

THE

CHRONICLE

QUARTERLY

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Weston Historical Society

THE EDITOR'S EDGE

'A DEFINITION'

Bill Rae, who was editor of Outdoor Life magazine from 1951 until 1972 probably had the best definition of an editor. He said 'An editor is a man who doesn't know what he wants but recognizes it instantly'.

I feel a little like that when I sit down to put together an issue of the CHRONICLE. Sometimes I have some articles which are planned for an issue, but most of the time a subject seems to 'just appear'; and I recognize it 'instantly'.

And it seems as though this is the norm as we put together more and more issues. I guess this is because we have to dig deeper for interesting things to include in each issue.

Which brings me around to invite anyone to send in interesting articles on Weston's history to be included in the Chronicle. We have had some wonderful articles sent in over the past eleven years.

Also, I would like to mention in passing that we are looking for a new editor for the Chronicle, since this editor would like to retire.

Herb Day

Herb Day - Editor

GOOD • HOUSEKEEPING

A FAMILY JOURNAL.

Conducted in the Interests of the Higher Life of the Household.

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VOLUME 21,
No. 4.

HOLYOKE, MASS.

DECEMBER 26, 1885.

NEW YORK CITY.

WHOLE No.
17.



Bring the holly! Wreath the pine!
Braid the dainty Christmas vine -
Let the breath of fir and bay
Mingle on this festive day -
Let the cedar fill the air
With its spicy sweetness rare.
Wake the carol-sound the chime -
Welcome Merry Christmas time.

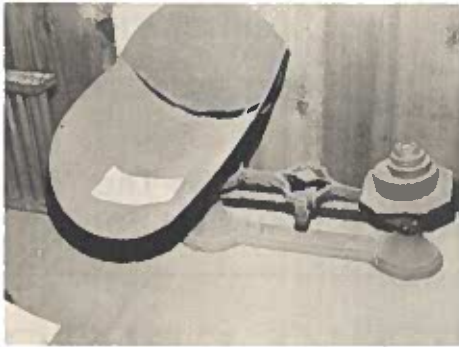
Bring the fronds of hardy fern -
Let the Christmas berries burn
Mid the sprays of richest green;
Weave the ivy polished screen;
And the radiant Christmas rose
In gray mistletoe enlose.
Snowy fleece and sparkling rime
Welcome! Merry Christmas time.

From some sunny forest knoll
Bring the yule log's mighty bole;
Where the pines weird music make
Where the storied yule tree take
Spread the board with rare good cheer -
Nail the fete day of the year.
Wake the carol-sound the chime -
Welcome Merry Christmas time.

Helen Chase

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU FROM THE TRUSTEES OF YOUR SOCIETY,
WE HOPE YOU HAVE A HAPPY, HEALTHY, AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR.

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 picture quiz in the last issue is a picture of a sailing ship tied up to the dock along the Saugatuck River in Westport. This ship probably hauled coal or lumber to the lumber yard behind the ship. We think the picture was taken looking southwest just south of the old bridge in Saugatuck. A girder of the old bridge is in the lower right corner of the picture. This picture is from the collection of old Weston and Westport photographs given to the Society by Gary Samuelson.

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WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 1092
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CURRENT EVENTS

CHRISTMAS AT THE COLEY HOUSE

DECEMBER 4, 5, 6, 1992

Again this year, we go to press about the time that this event is taking place. We hope you were able to attend. This Christmas event in Weston gets better each year. Of course, it doesn't get done without a lot of hard work, and Marylou Perry and her committee have put long hours into making it all come out first class. Thanks to all who have worked on 'Christmas at the Coley House', including the Weston Garden Club and Weston Women's Club.

SCARE FAIR—A SUCCESS!!

The second Scare Fair was a fun time for all who attended. The haunted house—DR. RIGORMORTIS, MORTICIAN—was scary. We only went through once. When that 'corpse' jumped out of the coffin, we almost jumped in the coffin behind him. We thank Pietra Knaus and all the people who helped her put this one over.

CIDER PRESS SHED

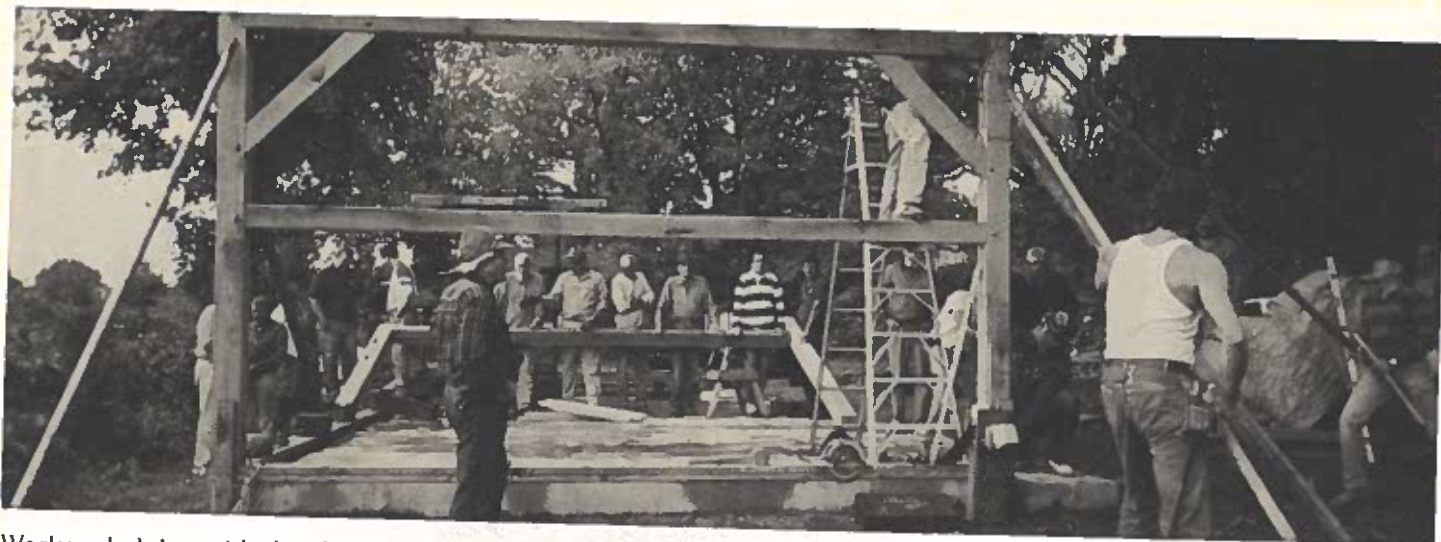
We are on the way. The post and beam frame is up and the roof is on. This will give us some protection from the weather while we assemble the various parts of the cider mill. We enjoyed the generous help of many Weston Kiwanians and several society members who helped Jeff and Ellis Bradley of New England Outbuildings to erect the frame on two Saturdays.

We visited an old but still working cider mill in Old Mystic to talk with the owner. Mr. Jack Bucklyn, third generation owner of Clydes Cider Mill, gave us a tour of his operation. He presses apples for many farmers in eastern Connecticut. His cider press is about 100 years old and is run by a steam engine. He can press 65 bushels of apples at one time, making over 275 gallons of sweet cider with each pressing. What is more important to us is that he knew all about our cider press model, and has a catalog showing it. Our press dates from about 1880. His press is just a model or two newer, but made by the same company: Boomer and Boschert Press Co. of Syracuse, New York. We gained much good information on the operation of a cider press. Our press is Model No. 1. Cider and other items are for sale at Clydes Cider Mill.

CHECK THESE CHRISTMAS PRESENTS OUT FOR A FRIEND OR RELATIVE

1. A membership in the Weston Historical Society \$25.00
2. A copy of 'Weston: The Forging of a Connecticut Town'
The history of Weston by Dr. Tom Farnam \$19.50
3. The Weston Historical Society's cook book \$ 6.50

The books can be ordered from the Society or purchased at the Weston Library. Call or write the Society for a membership application.



Workers helping with the shed raising. Also, some onlookers.



Framing done—putting on the roof.

FIFTY (OR SO) YEARS AGO

We went to the Danbury News-Times of May 5, 1942 for a short news item. Here it is.

JUST LIKE THE GOOD OLD DAYS WHEN MODEL T's WERE A COMMON SITE

Traffic was backed up on White Street to Ives Street yesterday afternoon when the light turned green but the line did not move. The reason? At the head of the line was a Model T, one of that old vintage which a few years back was a common sight on the street, which had stalled.

Unperturbed by the sounding of horns, the operator climbed out and gave the crank a spin a few times and the motor started up.

He climbed back into the seat, via the right hand side, there being no door on the left side, and when the light went green again, drove down the street.

Incidentally, the car, which uses obsolete tires, was equipped with a new set which will carry the owner many thousands of miles.

(Editor's comment—We only report the news, we do not interpret it.)

NEXT ISSUE

GETTING IN THE HAY
PICTURES OF WESTON
REFLECTIONS FROM YOUR
SOCIETY PRESIDENT
FIFTY YEARS AGO
PICTURE QUIZ

PICTURES FROM WESTON'S PAST

Every so often we are given photographs of people and places in Weston from people's albums or from their attics. Some are given to us, and others we borrow to copy. The pictures here are from Gary Samuelson. He found the glass plates in his uncle's barn. You can see by the pictures, the plates were in excellent condition. We do not know who the good looking gentlemen and ladies are, since almost all the old pictures were not labeled.



This house was in Valley Forge and was moved to Godfrey Road East before the reservoir was completed.



Coon hunters par excellent. We could use a few around here now—with all the raccoons in town.

IN MEMORY OF ANSON MORTON

Anson Morton died this fall at the age of 84. He was a member of the Weston Historical Society and had been a trustee. Anson was born in Weston and was a wealth of information regarding people and places of the past. He was also a willing worker, who gave of himself whenever called upon. Part of him and his family lives on in a few pictures and other memorabilia which has been given to the Society by the executor of the estate; Mr. George Guidera. We will include some of this in future issues of the Chronicle.

For this issue, we thought you would like to read the transcribed oral tape that Anson did with Jean Matson on February 18, 1975. This will give you a picture of Anson Morton's Weston and especially the area around Valley Forge and Devils Glen, where he lived. We hope you will enjoy reading this as much as we did.

ANSON MORTON'S WESTON

My father came from New Haven and his father came over from Scotland.

The Squires in our family came from Cambridge, Massachusetts to Fairfield and then to Weston in the early 1700's, as far as we can trace them back. My grandmother Squires was a Merwin and they came here very early in the 1600's. There used to be several here in town and in Easton. My grandfather Squires owned about 80 acres up on Godfrey Road East at one time. Over a period of years it's really hard to say the exact amount because he always bought and sold. He'd buy a little piece of woodland and keep it awhile, then sell it. I still don't believe the story in the paper, that he was issued a grant of land. According to all the deeds that we have, it was all bought.

Originally this house was across the road next to the river. The spring freshnets would flood the cellar so they decided to move it across the road. It is pretty much the same today as it always was except for the porch and a small addition on the back. Toward the reservoir was the old wagon shop with a cider mill on the end of it, which was owned by Platt Keeler who owned this whole area at one time. The wagon shop was probably done away with in the 1880's. It was mostly a family affair plus a few local people. They made the whole wagon. The lumber was all cut locally. They'd let it dry out before they used it. The factory was on the riverside with a water wheel for power. They'd close the gates at the dam at night to hold the water back and in the morning they'd have practically a full pond. During a short time during a dry summer, they might not have enough water to last all day but they could usually keep going with what they had.

Right south of here was the old grist mill that was owned by the Godfrey family, originally by Stephen Godfrey. It only needed one man to run it. He ground corn and wheat. They used to raise a lot of buckwheat around here. They'd grow enough for their own fodder. The grist mill shut down about the same time as the wagon factory. These buildings were all standing when I was very small. The barn was across the river where it is now.

Up in the Forge there was a blacksmith shop and a sawmill. We used to go up and watch them work the sawmill. There were two iron foundries also, one run by the Buckley family on the west side of the river and on the east side was the old Hull Foundry. When Mr. Hull died, a Wheeler who had married into the family, took the foundry over and it became known as Wheeler's Foundry after that. In back of the foundry was the old up and down sawmill run by William Osborn who originally came from Fanton Hill. Up from Buckley's Iron Foundry was a blacksmith shop which was in operation sometime after the other shops had closed down. Clinton Hull's place was up the road about half a mile. Near there was an old frame of a building. They claimed they made beaver hats there but that was almost gone when I was very small. Back in 1912 when I was going to trade school, they were just standing there idle.

There were a few houses in there. The Sanfords lived there, so did Mrs. Wheeler and the Whitlock family. Edgar Perry lived at the upper end of that district near Redding. They all farmed and sold a little wood. They used oxen so much years ago because, as one old gentleman said, "At least you could eat the ox when he got old, but you couldn't the horse." An ox is a much more rugged animal although the horse is much faster on the road and doing everything else.

Some of the families used to cut oyster stakes that are three or four inches at the butt and go to a tip, anywhere from 15 to 20 feet high. They'd sell them to the oystermen to put on the corners of their beds so they wouldn't drag over the next fellow's. The oyster business was going strong in those days.

They used to burn a lot of charcoal here too. That died out right after World War I. It was primarily used in foundries around Bridgeport and Norwalk where they were tempering steel. It gave a good hot heat and would hold up for quite awhile. Quite a bit was used in those days for tempering steel. All through the woods here you can find old charcoal beds.

Most of the time my father was in the wood business. He farmed for what we had to eat, but most of the time he sold wood, timber and burned charcoal. He'd cut the wood and drag it to a central site. Then when it got too far to carry it, he'd dig another pit. He had them up on Pop's Mountain and all around. It's not a regular mountain, mostly stone with hemlocks on it.

Although people had been cutting wood here for a couple of hundred years, I think the old time farmer did a pretty good job of conserving wood. He wouldn't go in and cut a piece of woods off clean, he'd take the poorest and thin it out. They'd be careful when they cut a tree that it didn't damage another. The timber grew back about as fast as it was used. Most people owned maybe 50 or 80 acres so they had the chance to go from one lot to another. Generally the average family cut six or eight cords for the winter. The old timers used to cut two cords a day by hand. They cut it four feet long and put it in a pile. Then when you brought it home you cut it whatever length you wanted it and threw it in the woodshed for the winter. We didn't heat the whole house, only a couple of rooms and enough heat to go upstairs to take the chill off the bedrooms. Most stoves took sticks 16 to 18 inches long. The kids did the biggest part of that work. I know when you got home from school, there were always plenty of chores to do. You didn't have too much time to get into trouble.

We had to go out to the well to draw up our water in wooden buckets with a rope you wound up again with a wheel. In the summer we used to get root beer extract and make root beer. Once in awhile you had lemonade as a real treat.

We had kerosene lamps as far back as I can remember. The wicks had to be trimmed and the chimneys cleaned a couple of times a week. If the wick was turned too high, it would smoke up the chimney. Mr. Webb Waldron gave the poles and got electricity up here about 1924 or 25, maybe a little later.

We didn't do too much hunting. You went out and got what you wanted. Everybody had gardens, cows, chickens and pigs. We raised two pigs a year. People in the neighborhood who made a business of slaughtering would come in and do it. We'd let the pig hang in the barn four or five days to age and cool. Then we'd give half a pig to a neighbor and, when he butchered, we'd take a half back so we never had a great quantity on hand. We kept it in the cellar where it was cold but not freezing. The temperature didn't vary much. We had bins for potatoes, turnips and carrots. The cabbage was hung by the head from the ceiling beams.

There was one store in Valley Forge. It was right next to where Dr. Gorham lived. Beyond the iron foundry on that road beyond the school there was the Gilbert Cemetery which is now under the reservoir. Sometimes it was called the Rowland Cemetery because Rowland ran the farm which surrounded it for a good many years. But when I was young, it was known as the Gilbert Cemetery because that was mostly all who were buried there. It was really a family cemetery which has been moved up to Redding on Route 57 right next door to the Mark Twain Inn. It used to be pretty close to the town lines of Redding and Easton.

This road out here is the direct route from Redding to Westport. It used to go through where the reservoir is now. It was quite a busy road for those times. It wasn't as wide as it is now. It was really a one track road, if you met anybody, you had to turn out. After a snowstorm the neighbors would all take their sleds and horses and break it out. If it was too bad, they'd have to shovel the drifts out. Nobody was paid for it. They just did it on their own.

You go back through here you're going toward Kellogg Hill, then you can come up Bradley Road down here that goes up through and dead ends in that lot up there which the water company now owns. Originally the British came up that Wells Hill Road, up the back of this valley and came out above the Forge here on their way to Danbury. The old Wells Hill Road went right straight across and down back of this Pop's Mountain, right up through the valley. They camped on the upper end overnight between Redding and Weston.

Off that old Egypt Road was an iron mine but the grade was so low they only used it in an emergency. Most of it was brought up from Westport. Maybe with today's technology some could be salvaged.

Burton Merwin's toy factory over at Aspetuck Corners looks today as it did years ago except that where they used to have the cider mill up on the top side there, they straightened that building along that line. They used to have a little shed out there where they drove under with the apples. They made little jumping jacks, little boxing toys and very small things like that.

In the first world war, he also had a store, and at one time, a post office. It served the Weston-Easton area around the Aspetuck. The Bluebird Cemetery is right over there on the Black Rock Turnpike. The one on the left is real old. The one on the right side of the road is the newer one.

When I was little there was an Indian who lived up on Newtown Avenue in a cave almost on the road, between Godfrey Road and Jim Hoe's. It was up where that ledge is. I think part of it was blasted off when they straightened the road. There was a big rock that came out and there was quite a hole underneath they had sort of blocked off when he lived there. An old Indian and his family lived in this old house out here years ago, but I don't remember that. They were gone before we bought the place. In the old days there were a lot of Indians living up in the Den.



Anyone know where this house was or is in Weston?



We believe that this house was moved from Valley Forge to Goodhill Road.

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