



The Chronicle Quarterly

Weston Historical Society

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THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

by Alan Aronow & Dorothy Curran

Historic preservation and education is the core purpose of the Society. Without a secure, fireproof, climate-controlled archive and exhibit space, the Society's collections are at risk and cannot be shared easily with the public or the schools. Lack of a proper conservation and preservation facility also deters prospective donors of priceless Weston artifacts.

The Society's Capital Campaign includes a larger vision for the Coley property and the contiguous space, but our first priority is to construct an archive and exhibit space. The goal of our Capital Campaign is to raise over \$1,000,000 over the next five years to be used to construct the Archive complex along with many other improvements to the Coley Homestead.

The Founders Circle

The Weston Historical Society is fortunate to have an impressive Capital Campaign Advisory Committee headed by former First Selectman, George Guidera. Mr. Guidera had a wonderful idea to jump-start the Capital Campaign by creating the Founders Circle _ a select group of individuals willing to pledge \$25,000 or more to the Archive

project.

Members of the Founders Circle responded enthusiastically to this fund raising challenge. As of the end of May, 2006, Founders Circle members have pledged over \$350,000 towards making the Archive dream a reality. These generous people include Christopher and Alice Barreca, The Woody Bliss Family, Franklin and Tracy Collins, Jess and Andrea DiPasquale, Travis and Anne Engen, Fairfield County Bank, George and Linda Guidera, James and Karen Magee, Michael and Sandy O'Brien, Alden and Dorothy Sherman, Hal and Sheila Shupack, Morton and Cari Schindel, John

and Cindy Vaccaro and Weston Shopping Center Associates, LLC. The list of members of the Founders Circle keeps growing.

On June 10, 2006 a reception was held to honor Founders Circle members that took place at the exquisite antique home of Nina Daniel on Good Hill Road. Our guests of Honor, Christopher and Elaine Plummer hosted a spectacular evening of music, fine wine and food, along with wit and wisdom of Mark Twain, portrayed marvelously by actor Ken Richters. Underwriting for part of the cost of this party was Fairfield County Bank.

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Carriage arriving at the Daniel residence for Founders Circle dinner.



Capital Campaign continued



Ken Richters and Nina Daniel. Ken portrayed Mark Twain and entertained guests with wit and wisdom.



Volunteers and members of the Founder's Circle posing for a group photo at the home of Nina Daniel.

What's Next

The Founders Circle event marked the official beginning of our 5-year Capital Campaign. In the months ahead additional programs and events will be held to raise the level of awareness and sense of urgency regarding the critical need to build an Archive. We are encouraged by the generosity and vision of the Founders Circle who understood the need to protect the thousands of items with which the Society has been entrusted to preserve for future generations.



Volunteers gathering on front porch of the antique home of Nina Daniel.

For further information on the Capital Campaign, please contact Dorothy Curran at (203) 246-0543.



Happy 75th Anniversary

*Weston Volunteer
Fire Department*

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RESTORATION VS. RENOVATION: Not just slapping on some paint.

May 2006 by M.A. Barr

Barometers signal change. Weathermen rely on barometric readings to determine weather patterns. Like a weatherman, The Weston Historical Society can determine its direction and progress by tracking the interesting changes it has made as it moves through the first decade of the 21st century. Over its 45 year existence it has, for the most part, integrated changes with tradition, and the old, to create a unique organization where Westonites can pursue history-related activities and research.

The new “old” kitchen at the Coley House is one change that is a dramatic nod to the 1910/20s era of Weston. Some people are dubious about effects of the change and loss of certain details in the process of achieving the vintage look. Others wonder if all the effort and money spent were in the right direction. Fair assessment is needed; best done by measuring the project against criteria in [The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties](#). This book is the benchmark, or litmus test for historic organizations. It describes the four categories or “treatments” in historic preservation – *Preservation, Rehabilitation, Restoration and Reconstruction*. Employing the criteria for each treatment assiduously in a transition such as the Coley House kitchen, creates the best portrayal of history. Was the Society conscientious in adhering to these standards? The answer lies in the research done and the results achieved. Lots of “digging,” is involved in the process; researching a property’s history, documenting details delving into diaries, scrutinizing photographs, searching out historically correct items, more

research, recording discoveries found in each strata as work progresses, and did I mention research..... Attention to such specifics as documenting each layer of paint applied to walls over the years is important; saving and dating these paint chips, taking photos, and properly archiving everything for future reference – and that is just *one* detail. Sometimes preservation can be tedious..... But the end result is very worthwhile – accurate depiction of life-in-the-past for future generations to witness.

Creating the “old” kitchen gave the Society an opportunity to put the principles of its mission - preserving Weston’s history – and the Secretary of the Interior’s standards into practice. This project fell into the category of *Restoration* as the basic *treatment*. Just a few of the precepts mentioned under Restoration in [The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties](#) are: “Work needed to stabilize.....and conserve materials and features from the restoration period will be properly documented for future research. Materials, features and finishes that characterize other historical periods will be documented prior toalteration or removal. Deteriorated features from restoration period will be repaired rather than replaced. A false sense of history will not be created by adding conjectural featuresby combining features that never existed together historically.” Complete criteria can be found in [The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties](#) or - for 21st Century style research - on line at [http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/stand](http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/standguide/index.htm)

[dguide/index.htm](http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/standguide/index.htm)

Adhering to the criteria from the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards is a tall order, but necessary to making true history come alive. How well does the Society measure up? Some details of the kitchen, such as recessed ceiling lights, may defy history and raise questions about the Society’s adherence to the Standards, but with each new project, the Society can learn more about implementing the Standards and get closer to such goals as being listed on the National Register of Historic Places and obtaining grants-in-aid from National funds; jewels in the crown for historic organizations.

Completion of the “historic” kitchen begs another barometer check. This is the time to ask what the next step is in fulfilling its mission. That can only be the state of Archiving and Collections management – the heart and soul of this Society, vital to its mission and an important part of its founders original intent. Proper care of documents and artifacts has been a goal almost since the inception of the Society. But as a priority project it has, for several years, been pre-empted for various reasons. This necessitated caring for Weston’s historic documents and artifacts under crowded and inadequate circumstances. Now archive work has come to a dead end due to lack of proper work and storage space. Further work cannot be truly effective. Collections Management suffers also. A change in this situation is of utmost importance. And here again – with change – is another opportunity to learn about, and employ, the Secretary of the Interior’s standards. Addressing the following questions in the process

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It seems so often in life that tragedy strikes in multiples of three. So it was in Weston in the month of April, 2006. Our community and the Society lost three Weston natives whose history went back generations. These three individuals lived quiet lives, worked locally, and gave Weston some of its strongest roots.

Our first loss was that of Ruth Lockwood. She left us on April 10 at the age of 88. Ruth was born in Weston in 1917 and was not only a Weston native, she was a daughter, a sister, an aunt, a hard worker, an artist, a farmer, a determined lady, and a loyal family member. She always had a sunny smile and an independent nature, a combination that served her well for most of her life.

Ruth was born in the family home on Georgetown Road. Her family, who date back in Weston to the 18th century, owned 70 acres of land from Langner Lane down to Hillside North. She was the eldest of four children, having two sisters and one brother. Her father and uncle ran sawmills in the area as a source of income, although their home had a farm-like atmosphere, with animals, gardens and fruit trees.



Ruth Lockwood at her home on Georgetown Road.

Ruth told us in an interview in the Fall of 1996 that she was never bored. Her sisters and brother and friends were always busy playing croquet, hopscotch, monopoly, jump rope and checkers. She also spent many hours reading. Her family did

not want Ruth to walk alone for the mile each way to School on Godfrey Road, so the teacher for the Upper Parish School, would drop off material at the house so that she could be taught at home. When Ruth's sister turned 5 the two of them were allowed to walk to the school.

Ruth's father had heard rumors when he was in a store in Norwalk, that girls were getting pregnant and drinking at the high schools in the area, so Ruth was sent to Merrill Business School upon graduating from 8th grade. After the death of her father in 1931, she attended Staples High School in Westport and then finished one more year at Merrill. She worked as a secretary for Wearever Slipper Co. in Norwalk, Harry Sherwood, and Norwalk Tire. But all this time Ruth longed for her animals and fresh farm air. As an example, when Ruth was 16, she started drawing pictures of the flowers in her yard and proved to be quite an artist.

Finally her dream came true and Ruth became the farmer she wanted. She sold eggs and chickens and had a couple of cows for milk. Folks would stop by her house for milk, butter, eggs, and cream. For a while she delivered eggs on three different routes, sometimes selling 60 dozen a day.

Ms. Lockwood still found time in her busy life to be involved with the Norfield Grange and the Weston Historical Society. She was always willing and eager to take on any job given to her. One of our favorite memories was when we were painting the woodwork at the Coley House in 1987 before our first Christmas Open House. We painted and chatted about life in Weston and her wonderful memories. Ruth will be sorely missed.

On Thursday, April 20, another of Weston's natives left us as quietly as he lived. Anson Keene passed away in his home at the age of



Ruth Lockwood, 1995



Anson I

90. As Anson told us in an article in the Chronicle in the winter of 1997, his grandparents came from Germany in the 1800's and settled in the West. They were cattle farmers, but the seven winters sent them packing and they settled first in Westport in the area of the Red Barn. They became onion farmers and in 1899 they moved to Weston. There, Anson's father Charles (Charlie as he was fondly known), became Weston's mailman for 32 years.

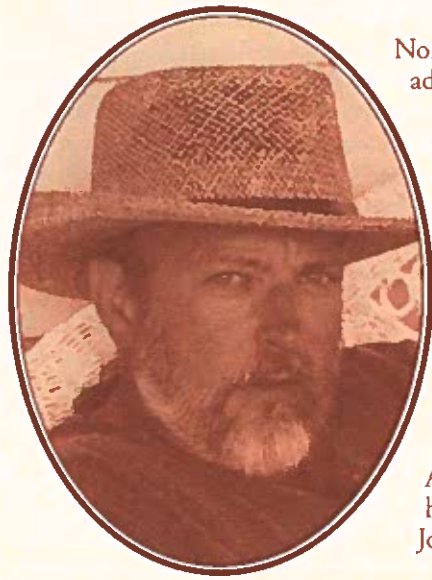


Childhood home of Anson Keene located at north corner of Weston Road and Broad Street - visible in front of stone wall (circa 1910)

Anson was born in Weston in his father's house at the northern corner of Weston Road and Broad Street in 1915. The Keene family built many houses in the area as well as the bath houses at Compo Beach and the



mid 1990s



Gary Samuelson, mid 1990s

brick buildings on Wilton Road nearby National Hall.

When Anson's father started delivering the mail the Post Office was in Westport where National Hall now stands. He had three horses which he used for mail: One to pick up the mail and come back; One to travel all around the reservoir; and one to travel down by the Red Barn and then back to Westport. Charlie made as many as 500 stops in a day and often picked up medicine in Westport to be brought along with the mail. One winter he used a sled for 66 days straight to go around the reservoir delivering mail. In the early 1900's Charlie switched to a Model T.

Like Ruth Lockwood, Anson had fond memories of growing up in Weston. For a short time there was a log cabin across the street that served as a store. He believes the proprietor was from Easton and contracted TB. Thus, no one would buy from him and the store went out of business before it had barely begun.

As a child Anson remembers playing ball in the field next to George Guidera's house on Lyons Plain. He spent many hours playing with Dave Coley who lived on River Road. One time he and Dave threw a whole basket full of Mrs. Coley's tomatoes at each other. Needless to say Mrs. Coley was none too thrilled. There were rumors that Anson raced his car on Lyons Plain and flew planes overhead. He admitted that he did fly a plane from a small airport on West Rocks Road in

Norwalk. Anson did not admit to the racing, but he did say that he could never get his Chevrolet above 85 mph. Before the days of cars and planes, Anson rode a bicycle or walked. He would sometimes walk to Westport and catch the trolley that came up as far as Clinton Avenue. One summer he mowed the lawn of John Orr Young (the home across from Norfield Church), and

made 50 cents an hour. He saved his money and went to Sears in Norwalk and purchased a new bike. Anson and a friend rode their bikes to Westport to see a movie, and when they came out the bicycle was stolen. Poor Anson had not had the bike an entire day before it was gone. He remembers skating on what is now Crystal Lake, and occasionally snuck a car out on the ice on the Steep Hill pond. He spent time sailing a boat down Gifford's Hill after a heavy rain filled the ditch with water.

Anson recalled a very heavy snow that fell in 1934. He had to ski to Westport for medicine. A bunch of men shoveled Lyons Plain Road to the intersection with Weston Road and another group shoveled down Weston Road from Norfield to meet them. Shopping in those days was done in Westport at the A & P store and at Daley's, where Bogey's is now. Saturday night was the big night out when square dances were held at the old Weston Town Hall (located behind Norfield Church but burned down in 1951) and also at Rippe's Barn in Westport on Long Lots Road.

In 1936 Anson joined the newly formed Weston Volunteer Fire Department where he would spend the next 70 years. He told us that there were many grass fires in those days and there were no phones so they were alerted to fires by the siren on the old school house. Anson remembered that almost every Good Friday for years they would have a grass fire on Langer Lane. The biggest fire, of course, was

when the school burned down in 1963.

In the early days when Anson joined the Department they only had one "Mack" truck. It was a great truck, but very hard to steer. It held 275 gallons of water but often blew off the hose. They would have to crawl underneath the truck and reattach the hose which no one liked to do. Sometimes they would drive to fires with the lights out to save the batteries. Someone would use a spotlight to light the way.

During World War II Anson was stationed in Wales where he met and married his wife, Marie. He served as a Staff Sergeant in the 8th Air Force 4th Fighter Group. He spent four 1/2 years there and upon coming home, he took a job at Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill in Georgetown. He and Marie built their home on Weston Road in 1949. Anson worked at the wire mill for 35 years and Marie worked 29 years for People's Bank fulltime and 11 years part-time.

On April 22 Weston lost yet another beloved native son, proud guardian of the town's history. Gary Samuelson was born in Weston and lived two houses away from Samuelson Road for the first years of his life. When he was 18, he inherited his family home on Samuelson Road. It was his maternal grandmother's home.



Gary Samuelson at Accoutrements in Georgetown

continud page 7

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THE ART OF MAILING A LETTER

Through the efforts of Judy Albin, our trustee and liaison to the Weston School system, the Society recently gave the entire second grade at Hurlbutt a tour of the Old Weston Post Office and General Store. Over a period of three weeks we had nine different classes come through the building where they were given first a short history. There were many a wide eye when they found out they were standing in a building that was over 200 years old.

The students were shown items that would have been sold in the General Store (candy for 1¢??), they then were told about the post office side of the building. They were shown letters from the Morehouse family which were sent from California during the Gold Rush days and actually went through the old post office.

Each child brought a letter written to their families. They were given a special post office envelope and a stamp with Benjamin Franklin's picture. Appropriately enough, Mr. Franklin was the first

postmaster of the United States. The children addressed their envelopes and inserted their letters. The students, teachers, and chaperones were then given the opportunity to sign a poster (designed by Mrs. Albin). They used a quill pen and the poster went back to the classroom for display.

Mr. Albin toured the children around the back room of the post office showing them various tools left behind, an old coal stove, and various pictures of the post office and barns on the property.

Following a group picture on the front porch, the children were given two old fashioned gingersnap cookies, and pictures depicting various parts of the building which they could take home to color. They then boarded the bus to take them to the new post office where they mailed their letters and found out how things are done in 2006. We understand that a great time was had by all. We sure had fun and want to thank Eileen Buckley, Mary Ann Barr, Ernie and Judy Albin and Karin Giannitti for a wonderful field trip.



Students visiting old post office



Student using quill pen to sign her name to a class poster.



Students took a moment to play some checkers while visiting the old post office.





IN MEMORIAM *continued*

His paternal grandmother lived next door. Gary's mother used to call him an "old soul" as a child, as he loved to be around older people. He would talk with them, and listen to their stories about Weston and its history.

After graduation from Danbury High School, Gary attended college, enlisted in the National Guard and received his nursing degree. He enjoyed nursing, but it did not indulge his creative side. Gary loved working with his hands and put an addition onto his grandmother's house. He spent time restoring antique furniture including the conference tables in the Meeting and Commission rooms of Weston's Town Hall. Gary was also an invaluable help to the Weston Historical Society in the 1970's, when we moved the old Weston Post Office from its location at the corner of Weston Road and Georgetown Road. He helped replace some of the siding that had deteriorated over the years, making it a viable museum for the Society's use.

For those of you who have read Jim Lomuscio's book "Village of the Damned", you know that when Gary inherited his family home, he discovered photographic glass plates. The plates were in an old box in the barn, but Gary knew

he had found a treasure. They showed pictures of Valley Forge when it was a community, before it was flooded to become a reservoir. With the help of Jim Daniel, Gary's plates were displayed at Weston Town Hall and brought us a wonderful picture of Weston in the olden days.

For several years, Gary owned a small antique shop in Georgetown, called "Accoutrements." You could find him there most Sunday afternoons, entertaining newcomers and locals alike with his off-beat humor and incredible wit.

Everyone who knew Gary describes him as a quiet and gentle man who loved this area and its history. Most recently he had been working on a film of Georgetown and its historic Gilbert & Bennett Wire Mill. Whenever you met Gary a simple "hi" always turned into a wonderful conversation about old houses, old folks, and fascinating stories of events in Weston and nearby towns.

The Historical Society wishes to send our deepest sympathies to Gary's son, Jake, and his daughter, Grace, as well as his five sisters. A great man taken too soon from us, but he has given us all so much to be grateful for having known him.

Our deepest sympathies to

the families of Ruth, Anson and Gary. They were always willing to do more than their share for the Town of Weston and the Historical Society. We are so glad that we have been able to share their memories of growing up in town and remembering Weston from a quieter time. We would be remiss if we did not mention the passing of three more natives in the months of May and June. Lillian Cognato of Lyons Plain, Helen Gecinceis of Georgetown Road, and beloved Charlie Squires from Godfrey Road East. Each had an impact on the lives of Westonites. We will miss you all.



Pansy drawn with quill pen by Judy Albin



RESTORATION VS. RENOVATION *continued*

can insure adherence to good preservation standards and fulfillment of the Society's mission. This kind of thoughtful attention to history, will sustain the health and uniqueness of the Society.

1. Do the changes keep in mind the accurate portrayal of Weston's history?
2. What methods of preservation are being employed in the process?
3. Is there enough continuity in the Society to keep it on track through necessary changes and keep it from going back to square one?
4. Are the most perspicacious grant monies being sought to assist with archival preservation?

5. Is the Society's Mission apparent in all aspects of its projects and other actions?
6. Are the Secretary of the Interior's Standards being adhered to in both large and small-scale changes to the Coley Homestead?
7. How effectively is the Society interacting with the population it serves?

If questions 1 through 6 are answered in good form the last question will almost take care of itself; the Society will remain an intriguing destination for Westonites and others interested in the town's history. The barometer will show great readings....

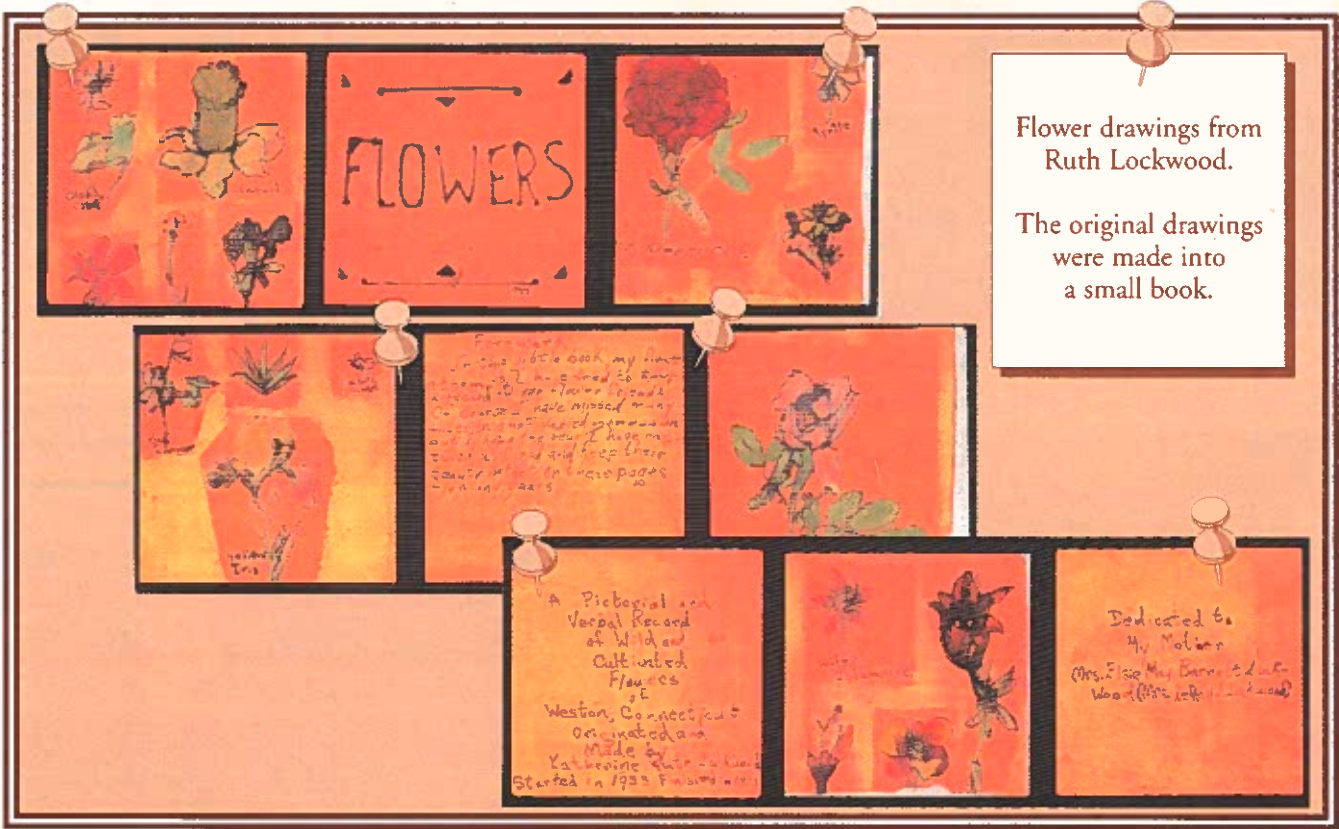


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Flower drawings from Ruth Lockwood.
The original drawings were made into a small book.