

# THE CHRONICLE

WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## THE CHRONICLE

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## TOWN HALL MEETING ROOM

**W**ikipedia defines a Town Meeting as a “form of direct democratic rule, used primarily in portions of the United States since the 17th century, in which most or all the members of a community come together to legislate policy and budgets for local government.” The late Jim Daniel, long-time resident of Weston, First Selectman from 1967 to 1969, and historian, defines this room as a “family room of the Weston Town Meeting. The meeting is older than Weston itself, the State of Connecticut or the United States. We were created in 1757 during the reign of our Gracious Sovereign George II as the civil and religious government of Norfield Parish. In 1787, the new state of Connecticut formalized the disestablishment of religion by chartering us as the Town of Weston. But, the meeting continued to this day as the totality of the people of Weston. You don’t have to be registered to vote in Weston, to belong. You only have to own real property in Weston to vote in the meeting.”



Jim Daniel

Jim stated in a copy of a speech he was to make, “This (Town Hall), is a beautiful, solidly built building in the Williamsburg Georgian revival style. The decorating and

furnishing of it began in 1968, was interrupted for a long period when the chamber was cut up into offices and resumed when Helen Speck was first selectman and has now been carried forward triumphantly under George Guidera, Dick Bochinski, and John Stripp.

Mr. Daniel was born in North Carolina in 1916. He attended the University of North Carolina and studied journalism. He served in World War II in the OWI Office (Office of War Information) and was stationed in India. Following the end of the War he became city editor for the Washington Scripps Howard News Service and covered Capital Hill.

Jim later joined the editorial staff of Time and settled finally at Reader’s Digest. Jim’s new job brought him to Weston in 1965 where he not only served as First Selectman from 1967 to 1968, but he served on many of Weston’s boards and commissions.

Jim’s interests included botany, music and the WVFD. He truly loved this community.

Although always interested in history and preservation, Jim was officially appointed as curator for the Weston Town Hall in 1988. Jim who had already raised money on



## TOWN HALL MEETING ROOM - CONTINUED

his own to acquire art for the Town Hall, now had a title to help him apply for grants and state funds. At that time he was applying for funds from the State Commission on the Arts for money to complete the mural by Charles Daughterty (a local renowned artist, son of artist James Daughterty) in the Commission Room. Jim also acquired a linoleum block print, which depicts a white-bearded farmer leading a team of oxen hauling logs. This print was created in the 1920's by Lowell Leroy (Tony) Balcom, a resident of the Silvermine area of Norwalk. Although it was never positively identified, Jim believed the site may have been on Godfrey Road East in Weston.

from the Weston Historical Society.

The council table is a very convincing reproduction, in ancient wood, of a rare early 1600's New England meeting house table, true to style in height and length. Gary Samuelson of Weston made this beautiful copy and only used modern tools in places that it didn't show. The bench is an authentic



Mural by Charles Daughterty

Mr. Daniel was also able to acquire works from John Held, an artist best known for his flapper style paintings during the 1920's. Mr. Held lived on Grindstone Hill (off Ladder Hill) for several years before buying the David Levy Coley farm on Route 57. Most of the 165 acres is now under Crystal Lake. Jim and his wife, Nenita, were able to acquire a print from the New Yorker series, spoofing "The Face on the Barroom Floor" to add to the growing collections of items for Town Hall. Mr. Held also worked in wrought iron and produced weather vanes, road signs and decorative hardware which were sold to Weston and Weston neighbors.

The portraits of David and Elizabeth Hanford Platt, who lived on Norfield Road, are prominently displayed in the Town Hall Meeting Room. The Platts had mills on the west branch of the Saugatuck River and from their portraits were obviously very much people of quality. The paintings were done in 1935 and are on loan

Meeting House bench from the garage of the Norfield Church manse and conceivably once supported members of the Weston Town Meeting. The chandelier in the meeting room is a modern reproduction, and in the foyer is a solid bronze, precise replica of a late 1600's Flemish chandelier. Such chandeliers were widely used in the English colonies. The Town Seal, designed by Blake Hampton and carved by Will Lewis, both of Weston, stands between the two portraits.

The draperies of this chamber are copies of a design taken from the sketch books of Thomas Jefferson when he was ambassador to Paris. There is also a "superb" 18th century wall hanging bookcase in Chippendale style in the back corner, and a large document box to make a small table, an iron spike from the U.S. Constitution, together with a lithograph of Old Ironsides for another corner of the room. There is a tall clock belonging to the Historical Society in the right corner of the

room and Jim was able to purchase a wonderful Sheraton influenced Windsor side chair which will be placed next to the clock.

Perhaps the most significant piece of artwork that Jim was able to acquire was the three large panels from local artist James Frasier. They had been donated to the schools in 1967. They did not know what to do with them so they had been stored in a barn until 1994 when Jim started working on displaying them in Town Hall. The panels are the original artwork created to cast bronze panels installed in the library entry of the United States Military Academy at West Point.

Along with little side tables with Oriental antiques, carefully selected maps and prints, mirrors and delicate china pieces in display cases all have stories to tell. All these bits and pieces that Jim was able to purchase and had donated makes our Town Hall Meeting room something to see, and all of Weston should take pride in it. As Jim stated "I hope this beautiful chamber will be employed by the Selectmen to hold discussions on the big questions facing our town." We would say that this vision has certainly come true. Next time you visit Weston Town Hall, take a moment to appreciate the history this meeting room represents. ♦



Face on the Ballroom Floor by Jim Held



# DIRT ROAD ASSOCIATION

This article is a reprint of an article written by Herb Day back in December, 1985. We thought it would be fun to send it again as the mud season is almost upon us. It must have been a horrible event for Weston with its numerous dirt roads, and these were a big improvement over the old wagon trails. Keeping the dirt roads in usable condition became more and more costly and a large part of the town budget. Many towns felt that the state should share the cost of upkeep since many of these roads were used to travel from town to town. The following articles from the Westport Herald of 1932 relate to this dirt road committee and the travel experiences along one of the town roads (Goodhill).

**"April 5, 1932 - Weston Voters To Consider Joining Dirt Roads Association."**

"There will be a meeting in the town hall on Monday, April 11, at eight o'clock for the purpose of discussing the advisability of forming a Dirt Roads Association here. There is a movement on foot throughout the state for all the towns to organize such associations, so that when the State legislature meets next January the towns will be able to secure the dirt road appropriation. It is felt by many in Weston, including the Selectmen, that such a step would be an advantageous one and that unless Weston does form this organization there is a grave possibility that the state will fail to give the town further appropriations for dirt roads.

"Iverson Fanton, formerly of this town, will be the main speaker of the evening and will represent

the State organization. Mr. Fanton has been interested in this movement for some time and has already spoken at a town meeting here on the subject. It is hoped that a large number of residents will turn out.

"Residents along the Georgetown road are greatly cheered by news from the State that work will start within the month. All deeds



for necessary rights of way have been accepted by the State and bids will be advertised in the next few days. The road is in a deplorable condition."

**"April 12, 1932 -  
The Dirt Roads Association"**

"A Very Enthusiastic Group Met In The Town Hall Monday night to discuss the rural road problem. The weather was very bad and kept many at home, but those present made up in enthusiasm for the lack in numbers.

"Representative Willis Banks presided and Miss Sarah Treadwell acted as secretary of the meeting. The speakers of the evening were Iverson Fanton, representing the State Dirt Road Association, and

J. Arthur Sherwood, representing the State Grange, both of Easton. Mr. Fanton told what had been accomplished throughout the state in the way of improvement and those present felt the results of forming an association in Weston would be well worth the effort.

"It is hoped to secure one hundred members for the Weston Rural road improvement association, of which Willis Banks was elected president. Other officers elected were: vice president, Joseph Buckley, secretary, Mrs. Bertram Lambert, Treasurer John Hartmann, members of the executive board, Frank W. T. Amis, George Waterbury and David Wahlquist.

"It was voted to hold another meeting in the town hall Monday, April 18, at which time the bylaws will be drawn up and a delegate sent to attend the state meeting in Hartford on April 27."

"June 7, 1933 - Travelling over Goodhill road is so precarious that three men are stationed at intervals along the road to stop cars that are proceeding faster than 15 miles an hour. Residents understood this road was to be put in first class condition last fall, but it was not until pressure was brought to bear by the Weston Rural roads association that any work was done this spring."

How far our vehicles and our roads have come. We are fortunate to have had former residents who pushed so hard to have work done on the roads so that we now have smooth rides. Drive carefully! ◇



# MANNERS

These days it seems as if our children are taught to use the keyboard as soon as they are old enough to sit up and take nourishment. We still teach reading, writing, and arithmetic (we think) with a dose of history, languages, and science thrown in for good measure. Our children work very hard at achieving success at school and in their extracurricular activities.

However, we do not believe that we have seen "manners" on any course study list for many years. Therefore we have decided to share with you some of the wisdom written in "Manners and Right Conduct" written by William E. McVey, A.M., superintendent of Thornton Township High School and Junior College. Unfortunately, we do not have a date, but guess it to be from the late 1800's.

Mr. McVey stated in the prologue of the book, "throughout the book a strong appeal is made for school spirit and the development of a high morale in the student body. It is the belief of the writer that when these qualities are prominent in an institution, most of the problems in discipline disappear. The method of approach enables administrators to use the work to great advantage in alleviating many of the troublesome situations that arise in misconduct. Parents will find the work helpful in dealing with out-of-school problems and in promoting a closer cooperation with school authorities."

The book continues with rules for students who stand for proper school spirit. He will observe the following: Prepare his lessons faithfully each day; He will be studious and attentive in the classroom; He will be polite and courteous at all times; He will not be afraid to be

criticized for doing acts of courtesy to his teachers; He will not mar or deface school furniture even though he has a pencil or pen knife and an opportunity to do so; He will be quiet and orderly in the corridors;

## 112 Manners and Right Conduct

### YOUR GENERAL RATING CARD

*Directions.*—You will find twenty items listed below. Each item has a range from 0 to 5. If you are worth a perfect rating, place the figure 5 in the rating column on the right. In some cases you may feel you do not measure up to the requirements for a perfect rating, in which case you will grade yourself 4, 3, or perhaps 2 or 1. If you have none of the qualities indicated in certain items, you will give yourself zero. A satisfactory rating must be at least 75.

	Perfect Rating	Your Rating
1. Are you brave?	5	_____
2. Are you modest?	5	_____
3. Are you obedient?	5	_____
4. Are you kind?	5	_____
5. Do you keep yourself clean?	5	_____
6. Are you industrious?	5	_____
7. Are you fair to others?	5	_____
8. Are you fair to yourself?	5	_____
9. Are you fair to the State?	5	_____
10. Are you trustworthy?	5	_____
11. Are you loyal?	5	_____
12. Are you helpful?	5	_____
13. Are you friendly?	5	_____
14. Are you courteous?	5	_____
15. Are you cheerful?	5	_____
16. Are you thrifty?	5	_____
17. Are you healthful?	5	_____
18. Are you truthful?	5	_____
19. Are you charitable?	5	_____
20. Are you reverent?	5	_____
Total	100	_____

He will not use vulgar or profane language in the toilet rooms or elsewhere; He will be sportsmanlike on the play grounds and lastly: He will cultivate the best manners possible for the lunch room, the classroom, the corridors, the street, the street car, the playground, the home, and the party. "A student of this type", according to Mr. McVey, "will be dependable, one of the highest qualities a boy or girl can possess."

For manners and right conduct at home, Mr. McVey starts with introductions which he claims should be simple and gracious. A younger person is presented to an elder, a man to a lady, and a boy to a girl. If you are entertaining a friend and your mother enters the room, you must immediately rise and introduce your friend. When boys are introduced, they should rise and shake hands. The girls are not obligated to shake hands, but may if

they wish to be cordial. To acknowledge an introduction say "How do you do, Mrs. Black." Do not say "Pleased to meet you" or "Glad to know you."

The section on "How to Dress" is amazing. He states that the following rules should be helpful in planning one's wardrobe:

1. Clothes for school or business should be plain and of durable material. They should not, however, be unattractive.

2. Select clothes which will be suitable for the occasions when they must be worn.

3. The cost of your clothes should be in proportion to your means.

4. Before buying new clothes, look over your leftovers which could be remodeled and cleaned and appear as good as new.

5. The various parts of your wardrobe should harmonize.

6. Do not spend all your money on one piece of clothing. An expensive coat looks very much out of place with a shabby hat and worn shoes.

7. Wear things which are suitable to your particular age and style.

8. Always take time to dress carefully and arrange your hair neatly.

9. Take care of your clothes,

10. Shoes should be kept clean and polished,

11. Do not use cheap heavy perfumes, the excessive use of cosmetics is in very bad taste for high school girls, and

12. Avoid cheap showy jewelry.

The booklet goes on to talk about the proper way to display the American flag and the code of flag etiquette. There are also chapters on right conduct and manners in public, at home and rules on how to study. The last chapter of the book-



let is entitled "Codes of conduct. "There was a National Morality Codes Competition held in 1916 with a prize of \$5,000. All the States participated and the competition resulted in fifty-two codes. It was offered for High School use.

Although we will not give all the details of each code, the general highlights were to

1. be strong in purpose and physically,
2. be brave in heart, and morally brave,
3. be modest in your bearing
4. be obedient to duty,
5. be kind,
6. be clean,
6. be industrious,
7. be fair and square to others, yourself and the state.

The last page is a general rating card. How well do you fare? How well do you think our children would fare? ◇

## From the Editor

*We apologize to Lynne Barrelle. We somehow printed a non-revised version of the article concerning the mysterious chimney from the last Chronicle, and we would like to correct the address for the group of interested residents in the history of the chimney and other historical sites/events. The group page is called "Weston History Group - the Fellowship of the Chimney."*

*(<http://www.facebook.com/groups/359181007505645>).*



## NORFIELD AID SOCIETY

**W**e recently found this picture in the back of a file drawer where it had fallen some time ago. We just thought it was such a great picture that we wanted to share it with you all. With the help of one of Norfield Church's historians, we were able to receive some documents from the Norfield Aid Society which was the precursor of the Norfield Women's Fellowship.

The first set of minutes we have from the Society is dated March 1st, 1907. The business meeting was held at the home of Mrs. D.O. Chase. Officers elected were President, Mrs. Mary Godfrey, V.P., Mrs. D.O. Chase, Secretary, Mrs. Charles Scofield, Treasurer, Miss Alice Ditch, Asst. Secretary, Eula Ferris and the Social Committee included Alma W. Fanton, Eula M. Ferris, Chester Fancher and Arthur C. Bradley. As you can see there were men included in the Norfield Aid Society. Mrs. Charles Scofield was elected organist of Norfield Church for the ensuing year.

Over the ensuing years, meetings were held once a month at a member's home and many social events were held such as an Ice Cream and Cake Social, fairs to sell homemade goods, basket or box lunch, and old fashioned suppers that were held at Town Hall. There seemed to be something going on each and every month for many years. The receipts for these evenings ranged from \$7.10, \$11.20, and a whopping \$18.40 for a Martha Washington supper at the home of Mr. & Mrs. Fred Banks. Unfortunately the minutes from the meeting of March, 1934 do not show receipts from the Wedding Dress Pageant. We would love to know.

The records are fascinating and we wish we could share them all with you. A very busy group indeed raising money for such things as pay for the organist at church, the furnace fund, and painting the church. Norfield Church has always been very strong on charity works for our community and others in need. ◇



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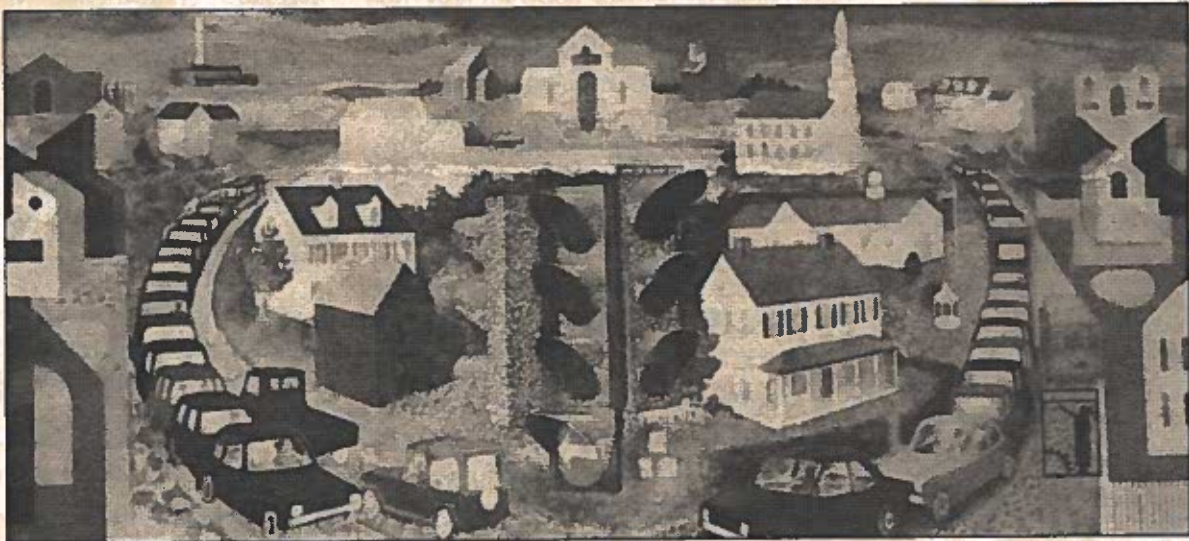
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*Charles Daugherty's artwork and more in this Chronicle.*