

# The Chronicle Quarterly

Weston Historical Society

Summer 1998

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## “BRAVE BRIDE, WOUNDED BY BULLET, INSISTS ON BEING MARRIED”

Recently, when Jim Hoe was cleaning his attic, he found a scrap book which had been donated to the Historical Society. Jim had taken it home for safe keeping. We only had the barn at the time and Jim was worried that it would be ruined leaving it out in weather. The scrapbook was a celebration of Oscar and Mabel Budd's 60th wedding anniversary, which occurred in October, 1962.

The Budd's daughter, Helen Mason, got the idea from a friend and sent out letters to all of her parent's friends and relatives and asked them to send notes, cards, pictures, or other memorabilia to be put into a scrapbook for her parents' anniversary. The celebration took place in Florida, where Mabel and Oscar had retired. As Mabel

had been born in Wilton, and Oscar in Weston where he served as First Selectman, among other jobs, the number of friends, new and old, was enormous. The cards and letters of congratulations filled the pages of the book. Many people sent pictures as well as notes about their own celebrations and grandchildren. Several of the notes included news about the Norfield Church adding on a building at the back of the property at an outrageous price of \$125,000. Some notes talked about the preposterous new homes that were being built in their lovely old town. However, most notes were fond wishes to a couple who had done so very much for Weston.

While pouring over the cards and letters there appeared several yellowed news clippings. Upon further investigation a wonderful story appeared in these articles. Despite slightly different versions, depending on the newspaper, it was definitely reported that Mabel Fitch Sturges of Wilton had been shot on the day before her wedding.

On Monday, October 13, 1902, Mabel Sturges, the twenty-five-year old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Sturges of Cannon (Wilton), was busy in the pantry of their home putting the finishing touches on her wedding cake. Suddenly she was, “struck by a 32-calibre bullet that entered through the partition of another room and passed

diagonally through the muscle of her right forearm, inflicting a serious wound. Miss Sturges screamed and rushed to the next room where her family was assembled and prompt measures were made to bandage the wound, while the horse was hastily harnessed and she was driven with all speed to Dr. Gorham's office, where the wound was dressed and the patient assured that no serious results could be expected.” In another article it was stated that the, “bullet struck Miss Sturges on her right elbow. It ploughed through the flesh of her arm and was imbedded in the wall. The wound was a serious one, as the bone was injured as well as the flesh. The physician who arrived in a short time found Miss Sturges unconscious.”

*continued on page 2*



Mabel Budd's 1902 wedding dress as modeled by daughter Helen Mason, in 1962.



1962 - Former First Selectman, John Guidera, in front of townhall: "To Mr. and Mrs. Oscar Budd, it gives me great pleasure to be one of your many friends from Weston to honor you both on this 60th anniversary."

After some investigation it was discovered that the shot had come from a small shop at the back of the house. A rifle had been kept there for a number of years. Although no one came forward it finally came to light that a young boy employed about the place had been sent to the shop for nails just a short time before the shooting. When he was assured that everyone knew that it had been an accident, the young man confessed that when he went to the shop he had found the gun and, being curious, had picked it up. Not knowing that it had a hair trigger, the gun exploded almost immediately, sending the bullet through the siding of the building, through a window shutter and glass, the length of a bedroom, through another partition, and after hitting Miss Sturges, struck a shelf and landed in a window curtain with force enough to break the glass.

Despite her wound, Miss Sturges was able, the following day, October 14, to walk down the aisle of St. Matthews Church in Wilton, to be married to Oscar Budd. The church was beautifully decorated with autumn



Charlie and Lulu Keene - July 1962

TOWN OF WESTON  
CONNECTICUT

SELECTMEN'S OFFICE

September 3, 1962

Dear Oscar:

After you left Weston, Willard appointed me to replace you as Tree Warden. When I asked Willard what my duties were, he very casually told me that all I had to do was to sign some papers for the Connecticut Light & Power Co. about twice a year.

That same winter we had a severe ice storm that knocked out power lines for as much as five days in several sections of Town. The following Spring the Connecticut Light & Power Co. and the Southern New England Telephone Co. started a major tree trimming and tree removal program to prevent the recurrence of loss of power. Of course you know that this entailed a great deal of activity on my part, such as having meetings with people affected by this program. Everyone in Town suddenly became a "Joyce Kilmer" and a loud and strong protest arose over the removal of trees in Town. I won't bore you with further details, but eventually everything turned out to everyone's satisfaction.

I am now serving as First Selectman and have other types of problems to solve. However, I like my job very much and find serving the people of Weston rewarding in many ways. Mr. Cresson Van Winkle is serving as Second Selectman and in my opinion doing a wonderful job in maintaining our roads with the inadequate amount of money allotted to him for this work. Cresson has taken the time to take some photographs of the improvement of some of our roads. I hope that you can remember them as they were back in the days when you served our Town.

I hope this little bit of nostalgia finds you well. With fondest remembrances and our best wishes, we remain with you,

Westonites in spirit,  
*Paul Casiglew*  
*James A. Hill*

leaves and the bride's two brothers served as ushers. The organist rendered familiar wedding marches and the church was filled to capacity, capturing the popularity of the bride and groom. A wedding reception for the relatives and friends, approximately 100 people, followed. One paper said that they then went on their wedding trip as planned, yet another said that because of the bride's fatigue that the wedding trip was postponed, and that they spent their wedding night in their new home in Weston. It was further stated after the wedding that, "Mr. and Mrs. Budd will then start in the many mysteries of housekeeping in Weston." Ahh - the good old days.

*Many, many thanks to Helen Mason for donating this scrapbook to us. It is filled with so many happy memories from so many old Westonites. What a lovely thought it was and how lucky we are to have it.*



Harold Keene, Herb Gifford and Dave Coley at new drain on River Road



New River Road Bridge

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## MEMORIAL DAY ENCAMPMENT



Photo by Gale Beyea

Connecticut Revolutionary War soldier as he would have been dressed in 1775.

This past Memorial Day, the Historical Society was represented in the parade, and at the Jarvis Academy, by a platoon of volunteers from the 5th Connecticut Regiment, which played a major role in the Revolutionary War. An advanced platoon set up a campsite on the Jarvis Military Academy on Sunday night May 24. The encampment, with tents and camp fires, was open to the public on Monday despite the pouring rain.

In 1974, the regiment was reestablished as a "living history unit" under an Executive Order by Governor Ella Grasso. The regiment keeps its distinguished military record alive by participating annually in encampments and battle recreations, including Williamsburg and as far away as Quebec. Regiment members also do original research, present programs, and in many other ways interpret the life of the Continental soldier, the civilian camp follower, and society in general, during the turbulent war years.

The 5th Connecticut Regiment was first formed on May 1, 1775, just two weeks after the British raid on Lexington and Concord,

Massachusetts. Made up of some 800 volunteers, most from Fairfield County, the Regiment was quickly dispatched to Ft. Ticonderoga in New York, and later that year participated in the siege of Fort Saint Johns in Canada, and helped in the capture of Montreal.

Mustered out of service at the end of 1775, it was reformed in the spring of 1777 and immediately saw action in the battle of Ridgefield against Tryon's raiders who had burned Danbury and were returning to Compo Beach. The Regiment was then posted to defend the highlands near West Point.

In the Fall of 1777, as reinforcement to General Washington's main army, the 5th Connecticut fought in the battle of Germantown in Pennsylvania, spent the storied winter at Valley Forge, and again fought gallantly, this time under General Von Staben, at Monmouth in June, 1778.

Returning to Connecticut, the Regiment wintered near Putnam, and in July 1779, attacked Stony Brook New York in retaliation for continuing British raids against Norwalk, Fairfield, New Haven, and other Connecticut coastline towns.

1780 was a relatively uneventful year, but in 1781 the Regiment was reformed again and made part of the

nation's first regular Army. In January, the 5th Connecticut saw action in Morisania, New York. In the Spring, it sent two light infantry companies for action in the South.

Both companies participated in the last major infantry assault in the War, the famous capture of Redoubt Number Ten at Yorktown. And both were on hand when Cornwallis surrendered, ending the long and difficult conflict.

The 5th Connecticut was mustered out for the last time in December, 1782, at West Point. Today, the reformed 5th Connecticut Regiment is headquartered in Plainville. It is commanded by Gene Freshcette, and includes about 35 volunteers. Funds are raised by week-end encampments, school enrichment programs, and similar activities.

In the Memorial Day Parade, the platoon members were dressed in the regular army uniforms of 1780, the first authorized and provided by the Congress. The platoon was also accompanied by an array of camp followers, typical of those who would tag along as the soldiers marched from town to town to fulfill their strategic mission.

*(The above written and compiled by Jack Light.)*



Photo by Gale Beyea

Tents and cooking utensils depicting campsite of Revolutionary soldiers in 1775.

## HERB GARDEN

Herb gardening has been around for generations, but its has regained a great deal of popularity in the last few years. We have written about our herb garden at the Coley Homestead before, but we felt that a thing of beauty is certainly worth repeating. The garden is currently filled with mature plants and the sights and smells are truly wonderful.

In the early 1990's, one of our members, Bea Crane-Baker, had the idea to put an herb (pronounced "erb", according to our local expert, Sal Gilbertie) garden outside of the

barn. Soon after, Bea moved from the area and the Aspetuck Valley Garden Club, looking for a project, took over the plans. The members of the Garden Club, with the help of several of their husbands, cleared away much of the brush and replanted existing staggered

peonies and iris along the new border of the garden. Branches were trimmed to let in more light, the soil was prepared, and the planting done. With the help of Sal Gilbertie, a design was made which incorporated a birdbath,



and a grinding stone which were already placed in that area.

The garden club comes every spring and cleans up, plants new plants where needed, and then they water and weed during the summer months.

There is a wonderful variety

of plants currently growing in the garden. They include ladies mantle, purple sage, lavender, marjoram, thyme, chives, carnip, lemon balm, and lovage (a very tall and large herb with a taste similar to celery) as well as several others. Each herb has its own lovely flower and individual smell as well as use. It is a wonderful treat to be cooking and be able to go out to the garden for just the right herb to make your dish complete. There is also an extra bonus to herb gardening that should make everyone here delighted. The deer don't eat the plants!

Please feel free to stop by any time at the Coley Homestead and take a look at the garden. It is right outside of the big red barn, and you might get some inspirations. Our thanks continue to the Aspectuck Valley Garden Club for keeping the garden so beautiful.

## AFGHAN FOR SALE

The Weston Historical Society is happy to announce the arrival of its historical afghan. The coverlet, which is available in Hunter Green, Navy Blue and Cranberry, depicts buildings significant in Weston's past. The afghan measures 48" x 60" and is 100% cotton, machine washable.

The price will be \$45 which includes the tax, and the afghan will come with a descriptive booklet of the buildings shown. The afghans are displayed at the Weston Library, Cobb's Mill Inn and Town Hall. They are available for purchase Saturday mornings at the Coley House, 104 Weston Road, from 10am-12pm and at Town Hall. You may also call the Historical Society at 226-1804 and leave a message.

They are really beautiful and will make a great addition to your home, as well as a wonderful gift. So order soon, and often.



# 🍷 CENTENIAL SCRAPBOOK 🍷

## GOOD HILL PARISH SCHOOL, 1898



Good Hill Parish School, 1898 class

Back Row: Neil Sweeney, Etta Fitch, Edna Meeker, Winnie Sturges, Mary Sweeney, Florence Lockwood and Eva Ferris  
Middle Row: Norman Lockwood, Mamie Driscoll, Chester Meeker, Katie Beers, Ula Ferris, Edith Bradley, Florence Henneshot, Julia Driscoll and Miss Burr, the teacher  
Front Row: Patrick Sweeney, Jerry Sweeney, Florence Meeker, Charles Beers, Eva Fitch, Charles Anderson, Dan Driscoll, Ann Anderson and Darwin Henneshot



◀ Good Hill Parish School exterior

▼ Good Hill Parish School interior



*Photos compliments of Mrs. Sovistano of Norwalk who found an old photo album of the Weston/Westport/Norwalk area while cleaning the attic of an elderly neighbor. She was most generous to give us appropriate pages from the book.*

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## MIGHT ELM

On the grounds of the Coley homestead we are fortunate to have one of the few Elm trees that still exists in this part of the country. The elm is known for its unique vase-shaped form with arching branches and wonderful shade. Unfortunately, the elms, more than any other tree, are susceptible to disease and insect trouble. The Dutch Elm disease has virtually wiped out elms in this area. We are fortunate to have such a lovely specimen which is treated several times throughout the year to protect it from disease.

Helene Weatherill, who is very active at the Katherine Ordway preserve, and is especially knowledgeable about tree specimens in this area, recently spotted what she thought was another elm on our property, down along the wall, near High Acre. She checked it against our big elm and had Fred Moore confirm that it is, indeed, another elm. Thank you Helene. We will take good care of this one too and perhaps it will become another great tree on our grounds.



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## COLEY HOUSE VOLUNTEERS



While looking for ideas for the Chronicle, we thought it might be fun to spend some time looking at ourselves and introducing our members to our hardworking trustees. Each and every trustee has taken on one or more projects and the house is abuzz inside and out. Over the next few issues we will introduce you to these wonderful people who give so much of their time and energy to keep our Society going. (Please note that there is no reason, other than pure chance, that we have included these first four folks. Everyone is doing a great job and they all deserve a pat on the back). Three of the trustees included in this issue are women who have spent, and are spending, countless hours cleaning up, sorting, filing, etc., etc., etc., all the paperwork that is upstairs in the house. The other trustee is a man who, through his timely articles in the local papers, is keeping the Society in the

public eye. We appreciate, beyond words, all the work that these folks, and the other trustees, are doing for the Historical Society.



**Mary Ann Barr**  
In 1950 Mary Ann's mother bought the house she lives in on Ladder Hill. Mary Ann spent her childhood here in Weston and went to the schools here and then on to Staples. Then she spent some time both in Boston and Ohio and moved back to Weston in

1980. Her trade is that of freelance artist, but she also fills many hours with volunteer work for the community.

Mary Ann is a cofounder of Keep Weston Rural and serves as head of the Historic Districts Commission. She is active in the Westport Arts Center and hopes to be moving her work into there soon. Although Mary Ann is a commercial artist she branches out into the fine arts as a watercolorist, and has developed a love of paper mache.

Mary Ann came on the Board in February of this year and has already plunged headlong into our upstairs. Not adverse to moving and hauling, she has helped organize the archival room. She is learning about the process of getting organized, cataloging and preserving our existing and future archives. She has learned much of this from talking to other Historical Societies.

As well as her artistic hand, Mary Ann's favorite hobby is *continued on page*

## VOLUNTEERS *continued*

being an armchair figure skater. She loves to watch all the events on television and knows all the skaters, past and present. She loves the outdoors, especially horses. She wants very much to find a horse to pull our carriage in the next Memorial Day Parade. She used to play softball, but after being away from it for a while she has found that it will take some getting used to again.

Mary Ann told me that she has always been interested in historical societies and that she is "having a ball" helping us. We cannot tell you how much we appreciate your work and your enthusiasm.



**Lynne Barrelle**

Lynne was born and brought up in Weston. Her maternal grandparents were Polish immigrants who lived on Old Mill Road in

Georgetown. Lynne's father came from the coal country of Pennsylvania to New York in 1932, and finally to work at Outpost Nurseries in Ridgefield. It was then that he met Lynne's Mom. They were married in 1940 and lived in Georgetown until they purchased the Weston property in 1947. In 1949 her parents built their house in which Lynne still lives today.

Lynne said that she has always been interested in history and very curious about who might have lived on her property before her. When her Mom died several years ago she and her sister started to do a title search on the house. They looked up deeds for the property working back to 1835. It was then a 52-acre parcel from 1835-1928, and was a larger parcel before 1835, which she discovered by looking into land records, vital statistics, the library, the Historical Society and personal narratives. She became so fascinated with her work that she has started researching other parcels of land and homes in this area for herself and for the Historical Society. Currently Lynne is trying to put all her information, which is in boxes all over her living room, into her computer. She recently completed a search of the John Held home on Weston Road which we will include in a future issue.

Lynne has been spending considerable volunteer hours at the Coley House. She has helped to procure a new copy machine for the office upstairs, and has been helping sort and organize old books, old documents and papers found in the upstairs rooms. She would like to see us become a repository for information and artifacts to which people would have access. As she so

aply put it, "We are caretakers of the past for the future."

In her spare time, Lynne works part-time in the Weston Schools and spends time with her husband, Jeffery Lesniak and young son Shaun. We are extremely lucky and grateful to have Lynne serving as one of our trustees.



**Gale Beyea**

Gale moved to Weston 3 1/2 years ago after spending 25 years in a lovely old home in Westport. While in Westport, Gale was very active

in the Westport Historical Society where she ran a program for 3rd grade students. The children would come to see how an old kitchen functioned, complete with water pump, and Gale would bake cookies. One of her favorite memories of this time was the day one of the little students sitting on the floor looked up at her and asked, "Are you one of the pilgrims?"

Gale also became interested in the remodeling of the old Bedford School into the current town hall. The original plan had been to add amber windows to the building and Gale went to a meeting and spoke her peace about double hung vs. amber windows. She attended several meetings and was asked if she wouldn't be interested in being on the Architectural Review Board. It was supposed to be a four-year term and Gale ended up staying for 12 years. Her job on the board was to help maintain the integrity of the old commercial buildings in town.

By this time she and her husband had outgrown their home. Her son was working on a small home in Weston and encouraged his Mom to come and take a look. Gale resisted, but in the end her son won out and they went to look on a day with snow up to her knees. She looked at the house and immediately said, "too small." Her son told her she could add on and took her out back where Gale saw the pond and the marsh and instantly fell in love. As they say, "the rest is history." She was told that the house dates back to 1742, but she has only been able to trace it back to 1829 so far. Lynne Barrelle, one of our trustees, is helping to research the property.

Gale calls herself a history nut. She has worked on three genealogical works with her father, two on the Peck family (Gale's maiden name) and one on the Beyea family. While working on the Beyea family history they discovered that in 1730, in the town of Mamaroneck, the Beyeas were neighbors of Gilbert Budd, related to our own Oscar Budd.

Gale spends her leisure (?) time making her own clothes, canning, making jams and jellies, and pickles. She also does needlework including embroidery and bargello, plus working full time as Vice President of the Westport/Weston Chamber of Commerce. We are glad to have Gale on our Board as she has pitched right in helping to clean out the attic, and organize the upstairs rooms, sorting papers, clothing, and various archives. She has also taken on the assistant Program Chair and was in charge of the Senior Luncheon held at the homestead on July 8. Thank you Gale for all you are doing.



**Jack Light**

Jack, his wife Erma, and their four children moved to Weston in 1962, after a short stay in Chicago, having moved from "home",

Louisville Kentucky. He worked for GE, but later moved on to Continental Group (Continental Can) and commuted for 18 years. Jack was involved in "relations" work: employee, community, union and government for the first two-thirds of his corporate life. The last third he was responsible for Continental's corporate communications.

In 1984, Jack started his own communications-related business in Stamford, and in 1997, beginning a wind-down phase, moved his office to his home in Weston.

As a way to get involved in the community, Jack and his wife became active at Norfield as soon as they moved in Erma was financial secretary and taught Sunday School. Jack also served on the Boards of Trustees and deacons.

Lately Jack has been spending a good deal of time on United Way. He has been on the Board for almost six years. This Fall, along with Jim Bennett, Jack will be running the campaign. He is also involved with the Westport Arts Center, is a member of Kiwanis, and does some behind-the-scenes communication consulting for non-profits and groups like the Jarvis Committee.

While serving as a trustee on the board for the Historical Society, Jack has taken on the job of publicity. He is responsible for all of our timely articles which appear in the Forum and all the local papers. We thank you for a great job. You are helping to make us more visible to the public.

*The Weston Historical Society  
Chronicle Quarterly*

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***New Member Tea***

**On Sunday, September 27, 1998 at 2:30 pm** in the afternoon, new members of the Weston Historical Society are invited to come to the Coley House, 104 Weston Road, to explore the Coley House, the Barn Museum and walk the grounds, including our beautiful herb garden. Refreshments will be served and several of our trustees will be there to answer any questions you may have. Please join us. 28

***Cemetery Tour***

A tour of the Coley Cemetery (located on Rt. 57 south of the Broad Street/Goodhill traffic light) has been scheduled for our members only, on Saturday, **October 17 at 11:00 am** Cynthia Williams and Karin Giannitti will be on hand to give a brief history of the cemetery and point out some of the more memorable gravestones. Please come. We think you will find it fascinating. 28

***Letter from the Editor***

This spring I had a few moments one noontime and decided to take my lunch out on the deck of our home. I was busy reading the paper and munching away when I heard a great deal of peeping of baby birds coming from a nearby bluebird house. I was quite sure that I had only attracted another finch family so I paid little attention. However, as the peeping continued I focused on the birdhouse and was absolutely amazed and thrilled when papa bluebird came out of the house and flew down onto the lawn. I was so excited that I actually had a bluebird in my yard and that they had a family as well. I watched mama and papa make dozens of trips to and from the house over the next few weeks, but unfortunately did not get to see the babies take their first flight.

Soon after I went to clean out the house, just in case they might build again, and was amazed to find a second nest already built on top of the first. Mama and papa again repeated their incessant trips feeding their young, and again, I missed the first flight, but I cannot tell you how happy I was to have had such a beautiful sight to see this, summer. I hope that others of you who spent such a fun morning making the birdhouses had the same luck as I did. 28