

CHESHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

Volume 25, No. 3

Winter 2002-2003

PROGRAMS

Monday, November 25, 7:30 p.m.

"The Youth Program at Lock 12"

Ann Belcher, Program Coordinator

Ann, together with her husband Phillip Belcher and their three children, Jacob (12), Hannah (10), and Micah (8), will discuss "The Youth Program at Cheshire's Lock 12 Park" at our November meeting.

Ann is Program Coordinator for the Lock 12 Youth Committee, and her talk will include an update on the "living history" programs currently offered at Lock 12 as well as information on the operation of the Lock 12 Museum. The family will be in period costume and will show selected artifacts from the museum.

A short business meeting will precede the program

Sunday, December 15, 2 – 4 p.m.

Annual Christmas Party

The house will be aglow with holiday decorations by the Suburban Garden Club. Eggnog, wine, punch and homemade Christmas cookies will be served.

Come join us to see old friends and meet new ones!

All exhibit rooms will be open for viewing. If you haven't visited us lately, it's a wonderful time to see the house.

Plan to stop by!

Winter Calendar

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|----------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| November 25 | Monday 7:30 p.m. | Membership meeting |
| December 15 | Sunday 2 – 4 p.m. | Christmas Party |
| January 19 | Sunday 1:30 p.m. | Board Meeting |
| February 16 | Sunday 1:30 p.m. | Board Meeting |
| February 23 and March 2 | Sunday 12:30 – 2 p.m. | Two-session class for house guides |
| March 16 | Sunday 1:30 p.m. | Board Meeting |
| March 24 | Monday 7:30 p.m. | Membership meeting |

The Hitchcock Phillips House will be open to the public on Sundays, 2 – 4 p.m. except for December 29.

Here Comes the Bride!

Pat Vita has volunteered to coordinate a special exhibit of wedding dresses and wedding photographs of Cheshire residents at the Hitchcock-Phillips house this spring, Sunday, May 18, to Sunday, June 15.

According to 2nd Curator Warren Van Almkerk, our costume collection includes a large number of historic wedding dresses. He plans to dress all of the house mannequins in wedding dresses. For the picture display, we'd like to borrow wedding pictures – your grandmother's, your mother's, yours. The older the better! During the holidays, please look over your family photographs. If you have a bridal photo you would be willing to loan to the exhibit, please call Pat at 272-3963.

New Director

At the November 17 Board meeting, the resignation of Director Robert Sweeney was accepted and his wife Marian Sweeney was elected to fill the remainder of the three-year term. The term extends until April 2004. Welcome, Marian!

Fall Children's Visits

A total of 136 third-grade students from St. Bridget's School and Norton School, accompanied by seven teachers and 13 other adults, visited the Society this fall as part of their regular, 3rd grade study of the Town of Cheshire. Third grades from the other elementary schools will visit in the spring.

Volunteer guides included Doris Black, Stephanie Casner, Barbara Christoff, Rosemary Cole, Mary Ellen Kania, Betty Martha, Ann Massimino, Gerry Mitlehner, and Marcia Robbie.

Mary Ellen and Ann also facilitated an evening visit from 13 Chapman School Tiger Cub Scouts and their parents on October 29.

New Plantings

The new foundation plantings in front of the house are a gift from The Suburban Garden Club. The plants include boxwoods, hydrangeas, rhododendron and blue juniper. Club members also planted a large selection of "old fashioned" bulbs, which should be beautiful next spring.

Freedom Tree

On Sunday, October 27, the Suburban Garden Club and the Cheshire Garden Club combined to plant a Clara Barton Redbud Freedom Tree seedling in memory of the September 11 victims. The 3-foot seedling, which will remain protected by a plastic tube for the next two years, is located toward the rear of the house on the south side.

Course for House Guides

House Tours Chairman Mary Ellen Kania and Curator Edgar Johnson will conduct a two-session course for people interested in serving as Cheshire Historical Society guides on Sunday, February 23, and Sunday, March 2, from 12:30 to 2 p.m. If you are interested, please call Mary Ellen at 272-8771.

Parlor Fireplace is Back

In October, the parlor fireplace, which has been covered with black plastic for over a year, was repaired. The Town placed new steel plates in both the parlor and dining room chimneys to seal the openings. Our fireplace problems began in 2001 and a new chimney cap was installed; however, the money for the final repairs was not available until the Town's 2002 budget year.

The Mulveys Find "Roots"

Bob and Donna Mulvey of Ocala, FL contacted the Society by e-mail last spring looking for information on Bob's grandfather, Michael Mulvey, who was born in Cheshire in 1862. At first, we could not be of much help except to advise them of four Mulvey tombstones in the old St. Bridget's Cemetery on Rt. 10 - no "Michael", however.

Then, Edgar Johnson uttered the amazing words, "Oh, I knew the Mulveys." He remembered a Mulvey who was caretaker for the cemetery and lived in a little house north of the old church (where the shopping center is now) and two Mulvey "girls", Helen and Agnes, who used to get a bus to work near his house. He also remembered that Society member Claire Wallinger had been a close friend of Helen Mulvey, who died in 1987 at age 90, and had helped settle her affairs.

This was great news to Bob and Donna. They came to Cheshire in October on the way to New York State to greet a new grandchild. They stayed three nights at the Welcome Inn, and met with President Ed Kania, Edgar and Claire at the Society. The best surprise was that Claire produced a stack of old papers which she had saved following Helen's death. (Claire said she "hated to throw old papers away!") They included a wealth of information about the Mulvey family - a US naturalization paper, family letters, even a price list of the supplies used to build the house on Rt. 10.

It was a genealogical bonanza for the Mulveys - and a very happy ending for all!

Recent Acquisitions by the Society

Antique Doll Carriage and Doll

Raymond Verner of Waterbury, son of Myra Williams Verner, has given us a wonderful doll carriage from the attic of his mother's home on Cornwall Avenue and a doll with a leather body that she played with as a child. Myra, who was born in 1908 and was on the Cheshire Public Library staff for many years, is now in the Cheshire Convalescent Center.

The carriage has a fringed canopy and is older than the doll. It may even have belonged to Ray's grandmother, Helen Williams, who was Cheshire's second librarian.

Wm. L. Gilbert Clock Co. Wall Clock

Raymond Verner also gave us a beautiful "Columbia" wall clock from his mother's home. The clock was manufactured by the William L. Gilbert Clock Co. in Winsted. Richard Copleston has checked *A Treasury of American Clocks* for us. He reports that the company goes back to 1825 and operated as William L. Gilbert Clock Co. from 1871 to 1934. We hope to find the dates during which the "Columbia" model was produced.

Bisque "Puppet Show" Figurine Vase

Connie Field has given the Society a lovely bisque figurine vase showing three children watching a puppet show. It was given to her maternal grandfather, Leonard Kolczynski, by financier Solomon Guggenheim around 1900.

At that time, her grandfather was working as a gardener on the Guggenheim estate in Bay Shore, Long Island. He and his family had emigrated from Poland after his land was confiscated by the Russian tsar. On a Christmas Day, Guggenheim took the vase off his own mantelpiece and gave it to Kolczynski "for the children."

On the vase, the word "GUIGNOL" is above the puppet theater. It does not appear in the on-line dictionaries for Italian, Spanish or French. Can anyone identify this word?

Forged Andirons

To dress up our reopened fireplace in the parlor, Curator Edgar Johnson has brought in a fine set of iron andirons which were made on a blacksmith's forge. He dates them from the early 1800s.

Nathan Booth Map of Cheshire from Civil War Era

Last spring, the Society received an old map of Cheshire rolled in a cylinder-shaped, metal container. Kathleen Connolly of Southington, a member of the International Society of Appraisers, graciously agreed to appraise the map for us. Her report follows:

"Nathan Booth, the map maker for which this appraisal is the subject, was born in Cheshire on April 22, 1801. Nathan built the family homestead on 466 Academy Road in 1857, according to his ancestors, who still reside there. He was a civil engineer and part-time farmer. A man of obvious means, he traveled extensively and was well known and highly respected. His death occurred on July 22, 1887.

"The map, which is in original pencil, documents a Cheshire during the Civil War years. It is a map of a village that conveys a sense of its virgin state with original colonial homesteads, roads, farms, churches, and its old Cheshire families. The map determines residence in each house and is surrounded by small vignettes of buildings of note including the Episcopal Academy. The map also has a drawing of a man with a pick, perhaps pertaining to the barite mines discovered in Cheshire in 1840. The original tin container, which is hand made, has survived along with this remarkable document of Cheshire history.

Appraisal: \$1000.00"

We are now investigating the best way to frame and display the map.

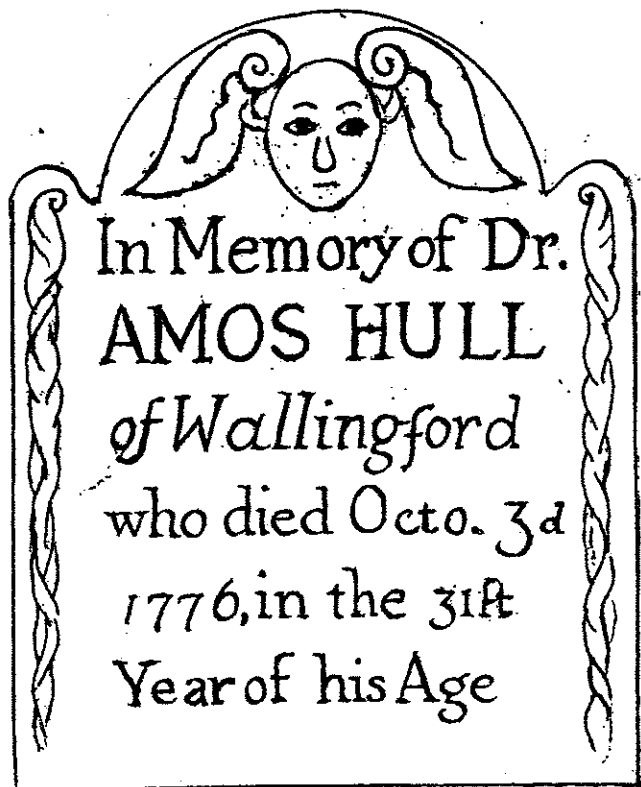
Dr. Amos Hull's Two Tombstones – in Cheshire and in Norwalk

Thanks to Lynn Friedman, vice president of the Norwalk Historical Society, we have received additional information about Dr. Amos Hull's **other tombstone** in the Brookside Cemetery in Norwalk.

As we reported in our fall issue, Dr. Amos Hull, who built the Pliny Hitchcock house at 744 South Main Street, served with the Revolutionary Army from time to time. During one of these enlistments in the fall of 1776, records show he died "in camp."

Until Lynn contacted us, we did not know where he died. A tombstone with his date of death, October 3, 1776, is in Cheshire's Hillside Cemetery and he is listed on the DAR plaque there. It was a great surprise to learn that he also has a tombstone in Norwalk's Brookside Cemetery.

According to Lynn, the Brookside Cemetery on Rowayton Avenue, Norwalk, has some 150 gravestones. The cemetery was established in 1724 and was active for about 150 years - averaging about one burial per year. In the fall of 1776, however, eight people were buried in the little cemetery in one month (September 4 to October 5).



Seven of the eight people, including six members of a Reed family, lived in houses along the Boston Post Road, probably all in a row. The eighth grave belongs to Dr. Hull.

Retreat after Capture of New York

Records from the period show that after the British capture of New York City on August 27, 1776, thousands of defeated militiamen came straggling back to Connecticut on foot, many wounded and many sick with "camp fever." Governor Trumbull ordered hospitals set up in each shore town. According to a report published by the Darien Historical Society, "By November, the Stamford hospitals were reported to be caring for 121 soldiers and Norwalk claimed to have 400-500 sick soldiers billeted in vacant houses."

It seems quite probable that Dr. Hull was caring for the militiamen who had retreated after the Battle of New York. He and the others who were buried in the Brookside Cemetery at that time may have become ill and died from the epidemic of "camp fever." While this is only a conjecture, it is fun to speculate!

As reported in our fall newsletter, *Landmarks of Old Cheshire* tells us that Dr. Hull's "personal effects were returned to Cheshire by Dr. Gould Gift Norton, who promptly proposed to Dr. Hull's widow (Martha Hitchcock) and married her, acquiring her former husband's home and medical practice as well." Dr. Norton lived in the South Main Street house until his death in 1813. After his death, the house was purchased by Pliny Hitchcock.

Left: Drawing of Dr. Amos Hull's tombstone in Brookside Cemetery, Norwalk, by Cheshire artist Geraldine Roberts, who copied it from a recent photograph. (Cheshire was officially part of Wallingford until 1780.)

In Memoriam

Ernest T. Wheeler – September 22, 2002

Elizabeth M. 'Betty' Lawler – October 8, 2002

Marilyn K. Ray – November 3, 2002

Joseph F. Bernard, Jr. – November 11, 2002

*We are saddened by the loss of these members and extend
our deep sympathy to their families.*

THE LEGACY BOOK

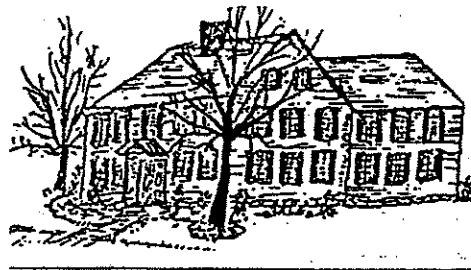
Our town has had many well-known citizens in its long and illustrious history. But everyone is unique and memorable in his or her own way and deserves to be celebrated.

At the suggestion of Vice President Ron Gagliardi, the Cheshire Historical Society Board has decided to offer everyone the opportunity to be honored and remembered in what we plan to call our LEGACY BOOK. It will be a book that will be preserved by us and on permanent display for you, the members of your family and your fellow residents.

Call Ron Gagliardi at 272-0701 for additional information and instructions on how to obtain and complete your page. The cost is \$25.00.

You may honor living individuals or use the page as a memorial to a departed loved-one. We will use the funds to support our projects. We hope you will use the page as a cherished gift for someone special to you, your family or the town.

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NEWS**



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Cheshire Historical Society
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