

CHESHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

Volume 31, No. 1

Spring 2008

Monday, March 24, 7:30 PM

"Coins of the American Revolution"

Gene Gandelman

Numismatist Gene Gandelman of Cheshire will present an historical look back at coinage in the American Colonies during the Revolution and the decades before and after 1776. During the United States Bicentennial in 1976, Gene produced detailed replicas of the 1776 Continental Dollar coin and three "state-designed" pattern coins never put into circulation. The Continental Dollar coin originally was produced to help finance the war. It replaced the infamous paper money about which American soldiers coined the expression "ain't (isn't) worth a Continental."

Gene began his interest in coins in 1954, at age eight, when Wheaties cereal included foreign coins in their packages. He liquidated his collection in the 1980s to enable his family to move to Cheshire and to pursue other endeavors as well. Although he is no longer an active collector, Gene retains the knowledge of more than 200 years of United States coinage.

Monday, April 28, 7:30 PM

Annual Meeting—Member Reception

"What's in a Name?"

Ann Moriarty, Archivist at Cheshire Academy

For her talk following the annual meeting, Cheshire Academy Archivist Ann Moriarty has chosen the intriguing title, "What's in a Name?" The Academy has had many names in its 200-plus-year history. Ann will review them all and discuss how a name can affect the school and its relationship to the community.

Ann began teaching at Cheshire Academy in the Upper School in 1982. Several years later, she became Department Chair and then Head of the Middle School. She has been the Academy's archivist for the past eight years. The annual meeting and election of officers and directors will precede her talk. A member reception especially honoring new members will follow in the dining room.

Spring/Summer Calendar

Effective April 6, except for holiday weekends, the Hitchcock-Phillips House will be open to the public on Sunday afternoons, 2—4 PM, through December.

March 24	Monday 7:30 p.m.	Membership Meeting & Speaker
April 21	Monday 7:30 p.m.	Board Meeting
April 28	Monday 7:30 p.m.	Annual Meeting & Speaker
May 19	Monday 7:30 p.m.	Board Meeting
June 14	Saturday 9 a.m.—3 p.m.	Antiques & Collectibles Strawberry Festival
July 26	Saturday 9—3 p.m.	Antiques & Collectibles Sale *
August 30	Saturday 9—3 p.m.	Antiques & Collectibles Sale *

**Weather permitting*

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

from Marshall Robinson

Dear Members:

Winter is now winding down, and we look forward to a nice, warm Summer and a good year at the Society. I want to thank all who made our Christmas Party the success that it was. As usual it was an excellent affair, and one of the best attended to date.

The Board of Directors voted not to open the house during the Winter except by special request. This is being done to cut down on our fuel use.

I want to thank Diane Calabro for the wonderful job she is doing with our web site. Check us out at cheshirehistory.org. I think you will be impressed!

I also want to thank all of you who are sending in your dues in a timely manner. It helps.

We are looking for few more people to serve as docents to staff the house for a couple of hours on

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Thank You!

Special thanks to the following Major Contributors and Other Contributors, who made donations to the Society in addition to their 2008 dues payments, and to our valued Supporting Members.

Major Contributors

Apple Valley Bank	John Romanik
Sally Bowman	Richard & Diane Ulbrich
Mary B. Hobler-Hyson	

Other Contributors

Sylvia Abbate	Ann Massimino
David Baillie	Helen Mertens
Peg Boutwell	Richard Miller
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Inge Druckrey	Lori Rusnack
Connie Field	Ray & Eleanor Verner
Larry & Eleanor Herrmann	

Supporting Memberships

Dr. Thomas Anderson	Aidamae Fowler
Donald Baillie	Barbara Lee
Steven & Johanna Calcagni	Addie Mark
Gary & Denise Charette	Joan Rinaldi
Jay & Carole Cunningham	Tim & Kristen Slocum

New Members

Welcome to the following new members:
 Barbara Benton, Wauwatosa, WI
 Michael & Amanda Celone, 165 Rockview Dr.
 Joseph & Suzanne Robinson, 39 Mueller Ave.
 Dorothy Evelyn Watkins, 361 Country Club Rd.
 Richard & Janice Yusza, 971 Bethany Mtn. Rd.

...President's Message *Continued from page 1*
 an occasional Sunday. It's not hard work and can be very rewarding. Training is provided. Right now we have two, maybe three people who staff the house when it is open to the public. I don't think they should be the only ones.

We are hoping for a banner year in the Boutique. As always, please donate unwanted items for that purpose. I will be donating some antique bottles. We also are seeking donation of items for the Society itself.

I wish you a healthy, prosperous, and enjoyable Summer. Stop by and visit when you can.

Marshall

Governor's Mansion in Hartford Has Connection to Cheshire

by *Eleanor Verner*
Society Member

The Governor's Mansion, situated on six beautiful, landscaped acres on Prospect Avenue in Hartford, was built in 1909 by Dr. George C. F. Williams, who was a major benefactor of the Cheshire Public Library. The original cost of the development of the property was \$300,000. He occupied the home until 1933. In 1943, the State of Connecticut purchased the house for \$38,928. On September 14, 1945, Governor Raymond Baldwin became the first governor to occupy it. Formal public opening ceremonies were held on October 18, 1945.

Dr. George C. F. Williams's father, Dr. William C. Williams, built a house at 100 Main Street, Cheshire, in 1857. He died in 1894. In 1911, Dr. George C. F. Williams offered the house to the Cheshire Library Association for use as a library. Until his death in 1933, he also paid all heating and lighting costs for the library. In 1961, upon completion of the new brick library next door, the Cheshire Historical Society made the Williams House its headquarters. In 1974, the house was razed to make way for the new library addition.

My husband's grandmother, the late Helena Talmadge Williams (no relation to Dr. Williams), told me about this connection about 45 years ago. Grandma Williams was Cheshire's second librarian (1921-1950).

References: Connecticut State Register & Manual
 Landmarks of Old Cheshire (1976)

In Memoriam

Rosemary Port	January 10, 2008
Elizabeth (Bowman) Shaw	February 8, 2008
Mary (Shuey) Hartman	February 28, 2008

We were deeply saddened by the deaths of these long-time members and extend our sincere sympathy to their families.

Physician Looks at 1880s Prescription Drug Register From Foot & Co. Druggists, Cheshire, Conn.

by *Dr. Robert P. Chesanow*
Society Member

Dr. Chesanow is a neurologist whose years of clinical research have given him excellent background to comment on the Society's newly acquired prescription drug register. "In medicine all of us write history," he says, "only we do it one patient at a time."

The Connecticut Business Directory for 1874 lists all the druggists in Connecticut. There is only one listing for Cheshire: John L. Foot. Born in September 1817, John Foot was still listed as "merchant" living in Cheshire, age 82 years, in the 1900 U. S. Census. Mr. Foot died in 1904, leaving an estate of \$400,000.

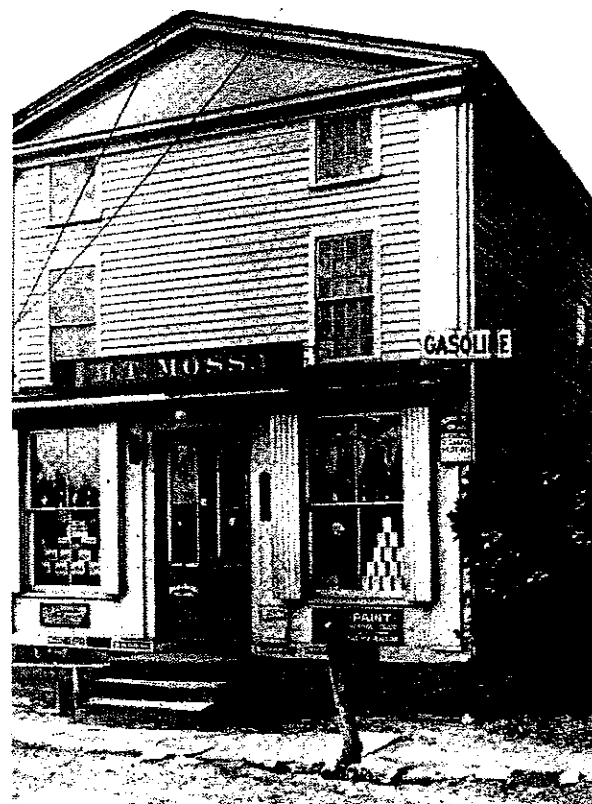
The Cheshire Historical Society acquired one of Mr. Foot's prescription registers last year. It is a narrow, fat volume, measuring 14 inches tall by 4 ¼ inches wide and 1 inch thick. On the spine in black ink is written: "No. 3 5304 to 7812". These 2508 entries span the dates from June 24, 1882 to July 12, 1886, averaging some 620 prescriptions per year for "John L. Foot & Co, Druggists Cheshire, Conn". The register is written in several different handwritings. The likely explanation is found in an item posted on the Historical Society of Pennsylvania website. In speaking of the interpretation of old financial records, it was noted that a doctor might itemize every patient's purchases (i.e., powders, medicines) in his daybook, but in the ledger the accountant would simply list these as "sundries". In fact, in the 1880 U. S. Census for Cheshire, John Foot himself is listed as "merchant of sundries", not as "druggist".

Of course, in that day, as in the present, drugstores sold more than drugs. A search of all 50 pages of the 1880 Cheshire census turns up seven additional names whose occupations were listed as "merchant of sundries" and a further four names listed as "clerk in a store of sundries". These clerks included the 17-year-old Edward R. Munson and the 20-year-old Frederick A. Ives, son of Titus B. Ives.

Medicines

In the 1880's virtually all medicines were of two types: simple inorganic salts, such as potassium iodide or ammonium chloride, and medicines derived from plants. The only medicine that was synthesized in a laboratory was chloral hydrate (from 1832), used as a sleeping medication. Chloral hydrate is still in use today, albeit a somewhat limited use, as a sedative. The plant-derived medicines included digitalis (from the foxglove), quinine (from the bark of the South American cinchona tree), valerian (used as a sedative), strychnine (from a species of the nux vomica tree), salicylic acid (from the bark of the white willow) and, of course, drugs derived from the opium poppy. Pharmacists were required to take a course in pharmacognosy – the ability to identify natural products – usually plants which had medicinal value. In-

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John L. Foot Drugstore on Wallingford Road was purchased by Howard T. Moss in the 1890s.

... Pharmacy Practice in Cheshire in the 1880s

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deed, the American Society of Pharmacognosy is still quite active in researching natural products, and currently has over 1,100 members.

Druggists of that time, and in fact up until the post World War II era, were expected to compound prescriptions. A prescription might have as many as five separate ingredients. The druggist would measure out each ingredient, using apothecary's measure, then – according to the route of administration or the characteristics of the ingredients - would either make up the medicine as an alcoholic solution (known as a tincture) or, using a special press, make up a number of pills. For the liquids, syrup of sarsaparilla or lemon could be used to make the medicine more palatable. The era of buying medications already made up in liquid, tablet, capsule, ointment, or suppository form – then simply transferring the medication from a large bottle into a smaller container – was far in the future.

Ailments

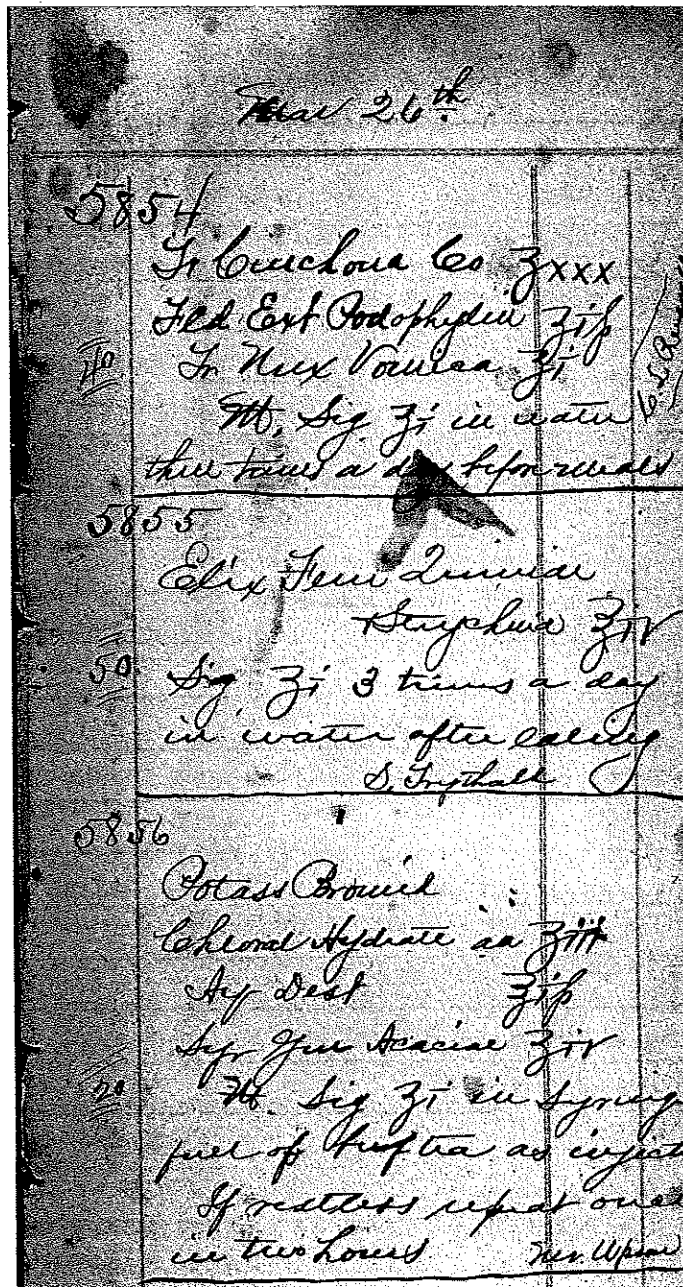
In reading through Mr. Foot's register, one can deduce the ailments for which these prescriptions were written. Digestive complaints, such as dyspepsia, constipation, or diarrhea were treated with remedies familiar to us today. In August 1882, a patient received a prescription of bismuth subnitrate, tincture of deodorized opium, acacia, glycerine, and distilled water. Instructions were to take one dram (about a teaspoonful) every 3 to 4 hours. Since we know that bismuth is the active ingredient in Pepto Bismol and that tincture of opium is similar to paregoric, we can assume that this patient was afflicted with diarrhea. Belladonna and hyoscyamine appear frequently in the register, and are used to this day for stomach and intestinal cramping.

Bromide salts were used to treat epilepsy and various "nervous conditions". Indeed, until the synthesis of phenobarbital in 1903, bromide salts were the treatment of choice for epilepsy. As to "nervous conditions" - today they are classed as anxiety disorders— bromides remained in wide use even until the 1960's. A popular over-the-counter "calmative" was Miles Nervine. And until the late

1950's, Bromo Seltzer contained sodium bromide. (Bromides were taken off the market in the United States in 1975.)

Mr. Foot's register records that, in late February 1883, Mr. Doolittle received a prescription for potassium bromide and chloral hydrate, mixed with lemon syrup. On March 26, 1883, Mr. Upson had two prescriptions – the first for potassium bro-

Continued on the next page



Foot's Drug Register, March 26, 1883. Note Mr. Trythall's quinine and strychnine tonic and Mr. Upson's sedative prescriptions.

HISTORIC BUILDINGS INVENTORY NOW ON WEBSITE

The 1986 HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY *Buildings and Structures* covering 82 historic properties in Cheshire is now on the Society website (cheshirehistory.org). We are excited to make this valuable research tool available on-line. Updating the inventory is a new project of the Cheshire Historic District Commission

Displayed in PDF (Portable Document Format) form, the Inventory lists properties by address and includes property identification (including historic name), description of site, a brief write-up of

notable features, another write-up of historical or architectural importance, source information, and a small black- and- white photograph.

Also see Cheshire Farming

While viewing the website, also scroll down to "A bit of history of Cheshire Farming." This fascinating presentation, prepared by Webmaster Diane Calabro, adds present-day photos of Cheshire farms to a 1935 article about farming written by Mark Bishop for the town's celebration of the 300th anniversary of the settlement of Connecticut .

... Pharmacy Practice continued from page 4

mide, chloral hydrate, distilled water, and syrup of gum acaciae. Curiously, this mixture was to be administered in a syringe by injection (? by rectum), with the instruction "if restless repeat once in two hours. Apparently this remedy was not sufficient to sedate Mr. Upson, since the next prescription was for fluid extract of valerian – another mild sedative.

Quinine in various forms appears throughout the register. Although malaria was common in the continental United States, it was predominantly in the South. Yet, in 1882, there were cases in lower New England. In 1920 in the United States, there were 350 cases of malaria per 100,000 population, with 60 deaths per one million population. Nonetheless, in Cheshire in the 1880's, quinine would have been given for fevers of many different causes. Quinine is used by some today to treat leg cramps.

Infectious Diseases

The leading cause of death in the United States, until the availability of penicillin in the late 1940's, was infectious disease. Every state in the Union had sanitariums where people with tuberculosis could be isolated from the rest of the population and, with time, rest, fresh air, and good nutrition, might overcome their disease. Sadly, many died. Diphtheria, whooping cough, bacterial pneumonias, poliomyelitis – all claimed many more lives than did heart disease or cancer.

In looking through Mr. Foot's register, one can find treatments for the *symptoms* of infectious

diseases, but none directed at the cause. For instance, in June 1885, William Beach obtained a prescription for potassium iodide rochelle salts, tinct of guiac, colchicines, and sarsaparilla syrup. Today we use guaifenesin as an expectorant (as in Robitussin) for chest congestion. Iodide salts are also used to loosen secretions, permitting the patient to more easily cough up sputum. Yet there was no specific treatment for pulmonary infections. Writing in the February 15, 1888 issue of "The Therapeutic Gazette", J. P. Crozer Griffith, M. D., expressed the frustration of all physicians in dealing with whooping cough.

"Among the means of treatment which have been proposed and tried may be mentioned the use of bella donna, alum, quinine, opium, chloral, the bromides, cocaine, carbolic acid, cochineal, quebracho, gelsemium, salicylic acid, turpentine, resorcin, castinea, hydrocyanic acid, sulphur both internally and by fumigation, compressed air, asafoetida, peroxide of hydrogen, change of climate, cannabis Indica, inhalation of the vapors from the purifying chambers of the gas-works, boracic acid and other drugs by insufflation, pyridin, and amylene hydrate, which by no means closes the list."

Many of those medications appear in the register, making it difficult to determine in any individual case what the ailment that particular Cheshire resident was suffering from.

The register from John L. Foot's drugstore is at once a chapter in the history of medicine, an insight into the health of our citizens, and, with some familiar names attached to the prescriptions, part of the story of many of Cheshire's oldest families. The Historical Society has acquired a real treasure.

CHESHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS



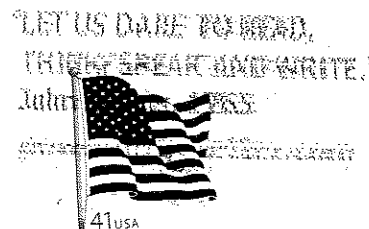
A dues envelope is enclosed if your membership is still unpaid for 2008. Please remit!

SPRING 2008

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Spring Meetings—Public Invited

“Coins of the Revolution” - Mar. 24

“What’s in a Name?”, Annual Mtg.- Apr. 28

