

CHESHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

Volume 26, No. 1

Spring 2003

PROGRAMS

Monday, March 24, 7:30 p.m.

"50 Years Ago at Cheshire High School"

John White, Class of 1957

As Cheshire High School begins celebration of its 50th anniversary year, John White, noted author, teacher and a member of the Class of 1957, will share some of his high school memories. John entered Cheshire High School the day the school first opened its doors, and his graduating class was the first to have attended there all four years.

John has lived in Cheshire since 1950 and is now retired. A graduate of Dartmouth College with a master's degree from Yale University, he has held teaching positions in high school and college, as Director of Education for the Institute of Noetic Sciences (a research organization founded by Apollo 14 astronaut Edgar Mitchell to study the mind) and most recently as a communications specialist for Northeast Utilities. He is the author of 15 books and his writing has appeared in newspapers and magazines around the world.

A short business meeting will precede the program.

Monday, April 21, 7:00 p.m.

Member Reception and Annual Meeting

The April meeting will begin at 7:00 p.m. with a dessert-and-coffee/punch reception for all members, followed by the annual business meeting and election of officers at 7:30 p.m. The nominating committee, which was appointed at the February board meeting, includes: Edgar Johnson, chairman; Clayton Crabtree and Helen Mertens.

Speaker: To be announced.

Spring Calendar

March 24	Monday 7:30 p.m.	Membership Meeting
April 13	Sunday 1:30 p.m.	Board Meeting
April 21	Monday 7:00 p.m.	Members Reception & Annual Meeting
May 18	Sunday 2 - 5 p.m.	"Here Come the Brides" Opening Reception
May 25, June 1, 8, 15	Sundays 2 - 5 p.m.	"Here Come the Brides" exhibit open
May 31	Saturday 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.	Antiques & Collectibles Sale "Here Come the Brides" exhibit open
June 14	Saturday 10 - 2 p.m.	"Here Come the Brides" exhibit open
June 15	Sunday 1:30 p.m.	Board Meeting
June 29	Saturday 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.	Antiques & Collectibles Sale

IN MEMORIAM

We were deeply saddened by the death of Lillian Andrews on March 7. She was Historical Society president from 1982 - 85 and curator and co-curator from 1981-1998. Among her many initiatives was the very successful program for third grade children to tour the house. Last year we hosted 439 third grade students, accompanied by 22 teachers and 45 other adults!

We also mourn the loss of long-time supporter and Life member, James M. Clark, Jr., who died December 19, 2002.

HERE COME THE BRIDES

Under the leadership of Exhibit Chairman Pat Vita, preparations for our "Here Come the Brides" exhibit, opening May 18, are well underway.

Calgagni Associates Real Estate has generously agreed to sponsor the exhibit with a gift of \$200. Both the Cheshire Garden Club and the Suburban Garden Club will provide floral arrangements. Lee Pelz (Cheshire Garden Club) and Jo Kowalski (Suburban Garden Club) are representing their clubs on the exhibit committee.

The response to our request for bridal pictures has been wonderful. April 6 is now the final date for picture submission. Bring your framed picture to the Society any Sunday, 2 - 4 p.m., or call Pat (272-3963) if you would like a committee member to pick it up. The five-week "Name the Bride!" contest in *The Cheshire Herald* also is creating quite a buzz.



Wedding Gowns from "Archives"

Committee members were surprised and delighted by the wedding gowns owned by the Society in the 3rd floor "archives." Warren Van Almkerk and Pat are making the final selection of those to be exhibited. One dress already chosen is a 1978 acquisition. It is a dark blue silk wedding dress worn by a Mrs. Payne and is accompanied by her bridal photo. She was married in 1880. Another will be a silk ankle-length dress worn by Priscilla Batty's mother, Catharine (Perkins) Line, on Aug. 4, 1934. Mrs. Line was married in a small garden wedding in Sioux City, Iowa, in 104-degree weather. For their honeymoon, the couple went to the Chicago World's Fair, using press passes from the bride's father (Priscilla's grandfather), who owned, published and edited the Sioux City Journal.

Volunteers Needed

Additional help will be needed to arrange both the gowns and the bridal pictures prior to the exhibit opening in May. It should be fun! If you can give any time, please call Pat and volunteer.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY TO BE FEATURED ON CHANNEL 15

Tune in to "Cheshire Central", the interview and discussion program sponsored by the Republican Town Committee, to view a taped interview with President Ed Kania and Curator Edgar Johnson about the Cheshire Historical Society. The program is scheduled to be shown on Cox local access TV Channel 15 on Monday evenings at 9 p.m. through April 8.

Ed and Edgar were interviewed by Republican Town Committee member Joe Traester. Topics of discussion included the history of Cheshire, prominent citizens, formation of the Historical Society, and Society objectives and program.

DOLL HAS NEW DRESS

The little leather-body doll, which appeared quite naked at our Christmas Party, has a new period dress of antique, gold-colored lace. The costume was designed and made by Second Curator Warren Van Almkerk.

In her new finery, the doll is now on display in the Exhibit Room. She belonged to Myra Verner and was a gift in the fall from her son Raymond Verner. According to Warren, she dates from the early 1900s and was probably made in Germany.

3 Tiger Cub Dens Visit House

Three dens of Tiger Cub Scouts visited this month. David Borowy's den from Highland School came on Saturday, March 1, and his St. Bridget's School den on Saturday, March 8. Andrew Clark's den from Norton School came during regular visiting hours on Sunday, March 2.

For the Saturday visits, Mary Ellen Kania and Ann Massimino acted as guides. On March 2, Mary Ellen was assisted by Sunday volunteers Barbara Merrill and Arlla Simisky. In all, 23 boys and 23 parents, came through. It was a first visit to the house for most of the parents as well as for the boys.

NEW DIRECTOR

Marshall Robinson was elected as a director to fill the unexpired term (2001-2004) of the late Armand Brodeur at the January board meeting.

Marshall is a retired Connecticut State trooper and a well-known forensic firearms examiner, who is frequently called upon to testify in legal cases involving firearms. He is an avid gun collector and has extensive collections of old tools and bottles. He is a past president of the State Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, a past president of the General David Humphrey Branch (New Haven) of the SAR, and a member of the Connecticut Society of Mayflower Descendants.

PLINY HITCHCOCK REPAIRS

In February, Society member Paul Bowman invited President Ed Kania, together with Curator Edgar Johnson and Director Eric Anderson, to visit the Pliny Hitchcock house, 744 South Main Street, to see the repair work in progress.

As part of the agreement for the town to allow construction of 24 "active adult" condos on the nine-acre site, the developers agreed to repair both the 1764 Pliny-Hitchcock house and its "twin", the Reverend John Hull house to the south. The unoccupied Pliny-Hitchcock house has been of particular concern. Last fall, Paul had the main section of the house covered in plastic sheeting to prevent further deterioration.

With the interior walls stripped, board members could see the real condition of the structure. "It's in worse shape than we expected," Ed said. Under the direction of Master Carpenter Curtis Genest, workmen are replacing sills, jacking up the walls and leveling the floors. It was obvious that repairing the house requires extensive work and is also very expensive; however, it was exciting to see the work in progress.

"They're doing a terrific job!" Ed said. "We were all impressed." Keep watching this beautiful house as the restoration proceeds!

A Note from Texas

Along with Supporting Member dues and an additional \$15 contribution, we received the following note from Ogden Vogt of Dallas, TX, who joined us as a new member last year:

"You may be wondering why someone from Texas would be interested in Cheshire.

"I spent the first two years of my life (1914-1916) in the parsonage across the green from your headquarters. My father, Von Ogden Vogt, was minister of the church in those days. I also spent many happy summers in the 1920s at the home of my grandfather, Jacob Daniel Walter, who lived in the house looking down the street just north of then 'Roxbury School'. The Academy now owns his house.*

"I remember being sent on errands to Platt's Store, riding the open trolley to New Haven, and riding in Mr. Ives' big Pierce-Arrow. 'Them were the days!'"

*Von Ogden Vogt was minister of the First Congregational Church from 1912 to 1916.

"GUIGNOL" IS A PUPPET

Our thanks to everyone who informed us that "GUIGNOL" is a French puppet. In the last newsletter, we reported the gift from Connie Field of a bisque figurine vase showing a puppet theater with the word "GUIGNOL" above. Not realizing it was a name, we asked for help translating the "word."

In case you don't know, Guignol is the most well known puppet in France (like "Punch" in England). He was created by Laurent Mourguet in 1808. Mourguet (1769-1844) was a silk worker in Lyon. After the French Revolution, he changed his profession and became an "arracheur de dents" ("puller of teeth"), setting up a stall in the market. In order to attract patients, he created a puppet theater and performed scenes using his own hand-made "glove" puppets.

WHITE HOUSE TOWER RESTAURANT CHECK BRINGS MEMORIES

A restaurant check from The White House Tower on "the Main Highway at Cheshire, Conn.," which was presented to the Society by Ron Gagliardi, resulted in a very interesting telephone conversation with Mrs. Raymond (Margaret Stapleton) Barth.

Mrs. Barth remembers The White House Tower very well! It was operated by her mother, the late Mrs. Frank Stapleton, from 1930 to 1935 in a converted barn on the Stapleton property at 1312 Highland Avenue, where Mrs. Barth now lives. The restaurant was named for the large white tower to the north of the house, which was built by the previous owner as an irrigation tower.

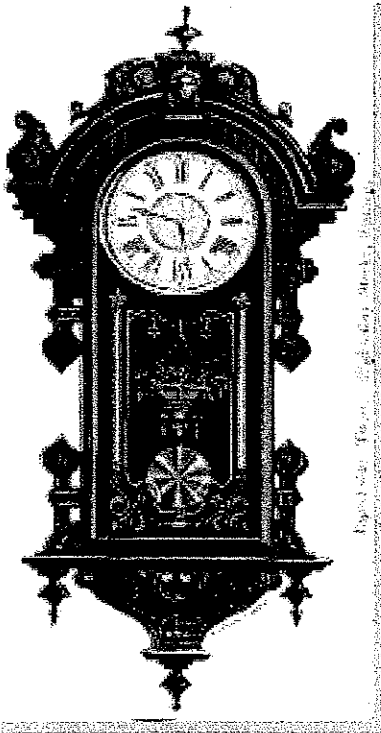
Mrs. Barth recalls that her mother first opened the restaurant as a tea room. The location was excellent, and it was very successful from the begin-

ning, soon expanding into a full restaurant. In the 1930s, Highland Avenue was known as "College Highway," the main road between Yale and Harvard. It was also on the trolley route to Milldale.

Later, Mrs. Stapleton put on an addition which was called the "ballroom." It had a dance floor and juke box, and Mrs. Barth said that she often danced to the juke box tunes. On Saturday nights, there was a live orchestra. Frank Papandrea, who grew up next door, remembers the wonderful sound of music coming from the restaurant and its delicious ice cream.

Restaurant Burned

The restaurant burned to the ground in 1935 and was never rebuilt. Both the restaurant check and a picture of the restaurant building will be on display at the Society later this year.



Gilbert Wall Clock Dated in 1880s

Thanks to Dick Copleston, the Wm. L. Gilbert "Columbia" wall clock, a gift last fall from Raymond Verner, is now thoroughly documented.

Dick writes: "As expected, the American Clock and Watch Museum in Bristol proved to be a good source of information about Gilbert Clocks. Mr. Chris Bailey was kind enough to find some old Gilbert company catalogs and, in the 1881 catalog, almost an exact copy of the Historical Society's clock was found." (See photo at left).

Factories: Winsted, Conn.

According to Dick, similar "Columbia" clocks were manufactured from possibly 1880 into the 1890s. The earlier ones were in walnut, but in the 1890s oak became popular. The catalog price of an 1883 clock was \$6.25. This price rose to \$12.00 by 1901.

Dick feels it is not possible to date the clock with any greater accuracy than to say that it was made in the 1880s.

The clock is now on the north wall in the Toy Room. If you haven't seen it, plan to stop there on your next visit.

Picture of our clock from the 1881 Illustrated Catalogue of the Wm. L. Gilbert Clock Co..

The catalog lists salesrooms at 6 Murray St., New York, and 54 and 56 Madison St., Chicago;

2003 DUES ARE PAYABLE

If you have not sent in your dues for 2003, you will find a dues envelope enclosed with this newsletter.

Remember that dues are PAYABLE NOW!
Please forward your check as soon as possible.

We need everyone's support!

Boutique Needs Contributions

When you're doing your spring cleaning, don't forget the "Boutique in the Shed". We are always looking for saleable items. They don't have to be antique or collectible, but they must be saleable.

Donations can be brought to the Society any Sunday, 2 - 4 p.m. through the end of May, or to the "Boutique" on the Antiques & Collectibles Sales days, the last Saturdays of the month, May through October (weather permitting).

Cheshire Historical Society Officers

President	Ed Kania
Vice President	Ron Gagliardi
Recording Secretary	Doris Black
Membership Secretary	Sally Clark
Treasurer	Connie Field
1st Curator	Edgar Johnson
2nd Curator	Warren Van Almkerk
Assistant Curator	Eric Anderson

Board of Directors

2002-2005	Pat Vita, Stephanie Casner, Lois VanAlmkerk
2001-2004	Ann Massimino, Marian Sweeney, Marshall Robinson
2000-2003	Eric Anderson, Mary Ellen Kania, Barbara Merrill

Committee Chairmen

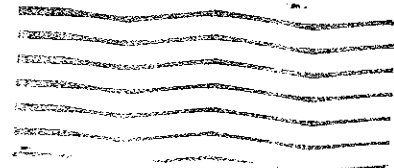
Antiques & Collectibles Sales	- Lois VanAlmkerk
"Boutique in the Shed"	- Pat Vita
Program	- Ron Gagliardi
House Tours	- Mary Ellen Kania
Webmaster	- Eric Anderson
Newsletter	- Ed and Mary Ellen Kania

**CHESHIRE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
NEWS**



SPRING 2003

Cheshire Historical Society
P. O. Box 281
Cheshire, CT 06410



Mr.
20 C
Che