



The Chronicle Quarterly

Weston Historical Society

Winter 2000

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WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY ITS PAST, ITS PRESENT AND ITS FUTURE

This year the Weston Historical Society celebrated its 38th birthday and has been hard at work coping with the past, and the future of the Society. It has been a year of great progress in the identifying of articles in the barn, cataloging, adding a barn floor where needed, and our current project of landscaping for the tick control program, as well as our annual Senior's Picnic, Children's Halloween Fair and upcoming Christmas open house.

The Society began in earnest in the year 1962, after several years of informal discussions about the possibility of forming such a group. Some historical items had been collected and stored in various homes around town. Then on January 13, 1962 an open meeting was held at the Weston Library to hear about organizing an Historical Society. Mrs. Hamilton Basso was the chairman for the meeting. The impetus of this meeting had been the offer of the old Post Office (located at the corner of Rts. 53 & 57) to the town by Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Scribner.

There was indeed a great deal of interest and a Certificate of Incorporation was issued on June 7, 1962, and the charter was issued by the State of Connecticut on June 22, 1962. The first organizational meeting was held on August 6, 1962 and Mr. Ed Phelps was elected Chairman, and Mrs. Susie Green as

Secretary. (There have been 12 different Presidents since that time.)

The Society attempted to move the old Post Office next to the onion barn to use as a museum, but the cost of such an enterprise made the move impossible. About this time, Mr. and Mrs. James Coley offered the use of their barn (no longer of use to Mr. Coley), for a museum. The Society gratefully accepted the offer on April 4, 1966.

In April of 1978, the Society also accepted the offer of Mr. and Mrs. Coley for the house, barn, the outbuildings and the property which would be left to us in their will. When Mr. Coley passed on, Mrs. Coley was given life use of the house for her and her son. On February 21, 1983, Mrs. Coley passed on, and with her son Jimmy cared for, the Society took possession of the 3.7 acres and all its buildings.

After two years of conflicts with town boards, neighbors, and a developer, the Society was granted permission to operate as a museum under a pre-existing ruling. A carefully watched 1968 endowment from the Forrest estate (Lucy Forrest willed her house to the WHS), provided the funds to make the necessary changes required by the town, and continues to maintain the property to this day.

To commemorate the 1976 bicentennial, the Society published the first edition of the history of Weston, by Thomas Farnham, and the lower floor of the house was redecorated by Society members, the Weston Young Women's Club, and the Women's Club of Weston.

The old Post Office was given to the town again, by the Scribners, and moved a few hundred feet to the north where it was put on a new foundation, re-sided, and cleaned by two of our most valiant members. It is now maintained by the Society as a museum.*

In October, 1999, a group of trustees led by Lynne Barelle and Mary Ann Barr came to the Board of Trustees and asked for some kind of archival facility to preserve all the things that were being uncovered, and to use for educational purposes. The Board considered their request and found that the cost would be somewhere in the range of \$250,000. To add to the cost, placing such a facility in the Cider Shed, the barn, or the house, would severely compromise the historical character of these buildings.

This issue became a focal point for the Board, and a meeting was held last October for trustees, and some past presidents as well as several volunteers who give a great deal of time to the Society. *Continued page 2*



WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ITS PAST, ITS PRESENT AND ITS FUTURE *Continued*

At this meeting, ideas were discussed for ways to accept future donations, ways to keep what we have from deteriorating, ways to involve the community and our own members. At the end of this meeting it was decided that we had to put our own house in order and to that end a Planning Committee was selected to come up with a five-year plan for the Society. Committee members included Mary Ann Barr, Reg Bowden, Lou Bregy, Mike Cuddy, Herb Day, Jack Light, Ted Lockwood and Cynthia Williams. The committee presented its findings to the Board on September 7, 2000, and was voted and approved at its meeting in October, 2000.

It is not possible to print the entire plan here, but we shall try to give you an overall view of its highlights. First and foremost is the mission statement which reads:

1. Discover the history of Weston and the surrounding region;
2. Procure and preserve, as appropriate, artifacts, documents, memorabilia, and other tangibles including real estate, significant to that history;
3. Educate the public about Weston's unique place in the history of the region, and;
4. Preserve the Coley Homestead as an example of a working farm that evolved through the 19th and 20th centuries.

Financial Structure & Policy

The financial affairs of the Society will be formalized with the treasurer preparing an annual operating budget and a detailed financial statement for the year that will be available to interested members at the annual meeting. Other highlights include managing the endowment fund, establishing a capital improvement fund, and accelerating with our fund raising efforts.

Custody of the Coley Homestead

For custodial purposes the Homestead property will be divided into two parcels, about equal in area. One will be the **North Parcel** and include the Coley House, Carriage House, Barns and smaller outbuildings. General maintenance and upkeep will follow the Department of Interior preservation guidelines. Re-construction projects will

follow the Restoration Guidelines. An example of a necessary re-construction project might be reroofing the barn. Under the guidelines, it would depict the late 1800's, removing the more recent layers done this century. When the project involves later additions to the original structure, as with the Coley House kitchen, the date of the addition will be used.

The **South Parcel** will include the Cider Shed, the parking areas, and the meadow: all of parcel #2 will be treated following the Rehabilitation Guidelines. A definition of these guidelines may be of help in understanding the custody of the property.

Preservation - applying measures necessary to sustain the existing form, integrity and materials of an historic property.

Rehabilitation - Making a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values.

Restoration - Accurately depicting the form, features, and character of a property as it appeared at a particular period of time by means of the removal of features from other periods in its history and reconstruction of missing features from the restoration period.

Re-construction - Depicting, by means of new construction, the form, features, and detailing of a non-surviving site, landscape, building, structure, or object for the purpose of replicating its appearance at a specific period of time and in its historic location.

Accessions/Deaccessions

A detailed policy is now available to guide us on what items we will acquire, identify, and catalog, as well as the disposal of items in the Society's collection. Items to be collected will show the history of Weston and the region, and exemplify the Coley Homestead during the period of approximately 1830-1980. We will, however, collect items that fill a gap in an existing collection, something that is rare, unusual and has universal historical value, or evidences, for future Westonites, a significant contemporary

event or trend.

The policy covers procedures of accepting gifts, restricted gifts, loaded items and unaccessioned gifts. It also details the process of deaccessioning an item.

Recommended Projects

A long list of projects for now and the future are encompassed in this part of the plan. Some of these items include work on the operating budget, investment management, Homestead history and layout, initiating an activity log, preparing a society handbook, exploring exhibit spaces, and preparing a detailed description of responsibilities and accountabilities for each elected officer, standing committee and each staff job.

It is also hoped that we can expand the membership, recruit and organize volunteers, continue to work on the structures on the property, the grounds, and the Post Office, and work on drainage, walkways, ramps and lighting, gardens and foundation plantings. Arranging for an archival facility is also proposed considering placing this facility off the property, establishing a visitor reception/information area and office for a proposed staff person.

All of the above have been given a timetable in the next four year's time. As you can see, an enormous amount of work and thought were given to this plan. The members of the committee worked long and hard and came up with hard facts, great ideas, and hopes for the future of the Weston Historical Society. It is an ambitious plan, but one which can be carried out with the continued support and hard work of our members. If you would like to see a copy of this plan, please call Sandy O'Brien or Jack Light and we will send one to you.

Our Society has always been manned by volunteers who have varied interests and talents, and all have been willing to commit to our mission to procure and preserve Weston's history, and to educate the community to that end. We can always use your help to make our Society even better, and we appreciate your kind words and deeds.

**The history of the Weston Historical Society was compiled by Herb Day in 1986.*

THEN AND NOW

Recently the trustees were given a tour of the Coley Homestead Grounds by Ted Lockwood. He is extremely interested in not only restoring old artifacts and documents, but also preserving and/or restoring the grounds to what may have been in the past, showing examples of the different times and the work that was done to change the layout of the farm as the years progressed.

We started our tour (*photo 1 - next page*) in what we call the back yard. Ted believes that this area, being very level and on the south side of the house, away from big trees, was probably a large vegetable/flower garden. There are metal pins in stones placed in this area which are indicative of fencing. Farmers preferred not to put wooden stakes in the ground because they would rot, so they put metal rods into the stones and then wood strapped or slipped over the pin to become the post and then the wooden slats would be added to form fences. The three large trees in the background of this photo were probably saplings which grew out of an arborvite hedge, which was commonly used as a fencing for the garden. (the stumps of the arborvite are still visible in the ground). These trees are relatively young and not in line with trees that were planted on a farm. There is a native red maple which is a very common self seeder, another red maple and a Norway Maple which grows with a shell of foliage on the outside, and the oak, possibly 50 years old. Even the big elm is probably from this century. The farmers did not have many trees on their properties as they wanted sun for their gardens and crops.

In *photo 2* there is a small stone cooker which probably backed up to the fence that was used for the garden. The cider shed that the Society built in 1996 shows by its placement that it is a new building. Buildings were never built close and parallel to stone walls in early times. If the building had been there originally, the stone wall would have run parallel to, but dead ending at the corner of the building.

This *photo 3* not only shows the Coley house, but it shows a walkway that leads into the backyard and abruptly ends in the middle of the lawn. There was most likely a dirt driveway that went from our current driveway across the back of the house and was used as a carriage stop. Looking at the house itself, the square portion was the original house and the shed roofs are add-ons. Ted believes that it is possible that the entire house was rebuilt in 1840 as it was very unusual for the ridge on the roof not to be parallel to the road. The Federal style of the houses of the 1830's - 1840's, were put perpendicular to the roads as this house. What is unusual is that the timber frame in the basement for the first floor suggests a house much older than 1840. The floor plan without all the additions, the kitchen, the bedroom, and the porches (the back bedroom without its roof was not a room), made a room all across the back to include half the current bedroom and part of the dining room that would be a 1750-1800 style house floor plan. There would have been a big room in the back and two parlors in the front, and a little entryway, with a set of stairs coming in off what is now the kitchen. If you look at the front of this house, the sequence of the windows without all the trims,

indicates pre-Federal. It is Ted's opinion that perhaps the top story was turned around when in 1840 the central staircases were added, as well as heat and plumbing for the bathrooms. Indications in the basement show that there was most likely a huge cooking fireplace in the room we now call the back parlor, and was probably the original kitchen for the house. All basements in the early days were built on the south side of the home to take advantage of any warmth that was available. The lilac, arborvite, and the hydrangea (to the right of this picture), were most likely part of a hedge.

In *photo 4* we are looking at the original well for the home. To the left, it appears that there might have been a second well. The main well probably had a wooden shed on the top to keep the children from falling in and to keep the well clean. This was most likely called a well house rather than shed. Most wells were hand dug 15 to 20 feet deep. When they struck the ground water level, they would bail out water so that the walls would not fall in. Stones were placed beneath the water level, sometimes as much as 8 or 9 feet, circular in shape, and brought up to ground level. This helped to keep dirt from seeping into the water. In later years, pumps and piping underground were punched into the buildings, saving them from pulling up the bucket from the well. The Coleys most likely had a pump in the basement as there were no submersible pumps at the time. This was probably done around the 1920's, which corresponds to the advent of electricity. It is very unusual to find a well this close to the house with rain water contaminating it, but if you take all the sheds that have been added on, it was not that close to the house. The basement stairs that go down were probably originally outside stairs into the original house and when they put the first kitchen shed on, it became an inside stair case to it. The cellar access that is outside would most likely never have been there as it was the north side and this would have allowed cold to enter. Perhaps the doors were added in order to bring in the boilers and water tanks and heaters.

This small room (*photo 5*) was originally believed to be an open porch. It most likely had a room with a column in the corner as it is located on the south east corner of the house, taking advantage of a real warm spot. It would have been added with that first kitchen shed. The two beautiful stones were there so that you could go up on either side. The stones were hand chiseled, or tooled, and required months of work. It is likely, therefore that the farmer himself did not do this work, but had the stones brought in for another place. These stones might have come from a quarry great distances from this farm, or from some local place. There is an area of surface ledge just north of Cobbs Mill Inn. Quarrying can be seen on some of this surface exposed ledge and there are large stone outcroppings in Devil's Den.

Just above the two stone steps (*photo 5*) is the foundation. This includes "tip-ups" which are large flat stones that are placed on field stone foundations to keep wind, dirt, and rodents from entering into the basement. Sealing stone foundations with mud only eroded with the rain

continued page 4

*The Weston
Historical Society
Coley Homestead*





104 Weston Road
Weston





THEN AND NOW *continued*

so flat stones were "tipped up" to have fewer joints. They were put at ground level with the smooth side facing out. They were cut rough to begin with and were rooled (taking a chisel and tapping off all the high spots until it is smooth). The stone on the side of the house with the well is an amazing 12'4" long.

This lovely bay window is indicative of the late 1800's Victorian style (*photo 6*). It was probably added on to the house around that time. The stones underneath the window were specially cut on angles to be placed under the window. These were done at a later date than the tip ups on the other side of the house. Just visible in the right of the picture is a doorway which is located on the north side of the house which is very unusual because of drafts.

Directly across the yard from the bay window is what was probably a hedge (*photo 7*), likely planted about the 1920's as indicated by the size of the trees. This was probably used as a screen between the house and the cars and work area of the property.

We know that in the early 1950's Weston Road originally passed right in front of the property and went to the right of the telephone pole (shown in *photo 8*) and continued on down Old Weston Road. The Carriage house (*photo 9*) originally rested on the stone wall visible on the right of *photo 8*. Because of the new road construction, the carriage house needed to be moved back from the road 16 feet. The two stone steps shown in photos 10 and 11 were used of help ladies step up and down from the carriages, or for use in getting onto horses. The steps in photo 10 were probably brought here because of their usefulness. The steps in photo 11, made with a slight curve, are early Victorian (1860-1870). The flat steps were used for a time to step up to the front porch of the house on the north side.

The driveway shown in photo 12 was probably much steeper than it is now. The two large stones on either side of the drive were probably moved back and have been moved further apart. The old driveways only had a 10-12 foot opening, with a gate. You can still see where the gate was attached and anything wider than 12 foot span was structurally hard for them to build. There would have been some kind of fencing on the outside of these stones, so that the gates and the fence would make some kind of enclosure.

The original Coley Barn burned to the ground in 1881 with the loss of several animals (*photo 13*). This current barn was built in 1883. The typical barn is 26 feet in depth. It could be as narrow as 24 feet, and as wide as 28 feet. That was totally dependent on the wood fasteners, the pegs, that they could use without using a center support. Any wider than that they would have to go into columns, and they wanted the freedom with the hay of getting it through the openings to the lofts on either side. The wood pegs and the few nails that they had limited the size of the buildings. The distance between the doors is 12 feet, (*photo 14*) and a box on either side of the door measures 12 feet. This made the barns either 36, 48 or some 12 foot dimension. This is standard English barn style, (called the "Popular Mechanic" buildings of the 1700's.) They are all over New England, and the farther north you go, the steeper the

roof so that it will shed the snow. If you get to the other side of the Hudson River, you pick up the Dutch influence.

There is a beautiful stone ramp at the barn door and the original barn probably was placed over these stones (*photo 14*), leaving a full basement underneath. The shed roofs again were probably add-ons. The hay was stored on the right side of the barn and there were bins for feeding and straw was also used for bedding. The main doors on the barn opened on both sides of the building directly across from one another. The threshing of grain was done right here on the floor with a 12' board dropped into slots up against the downwind doorway. The prevailing winds would blow through the barn. First one would beat all the grain on the floor and loosen up all the shells on the grain, and then one would throw the hulls up in the air and the wind would take the chaff out the door and the grain would get caught behind the threshold as it was heavier (this is where the expression threshold came from - thank you Ted).

The center area of the barn was most likely used to work in and to store the farm equipment (things could be wheeled in and out of this area). The floor would either be dirt or wood (which often meant there was a basement beneath). The main thing they needed was the food crop for the cows and the horses, which would be stored in the two hay lofts. There was a nutritional quality to that hay. The grain such as Timothy and the orchard grasses which were inedible for people were used. The wheats and the other grains were grown as a food crop. Straw material had very little food nutritional value and was often kept as bedding and was probably kept in attics of these buildings separate from the fodder hay.

The road passing the barn on the right side of this picture probably went straight back to the fields for use by the animals, and the vehicles. Thirty or forty acres were most likely used for pasture to feed the animals, and closer to the barn was probably a corral for the pigs and other farm animals. There may have been sheep, as well as oxen, and perhaps chickens closer to the house, possibly turkeys and rabbits. The outbuildings (*photo 15*) were never this close to the homestead (outhouses and cabins for the workers), but were moved here after the sale of the farmland so that we might preserve them.

This tour was very informative and made a great deal of sense when seen up close. As with all properties, progress also means change. However, it is nice to have a sense of what came before and perhaps we can preserve the integrity of the land and the buildings as we help to keep the past for future generations. 🍷

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Karen Giannitti - Chronicle Editor
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September 8, 2000
M.A. Barr
109 Ladder Hill Rd.
Weston CT 06883

Dear Karen:

The Chronicle is one of the really interesting pieces of literature I receive, due, in large part, to the dedication of the editor and other volunteers who give their time and effort to getting it written and published.

The latest issue had an added bonus in my opinion: commentary from the editor ("Letter From the Editor"). I enjoyed the personal touch and the point of the comments was certainly food for thought.

I'm sure I am not alone when I say thank you for getting this nifty publication out to all of us members of the Society.

Sincerely,

Mary Ann Barr

Letter to the editor:

Dear Editor:

Somehow, your edition of the scrapbook page of Weston's Own News made it to my home in Alexandria, Va.

I was a young student at Weston Public School from 2nd grade until I transferred to Westport in the 7th grade. Your recreated article of a Cub Scout Pack Meeting really caught my attention, as names from the past sprang (sprung) to the present. It is amazing how I can remember all those names from elementary school, and I can't even recall the name of my neighbor. Funny how the mind retains the past and forgets the present. Could it be age creeping up on us?

I can recall riding my bicycle up Giffords Hill from Broad Street to attend Norfield Congregational Church, in my nice Sunday clothes, with a special pantleg clip around my ankle to prevent my pants from catching in the chain. And how I looked forward to coming home after the service, so I could scream down the hill without pedaling. I remember how proud I felt when Rev Karl Osberg autographed my Bible in 1952. After all, he was the main man and getting his autograph was right up there with Mickey Mantle.

I remember Mr. Jack White driving my school bus, then taking his position at the head of my class to begin his teaching role an hour later.

My favorite bus driver was Steve Gjuresko. He was so funny, and made riding the bus an enjoyable experience. I remember one day "mouthing off" and he stopped the bus, stood up and walked back to my seat to reprimand me about what I had said. He was more than just a bus driver. He was a disciplinarian, something missing in today's society.

It's been 45 years since I moved from Weston when I got my haircut at Bob's Barbershop and my 56 Coke with a squirt of cherry syrup at the soda fountain at the Pharmacy, and ice skated on Lomazzo's gravel pit behind the "No Trespassing" sign through the woods off Broad Street. My parents got their gas at Falla's gas station and their food at Peter's. It's been ages since we swam in the river off Cartbridge road or floated our rafts under the Troll Bridge on Davis Hill Road. But when I meet new people and they ask me where I am from, I always answer, "Weston, Ct." You can imagine my shock when came back for a visit and actually saw a traffic light at the bottom of Gifford's Hill at Goodhill Rd and Broad Street. I don't think my old Humber 3 speed would have been able to stop for the light without ending up in Danneman's back yard.

Those were the good old days when phone numbers didn't have a prefix, and you only needed to remember 4 digits, you left your keys in the car so you would know where to find them, and the houses were left unlocked.

Tommy Golden
1950

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Chronicle Quarterly

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With this year's election on everyone's mind I thought it would be fun to share a couple of Presidential recipes for you to try. Enjoy!

Lincoln Log Meatloaf

Serves 8

1 1/2 lb Ground beef	6 Servings of prepared
1 1/2 c Soft bread crumbs	instant-mashed potatoes
2 T Instant minced onions	1 T Butter
1/2 t Margarine, crumbled	1 t Onion salt
1/4 t Pepper	2 Egg yolks
1 Egg lightly beaten	1/4 c Milk
2/3 c Milk	

8 slices Sharp cheese

Mix together beef, bread crumbs, onion, margarine and salt and pepper.

Beat egg until bubbly. Add 2/3 cups milk to meat mixture and mix gently but thoroughly. Shape into 9x12 rectangle on wax paper. Using paper to lift meat into 9" cylinder. Place on a shallow pan and bake at 350°F. for 45 minutes.

Prepare instant potatoes. Add butter, onions and salt to potatoes.

Beat egg yolks. Add in potatoes.

Take meat loaf out of oven and frost with mashed potatoes. Return to oven 10 minutes longer. Place cheese on top and put under broiler until cheese melts.

Washington's Cherry Pounder

Serves 16

1- 1/2 cups boiling water
1 pkg. (8 serving size) Cherry Flavored Gelatin
1-1/2 cups cold water
1 can (21 oz.) cherry pie filling
1 pkg. (12 oz.) pound cake, cut into 10 slices
1 tub (8 oz.) Whipped Topping, thawed

STIR boiling water into gelatin in large bowl at least 2 minutes until complete dissolved. Stir in cold water and cherry pie filling. Refrigerate about 1-1/4 hour until slightly thickened (consistency of unbeaten egg whites).

LINE bottom of 13x9 inch dish with pound cake slices. Spoon gelatin mixture cake. REFRIGERATE 2 hours or until firm. Just before serving, spread whipped top over gelatin mixture. Garnish as desired. Store leftovers in refrigerator.