



THE

CHRONICLE

QUARTERLY

Volume 11

No. 3

September 1992

Published By The
Weston Historical Society

THE EDITOR'S EDGE

DE-JA VU—IN FARMING

Well, not exactly. But almost. Let's compare Weston in the 1800's with the 1990's. The 'hot' concept in agriculture these days is SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE. But is it new? The three measurements by which sustainability is determined include environmental and social barometers. Let's look at the three measurements. The first states that the farm must be economically viable. The early farmer in Weston farmed to provide food and housing for his family. Later, he was able to produce a few products for the market so he could buy some necessary items he could not raise. Today's farmer farms for profit and probably does not produce too many of the items used by his family. The second measurement states that the natural resource base (the farm) must not be depleted. And a measure of this includes maintaining the fertility and keeping soil erosion to a minimum. The 1800's farmer in Weston did not have much in the way of fertile soil to start with. His only source of fertilizer for many years was the manure his cattle produced. He was not able to produce the yields that the farmers to the west could (with their deep loam) and soon found himself with shrinking markets. This leads to the third measurement; No farming system is sustainable if the community within which it is situated is not sustained. When the industry which dotted the riverbanks of Weston folded because of overwhelming competition, farming, already on the wane, was further hurt and finally ceased to exist.

In today's agriculture, many small farmers, unable to compete, sell out to larger farmers. This tends to affect the
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CURRENT EVENTS

CIDER PRESS SHED

We are happy to announce that we have signed a contract with Jeff Bradley of Westbrook, Connecticut to begin the construction of the frame for the shed. We will have a 'BARN' raising of the shed on October 10, starting about 9:00 am. Watch for this event. Rain date is October 24. We will have some local 'farmers' helping us put the frame up. Later this month, we will have the roof put on, and if we have the lumber available, we will start putting the siding on the date of the Scare Fair, October 31.

MEMBERSHIP

Our Membership Chair, Eileen Buckley, has advised the Trustees that your Society has increased in membership by over 75 members since April 1. We welcome all who have recently joined, and we thank all our members who have sent in their renewal memberships.

PROGRAMS

The above mentioned 'barn raising' is the center of the next Society event. However, we will have the Barn Museum open on Sunday afternoons in October from 2 until 4 pm (see below).

SCARE FAIR

A Scare Fair is scheduled for Saturday, October 31. Information is on the enclosed flyer.

FUTURE PROGRAM IDEAS

We have explored the possibility of having an Antique show with dealers at the Coley Homestead. However, we were unable to get all the plans in place for this year. We are exploring this idea along with several others for next year and will announce our program for 1993 as soon as the plans are in place.

MUSEUM HOURS

The barn museum will be open on Sunday afternoons during October (2-4 pm). While not all of the museum has been renovated, we feel that there is enough for visitors to see. We hope you can spend a few minutes with us.

OLD POST OFFICE

We are pleased to advise you that work will soon begin on the renovation of the old post office. Monies have been appropriated by the First Selectman's office to permit the renovation of two sides of the building: the front and the south side. This includes replacing decaying framing, windows, and replacing the clapboard siding.

PICTURE QUIZ



CAN YOU NAME THIS?

If you can, please send your name and address to:

THE EDITOR
THE CHRONICLE QUARTERLY
P.O. BOX 1092
WESTON, CT 06883

The item in the last issue is a concrete bucket, which is used to carry concrete from the mixer to the foundation or form where it will be used. In this case, it was used in the building of the Saugatuck dam. This one is resting just west of the dam, not far from where it was used. The pictures to the right show it in use while the dam was being built. For the use in building the dam, it was run along the cable to the spot in the dam where it was needed, and lowered and the concrete was released by pulling on a large lever.

We received one correct answer from Mr. Carter Beach of Old Easton Tpke.



Concrete bucket moving away from dam site after dropping concrete. Saugatuck Dam, Weston.

Concrete bucket moving on cable to Saugatuck Dam site.

FIFTY YEARS — OR SO — AGO

Special friends of ours; Francis and Mary Bennett, of Wilton, recently celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary. Francis lived just over Weston's town line and was probably more familiar with the roads in Weston than he was with Wilton. Early in his life he worked for Irv Patchen as a builder, and for a time had a milk route in Weston, picking up his milk from several Weston farmers, including Dave Coley on River Road. One of Francis' best friends was Jim Coley, who, with his wife Cleora, gave the Coley homestead to the Society. In fact, Jim and Cleora hosted the engagement party for Francis and Mary in their home; the present home of the Weston Historical Society. For many years Francis was an officer of the Norwalk Bank for Savings.

We have printed the announcement of this party opposite the Eva Gray insert. It appeared in the July 7, 1932 issue of the Westporter-Herald newspaper.

Continued from cover

economy of the local shopping center or town, which, in many states, has gradually become a ghost town.

Fortunately, Weston survived as a town because of the commuters and the tenacity of the descendants of the early farmers.

DE-JA VU? What do you think?

This editorial is based on a letter by the president of the American Farmland Trust, Mr. Ralph Grossi, in the Summer 1992 issue of the American Farmland.

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PUBLISHED BY THE
WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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Herb Day

Herb Day - Editor

WESTON HISTORICAL NOTEBOOK

EVA GRAY — AND HER CORNER OF WESTON — AS IT USED TO BE

Eva Gray was interviewed by Scott Hill at her home at 145 Valley Forge Road on February 18, 1977. This oral tape was transcribed in a narrative form by Ruth Lockwood, for the Historical Society. We think you will find it interesting.

I am 87 years old. My health is pretty good. I don't complain. My hand, Doctor wants me to go to the hospital and have it opened. He said, "I know it hurts and pretty soon you won't be able to use your hand." I said, "Well, I know but I'm 87." I have cataracts on my eyes but they don't grow very fast. I've had them several years now. I can see the TV and I sew all the time. There are Indians on one side of my family. They were all around here years ago, up on Pops Mountain and the upper part of Easton. I'm related to the Golden Hill Tribe. I tried to find out more about my ancestors a number of times but most of the stories I got didn't go back further than my great grandfather.

When I came to Weston, I was up on Davis Hill. Fred Davis did all kinds of farming and almost everything else. He mowed lawns, took care of gardens, and in the cemetery he dug graves. Of course he had a farm up there on the hill years ago. Mrs. Davis, Fred's mother, was a very nice person. She worked awfully hard. Eliza. His father, Jerry Davis, was a farmer. The old Davis house was an old fashioned saltbox up there at 100 Davis Hill where Tex Moore lives now. They bought it and fixed it up, it's a beautiful house. Fred had two sisters, Jenny and Eva. Fred would have been 90 years old had he lived another month. He died in October 1972 and is buried down in the Emmanuel Church Cemetery near some of his family.

I came here in 1941. I tried to buy one of the houses the Hydraulic Company was selling before they built the dam and flooded Valley Forge, but I couldn't afford it. Anson Morton bought this and had it moved down from there. It used to be the store Dr. Gorham owned. He had died and the Hydraulic Company bought their place from Annie, his wife. They had a real nice place. The path up to this house is very steep. There's a fireplace but the chimney is right up against a big boulder so all the smoke comes right back down, it doesn't draw. I have an automatic heater sitting in the fireplace. The gas for it costs \$80. a month. I get Social Security but I don't get gas. That's all the heat I have. There's an electric stove in the kitchen. There is no indoor plumbing. Up to two years ago, I got my water by gravity, then an artesian well was drilled.

There were other stores in Weston. One of them was where the Mansbridges now live at 306 Lyons Plain Road. The foundation to it has been covered over. There was another where the Wolfs live below Cartbridge Road at 145 Lyons Plain and there had been another store over on Weston Road near the Norfield Cemetery.

The Godfreys lived next door. Several people lived there after they did, I think they built it, and before the Ettingers bought it about 30 years ago. Steven Godfrey had a cider mill across from Anson Morton's (153 Valley Forge Road). He had a charcoal pit over on Godfrey Road near where it comes out on Valley Forge. There used to be a coal pit on Davis Hill Road, corner of Steep Hill. You could see the chunks of charcoal but I think the road covered that up. I remember the old red barn across from Morton's. It was between the road and the river. And when I came here right across from me was part of the old hoe factory still standing. There were just some beams, you couldn't tell what it had been.

Mrs. Godfrey was my Sunday School teacher. I was always a Methodist. When we came here, Betty and Ginny, my granddaughters, went to Emmanuel Episcopal Church but I didn't though I was baptized at Emmanuel. Bud Palmer, who lived up on Laurel Ridge Lane, I'd known them a long time and we were talking and she asked me, "Wouldn't you like to go to St. Paul's?" And I said, "Yes," so I went to St. Paul's in East Norwalk on Westport Hill. It's the stone church on the green on the steep hill. The priest was up the other day to see me. We call them priests and Father. There was a woman in Florida last year when I was down there. I always said Father or Reverend Mother and "Sister Mary, how are your students?" She said she was a Catholic and I know they say the same as we do because St. Paul's is so near Catholic. She said we must call them by their first names. I never could call anybody by their first name. Even my good friends that I see every day—Mrs. Kruse, or Mrs. Golden or Mrs. Scully, it's always Mrs. to me no matter how near or close they are. Mr. Canevari asked me to call him Fred, but I just couldn't.

There used to be a log across the river on the other side of the road here. They used to go over it and down Davis Hill to the store where Mansbridges are. Some would fall in the river and boys would dare each other to jump off there. I think it finally fell down. I've seen painters go over there and sit and paint the Gorge. It would be wonderful if it weren't for all these people, boys and girls, coming from other towns and making such a mess. If you go over when there's a gang there, they yell insults.

Betty and Ginny went to the first Hurlbutt School before it burned. Virginia has a girl and boy. Betty has two girls and a boy. She's lived in Sussex 21 years. She works in a restaurant out there.

Of course the Webb Waldrons were already here when I came. I knew Mrs. Lillian Morton, Anson's mother, and the Treadwells. I get so embarrassed, I can't remember names but they lived at Cobbler Hill in there where the Thorpes were. The other day Mrs. Schor took me to a concert over at the high school and somebody spoke to me and I couldn't recall their name. The Thorpes were there in the early 40's. The children died and the mother died. One of the boys died very suddenly. Robin writes me all the time. She's married and living in Vermont. She has four children all grown up and one is married. She had one girl and three boys.

I knew all the Moores from way back, Jim and Peggy. Irving Patchen and his father were excellent carpenters. They lived next to each other at 265 and 267 Lyons Plain Road. Down across the street Albert Gerhardt lived at 266 Lyons Plain. He was a character all right. He used to say such queer things. I used to think when the war was on, I used to be at a neighbor's of his quite a lot, you'd think he was a Communist the way he used to talk. The woman who lived with him for many years put everything she had in his bank account and then just before he died, he willed it all to a friend of his. She had no money. She always worked in the hat shop, Crofut and Knapp in East Norwalk. My daughter worked down there also. She wasn't living in Weston then, she lived down there. Then that woman got married and she had great hardship, her husband drank so.

This road out here goes to Redding. Before the dam was built, it went straight up instead of crossing the bridge by Mortons. It went right under where the dam is now. I knew quite a few people who lived up in Valley Forge. There was some kind of minister, Coggsell, I knew him. I remember Buckley's old foundry up there. Of course this was Dr. Gorham's store. The Neumanns evidently helped Anson move it. They lived here before I did and so did George Coleman.

The Smiths lived where the Dicksons are (21 Davis Hill Road). He's in an institution but she's still there. The Smiths bought the land and had it built but I can't remember the builder. We were on Davis Hill at that time. It was an old cow shed right there where the red barn is. The end of the barn was moved down to where it is now and built onto. It was just a kitchen and bedroom and living room with only one bedroom upstairs.

The Braytons live at 25 Davis Hill. Peter VanSuetendael has a place at 29 Davis Hill. That was built new. He has a barn for the ponies.

The neighbors up the road don't live, really. Of course I suppose it's his style of living. The wife just sits all day long. I can't do that, I can't stand to sit. I've got to go, do something.

Mark Twain and a lot of other people used to come down Valley Forge Road in sleighs. I used to travel by sleigh when I lived over in Easton.

Over there on Davis Hill Road near Steep Hill there used to be a camp. There was a fire and only the chimney is standing. There were two boys and their parents living there. The father died but she lived there quite awhile. One boy is in Westport now, I think.

Really this whole area along the Saugatuck had many small industrial operations. There were only 600 people when I came here but with all the new roads and new buildings, Weston isn't anything like it used to be. Mrs. Smith writes and says she wants us to come out there and I was going but I hurt my ankle so I couldn't go. She thinks it's just the same here now as it was when they lived here. I told her it wasn't Weston any more, it's just a suburb.

Betrothed Couple Tendered Surprise Party and Shower

Mr. and Mrs. James S. Coley of Norfield gave a delightful surprise party and miscellaneous shower in honor of Miss Mary Marushak and Francis Bennett who are to be married next month. The young couple arrived at the Coley home for an evening visit and were soon greeted by a crowd of friends, blowing horns and ringing bells. They were presented with many handsome gifts, and cards were enjoyed throughout the evening, followed by a supper at midnight.

In addition to the guests of honor, those present included Mr. and Mrs. Stanton Fancher, Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Zimmerli, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Bennett, Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Bennett, Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Gifford, Mr. and Mrs. Rolland Gifford, Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Fitch, Representative and Mrs. Willis Banks, the Misses Alice Thompson, Florence Bennett, Dorothy Bennett, Ruth Bennett, Marion Burr and Doris Haynes, and the Messrs. Kenneth Fitch and Larry Ohmstead.

Miss Marushak is a graduate of Staples High School, where she was very prominent, and Mr. Bennett is a former Master of Norfield Grange and present Steward of the Fairfield County Pomona Grange. It is expected the couple will make their home in Weston.

NEXT ISSUE

MORE OLD PICTURES
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PICTURE QUIZ

THE PASSING PARADE



"Things are so bad I fired my brother-in-law — and he worked for nothing."

A POEM TO PUMPKIN PIE

The following poem; 'HOME-MADE PUMPKIN PIES' is from the November 28, 1885 issue of Good Housekeeping magazine. We hope it helps you get in the spirit of Thanksgiving, even though it is still two months away.

HOME-MADE PUMPKIN PIES.

I've tried the best
In East and West,
I've lunched 'neath tropic sun,
I've tested all
The fruits that fall,
And like them every one;
But North or South
No human mouth,
I will the world apprise,
E'er tasted food
One-half so good
As our own pumpkin pies,
Upon the vine,
In rain and shine,
Through fragrant day and night,
The yellow globe
In emerald robe
Drinks up the summer light,
Oh, golden sweet,
The suns repeat
To mold thy luscious size,
That we may come
And roll thee home,
And make our pumpkin pies
Our lovely girls,
With shining curls
Put neatly in a cap,
Cut slice on slice
And peel it nice,
And stew it to a pap,
Then milk is had
And eggs they add
And sweeten as is wise
While others haste
To spice to taste,
These home-made pumpkin pies.
Oh pure and fair,
This food so rare,
Made up of all that's best!
No creature's pain
Goes to its gain
But only nature's zest;
For summer days
And autumn's haze
And smiles from beauty's eyes
Are in the dish
Mixed to our wish,
That we call pumpkin pies.
No wonder, then,
That loyal men,
From Florida to Maine,
Their quarter eat,
The same repeat,
And pass their plates again;
That exiles fret
With vain regret,
And vex the air with sighs,
When forced to stay
In climes away
From their own pumpkin pies.
So to our boast
I give a toast,
Embroidered all in rhyme:
May pumpkins round
With us abound
Through future autumn time!
And may our girls,
With shining curls
And tender beaming eyes,
All learn by heart
The happy art
Of making pumpkin pies.
—Unidentified.



MASS. MUTUAL LIFE INSURANCE CO. AD
FROM TIME MAGAZINE
NOVEMBER 21, 1960

Norman
Rockwell

At certain times of the year we're reminded how well off we are—as Americans. The most heartfelt thanks of all often come from the head of the table—especially these days when being a family provider is no light responsibility. For past blessings, it is a time for gratitude. For the future, a time for high hopes and careful planning.

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A PUBLICATION OF THE WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
FOUNDED IN 1961

September 1992

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