

# The Chronicle Quarterly

Weston Historical Society

Spring 2003

Volume 24 No 1

## HERB DAY HEART & SOUL OF WHS

From the Editor:

It is yet again that I report to you with a heavy heart, the loss of one of our most distinguished, hardworking, and amazing volunteers, Herb Day. It is almost impossible to put into words what Herb meant to the society. After retiring from his 40 hour work week, Herb took on the barn at the Society and turned it into a living museum. Several years ago when two very foolish women (myself being one of them) took the barn apart for a quilt show, Herb just went on in his quiet manner and redid the entire barn with descriptive boards and displays. He told me that he had always wanted to do that, so that what we had done was okay. This was the spirit of Herb Day. He went about his business and accomplished so many wonderful things.

Herb started the Chronicle which he wrote single-handedly for 13 years. He was the driving force behind the restoration and the opening of the Old Post Office on the Adams-Scribner property. He made sure that the Post Office was open each fall for the public to come and see and learn what life was like "back then" Herb always took every opportunity to educate the people of Weston about its history as a farming

community, an industrial town for a period and all the people that made things possible over our 200 plus years as a community. Rain or shine, every July Herb was at the Coley House cooking hamburgers and hot dogs for our annual Senior Picnic. He served as our President for many years and was instrumental in the building of the Cider Press Shed, and was in the forefront of making the Society a visible and educational resource for the community. Herb took it upon himself to catalogue many photographs and documents on Weston's history, took over the building of the bluebird houses each spring following the untimely death of our member Bob Jirucha, and in 1996 won the Volunteer Spirit Award given each year to an exceptional volunteer. The award is

given by the Voluntary Action Center of Mid-Fairfield County.

These are just a few of the highlights of the incredible things that Herb did for our Society. Our hearts go out to his family and many, many friends. The Coley grounds will never seem the same without Herb being there working on something small or large for the betterment of us all.

## HELEN MASON FRIEND & BENEFACTOR

From the Editor:

We have also lost another of our most staunch and generous members. Helen Mason passed away on February 18 at the age of 98. Helen was the daughter of Oscar Budd who served the Town of Weston for many years, three times as First Selectman. Helen was born and grew up in Weston on the Budd farm on Kettle Creek Road in the early 1900's. She with members of her family have given the Society a large bound volume of the history of Oscar Budd, and many items from their homestead ranging from mirrors, furniture, china, pictures and her great-grandmother's Bible. We also have a lovely yellow rose bush grown from a cutting given to us by Helen a few springs ago. In honor of *continued on page 2*



Herb Day

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## HELEN MASON

all that Oscar Budd did for Weston, our front parlor at the Coley House is named in his honor.

Mrs. Mason was a former publicist and home economist. She earned a bachelor of science degree from Connecticut State College and a master of arts degree from Columbia. Helen taught school here in Weston at the Goodhill Schoolhouse for 20 years and in the spring of 2000 Helen shared some of her memories with 3rd and 4th grade students from the TAG class at Hurlbutt Elementary. Helen told them that she taught in the 1920's when all grades were taught in one room. She would have to arrive early to fill a wood stove and start a fire, then spent the day teaching approximately 8 students ranging in age from 4 to 16. She was insistent that she never had to punish her students because they were all good.

After teaching, Helen joined the Women's Reserve of the U.S. Army

servicing from 1943 to 1945. She then moved on to New York City where she became a food columnist for the Newark newspapers. At one time she worked for Parents Magazine. In our Spring/Summer 1999 issue of the Chronicle we featured a "Storyland Cook Book" which was the work of Helen. She not only wrote the book, but she tested all the recipes including candied apples, berry muffins and peach snow. Helen then became a publicist for General Foods, a position she held until retiring.

Helen was an avid supporter of the Historical Society in every way. She had many friends at the Society, and we were fortunate to have been able to celebrate Helen's 95th birthday at the Coley House in 1999. What was to be a small



Helen Mason in Mabel Budd's 1902 wedding dress. Photo taken in 1960's

celebration turned into a gala party with so many friends attending, a true testament to what Helen meant to all of us. Our sympathies to Helen's family and friends. She will be terribly missed. ❁

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### Letter to the Editor:

As a Westonite the Chronicle Quarterly always has appeal for me. The Winter 2002 issue was of special interest to me since I knew Jim Hoe quite well. I appreciate the recognition this issue gives Jim. But beyond that, I think the kind of coverage is exemplary of how the Chronicle Quarterly covers any subject. All the articles are informative, well put together and accompanied by great photographs. The Winter 2002 issue, especially, has lots of wonderful photographs depicting Weston's past.

Speaking of photos; that's a great one of the cannonball.

Thanks for all your efforts.

Sincerely,

Mary Ann Barr

### *The Chronicle Quarterly*

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

**Karin Giannitti**  
Editor

**Tad Dillon**  
At the Keyboard

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Design and Production

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*Thanks to you too Mary Ann for your letter  
and all your hard work.*





# THE BLIZZARD OF 2003

If you are like most Westonites this winter has been one to remember. The cold and snow have both combined to give its citizens a bit of "cabin fever." There was, however, a much worse winter that truly was one for the books. We are talking about the Blizzard of "88" – 1888 that is.

Mrs. Lillian Squires Morton who was a native of Weston made a tape of her life in Weston back in 1956 when she was 72 years old. One of her most vivid memories was the blizzard of 1888. At the time of the snow Mrs. Morton lived on East Godfrey and she is quoted as saying "That was a terrible snow. It blew and snowed for three days I think. It crusted over and snowed more on top of that. At home we had a little porch that had a window opening on it. It blew that full of snow so we couldn't see out the window. It was just packed full. Levi was a baby and, of course, Mother had to wash so she shoved up the window and filled a washboiler with snow and put it on the stove. Nobody could go out and nobody could go in. To get to the well, we would have had to go out the back door and dig all around. Over there, up the hill from Mrs. Shethat's (190 Godfrey Road East), the snow was right up in the maple trees. It must have drifted 20 feet deep there.

I guess they were a week getting down to the main road. Nobody could get to the store or post office.

Somebody finally got through with a sled and oxen and brought up the mail. Sam Smith died during the snow and they had to keep him three weeks."

From the Morehouse family of Newtown Turnpike came the remarks "It commenced snowing Sunday afternoon March 11th and did not clear off until March 14th in the afternoon. The banks in places were from 8 to 12 feet high, the New York and New Haven railroads were blockaded, trees blown down and some small buildings blown over, there was no horse hitched to a wagon that went by here until Thursday March 22nd."

Ruth Lockwood of Georgetown Road reported to us that "My father was ten years old when the blizzard of March 1888 hit Weston. Drifts reached to the second story windows of the house on Georgetown Road. He and his brothers were sliding on snowbanks in June. A tunnel had to be dug to the barn in order to care for the livestock. Fortunately, there was a well inside the barn."

Not only did we have eyewitness accounts of the storm (unfortunately no pictures), but the local papers also carried the story. The Norwalk Gazette Wednesday March 14, 1888 reported "Lean Sherwood was found in the snow by the police nearly frozen to death last Monday night. He was taken to Wendling's bake shop where Dutch

George packed him in a barrel of snow to take the frost out and rolled the barrel and all into his oven to take the snow out. Lean came out alright. Stage driver Gregory of the Weston stage route had an experience in getting home Monday night which he doesn't care to see again. He was obliged to frequent intervals along the dreary and lonesome road to shovel a pathway for his team through high drifts, in the teeth of the blinding storm and it is a miracle that he survived the strain. On Wall street (in Norwalk) snow obscured the first floor stores and was up to the second floor windows."

The evening Sentinel – South Norwalk wrote on March 14, 1888 – "the mail carrier from Weston drove to Norwalk Monday and has not been able to go back to Weston yet." From the Norwalk Gazette dated Wednesday March 21, 1888 – "We never had anything like this during 25 years of Republican administration, and it simply shows how utterly incapable the Democrats are to run this country. We must have a change. Signed Selectman Wheeler, Norwalk."

Whoever or whatever was to blame for the Blizzard of 1888, all those that lived through it claimed it rivaled any storm in their memories and all storms to come. Maybe our winter isn't so bad after all.



Cobb's Mill



Post Office



As one drives north along Rt. 53, just before you leave the town of Weston, there is a large parcel of land, which is now Blue Spruce Circle, Ledgewood Dr. and Oak Lane. This property goes back in the Morehouse family for generations and at one time encompassed approximately 2000 acres. The property extended from just south of Blue Spruce Circle, north to Redding, including part of Redding, west to include all of what is now Blue Spruce Circle, and east to include Singing Oaks and down to the Saugatuck River which is under the reservoir. This property was owned by Ebenezer Morehouse. He and his brother David built homes next door to each other; David's being the house and property recently acquired by the town from his granddaughter Minerva Morehouse Heady. This property is now known as Morehouse Farm Park. Ebenezer's home, originally located at the corner of Newtown Turnpike and Blue Spruce Circle was moved across the street in 1960, and has been occupied by Ernie and Judy Albin, members of the Society. Ebenezer Morehouse is the great, great grandfather of Ernie and his sister Elaine Deysenroth, also a member of the society. Elaine's husband, Paul is the current WHS President.



*Handwritten signature: C. L. Morehouse*

While going through boxes of papers, etc. that were found in the attic, Ernie and Judy discovered some treasures from the family. One of these treasures is an essay written by Carrie L. Morehouse, a daughter of Ebenezer. The essay was written on September 27, 1882, when Carrie was approximately 16 years of age. The subject of the work is the United States, and we would like to share it with you.

*(Note the beautiful handwriting and places where the ink was darker, probably when she dipped her pen for more ink.)*

*The United States.*

*The United States is held as the most populous country on the Western Continent and the most powerful Republic in the world. It has a great variety of climate, the northern part being subject to extremes of heat and cold, while in the south it is very hot. The Alleghany and Rocky Mountains divide the country into three great regions, the Atlantic slope extending from the Alleghany Mountains to the Atlantic, the Pacific Slope extending from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific and the great valley of the Mississippi lying between these Mountain chains. The principal rivers of the United States are the Mississippi which with the Missouri forms the longest river in the world, the Rhine, Red, Columbia, Colorado, and Potomac. The United States contains many large cities, New York city situated on Manhattan island is the most populous in the Union. It was settled by the Dutch in 1623 and called by them New Amsterdam, but when it was taken by the English in 1664 the name was changed to New York. It contains many public buildings, and an immense publishing business is carried on there. The United States at first contained but thirteen states and these were British Colonies until the 4th of July 1776 when they declared themselves free and maintained their freedom by war, which lasted eight years. There are now 37 states and 11 territories which are divided into four sections, Eastern, Middle, Southern and Western. The Middle States are the most thickly settled, Niagara Falls in the Niagara River between Canada and New York having a perpendicular descent of 166 feet is the most abundant waterfall in the world. California one of the principal States of the west contains many natural wonders, one of them is the grove of big trees some of which are 400 feet high and 167 feet in circumference. The valley of the*

*Some world, on the U. such a occupy by the 6 The World and the common a blessing the world. Franchise made the minister Professor Henry*



“THE UNITED STATES”

“The United States is noted as the most populous country on the Western Continent and the most powerful Republic in the world. It has a great variety of climate, the northern part being subject to extremes of heat and cold, while in the south it is very hot. The Alleghany and Rocky Mountains divide the country into three great regions, the Atlantic slope, extending from the Alleghany Mountains to the Atlantic, the Pacific Slope extending from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific and the great valley of the Mississippi lying between these two mountain chains. The principal rivers of the United States are the Mississippi, which with the Missouri form the longest river in the world, Ohio, Arkansas, Red, Columbia, Colorado, and Potomac. Manhattan Island is the most populous in the Union. It was settled by the Dutch in 1623 and called by them New Amsterdam, but when it was taken by the English in 1664 the name was changed to New York. It contains many public buildings and an immense publishing business is carried on there. The United States at first contained but thirteen states and these were British Colonies until the 4 of July, 1776 which they declared themselves free and maintained their freedom by a war which lasted eight years. There are now 37 states and 11 territories which are divided into four sections, East, Middle, Southern and Western. The Middle States are the most thickly settled, Niagra Falls in the Niagra River between Canada and New York -----having a perpendicular descent of 165 feet is the most stupendous cataract in the world. California one of the principal States of the West contains many natural wonders, one of these is the grove of big trees some of which are 411 feet high and 100 feet in circumference. The valley of the Yosemite in this State contains some of the grandest scenery in the world. Gold was first discovered in California in the year 1848 on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada. This discovery created such a great excitement that many people left their farms and other occupations and flocked to the fortunate spot. Alaska was purchased by the United States from Korea in 1867. The principal fruits of the United States are the apple, pear, peach, plum and grapes in the north, and the orange, lemon, banana, and figs in the South. George Washington the commander in Chief during the Revolution was also the first President. Among the greatest of the Presidents should also be placed Jefferson, Madison, Jackson, and Lincoln, among the greatest statesmen Alexander Hamilton, Henry Clay and Daniel Webster, and among those who have made the Unites States famous by their inventions, Eli Whitney who invented the cotton gin, Robert Fulton the builder of the first steamboat, Professor Morse the inventor of the telegraph and Elias Howe of the sewing machine.

Carrie Morehouse

Weston September 27, 1882

This composition was composed by Carrie while Celia Hill was teacher and read by her September 27, 1882.

1886. 207 Main Street Danbury Conn

This State contains some of the grandest scenery in the world was first discovered in California in the year 1848 on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada. This discovery created such a great excitement that many people left their farms and other occupations and flocked to the fortunate spot. Alaska was purchased by the United States from Russia in 1867. The principal fruits of the United States are the apple, pear, peach, plum and grapes in the north, and the orange, lemon, banana, and figs in the South. George Washington the commander in Chief during the Revolution was also the first President. Among the greatest of the Presidents should also be placed Jefferson, Madison, Jackson, and Lincoln, among the greatest statesmen Alexander Hamilton, Henry Clay and Daniel Webster, and among those who have made the United States famous by their inventions, Eli Whitney who invented the cotton gin, Robert Fulton the builder of the first steamboat, Professor Morse the inventor of the telegraph and Elias Howe of the sewing machine.

Carrie Morehouse  
Written September 27, 1882

This composition was composed by Carrie while Celia Hill was teacher and read by her September 27, 1882.





# WESTON PAST AND PRESENT

*Presented by  
Mrs. Larrabee's Second Grade*

This past year we were excited to have Judy Albin accept the offer of the Board of Trustees to be a liaison with the Hurlbutt Elementary School. Judy spent many years at Hurlbutt working as an aide in various departments. After a term of several years in the private sector, Judy came back to Hurlbutt and worked for 10 years as a Kindergarten aide, at which time she retired. She has been talking with the second grade faculty for ways in which the Society can enhance the curriculum dealing with Weston's history. During her conversations, Judy was given a booklet created

by Mrs. Janis Larrabee's second grade class created during the 2001-2002 school year. The children spent several weeks researching and learning about their community both past and present. For much of their research they used a Web-Quest Internet information search created by Mrs. Larrabee, Mrs. Harjes, and Mrs. Nakas featuring the Weston Historical Society website as a primary resource (our thanks to Tad Dillon for creating this site). One of Judy's hopes is to create a website suited to children of second grade and perhaps other ages as well.

The children then created a multi-media presentation comparing Weston from the past to the present. We would like to share the children's presentation with you over the next few issues. It is simply charming and the pictures were all done on the computer by the children. As the class proclaimed "We hope you like our presentation. We bet you'll learn something too."

Front cover illustrated  
(page 1 of this issue)  
by Audrey Goettl

Written by  
Ari Dabush  
and  
Christopher Hopf

## **Weston: Past and Present**

**We explored Weston today and long ago using a WebQuest our teacher wrote with two other teachers. We did a lot of activities to find out information about our town. We worked in committees, with partners and sometimes alone. For the final project, we had to use the information we had learned to show changes in Weston. We chose our favorite sights or people to write and draw about. We hope you like our presentation. We bet you'll learn something too!**

**By Ari and Christopher**

**PAST FIRE HOUSE**  
By SAM



## **Weston Fire House Past**

**What do you think the people in Weston did if there was a fire two hundred years ago? They couldn't call 911. They didn't have many men who were firefighters. There weren't a lot of fire trucks either. Do you think there were women firefighters? There weren't. It wasn't easy to put out the fires because they didn't have very good equipment. Often the buildings burned down. The firehouse was smaller too and so were the trucks. Aren't you glad that we have bigger trucks and better equipment today?**

Illustrated and written by Sam Loeb

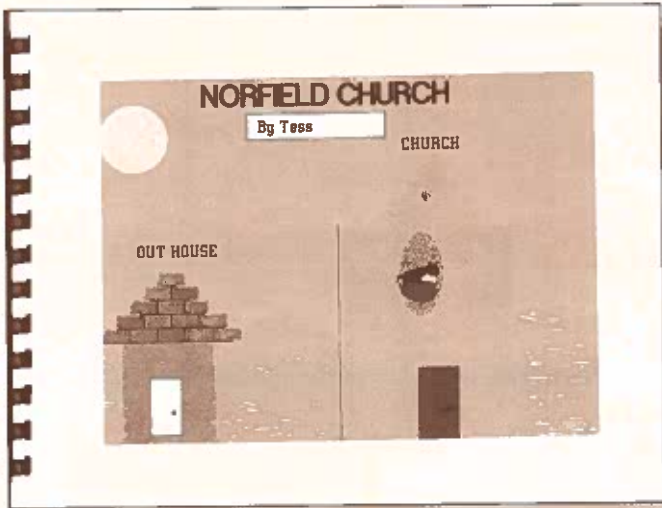


**The Firehouse Today**  
By Chloe

Do you think that the firehouse was smaller in the 1800s ?

Yes, it is a lot bigger now because there are a lot more people living in Weston today. Now that it's bigger I think they can protect us better. We are lucky that we have firemen with more tools today because if there was a real emergency we will stay alive.

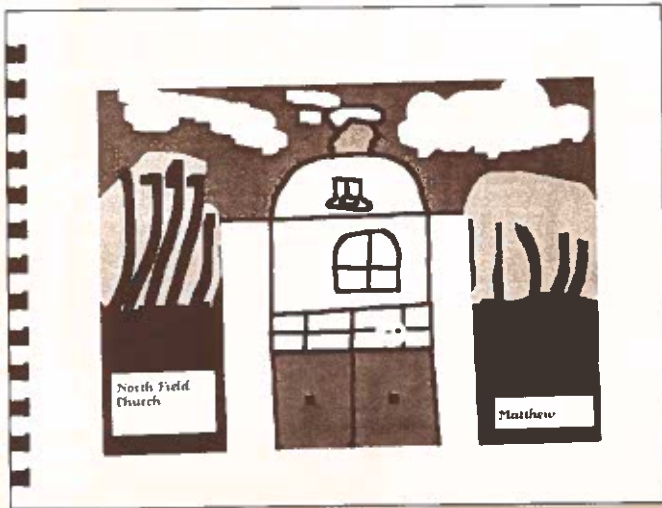
Illustrated and written by Chloe Canter



**Norfield Church**  
By Tess

Come with me! We now are going back to 1757. We are at Norfield Congregational Church. I will open the door. It is a dark place because there was no electricity. There are wooden seats with no cushions. The present building was dedicated in 1831. It is the third Norfield meeting house. The little shed in the rear was for carriages. Is Norfield Church any different today? ☺

Illustrated and written by Tess Maggio



**Norfield Church in the Present**  
By Matthew

Creak! Went the church in Norfield! In the past it was only used as a place for prayer. Now it is sometimes used for Hurlbutt Elementary's after school activities for Hurlbutt students. It also has electricity now and it's a lot bigger too. The Norfield church is still a good place to do prayers and services. I'm glad that the Norfield Church is still there because many people use its services every day.

Illustrated and written by Matthew Birtwell



*The Weston Historical Society  
Chronicle Quarterly*

*Karin Giannitti, Editor  
9 Christopher Hill  
Weston, CT 06883*

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*Annual Easter Egg Hunt  
April 19, 2003 - 12:00 Noon  
for children age 8 and under*



Old Easter Cards