

The Chronicle Quarterly

Weston Historical Society

Winter/Spring 1997

Volume 16, No.1



A THREAD THROUGH HISTORY



Charlie Squire, son of Levi and Lillian

The name Squire is threaded throughout the history of Weston from its earliest days. According to an oral history done by Anson Morton*, the Squire family came from Cambridge, Massachusetts, to Fairfield, then to Weston in the early 1700's. Mrs. Squire was a Merwin, and their history goes back to the 1600's.

It was believed that a Nathaniel Squire began operating a mill on Godfrey Pond as early as 1767. A Nathan Squire was elected moderator of the first meeting of the Norfield Parish in June, 1757. David Squire lost both hands and an eye while on duty at the fort at Black Rock Harbor in Fairfield during the Revolutionary war. Nathan Squire of Captain Cooley's Company was called upon to head a detail to voyage down the Sound to help George Washington who was preparing the defenses of New York City.

Edson Squire and his wife lived in the house (recently torn down) at the corner of East Godfrey Rd. and Tubbs Spring. Edson's son Levi was born in the same house and owned about 80 acres, most of which ran up to the Weston Gun Club. Levi one of the original volunteer firemen, pledged his property, along with other volunteers to guarantee a loan needed to acquire fire-fighting equipment.

Charles (Charlie) Squire was also born in the same house and remembers his Dad raising potatoes, corn

Parish School on Godfrey Road where his mother also went to school. He also remembers some of the houses and an old mill that stood where the Saugatuck Reservoir is now. His fondest memories are of the Weston Gun Club where members such as Woody Cowan (cartoonist and Weston resident) would come every Sunday rain or shine to shoot. Charlie either pulled skeet or trap.

Charlie has many memories of Weston's past and we thank him for sharing these and the wonderful pictures included in this issue.

*(whose sister was Lillian Squire, Levi's wife)



Edson Squire and his wife in front of the old homestead on Godfrey Road E.

and vegetables for their own use, but sold chickens and eggs. They would sometimes get calves from the milk man and keep them until they were 6 weeks old when they would sell them for veal. They also raised pigs and sold them. At one time they had 85 pigs. They all worked at odd jobs around town including putting the siren on top of the old Town Hall building, located behind Norfield Church.

Charlie attended the Upper



Below, Charlie Squire posed on a horse at the Upper Parish School. Photographers in the 1920's often brought a pony with them to photograph children riding.



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JARVIS MILITARY ACADEMY

(ed. note) Although much has been written about the Jarvis Academy/Vetromile property in recent issues of the Weston Forum, we felt it was important to write yet again. There is a committee formed looking into the purchase of this property at Norfield Corners for use as town offices, overflow parking, a possible art center, etc. We want our readers to be aware of the significance of this property to our history when it comes to a vote so that you may go to the polls with some background information.

Although built as a residence in 1796 the building and property were purchased by Matthew Bulkley in 1835 where he founded the Weston Boarding School. The school was operated by his son-in-law, Andrew Sanford Jarvis (the property also was known as the Jarvis Academy). The school was military in its organization and offered a classical or a business curriculum.

Approximately 50 students were accepted each year. The tuition was \$200 which included board, laundry, fuel, and lights. Excerpts from an old newspaper report of the first reunion of the students (held June 20, 1914), reveille was at 6:00 a.m.; bathroom call, 6:15; breakfast call and inspection 6:30; study hour, 7:30 to 8:45; inspection 9:00; recitations and devotions, 12:00; recitations 1:00 to 3:30; supper call and inspection 5:30; battalion drill 6:15; evening dress parade, 7:00; roll call and study hour, 7:30 to 8:45; and taps, 9:00.

Despite the rigorous schedule the boys (it was reported) still had time for merriment and mischief. One year the Governor of Connecticut came for the review and a large ball was held. It was reported to have been the greatest moment in the history of the Military Institute. However, the boys still seem to have time to harass the Weston farmers. Stories were told of how many chickens the boys stole, wood piles that were rifled, cherry trees that were "skinned" and many other nightly raids upon the good things the farms had to offer.

The boys also wrote their own newspaper the "Weston Boarding School Cadet" This included writings from

Thackery, excerpts from Hamlet and local events such as a musical soiree, a parade in Norwalk, sleigh riding and skating.

Lastly there was a song held near and dear to the cadets which went:

In the Southwest corner of the Nutmeg State,
There lies a little town
Which though no city at the present date
Is getting great renown.
For there a nursery of great reach,
Has firmly taken root,
Designed in country air to teach
Young city sprigs how to shoot.

CHORUS

Hurrah! boys, Hurrah! for the Weston Boarding School
We'll give a hearty three times three for the Weston Boarding School

In spite of hours on Saturday for those who break a rule,
Yet after all a jolly place is the Weston Boarding School!
Just fifty boys are gathered here, some short and thick, some tall,

Some that away from home feel queer, some that this place home call

Some that by Coleys frantic rush
For fear they shall see ghosts,
And some who scorn the blacking-brush,
And some stand on school yard posts.
But when June's scorching sun beats down
They bathe at Compo Beach,
And when there's snow they hie to town
In sleighs of four horse each.
A field for ball, a pond to skate,
A gymnasium when it rains -
Oh tell us of a school to mate,
And we'll thank you for your pain.

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ANNUAL MEETING

MARCH 13, 1997

7:30 PM

WESTON LIBRARY

Weston resident, and new trustee of the Historical Society, Gale Beyea will speak to the Weston Historical Society at its annual meeting. She will be demonstrating early 19th century household appliances, and their uses.

Ms. Beyea has taught for many years the history of the Colonial kitchen and cooking with the wood burning stove utilizing kitchen artifacts dating back to the industrial revolution. She will talk about gathering, preserving and storing many types of food in preparation for the long winters, and the everyday tasks necessary to exist in New England.

Ms. Beyea is a member of the Norfield Grange, The Daughters of the American Revolution, and is the direct descendent of William Brewster of the Mayflower. She is a Vice President of the Westport Chamber of Commerce.

The public is invited to attend. Please come to the Library Community room at 7:30 to hear this informative and fun talk.

TRUSTEES OF THE WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Roger Core
Sandy O'Brien
Dave Bushley
Joe Spetly
Bob Jirucha
*Jack Light
*Gale Beyea
*Jacqui Schneider

Bill Barron
Helene Weatherill
Pat McLaughlin
Millie Best
*Lou Bregy
*Jim Schaper
*Cynthia Williams

* New members up for election at Annual Meeting

JARVIS MILITARY ACADEMY

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Unfortunately, by 1875 the school had fallen on hard times and by 1888 had closed altogether. The buildings, a dwelling house (still standing), a dormitory, and school building which included a gymnasium - complete with bowling alley - sat empty in the center of town. The main hall burned down and the brick oven where the baking was done was moved to Hurlbutt street and turned into a house. New people by the name of Amis bought and lived in the house. In the 1940's Peter Vetromile, owner of the Bridge Market in Westport and later Peter's Market in Weston purchased the home and his wife Helen remained there until 1996.



Cadet Pignal dressed in the uniform of the Weston Military Institute (Jarvis Academy).



Gale Beyea and her 19th century cookware.

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9 Christopher Hill
Weston, CT 06883
(203) 762-9208

Karin Giannitti
Editor

Roger Core
Art Director, Photographer

Tad Dillon
At the Keyboard

Custom Printing & Graphics
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One of Weston's most unique characteristics has always been the spirit of volunteerism that has existed here over the years. One fine example of this spirit was a program put on by the citizens of Weston - the "old-timers" who had roots in the community, and the "newcomers" who came from New York City in the 1930's to escape the hustle and bustle for the peace and quiet of the country.

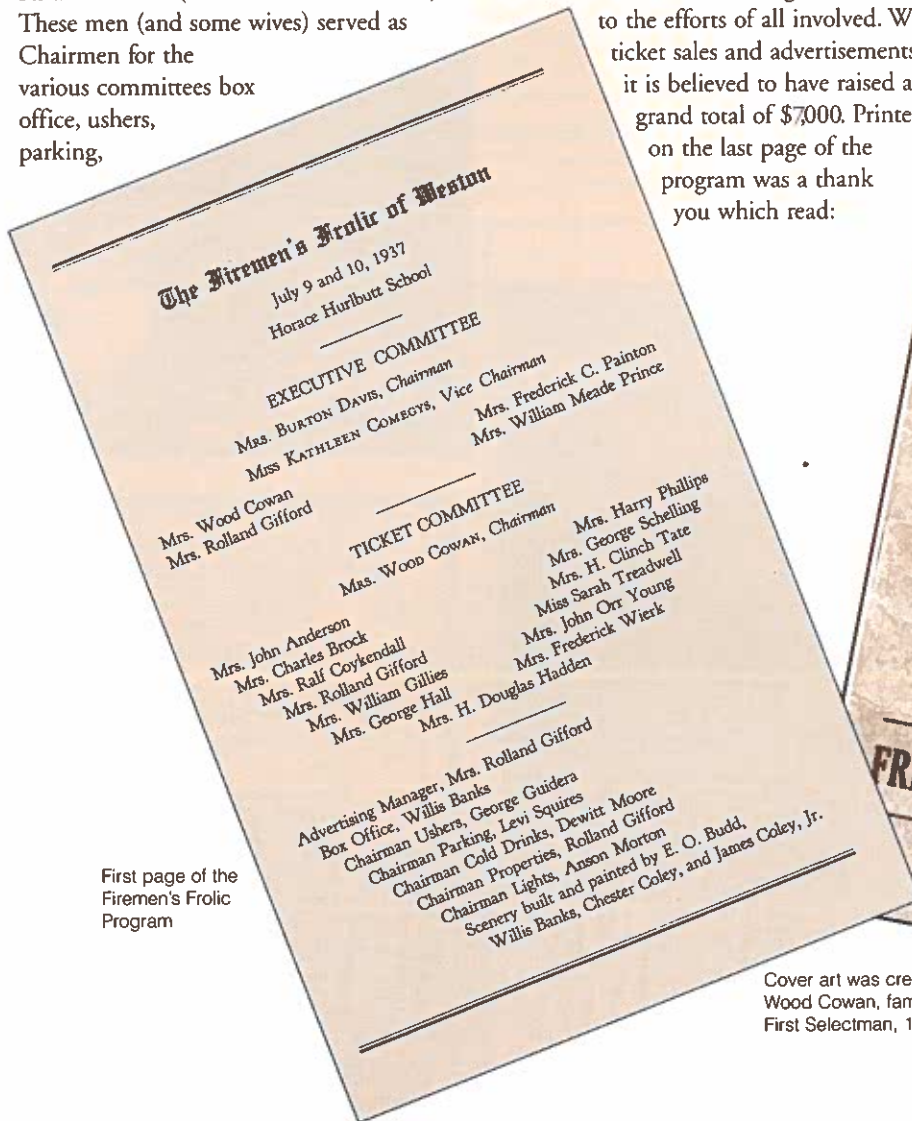
The program was the "Firemen's Frolic" held July 9 & 10, 1937. The purpose of the program was to raise money to pay off the mortgage on the fire engine purchased for the Volunteer Fire Department when it was founded in 1931.

Among the participants were old names such as Willis Banks, George Guidera, Levi Squires, Anson Morton, Chester and James Coley, E. O. Budd and Roland Gifford (Weston's first Fire Chief). These men (and some wives) served as Chairmen for the various committees box office, ushers, parking,

cold drinks, lights and scenery. Many wives of the new folks in town served on the Executive committee and Ticket Sales. Included in this list were businessman, John Orr Young (founder of Young & Rubicam advertising agency in New York City) H. Clinch Tate (former owner of the Revson property including down to Tobacco Road), H. Douglas Hadden; artists Wood Cowan, Frederick C. Painton, William Meade Prince, Charles Brock and Ralph Coykendall. Other names included James Melton, Metropolitan Opera Tenor, Mrs. Frederick Wierk (wife of the school principal, Edwin L. Howard an architect who designed the Shakespeare Theatre, Percy Stone, journalist, and John Cecil Holm who wrote a very popular Broadway show in the thirties "Three Men on a Horse."

The Frolic was a great success due to the efforts of all involved. With ticket sales and advertisements, it is believed to have raised a grand total of \$7000. Printed on the last page of the program was a thank you which read:

"The Weston Volunteer Fire Department, Inc. takes this opportunity of thanking all those who by their hearty cooperation have made the FROLIC an outstanding success. By their efforts the mortgage can be entirely lifted



First page of the Firemen's Frolic Program



Cover art was created by Wood Cowan, famous illustrator and First Selectman, 1955-1957.

Program of the Weston Volunteer Fire Department Fireman's Frolic - donated by William Gifford.

HAS BEEN SAVED BOYS"

on the fire engine -- the old homestead has been saved boys."

Volunteerism still remains one of Weston's unique qualities. It is certainly no more evident than the Weston Volunteer Fire Department and the men and women who give their time.

(Ed. note. My thanks to Tom and Olive Phillips and to Percy Stone for recalling many of the people named in the program).

Our thanks to William (Bill) L. Gifford for sending us a copy of the Firemen's Frolic program. Williams' grandfather George D. Gifford, one of the founders of the Norfield Church, moved to Weston in 1910 around the time of the sighting of Haley's Comet. The Giffords lived at the corner of Weston Rd. and River Road (thus the name Gifford's Hill). They later moved up to the corner of Weston Road and Kettle Creek. George had four sons, Allen W. Gifford, Vernon E. Gifford, Rolland W. Gifford (Williams' father) and Brundage Herbert Gifford (who was 2nd Selectman for a time). By 1946 the Giffords had all moved from Weston, but not before leaving their mark on our history. Also, our thanks to Fred Moore.

WOMEN'S

FROLIC

RACE BUTT POOL

OTH, 1937

Program

Part One

MASTER OF CEREMONIES . . . EDWIN L. HOWARD

1. ART IN WESTON by JOHN CECIL HOLM
The model — Dolf Weed
The artists—Wood Cowan, Wm. Meade Prince, Parke Cummings, Percy Stone.
2. KNIGHTS OF HARMONY HOLLOW
GEORGE TOMPKINS, Leader
Harold Dow, Tom Ball, George Hale, Arthur Gagg, John Gordon
3. DANCES by HARWOOD BOOTH
4. MAGIC by RICHARD DUBOIS
5. THE FIREMAN AND THE LADY
SCENE: A city apartment.
Characters:
A LADY THOMASINE MAURY
FIRST FIREMAN PERCY STONE
SECOND FIREMAN WOOD COWAN
6. Friday, July 9—
SONGS by JAMES MELTON
 - a. The Homes of Hill Fox
 - b. Sombrero Chaminade
 - c. Love Went a-Riding Briggs

HAROLD DART AT THE PIANO

Saturday, July 10—
7. THIS THING CALLED ART MARIAN GRANT SACK
STILL GOING WITH THE WIND by BURTON DAVIS
DIRECTED BY PHILIP DUNNING
SCENE: Tara in 1937.
Characters: RHETT BUTLER WILLIAM MEADE PRINCE
PRISSY, A NEGRO WENCH VIRGINIA DUNNING
SCARLETT O'HARA HAMILTON KENNEDY LILLIAN PRINCE
BUTLER ROBERT L. DUFFUS
PROFESSOR LOWELL CABOT HARRIET WISNER
AMANDA, HIS WIFE HUGH FOSS
EDDIE

Intermission

The Firemen's Frolic Program

Program

Part Two

8. KNIGHTS OF HARMONY HOLLOW
9. THE WHIPPOORWILL by JOHN CECIL HOLM
SCENE: A home in Weston
Characters:
THE HOST JOHN CECIL HOLM
THE GUEST A GUEST
THE GUEST'S WIFE LUCIE WOOLSON
ANOTHER GUEST DR. CLAY BOLAND
10. AT THE PIANO DR. CLAY BOLAND
11. VALLEY FORGE ROAD
As adapted from an original sketch by Frank Liberman and Ed Milwick
Directed by J. CARLISLE PEET
Scene: The lounge of a farmhouse in Weston, July
Characters:
Paw
Maw Bro
Faith, a home girl Jo
J. Walter Tommy, her twin Jo
Batten
Barton
Durstine The quadruplets } Jo
Osborne
Goldie The twins } Barba
Dustie Hel

Space does not permit listing triplets and twins away at C. C. O.

12. SONGS OF THE GAY NINETIES by JANE ALDEN J
13. DOUBLE EXPOSURE
SCENE: A living room in a 1955 home
Characters:
HENRY F. BARREN, the husband PARKE CUMMI
OLIVE BARREN, the wife MARIAN GRANT SA
OSCAR O. FISCHER of the F.D.P.O.R. H. DOUGLAS HADD
LITMUS F. LENSER, a lady photographer GODFREY MACDONAL
14. FINALE by THE ENTIRE CAST

If the Weston Fire Department doesn't get there in time — you can stock up the next day at

The WESTPORT HARDWARE Co.

WE'LL HAVE IT!

Westport Hardware Advertisement from the Firemen's Frolic Program



BUILD A BLUEBIRD HOUSE

by Bob Jirucha

The bluebird, according to Thoreau, carries the sky on its back. Added to the blue is the robin red of the male's breast and the crisp white of his underparts - truly the perfect counterpoints to that blue. For many of us, it is the most beautiful bird in the Northeast, a real thrill having them nest on your property.

Eastern Bluebirds, a native species, reached its population peak around 1900, after which house sparrows and starlings, plus urban development, began to decimate the number of Bluebirds. Around 1970, various groups

began to install Bluebird nest boxes and this has definitely increased the population.

The Wildlife Division of the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection sponsors, since 1980, the installation of nesting boxes around the state, and **the Weston Historical Society has been selected to provide boxes to interested members.** We have enough material to make 30 boxes, so the first 30 members to call Bob Jirucha at 226-6293 can arrange to come to the Coley House to assemble them. (This will most probably

be the first Saturday in April - Mr. Jirucha will give a definite date when you call).

Each person will be given a card to record pertinent information on the nesting for submittal to the Wildlife Division. You will also get tips on keeping out house sparrows and Cowbirds.

(ed. note) Please come and join Bob in making these houses. It should be a fun filled morning and the rewards of having a Bluebird nest on your property will be immense. Call Bob and make a reservation now!



Bob Jirucha



Shown here are male eastern bluebirds.

When territories are adjacent, two males may perch near a common border and alternate singing, sometimes referred to as "song duels".

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COLEY BARN FIRE



Coley Barns rebuilt in 1883 after a fire in December 1882 destroyed both buildings.

Recently, Herb Day, Coley House Historian and barn curator, had begun to question the authenticity of reports of our barn having burned back in 1882. Herb could find no signs of burnt or charred wood in the barn, he then came across an account of Mrs. Betsy Coley's barn having been burned about the same time, so these two things compounded his suspicions.

However, in a recent memo sent to us from Mr. Day, it does appear that there was a fire in our Coley barn. Herb found the following in the Norwalk Gazette:

December 12, 1882

"About half-past seven on Thursday evening, our citizens were startled by a bright light in the Northeast giving an indication of a large fire in the near vicinity. The fire ladders were out in force but after proceeding a short distance found that the fire was beyond their limits. It proved to be two large barns in Weston owned by Demon (sic) Coley. They were totally consumed together with about forty tons of hay, a lot of farming utensils, one fine horse, two cows, twelve sheep, two yearlings and several pigs. The fire was

undoubtedly of incendiary origin."

January 2, 1883

"Mrs. D. D. Coley is building two new barns to replace those recently destroyed by fire."

These two reports have confirmed that our barn was burned. Because it was totally consumed, there was never any evidence of charred timbers. Herb will continue to investigate the burning of Mrs. Betsy Coley's barn.



James Coley and his wife Cleora. James donated the barn to the Society in 1963 and Cleora willed the house and the outbuildings and 3.7 acres to Weston Historical Society in 1981.



...and son Jimmy Coley. (circa 1960)

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CLASSES AT COLEY HOUSE

The Weston Historical Society is offering to members only, starting this Spring if there's interest, one-day classes in a variety of crafts:

- basket-weaving
- chair-caning
- birdhouse building
- bee-hiving
- landscape photography
- water coloring
- patch-quilting
- antiques care and repair

These will be day and night time classes during one specific weekday each week (for example, Wednesday 10-12 a.m. and 7-9 p.m.) Many crafts sessions will be offered, a different craft each week.

HOWEVER, WE NEED YOUR INPUT. Please drop us a note showing your interest in the program, suggest any subject matter(s) and days/ times that mostly suit you. Address to:

"Coley Classes"
Weston Historical Society
PO Box 1092
Weston, CT 06883

Please respond now because there is planning and scheduling to do.



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OLD NEWS FROM HARTFORD

DAVID DIMON COLEY



David Dimon Coley served as a House Democrat in 1864, 1865 and 1867. He made a lifelong friend of fellow legislator, P.T. Barnum.

(Letter supplied by distant Coley relative, Donald Coley.)



GARDENCROFT.

Bridgeport Conn June 30 1865.

Hon. David D. Coley

My Sir Please accept the enclosed mementos of our meeting in the Connecticut Legislature this year. If you can conveniently favor me with a photograph of yourself, I shall esteem it highly.

Truly Yours,

P.T. Barnum

P.T. BARNUM

