The Chronicle

Weston Historical Society *Summer 2011* *Vol. 32, No. 2*

A PASSION FOR A PROCESS

By Sharon Gilbert, Archivist

The Weston Historical Society's records and collections tell stories of people who got up in the morning and tilled the land, or worked in a toy factory, or walked down to the mill to grind corn. These were folks who paid their bills, went to war, and sent their children to school. Some gained new found wealth while others lost their businesses. They were born here, many were married here, and a fewer number were buried here.

As museum volunteers, we preserve materials that pique curiosity, inspire a sense of wonder, and connect those living in the present with those who have gone before us. Have you ever seen a bouquet of intricately woven and multicolored flowers that was made of human hair? Well, neither had I until three years ago.

In August of 2008, the Weston Historical Society was contacted regarding the Estate of Louise Messex. Karin Giannitti and I were graciously invited to the family home on Old Redding Road where we selected items we deemed appropriate and of permanent value for the Society's archives.

Of the hundreds of items we saw, I was especially fascinated with a bouquet of flowers, showcased on a dark wooden stage and domed in clear glass. At first glance, I assumed the flowers were made of straw, but I would soon learn that these flora were human hairs, and, while my curiosity was then piqued, what I continued to learn over the following months and years about this unique piece would transform my mind with the magic of history.

The job of a museum volunteer requires patience, attention to detail, and an unflagging enthusiasm for meticulous work. So, after choosing hundreds of items from the Messex Estate, Karin Giannitti, Barbara Smith, and I began the arduous, but exciting task of authenticating, accessioning, cleaning, storing, and servicing this collection. This was a labor of love that would take six months to complete.

"History is the witness that
testifies to the passing of time;
it illumines reality, vitalizes memory,
provides guidance in daily life
and brings us tidings of antiquity."
Cicero (100BC-43BC)

Human hair bouquet

Authenticating

Prior to accessioning an item, every attempt is made to establish its authenticity. Did it come from Weston? Was the object passed down from one generation of a family to another? Determining the authenticity of a tool, for example, usually sends us rushing to our copy of the 1897 Sears, Roebuck & Co. Catalogue, consulting our "tool guy" Paul Deysenroth, contacting another historical society in the area, or telephoning the Sloane-Stanley Museum in Kent, Connecticut.

While that hair bouquet and

hundreds of other objects from the estate were easy to authenticate, Karin and I met with a family member prior to accessioning the collection, at which time several people and places in dozens of photographs were identified. Any additional "history" given to us at that time was carefully documented.

Accessioning

In archiving, "accessioning" an item is much more than "acquiring" something. Accessioning connotes a process by which physical and intellectual control is established over materials. This process begins with adherence to the charter of the Weston Historical Society. Care is taken to assure that items come from Weston and/or exemplify a part of Weston's history. Although never co-mingled with other collections, newly accessioned items typically fill a gap in an existing collection. And, we look for materials that are in good condition and usable for display purposes.

The tool by which all acquisitions become the property of a museum is the accession form. In the case of the Messex Estate, thirteen pages of inventory were attached to the accession forum. These lists identified hundreds of photographs, certificates, deeds, genealogies, receipts, wills, promissory notes, and numerous miscellaneous items. An additional four pages of objects or "solids" included household items, textiles, furniture, and barn items. Finally, two Excel spreadsheets listing the titles, authors, and condition of fifty-three books rounded out the inventory.

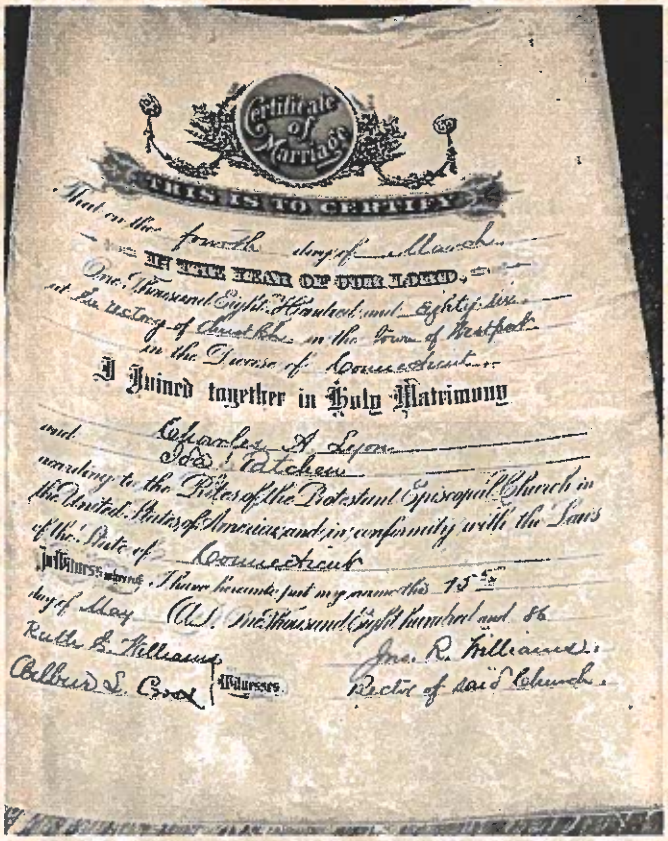
Using best practices, non-textual and printed materials were inventoried separately. This means that the hair bouquet was not stored in the same box as the 1886 Certificate of Marriage of Charles A. Lyon to Ida Patchen. The bouquet was placed in a box with like objects-an oval vanity tray, a hair brush, and a small blue glass jar. The description, date, condition, and location of every item were noted.

Once the new material had been identified and recorded, an acknowledgement/thank-you letter was sent to the executrix of the Messex Estate.

Cleaning

After authenticating and accessioning hundreds of papers and items from the Messex Estate, care was taken to address those objects that needed cleaning prior to storing. The glass dome of that hair bouquet, for example, was removed from its wooden base and carefully cleaned with a liquid soap. Using a specially treated flannel cotton cloth, the wood was slowly polished, with care taken to avoid touching the flowers. And, because the flowers were dust free and in excellent condition, the piece was then ready for storage.

Due to lack of space and the prohibitive costs of having printed materials and objects professionally cleaned and restored, we accession only non-textual and printed materials that are in fair to excellent condition. Exceptions are made for very rare or unique objects and printed materials. These are stabilized until such time professional cleaning or restoration can be completed.


Certificate of Marriage

THIS IS TO CERTIFY

That on the fourth day of March

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD

One Thousand Eight Hundred and Eighty six

at the rectory of Christ Ch in the Town of Westport

in the Diocese of Connecticut

I Joined together in Holy Matrimony

and Charles A Lyon

Ida S Patchen

according to the Rites of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America and in conformity with the Laws of the State of Connecticut

In Witness whereof I have hereunto put my name this 15th day of May A.D. One Thousand Eight Hundred and 86

Ruth L Williams

Wilbur L Cook Witnesses

Jno R Williams Rector of said Church

Marriage license of Ida Patchen and Charles Lyon on the 14th of March, 1886 at the rectory of Christ Church in the town of Westport.

Storing

Textual materials are transferred to chemically stable clear polyester covers or sleeves and then placed in acid and lignin-free storage cartons. "Solids" are individually wrapped in acid free tissue paper and placed in boxes with acrylic coatings to resist moisture, soiling, and abrasion.

An important principle of archiving is called *Respect des Fonds* or Provenance. Fonds make up the entire record created by a person or institution, sometimes referred to as a collection. This means that the record or collection must be acknowledged as an entity. Therefore, in respecting

the sanctity of the collection, the archivist must never mingle one collection with another. While it might seem logical to store that hair bouquet in a box with a hair wreath, several late 19th Century daguerreotypes, and other Victorian Era objects, care was taken to keep the Messex collection intact. Otherwise, the objects and printed items removed from this collection, of which they form an integral part, would be obscured and the full significance and meaning of the collection would be lost.

Daguerreotype circa 1860. Possibly taken of a Messex relative.

Servicing

The most exciting and rewarding part of an archivist's and collections manager's job is to service the community. While providing resources to a fifth grader doing a Social Studies project or helping a new resident learn about his old house, museum volunteers are piquing someone's curiosity and promoting a sense of history. Our job is not to establish the facts of history, but to accession and protect objects and textual materials that tell stories of people who clarify the facts and show change over time.

The Messex Estate collection helps to define the social and economic status of an extended family as it evolved from the middle of the 1800's well into the 20th Century. This is a family record that spans several generations and gives us a glimpse into the lives of other Weston families-the Patchens, Eichingers, Lyons, and Parsons, to name only a few.

And now, back to that hair bouquet. I recently learned from a fellow volunteer that hair has been associated with life and death since the Pharaohs. During the Civil War, soldiers left their families locks of hair before going off to battle. In the Victorian Era, weaving strands of hair together into flowers was a way to memorialize loved ones. These floral arrangements were usually shaped into wreaths and almost always protected and displayed under glass.

The intricate and varied styles used in weaving the flowers in the Messex Estate bouquet tell us that the piece was professionally done and that the wooden base was custom designed and made for displaying this particular arrangement. The hand blown glass dome fits snugly over the wooden base, providing protection as well as a decorative flair for a piece that would probably have a place of prominence in the family parlor. This is an object that speaks of an upper middle class family who cared for its loved ones and was well aware of its own mortality and its impact on generations to come.

Like many of our accessions, this beautiful bouquet is a work of wonder and an object that links us through time.

Inventive Battlefield Cookery

Continuing with our series of Civil War articles, we move from Weston to the battlefields of the Union and Confederate soldiers. Sandy O'Brien, our trustee and Saturday docent, recently gave us a copy of "The Tombstone Epitaph" which contained an article on the cooking of meals and the creativity that soldiers used to feed themselves and the troops.

According to the article "the recipes that resulted from the Civil War exemplified American ingenuity – Yankee and Rebel. Field soldiers often did not have many food supplies. In the Union army, the daily ration consisted of meat – 12 ounces of pork or bacon or 22 ounces of fresh or salted beef, plus 22 ounces of flour or a pound of hardtack (hard crackers) or 20 ounces of cornmeal. "Each Union soldier was eligible to receive stipulated amounts of dried beans or peas, rice or hominy, coffee or tea, sugar, salt and molasses. When available, dried fruits were appreciated, as were potatoes and vegetables, which were dehydrated and compressed for traveling. At least they kept a soldier alive.

"Confederate soldiers knew many recipes using cornmeal. One called Indian 'sagamite' came from the following recipe: Three parts of Indian meal and one of brown sugar, mixed and browned over the fire. Sagamite appeased hunger and allayed thirst, which was useful to scouting troops.

"At the start of the war in 1861, bread for the Potomac army was baked in ovens located under the west terrace of the Capitol in Washington, D.C. When the battlefront shifted, ovens were set up in the field or nearby towns. Soldiers often had to make due with hardtack, which could be kept for long periods. To improve the taste of this substitute bread, soldiers heated it in pork grease or soaked it in coffee.

"Dried beans and peas were much better than the old meat. Some northerners made Boston baked beans by cooking them in a hole in the ground. The plain field pea was named the 'Confederacy's best friend.'

"Although the rations were not particularly palate pleasers, the soldiers usually had adequate food. Not so with the Confederates, who suffered from food shortages. Food supplies that were produced often did not reach the soldiers because the Union cut transportation lines. A Southern soldier was left with corn bread, minus butter and salt. When he did receive pork or beef, it was inferior to the meat received by the Northerners. In addition to inadequate food supplies, Confederate troops often lacked pots and pans. And when no coffee was available, substitutes were created from parched peanuts, potatoes, peas, dried apples and ripe acorns. It took much in the way of creative imagination to get these alternatives to satisfy like the real thing.

"When coffee was available, it was the soldier's culinary companion, the most important ration of all. Brewed over a campfire, it was stimulating morning, noon and night. Sugar was issued simultaneously with coffee and soldiers learned to mix the two before the ingredients could be stolen or spilled. When not on the march, soldiers used Gail Borden's new product, condensed milk, but otherwise learned to drink their coffee black. Before the Civil War, most Americans drank tea; after the war, coffee became the national drink.

"Both sides added to their rations by hunting and fishing and stealing or begging. Southern soldiers had to be more creative in an era of 'have' and 'have not' cuisine. They made bread from rice or potato flour. Crackers and tartaric acid made 'apple' pie. Today, just for fun (sometimes even flavor) cooks like to make mock apple pie."

The following are two recipes from the Civil War, one that I don't think that we will try.

Salt Pork with Cream Gravy

1 pound salt pork
½ cup yellow corn meal
2 tbs. all-purpose flour
Dash pepper
1½ cups milk
Toast

Remove the rind from salt pork. Slice pork ¼ inch thick. Place in a saucepan with enough water to cover. Bring to a boil and drain well. To remove as much salt as possible, boil longer. Coat slices with corn meal. In a skillet, brown salt pork on both sides about 15 minutes. Spoon off drippings and reserve 3 tablespoons. Remove pork. Return drippings to skillet and stir in flour and pepper. Add milk all at once. Cook and stir until thick and bubbly. Add pork and heat through. Serve on toast. Makes about 4 servings.

Mock Oysters

1 pint green corn, grated
1 egg, well beaten
2-3 tablespoons butter
Seasonings to taste
Fat for frying

In a dish containing the corn and egg, add flour, butter and seasonings to make a batter. Drop 1 tablespoon of batter into deep fat to make each oyster. Fry the oysters until light brown. Serve buttered.

Thanks, Sandy, for sharing this interesting article. Not only did those poor men have to endure the horrors of war, but the horrors of eating as well.

The Hurlbutt Review
February 1935

Schools have always been an important part of Weston's life, as you all know. In our archives, we discovered the "Hurlbutt Review" from February, 1935, October, 1934, and November, 1933. They comprise two sections – the upper grade section which seemed to include grades 5 and 6, and the lower grade section which included grades 3 and 4. There are short articles, reports on books read, drawings, poems and perfect attendance notations. Names like Budd, Gjuersko and Corsa grace the pages of the "Review," names prominent in Weston's history.

We have chosen a few that we thought would give you all a smile. The first is about what a young lady does when she gets home from school – no TV, computer, iPad, etc.

THE RADIO – Miriam Kramer, Gr. 7

I listen to the radio, when I come home from school.
I think it's better than reading books or playing table pool
I listen to each program so very carefully
I wonder how they tell their stories and sing so merrily
I listen to Bobby Benson and Jolly Sunny Jim,
Also to Buck Rogers and Little Tiny Tim
I always listen to Orphan Annie,
And the queer stories read by Grammie
This is the most interesting part of my day,
It's even better than work and play.

LINCOLN - Eleanor Jaderlund, Gr. 6

Lincoln was our president
A long time ago.
Kentucky was his resident
Which many people know.

He was a very brave man indeed
We all know that, of course,
And tried to make the people obey;
Still nothing would do but force.

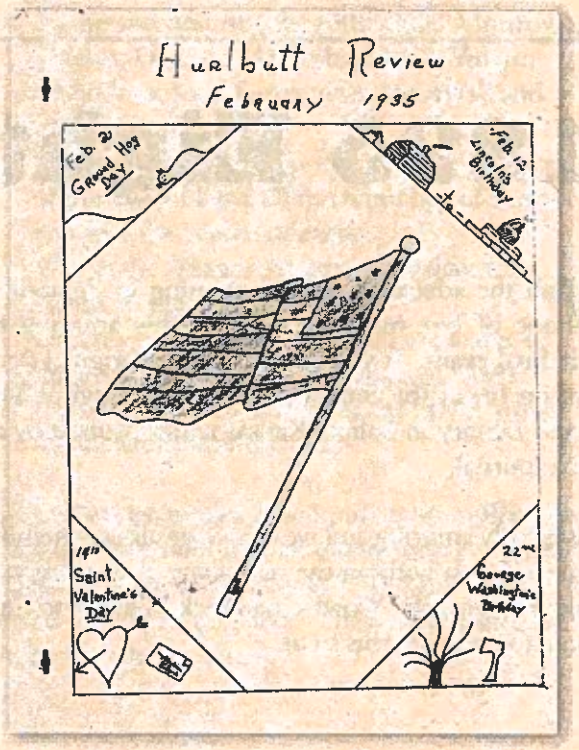
ABRAHAM LINCOLN – Anna Ward, Grade 5

When Abraham Lincoln was a boy
He didn't own a single toy
He just read books by the fire side
And of course he never, never lied

Now you all know this kind old gent
For he used to be our president
And that of course, will prove to you,
If you are good – what you can do!

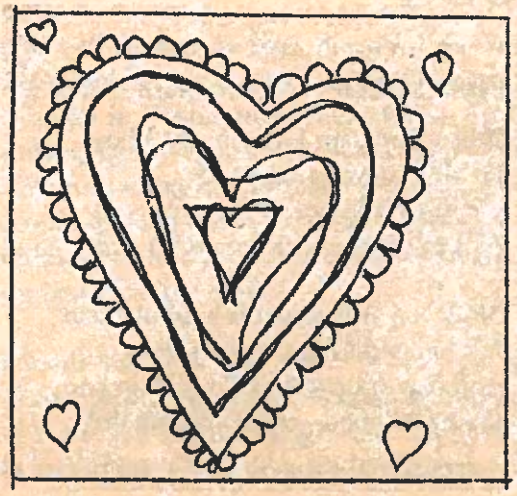
SPRING –Leonard Anderson, Grade IV

Spring is coming. The buds are swelling up. The Spring birds are coming from the south. The snow is melting away. It is running in little rivers. The roads are muddy. The ice is melting and if you start to skate, you will fall in.



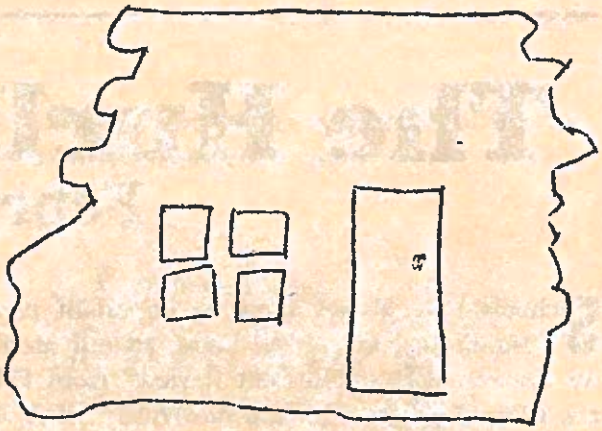
MY VALENTINE – Julia Gjuresko, Gr. IV

I sat at my table and chair. I had some white paper and some red paper. I wanted to make a valentine for my mother. The mailman took it away and brought it back the next day. This is what it looked like.



ABRAHAM LINCOLN

When Lincoln was a small boy he lived in Kentucky. This is a picture of the log cabin he lived in. David drew it.



It had only three sides. The snow and cold came in the other side.

When Lincoln was a boy there were no electric lights. He had to read by firelight. He didn't even have oil lamps. He wrote with charcoal on the shovel and on the logs of the cabin because he didn't have any pencil or paper. He liked to read. He was the president of the United States and he freed the slaves.

We hope you have enjoyed the thoughts and writings of the Hurlbutt students. We hope to include more poems and stories in future issues of the Chronicle.

1895 Eighth Grade Test

With the advent of school opening in September, one of our members sent us this amazing 8th grade final exam. It was taken from the original document on file at the Smokey Valley Genealogical Society and Library in Salina, Kansas and reprinted by the Salina Journal.

This is truly amazing and we challenge all our members to take this test without the use of any internet or extra books by your side. Wow! Good luck. Thanks to Carol Moore for sending this to us.

Grammar (Time, one hour)

1. Give nine rules for the use of capital letters.
2. Name the parts of speech and define those that have no modifications.
3. Define verse, stanza and paragraph.
4. What are the principal parts of a verb? Give principal parts of 'lie', 'play,' and 'run'.
5. Define case; illustrate each case.
6. What is punctuation? Give rules for principal marks of punctuation.

7-10. Write a composition of about 150 words and show therein that you understand the practical use of the rules of grammar.

Arithmetic (Time, 1 hour 15 minutes)

1. Name and define the Fundamental Rules of Arithmetic.
2. A wagon box is 2ft. deep, 10 feet long and 3 ft. wide. How many bushels of wheat will it hold?
3. If a load of wheat weighs 3,942 lbs., what is it worth at 50cts/bushel, deducting 1,050 lbs. for tare?
4. District No 33 has a valuation of $35,000. What is the necessary levy to carry on a school seven months at $50 per month, and have $104 for incidentals?
5. Find the cost of 6,720 lbs. of coal at $6.00 per ton.
6. Find the interest of $512.60 for 8 months and 18 days at 7 percent.
7. What is the cost of 40 boards 12 inches wide and 16 ft. long at $20 per metre?
8. Find bank discount on $300 for 90 days (no grace) at 10 percent.
9. What is the cost of a square farm at $15 per acre, the distance of which is 640 rods?
10. Write a Bank Check, a Promissory Note, and a Receipt.

U.S. History (Time, 45 minutes)

1. Give the epochs into which U.S. History is divided.
2. Give an account of the discovery of America by Columbus
3. Relate the causes and results of the Revolutionary War.
4. Show the territorial growth of the United States.
5. Tell what you can of the history of Kansas.
6. Describe three of the most prominent battles of the Rebellion
7. Who were the following: Morse, Whitney, Fulton, Bell, Lincoln, Penn and Howe?
8. Name events connected with the following dates: 1607, 1620, 1800, 1849, 1865.

Orthography (Time, one hour)

[Do we even know what this is?]

1. What is meant by the following: alphabet, phonetic, orthography, etymology, syllabication?
2. What are elementary sounds? How classified?
3. What are the following, and give examples of each: trigaph, subvocals, dipthong, cognate letters, lingual?
4. Give four substitutes for care 'u'
5. Give two rules for spelling words with final 'e'. Name two exceptions under each rule.
6. Give two uses for silent letters in spelling. Illustrate each.
7. Define the following prefixes and use in connection with a work: bi, dis-mis, pre, semi, post, non, inter, mono, sup.
8. Mark diacritically and divide into syllables the following, and name the sign that indicates the sound: card, ball, mercy, sir, odd, cell, rise, blood, fare, last.
9. Use the following correctly in sentences: cite, site, sight, fane, fain, feign, vane, vain, vein, raze, raise, rays.
10. Write 10 words frequently mispronounced and indicate pronunciation by use of diacritical marks and by syllabication.

Geography (Time, one hour)

1. What is climate? Upon what does climate depend?
2. How do you account for the extremes of climate in Kansas?
3. Of what use are rivers? Of what use is the ocean?
4. Describe the mountains of North America
5. Name and describe the following: Monrovia, Odessa, Denver, Manitoba, Helca, Yukon, St. Helena, Juan Fernandez, Aspinwall and Orinoco
6. Name and locate the principal trade centers of the U.S. Name all the republics of Europe and give the capital of each.
7. Why is the Atlantic Coast colder than the Pacific in the same latitude?
8. Describe the process by which the water of the ocean returns to the sources of rivers.
9. Describe the movements of the earth. Give the inclination of the earth.

NOTE: This exam took five hours to complete. Gives the saying, "He only had an eighth grade education," a whole new meaning, doesn't it? No wonder they dropped out after 8th grade. They already knew more than they needed to know.

The Chronicle
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Archives Building & Civil War Exhibit

Saturday Sept. 10

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