became a problem about two years before her death in 1983.

CHESHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS



FALL 2010

Cheshire Historical Society
PO Box 281, 43 Church Drive
Cheshire, CT 06410
www.cheshirehistory.org

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Warren VanAlmkerk, *asst.*

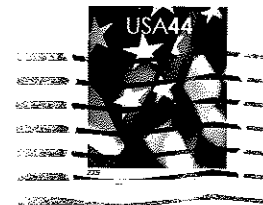
Kathleen Connolly, *asst.*

Webmaster

Diane Calabro

Newsletter Editor

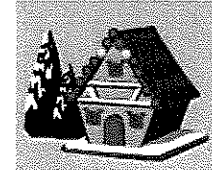
Mary Ellen Kania



NEXT MEETING: MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 27

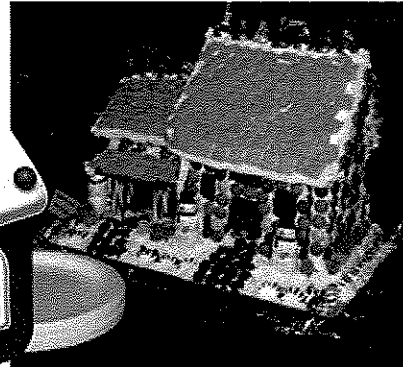
“Julia A. Humiston, Cheshire’s Unsung Benefactress”

The Cheshire Historical Society
is proud to host



HOLIDAY GINGERBREAD HOUSE DEMONSTRATION

Sunday, November 28th at 2:00 pm
at the Cheshire Historical Society, Philips-Hitchcock House,
43 Church Drive, Cheshire CT 06410



CALL
203 272 3963
to reserve space
(limited seating)

No Fee - But
Bring A Small
Bag of Candy



Cheshire residents, Diane & David Calabro, will
demonstrate the construction and decoration of a
traditional gingerbread house