

# CHESHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

Volume 32, No. 1

Spring/Summer 2009

## PROGRAM

### Monday, March 23, 7:30 PM

#### **"Thoughts on Cheshire's Future"**

**Sheldon Dill and Gerald Sitko**

After so many programs looking to the past, the Cheshire Historical Society will take a new direction at the March meeting. Sheldon Dill, executive director of the Cheshire Chamber of Commerce and a member of the Cheshire Town Council, and Cheshire Economic Development Coordinator Gerald Sitko, will share their "Thoughts on Cheshire's Future." It should be a fascinating look ahead. Don't miss it!

### Monday, April 27, 7:30 PM

#### **"The Congregational Church in the Colonial Period" - Henry McNulty Annual Meeting—Member Reception**

Henry McNulty, former historian at the First Congregational Church, will talk about the church's role in Cheshire during the Colonial Period. Henry is a former editor of the *Hartford Courant* and currently operates his own communications business. The April program will be preceded by the annual business meeting and election of officers and directors. A member reception in the dining room will follow.

### **Boutique Donations Needed**

Please don't forget the "Boutique in the Shed" when you are doing your spring cleaning. It is a major fund raiser for the Society, and we are always looking for saleable items. Donations don't have to be antique or collectible, but they must be saleable. Call Pat Vita, 203-272-3963, or Kathy Connolly, 860-621-8786, with questions.

### **Honorable Mention**

Our film project, *Introduction to the Hitchcock-Phillips House*, has received Honorable Mention from the 2009 Awards Committee of the Connecticut League of History Organizations. Congratulations to Rick, Mary Ellen, and Josiah!

## Spring/Summer Calendar

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

March 16	Monday 7:30 p.m.	Board Meeting
March 23	Monday 7:30 p.m.	Membership Meeting & Speaker
April 2	Thursday 1—2:30 p.m.	Cheshire Women's Club tour at Society
April 12	Easter Sunday	House closed
April 20	Monday 7:30 p.m.	Board Meeting
April 27	Monday 7:30 p.m.	Annual Meeting & Speaker
May 18	Monday 7:30 p.m.	Board Meeting
May 25	Memorial Day Observed	House closed on Sunday, May 24
June 13	Saturday 9—3 p.m.	Antiques & Collectibles Strawberry Festival
July 4	Independence Day	House closed on Sunday, July 5

*Weather and circumstances permitting, monthly Antique & Collectible Sales will be held on the Society grounds during the summer. Dates will be announced.*

## Thank You!

Special thanks to the following contributors who made donations to the Society in addition to their 2009 dues and to our valued Business/Professional and Supporting Members.

### **Major Contributors**

Apple Valley Bank	Elizabeth Lewis Panke &
Sally Bowman	Dr. Eugene Lewis
Mary B. Hobler-Hyson	Ray & Eleanor Verner
Jean McKee	

### **Business/Professional Members**

Bailey, Moore, Glazer, Schaefer & Proto, LLP	New Alliance Bank
Bristol Insurance	O J Mann Electric
Valerie Joyce	Richard Chevrolet Carl M. Spadola DMD

### **Supporting Members**

Martha Connolly	Addie Marx
Jay & Carole Cunningham	Joseph & Suzanne Robinson
Robert & Ann Fennelly	Lori-Ann Rusnack

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## GREAT, GREAT GRANDDAUGHTER DONATES MAJOR COLLECTION OF CIVIL WAR PAPERS

While looking on the Internet for information about the Civil War papers of her great, great grandfather, Lt. Alex H. Buckingham of New Haven, Suzanne (Smith) Steinhagen of West Granby did a search on the name Timothy Guilford. It brought her directly to the Titus Moss letters on our website ([www.cheshirehistory.org](http://www.cheshirehistory.org)), where she began to read about the Cheshire soldiers in Company A, 20th Regiment of the Connecticut Volunteers.

A short time later, Suzanne's husband, Fred Steinhagen, contacted the Society about their papers. After Society representatives went to West Granby to see the documents, Suzanne made the wonderful decision to donate the collection to the Cheshire Historical Society where it could be "properly preserved for future generations."

Although Suzanne's great, great grandfather did not muster in with Company A, he was transferred in as adjutant in September 1863 after being promoted from sergeant to 2nd lieutenant. For the next 15 months he kept records and handled Company A's quartermaster duties, including distribution and collection of equipment.

### Buckingham was a "saver"

Lt. Buckingham was a "saver"! He kept three original muster rolls from Company A, starting with the period 30 Apr. '63 to 30 June '63 (after Chancellorsville) and including 31 Oct. '63 to 31 Dec. '63 (Stevenson, AL) and 29 Feb. '64 to 30 Apr. '64 (Lookout Valley, Tenn.) These were *second copies* which were made for the Company's records. They show the deaths of both Titus Moss and Joel Brooks at Chancellorsville along with several other members of the company. Two of the muster rolls are signed by Capt. Timothy Guilford, who was discharged from wounds at Lookout Valley, December 26, 1863.. The third muster roll was signed by Capt. David R. Brown. There is also a fourth muster roll, prepared sometime later and titled "Original Muster Roll of Sept. 8, 1862", which shows all the men mustered in on that date and what happened to them.

Carte-de-visite photo of Lt. Alex Buckingham from the Society's collection.

Buckingham served in Company A - the "Cheshire company" - 20th Regiment, Connecticut Volunteers, from September 1863 through December 1864.



In addition to these important documents, Buckingham kept the original copies of his own personal papers, including his original appointment, promotions, leave of absence, and special orders. He also saved numerous "retained copies" of "Monthly Return of Clothing" forms, equipment transfers, and lists of stores received and—surprisingly—a court martial record for two privates.

In all, there are 68 documents in the collection. All were folded, arranged in packets, and are generally in good condition. Buckingham lived in New Haven until 1892 and had five children. Following his death, the documents passed to his youngest daughter; then to her daughter who had no children; then to Suzanne's mother, a second cousin; and finally to Suzanne.

When the Steinhagens visited Cheshire, they were thrilled to find a picture of Lt. Buckingham among the Society's *carte de visites* and see the names on the Civil War monument in front of the Hitchcock-Phillips House, the same names that are on many of their documents. After the visit, Suzanne wrote "Fred and I were delighted to see that my grandfather's Civil War documents are in the town where they belong. We think you will have as much fun studying them as we did."

The collection is a wonderful research resource. There will be more about the documents in future newsletters. Part of the collection will be on display at the Society this spring.

## SOCIETY BENEFITS AS CRAIG TRUST MATURES



Dr. Robert J. Craig (1902—1983)

When Cheshire Historical Society founder dentist Dr. Robert J. Craig died in November 1983, his will established a trust for the sole benefit of the Society. The sum of \$25,000, numerous antiques and memorabilia located at the Society, and proceeds from the sale of his Hillside Village condominium (upon the death of his second wife) were placed in trust for 25 years. This time period elapsed in November 2008, and the Society is now sole owner of both his wonderful collection of antiques and the monetary bequest, which after paying the annual insurance on his collection and other costs, now totals approximately \$98,400.

Dr. Craig was born in Wallingford in 1902. A graduate of the University of Maryland School of Dentistry, he was a practicing dentist in Cheshire from 1937 to 1977. His office was located in his home, the historic 1854 Humiston house, 92 Main St., just east of the Public Library. Dr. Craig and his first wife, Helen Zetterholm Craig (1903-1977) were deeply interested in antiques and in local history. It was primarily due to their enthusiasm that the Cheshire Historical Society was founded in 1951.

Dr. Craig served as Society president, 1955-57, and in 1960, he and Mrs. Craig together became the Society's first curators, a position he held until 1981. During this period, he also was chairman of the Cheshire Bicentennial Committee

for the publication of *Landmarks of Old Cheshire*. He was president of the Connecticut League of Historical Societies for five years and was a charter member and past president of the Cheshire Rotary Club.

Dr. Craig's antiques at the Society include some of the best-loved pieces: all the furnishings in the bedroom, including the *circa* 1760 cherry wood highboy; the tall case, flat-top clock in the dining room; the cherry wood desk, Willard banjo clock, and folk art portrait of an old woman in the parlor; seven two-part mirrors with reverse paintings on glass, 12 chairs and rockers; and four tables or candle stands as well as numerous antique tools, house wares, and other items. In the Exhibit Room, the miniature display in the corner cupboard was from his dental office waiting room..

*Landmarks of Old Cheshire* is dedicated to Dr. Craig. Part of the 1976 dedication reads: "In every generation someone must stimulate enthusiasm for our heritage. Cheshire has been blessed with many such individuals. In the mid-nineteenth century there was Joseph P. Beach, then Deacon E. R. Brown at the turn of the century, and Nettie Smith a generation ago. We are fortunate, indeed, that today Dr. Robert Craig maintains this tradition and helps enlighten us." The Cheshire Historical Society heartily agrees. We are fortunate, indeed!

### Emma (Lee) Pelz Gives Minatures

The Society has received a beautiful collection of miniatures from long-time member Emma (Lee) Pelz. The collection includes 50 tiny sets of collectibles. Many are little tea sets, but there is also furniture and other tiny items that Lee collected over many years. Lee is now living at Masonicare, Wallingford. She says that miniatures always fascinated her, and she hopes Society visitors will enjoy them. Parts of the collection will be displayed periodically as space permits.

#### DUES ENVELOPE ENCLOSED?

If you find a dues envelope enclosed with this newsletter, it means our records show that you have not paid your 2009 dues yet. If this is the case, please remit. We depend on your support and are truly grateful for every paid membership.

# Cheshire Newspapers in Late 19th Century

By Dr. Robert P. Chesnow  
Society Member

Until the invention of a practical telegraph apparatus by Samuel Finley Breese Morse in 1844, and the subsequent proliferation of telegraph companies (Western Union was founded in 1851), prompt publication of news depended on delivery by horseback from neighboring towns. As a means of broadening their coverage, newspaper editors often swapped copies of their paper with those of editors from distant cities. Gideon Welles, one of a number of distinguished graduates of the Episcopal Academy of Cheshire, assumed the editorship of *The Hartford Times* in 1827. He stepped down in 1836 but wrote editorially until 1846. During his time at the paper, Welles amassed a collection of newspapers from around the country. Unlike most editors, Welles saved his collection of newspapers, dating from 1807 to 1839. In 1915, Mrs. Mary Jane Welles Peabody, Gideon Welles' niece, donated the collection to the Connecticut State Library, where it can now be read on microfilm.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, Connecticut had ten daily newspapers and over 40 weeklies. It is likely that up to and including the Civil War, Cheshire residents got their news from the New Haven and the Hartford dailies, including the forerunner of *The Hartford Courant*, whose online index of "Historic Article Images" covers the period from 1764 to 1984.

The first locally published newspaper of which copies still exist is Volume 1, No. 1 of *The Cheshire Monthly Review*, dated Thursday, November 10, 1870. The editor and proprietor was Arthur E. Hotchkiss. Born in 1845 to farmer Merriman Hotchkiss and his

wife Eliza, it appears that Arthur developed into one of those self-confident, inner-directed muscular Victorian men. By 1866, when Arthur was 21, his name appears on a list of persons liable for the payment of an excise tax. His occupation is listed as "Exhibitions and Shows" with tax owed of \$2.50. The Cheshire Historical Society has the large broadsheets Arthur and his brother printed to advertise their services. At age 25, with his occupation in the 1870 U. S. Census listed as "farmer", Mr. Hotchkiss was ready to start his own newspaper. Below the front page title is written "Independent. Not Neutral." and a quote from Shakespeare: "My office is to noise abroad." Perhaps Mr. Hotchkiss did not enjoy the benefits of his Episcopal Academy education (1857-1860), for he attributed the quote to "Henry VII". (It's "Henry IV, Part 2", Prologue.)

On his masthead, Hotchkiss prints an editorial statement reminiscent of that written by the young Charles Foster Kane when starting his first newspaper:

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 1870

#### EDITORIAL NOTES

In our columns we shall endeavor to give due prominence to all the popular discussions of the day in which the interest of society are at stake: "With malice toward none, with charity for all, and firmness in the right," always open to criticism, and extending to correspondents the same liberty and privileges in our paper which we claim for ourselves, believing the grand fundamental principles of Truth, Equity, and Justice are best promoted where "free speech," "free press" are guaranteed to all.

Below that, an item of local interest;

"A sufficient amount of money having been subscribed, a Singing School has been opened in Cheshire. As has already been announced, 'they are for us Congregational folks.' N. B. — The Methodist Brethren will please stand one side and 'let the elephant pass.' "

And this:

"The Railroad between Cheshire and Meriden via Cheshire Street is not likely to be completed before Christmas."

There follows an acerbic comment on the apparent revival of interest in Temperance in Cheshire "after having enjoyed a quiet snooze in Cheshire for so many years". The article quotes no fewer than 42 column inches of letters and articles from recent issues of the *State Temperance Journal*, including a report of a lengthy resolution voted at the last Sabbath by the Congregational Church strongly supporting the temperance

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## Old Cheshire Newspapers in Archives

A recent file reorganization shows that the Society has the following Cheshire newspapers in our archives:

*The Cheshire Monthly Review*— Nov. 10, 1870  
*The Times and The Cheshire Enterprise*—Oct. 23, 30, 1896  
*The Cheshire-Hamden Times*(assorted copies) 1907—1921  
*The Cheshire Standard*—Jan. 13, 1927  
*The Cheshire Times*—Mar. 23 1938—Mar. 29, 1940  
*The Cheshire Advance*—Mar. 3, 9, 1950  
*The Cheshire Citizen* (asstd copies) Mar. 1990—Jan. 1991

Note: The complete *Cheshire Herald* from 1953 is available on microfilm at the Cheshire Public Library.

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position of their pastor. (While not opposed to the movement, he was apparently less enthusiastic than some thought he might be in his embrace of the movement.). Editor Hotchkiss, with rather heavy sarcasm, proposes a revision of the resolution to accurately reflect the present state of cider making and cider drinking in Cheshire.

Virtually all the advertisements in that first issue of *The Cheshire Monthly Review* were for merchants in New Haven. Organs and melodeons, pianos, tea, tobacco, carriage axles, women's clothes—all giving a picture of the local commerce. The sole ad for a Cheshire firm is the only ad on the editorial page: M. I. Hotchkiss and Sons. Steam Saw Mill. Saw Mill Avenue, East Main St., Cheshire, CT.

There is a short column of jokes, designed to provoke thigh slapping in the comedy-deprived populace of Cheshire. On the back page were printed the timetables for the New York and New Haven Railroad, the New Haven, Hartford, and Springfield Railroad, the New Haven and Northampton Railroad, the Shoreline Railway, the Naugatuck Railroad, and the Airline. The New Haven, Middletown, and Willamantic RR.

...**THANK YOU!**

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#### Supporting Members (continued)

John & Judy Knott	Tim & Kristen Slocum
Andrew & Brandi Martelli	Don & Christine Tall

#### Other Contributors

Margaret Barth	Richard Miller
Peg Boutwell	Alfred Mitlehner
Stephanie Casner	Ray & Mary Ellen Morgan
Bob & Noreen Cawood	Louis & Mary Ann Ricciuti
Barbara Christoff	Jane Richards
Mark & Kathryn Collins	Joan Rinaldi
Cara Luciani	Joseph & Suzanne Robinson
Ann Massimino	William Siegel
Bill & Joanna Miller	Dorothy Evelyn Watkins

### CHEERS FOR CHESHIRE FURNITURE REFINISHING, 43 Willow Street

When an old break reopened in one leg of our *new* "Lincoln table" in December, Normand Le Clerc at Cheshire Furniture Refinishing saved the day! His prompt and very skillful repair to the historic table made it possible to have the table back on display in time for the Christmas party. Thank you, Cheshire Furniture Refinishing!

In addition to the first issue of *The Cheshire Monthly Review*, the Cheshire Historical Society has copies of the October 23 and October 30, 1896 *The Times* and *The Cheshire Enterprise*. Published by the same company, the papers covered both Cheshire and Wallingford news, as well as national and Connecticut news of general interest. The masthead explains:

<p><b>THE TIMES</b> PUBLISHED TUESDAYS AND FRIDAYS F. W. CONE Business Manager</p>
<p><b>THE ASSOCIATED WEEKLIES</b> Editions of The Wallingford Times</p>
<p>THE WALLINGFORD TIMES THE WATERTOWN TIMES THE CHESHIRE ENTERPRISE THE NORTH HAVEN NEWS THE YALESVILLE GAZETTE</p>
<p>SUBSCRIPTION RATES—One year, \$1.00; Six months, 60c; Three months, 35c; single copies 2 cents.</p>
<p>THE publisher of The Times has a first-class job printing office, and any orders entrusted to his care will receive prompt attention</p>
<p>CHANGES for ads, exchanges, etc. will please address the publisher at Wallingford, Conn.</p>
<p>Entered at the post office at Wallingford as second-class matter.</p>

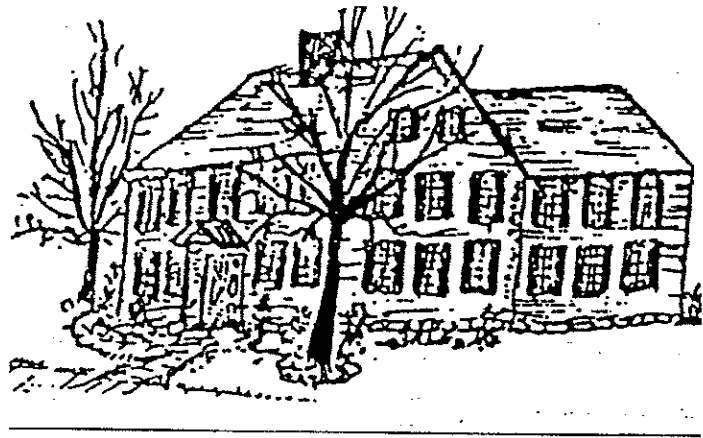
Now well into the era of the telegraph, these 1896 papers carried stories datelined Washington, Parkersburg, W. Va. and Stockton, California. This was the week before election day – when William McKinley was a strong local favorite to oppose William Jennings Bryan. As may be guessed, there was much comment about the gold standard.

To round out the story of local journalism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Connecticut State Library (CSL) has a single issue (August 2, 1884) of the *Conn. ec-lec-tic weekly*. During that period Cheshire had only one pharmacist: John Foote. According to the CSL, John Foote was also the publisher of this particular paper.

As has been remarked, journalism is the first draft of history. In these newspapers, we see not only the accounts of great events, but the small items which fill our lives – a new singing society, an obituary, a young college man home on a visit, the advertisements for the commonplace of another time. It is all history. Our history. Read, remember, be rewarded

# CHESHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

A dues envelope will be enclosed if your membership is still unpaid for 2009. Please remit.



## SPRING/SUMMER 2009

Cheshire Historical Society  
PO Box 281, 43 Church Drive  
Cheshire, CT 06410  
[www.cheshirehistory.org](http://www.cheshirehistory.org)

### *Society Officers*

#### **President**

Marshall Robinson

#### **Vice President**

Gerald Devine

#### **Secretaries**

Eleanor Verner

Cara Luciani

Brad Zambruski

#### **Treasurer**

Ed Kania

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Ron Gagliardi

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Robert Larkin

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Lois VanAlmkerk

Ray Verner

Pat Vita-Garber

#### **Curators**

Edgar Johnson, *emeritus*

Mary Ellen Kania

Warren VanAlmkerk

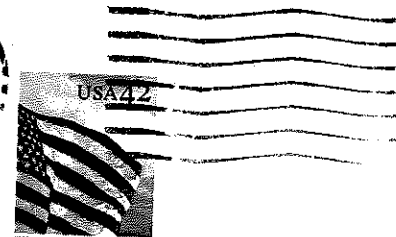
Kathleen Connolly, *asst.*

#### **Webmaster**

Diane Calabro

#### **Newsletter Editor**

Mary Ellen Kania



### **SPRING MEETINGS—PUBLIC INVITED**

**“Thoughts on Cheshire’s Future” - March 23**

**“The Congregational Church in the Colonial Period”—Apr. 27**