

CHESHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

Volume 26, No. 3

Winter 2003-2004



You Are Cordially Invited

to a

Christmas Open House

Sunday, December 21

2—4 p.m.

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 will be a wonderful time to see the house. The 2003 acquisitions will be highlighted with red bows.

Plan to stop by!



Winter Calendar

December 21	Sunday 2—4 p.m.	Christmas Open House
January 18	Sunday 7:00 p.m.	Board Meeting
January 25 & February 1	Sunday 12:30—2 p.m.	Two-session class for new house guides
February 15	Sunday TBA	Board Meeting
March 14	Sunday TBA	Board Meeting
March 22	Monday 7:30 p.m.	Membership Meeting

The Cheshire Historical Society Museum, the Hitchcock Phillips House, is open to the public on Sundays, 2—4 p.m.

No membership meetings held in January and February

New Members

We are pleased to welcome the following new members:

- Mrs. Josie Banach, 400 Mountain View Terrace
Mr. and Mrs. David and Diane Callabro,
1731 Peck Lane
Mr. and Mrs. Robert and Frances Davis,
30 Braemar Drive
Mr. Hazen Jones, 101 Cranberry Lane
Mr. and Mrs. Linda and Tali Madelis,
605 Woodpond Road
Judge and Mrs. Ernest and Ginger Oberst
404 Patton Drive
Ms. Jane Richards, 420 James Drive
Mr. and Mrs. Arthur and Sharon Sides
636 Moss Farm Road
Mr. and Mr. Timothy and Kristen Slocum
1285 Lilac Court
Ms. Ingeborg Venus, 120 Laurel Terrace

NEW COURSE FOR HOUSE GUIDES SCHEDULED JAN. 25 & FEB. 1

A two-session course for people interested in being guides at the Hitchcock Phillips House will be held Sunday, Jan. 25, and Sunday, Feb. 1, 12:30—2:00 p.m. House Tours Chairman Mary Ellen Kania and Curator Edgar Johnson will serve as instructors.

Those who attend will be asked to help at the regular Sunday open house from 2 to 4 p.m. about once every eight weeks,

September through May, or to assist with a specially-scheduled group or school class visit.

The class is a wonderful opportunity for members to get acquainted with the house and the exhibits. No advance knowledge is necessary, just an interest in learning about the house and sharing it with others.

The first session will include the history of the house

and a detailed look at the contents of the first floor rooms. The second session will focus on the second floor rooms.

If you are interested in attending, please call Mary Ellen at 272-8771. Additional people familiar with the house contents are very much needed.

Please consider volunteering!

GOOD NEWS ABOUT OUR KENSETT PAINTING

At the end of October, we received the good news that our little Kensett oil painting of Niagara Falls **will be included** in the John Frederick Kensett Catalogue Raisonne now being compiled by Dr. John Driscoll, Ph.D. Dr. Driscoll is a well-known Kensett expert and the owner of Babcock Galleries, 724 Fifth Avenue, New York City. This is a major, scholarly accolade for our picture. A "catalogue raisonne" gives a complete, verified record of all existing works by a single artist.

In June, after looking at photographs only, the Catalogue Raisonne Committee was unsure if our painting was really a Kensett. With the help of Curator Huntley Eikenburg, it was agreed that they would look at the actual painting.

A handwritten note indicating "Bought at sale No. 683" on the back of the stretcher on our picture was considered significant. Following Kensett's sudden death in 1873, his executors sold more than 600 paintings at a marathon sale in New York City. The Kensett committee has the original catalogue from the sale, and it indicates that picture 683 is "Sketch, Niagara. 8" x 5."

Ed and Mary Ellen took our painting to New York City early in October and the commit-

tee met on October 29. They were able to locate a picture of our painting in the sale photographs and also a record that it was purchased by a G. Meade for \$35, plus \$1 for the frame.

The decisive factor was the unique, silvery grey color in the water fall and water . . . absolutely unique to Kensett. . .

The committee thought that some of the open brush strokes on the right side of our picture appeared to be in the style of Thomas Cole. They felt, however, that Kensett may have been attempting to imitate this style, and that the rest of the picture was consistent with his work.

According to Huntley, the decisive factor was the unique silvery grey color in the waterfall and the water. This color was absolutely unique to Kensett, who was much

admired by his peers for his "palette." Also the way the headland meets the water on the left of the picture is very typical of the style and composition seen in Kensett's Newport (RI) paintings.

The dimensions of our picture, 9.5" x 6", are slightly larger than those indicated in the sale catalogue. This was considered a "mystery," but not significant enough to prevent inclusion in the catalogue raisonne. Needless to say, we are delighted with the result! Our picture is now back on the Exhibit Room wall. Give it a special "thumbs up" when you walk by!

BOOKS FROM JEAN MCKEE

Special thanks to Jean McKee for the generous gift of a new, two-volume set, Voices of the New Republic, Connecticut Towns 1800-1832, edited by Christopher P. Bickford (Vol. I) and Howard R. Lamar (Vol. II), Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 2003, and a new genealogy, Dr. John Durand of Derby, Connecticut and His Family by Alvy Ray Smith, New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2003.

Volume I of Voices of the New Republic documents previously unpublished responses to a questionnaire which the Academy sent to all Connecticut towns in 1800. The questionnaire asked about each town's history, its plants, animals, farming methods, industry, churches, schools, and many other areas. Cheshire's response was written in 1803 by John Foot, and gives a fascinating glimpse of our town 200 years ago. Volume II gives commentary and assessment of the responses by modern historians.

The Durand genealogy has excellent information on a number of prominent Durands, including Hudson River artist Asher Brown Durand. The books are now on display in the Exhibit Room.

Visitors to the Society This Fall

In addition to Sunday afternoons, the Hitchcock Phillips House was open to the following special visitors during the fall:

- Republican Town Committee campaign party (rental)
- Bus tour group from East Hill Retirement Community in Southbury
- St. Bridget's School third grades (Special thanks to volunteer guides Priscilla Clark, Ann Massimino, and Rosemary Cole!)
- Meeting of the Ladies Aid Group, First Congregational Church, for program about the Society
- Adult English-as-a-Second-Language Class, Humiston School,
- Den 1 Bears, Boy Scout Pack 92, Norton School.

COPIES OF AMOS DOOLITTLE "MONEY" NOW ON DISPLAY

On a visit to Connecticut in November, Nancy Rose Redling of New Ipswich, NH, president of Doolittles of America, Inc., brought us a framed copy of six bank notes issued by Washington Bank, Westerly, RI. Each note is clearly marked "engraved and printed by Amos Doolittle, New Haven, 1800." (Doolittle was born in Cheshire in 1754.)

The new acquisition, which includes \$1, \$3, and \$25 notes, fits perfectly on the west wall of the Exhibit Room. It is located next to our copies of Doolittle's prints from the Battles of Lexington and Concord.

Bank notes such as these entered circulation as money lent to borrowers. For many years, they comprised most of the currency in the United States. The federal government did not begin issuing standard currency until the National Bank Act of 1863.

Other Recent Gifts

Roaring Twenties beaded dress of blue Cheney silk, made in Connecticut. Gift from Barbara Balch, Cheshire.

Copy of a brochure entitled "Mountain Brook," created in the 1940s by the late Edward M. Bradley for possible sale of his estate off South Brooksvale Road. It has black and white photos of the house and grounds. Gift from his grandson, Dr. Donald F. Bradley, Jr. of West Hartford.

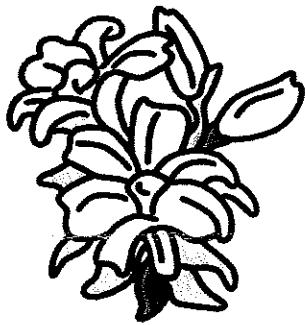
Framed 1867 invoice to Mr. Henry Hotchkiss from N. W. Merwin, Wholesale Dealer in Flour, Grain, Meat, Feed, 8 & 10 State St., New Haven. Prices are interesting: tobacco—\$5 / gross; meal—\$3.85 / bag; flour—\$13.25 / barrel. Gift from Claire Wallinger, Society member.

Wooden blocks which can be assembled to demonstrate mortise and tenon with wooden peg construction. Gift from Robert Davis, Society member and speaker at our October meeting.

Cheshire Garden Club at Work on Courtyard Restoration

Since June, Cheshire Garden Club members have been at work on a handsome restoration of the Lucille D. Williams Memorial Garden at the rear of the house. Under the leadership of Club President Rebecca Simpson, their aim has been to remake the courtyard into an authentic Colonial Period garden, blending the informality of a cottage garden behind a farmhouse with the more formal geometric design of the raised flowerbeds, separated by gravel paths, which were found behind Colonial mansions and public buildings.

In June, Garden Club Parks Committee members removed invasive species of barberry shrub and overgrown fern, pachysandra and poison ivy. They also pruned the pink dogwood tree, which had been planted by the club in the courtyard in 1984. In October, the existing lawn was removed and replaced with peastone gravel. All the flowerbeds were edged with red bricks, and the soil was thoroughly reworked, amended and mulched to give the appearance of raised beds. Parks Committee research has determined that this was a dominant design feature of the Colonial period. The center herb garden was elevated by one entire layer of bricks.



A simple, wooden bench has been placed alongside the outdoor staircase, surrounded by rhododendron and azalea known in Colonial times. Red and yellow tulips, yellow daffodils, grape hyacinths, and fritillarias, all used in the late 1700s and early 1800s, have been dug in throughout the courtyard.

Garden Club has appropriated \$800

To date, the Cheshire Garden Club has appropriated \$800 for work in the courtyard. Additionally, discounts and donations from nurseries, stores and professional labor have been secured, making this a real community project.

Needless to say, we are delighted with the “new look!”

Parks Committee Chair and Club Historian Inge Venus, who is also a new Historical Society member, has given us some interesting history of the garden.

Herb Garden Designed in 1976

The central herb garden, in the shape of a wagon wheel, was designed and constructed in 1976 with a \$200 donation from the Cheshire Garden Club. It was first named the “Historical Herb Garden.” In 1980, with Lucille Williams an active participant, flowerbeds abutting the two buildings and the fences were added, and the garden was renamed the “Old Fashioned Garden.”

Following Lucille’s death in 1984, the garden was dedicated in her honor. The plaque reads “The Lucille D. Williams Memorial Garden—Established and Maintained by the Cheshire Garden Club.” Lucille was an active member of both the Cheshire Garden Club and the Cheshire Historical Society as well as many other Cheshire organizations. In the Garden Club, she was affectionately known as the “Geranium Gal.” She was instrumental in naming the geranium as the Town’s flower and the dogwood tree as the Town’s tree. In the Historical Society, she is particularly remembered for the beautiful wall stenciling in the Craig bedroom.

The Cheshire Garden Club received an award of excellence in civic development for historical preservation from the Federated Garden Clubs of Connecticut (FGCC) in 1985. Slides of the garden taken in 1990 are still used as part of the FGCC program on Historical and Memorial Gardens. It is interesting that the 2003-2005 FGCC theme is “Saving Yesterdays Treasures Today For Tomorrow.” The principal caretakers of the garden since 1991 were Carla Burritt and the late Eva Beck. Other Garden Club members, all also Historical Society members, who have made major contributions are Nelle Mokrzyński, Dorothy Edwards and Lee Pelz.

Mini Museum, Depression Era Glassware Are New Exhibits

Town Historian and Society Vice President Ron Gagliardi has set up his first mini-museum, a display of vintage toys from the 1930s and later in the south display case in the Exhibit Room. It is the first in a series of exhibits Ron is planning for this exhibit case—and, hopefully, for other sites in town. He says he hopes to have mini-museums all over town: in the library, schools, businesses, senior center, town hall, wherever there is a secure space.

The present exhibit, which will remain into January 2004, includes Monopoly sets, Tinker Toys, Trivial Pursuit, Password, Mr. & Mrs. Potato Head, and other childhood (and adult) favorites as well as a handsome Steiff teddy bear. In late January and February, Ron is planning to exhibit Cliff Scofield's postcards from a half century of his photography.

Future exhibits will include famous autographs, political buttons and memorabilia, 1939 World's Fair items, and Ball and Socket Manufacturing Company buttons and other products.

Depression Era Glassware

In the north exhibit case, Society Treasurer Connie Field has arranged a lovely display of her Depression Era glassware. The display is highlighted by 1890 hand-blown glass Christmas tree ornaments from Germany, loaned by Inge Venus.

Depression Era glassware, manufactured during the 1920s and 30s, was the first all-machine-made glass. Connie's collection includes both "dime store" glassware, often given away as promotional items to boost sales, and the finer "elegant glass," which was sold in department and jewelry stores. Elegant glass involved some form of hand operation such as cutting, polishing, or acid etching. The display includes several rare Heisey pieces, including a set of six sherbets. Also of special interest is a large glass plate and matching candlesticks with Pierpont etching.

HISTORY BOOKS THAT MAKE GREAT GIFTS

On sale at the Society on Sunday afternoons—
or call 272-8771 to arrange for individual pickup :

Landmarks of Old Cheshire \$35

Cheshire Bicentennial Committee. Considered the definitive story of the town from its first settlement. Includes charming wash drawing and detailed histories of almost all 18th century houses still standing.

Images of America: Cheshire \$20

By Ron Gagliardi, published in 2001. Documents the town's history from prehistoric times through 1929. Has 240 historic photos that capture the spirit of the town's early years.

Our Town—Cheshire, Connecticut, 1780-1980 \$35

By Marion More Coleman. Reflections, memories and historical notes from throughout the town's history. Most of the assembled articles were published originally in *The Cheshire Herald*.

The Durand Family of Cheshire \$25

By Sterling M. Jewett. Delightful collection of information on the musical Durand Family, virtuosos of vaudeville

Reflections on the Canal in Cheshire \$5

Compiled by Raimon L. Beard with a Special Summary of Canal Finances by Arthur J. Frechette, Jr.

The Barite Mines of Cheshire \$10

By Crawford E. Fritts

18 x 24 inch 1882 map of Cheshire \$5

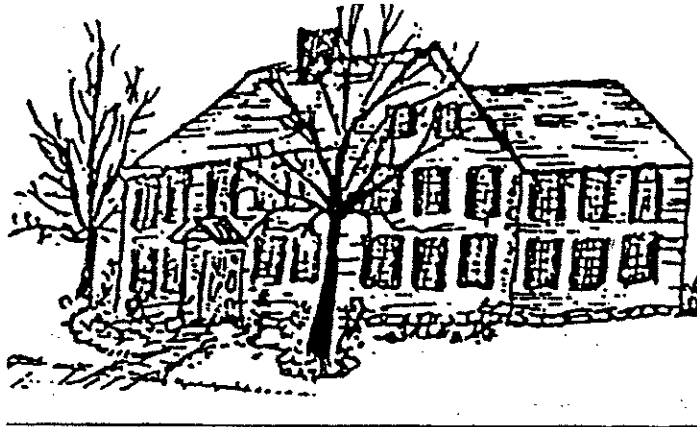
Cheshire Historical Society Officers

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

Board Members: Eric Anderson, Stephanie Casner, Mary Ellen Kania, Ann Massimino, Barbara Merrill, Marshall Robinson, Marian Sweeney, Lois VanAlmkerk, Pat Vita

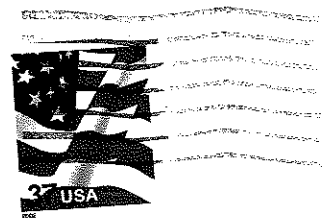
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**CHESHIRE
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NEWS**



WINTER 2003

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