



THE CHRONICLE QUARTERLY

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Weston Historical Society

THE EDITOR'S EDGE

The future of our Historical Society is closely tied to the ownership and use of the Coley Homestead property. The barn on this property was "loaned" to the Society shortly after it was founded to be used as a museum. Some years later the Homestead property was conveyed to the Society by deed from Mrs. Coley in her and her husband's name. Past members of the Trustees had for several years, been planning how best to use this wonderful gift. The present Trustees are in the process of formulating plans to be carried out over the next 5 to 10 years. What an exciting time to be a member of this growing organization. As someone once said "You ain't seen nothing yet!"

My modesty is only superseded by my respect for my elders, and one of my elders has insisted that I sign my name as Editor so all can see—Aw Shucks!

Herb Day
Editor, The Chronicle

WESTON'S HISTORIAL NOTEBOOK THE COLEY HOMESTEAD

The Coley Homestead officially became the home of the Weston Historical Society (2 years, five months, and 6 days after the first presentation before the ZBA). When the three boards having jurisdiction each approved this use for the Coley property.

What has been wrought with frustration, arguments, confusion, delays upon delays and political parliamentary hogwash, let no man put assunder.

The Coley Homestead Museum is a fact and will be an asset to Weston for years to come.

Since most residents of Weston (and many Society members) have not been to the museum property, we would like to show you some scenes and relate some of the history of the farm.

The land where the Coley Homestead is situated was part of the original long lot given to Jesse Lockwood in 1758. Because these lots were not easily farmed the early owners traded or sold parts of their lots to put together more accessible lands (acreage) for farming. We are not sure that we have all the deeds to cover the 100 plus acres that once comprised this farm, but we have some of them. While the total acres on the following deeds are more than 100 acres, we are not sure that all of the properties adjoined.

1. March 23, 1820, from Ebenezer Lockwood to Eliphalet Coley—about one acre—\$104.28.
2. July 27, 1825—Samuel Coley to Eliphalet Coley—four acres and 10 rods—\$300.
3. April 20, 1835—Eliphalet Coley to David Dimon Coley—one acre and 43 rods—\$124.
4. February 20, 1836—James Gregory to David D. Coley—five and ¼ acres \$70. (This deed states that the property was bounded on the south by the fifth cross highway which is present day Broad street).
5. March 10, 1840—David Gray to David D. Coley—a piece of land 12 ft. by 14 ft.—\$5.00 (this small piece of land was between land owned by David Coley and his father Eliphalet Coley).
6. March 10, 1840—Amity Fairchild (of Westport) to David Coley—three acres—\$50.
7. March 12, 1840—Polly Adams (of Westport) to David D. Coley—six acres \$100.
8. March 27, 1841—John Andrews to David D. Coley—one acre—\$75.
9. February 1, 1843—Burr B. Coley and Samuel W. Coley to David D. Coley—eight acres \$155.
10. July 8, 1946—Herekiah(?) Lockwood to David D. Coley—one acre—\$175.
11. September 11, 1847—John Andrews to Mary Coley (wife of David Coley)—four acres—\$225.
12. March 23, 1849—Warren Nichols to David D. Coley—twenty-four acres—\$2800. (Nichols had purchased this land from Burr Sturges the same day for the same amount—we have both deeds).
13. October 16, 1852—Mathew Bulkley to David D. Coley—twenty-four acres \$750.
14. June 18, 1872—Granville Adams to David D. Coley—five acres—\$100.
15. November 23, 1877—Minot Hendricks and Polly Hendricks to David D. Coley twenty acres—\$200.

The above lands add up to 107+ acres which was the reported size of this farm. David D. Coley put together alot of small pieces of land from neighbors who did not need the land or sold off small portions to obtain cash.

Most of this farm was sold off for development by his great, grandson James, who, with his wife Cleora gave the Homestead on 3.78 acres to the Weston Historical Society. James Coley did farm the Homestead until his health no longer permitted it.

We have no record of the farming of this land when David Dimon Coley owned it, however, a taped conversation with Mrs. Cleora Coley provides interesting insights on the farming by her father-in-law and her husband.

Pictures of the home, outbuildings, and land will help orient you as you read Cleora's story. This is based on a taped interview made by Scot Hill on January 15, 1979.

(Continued on page 3.)

PICTURE QUIZ

Can You Name This?



If you can name the item in the picture send your name to:

The Editor
The Chronicle
P.O. Box 1092
Weston, CT 06883

LAST ISSUE'S QUIZ

The picture in the last issue was of a sharpening stone used to hone knives and razors. The following people sent in correct answers:

Ralph F. Smith
Mrs. Alden Sherman

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POST OFFICE UPDATE

Since our last communication the old barns have been torn down and the timbers stored for future use. The post office will be moved as soon as most of the frost is out of the ground so a ramp can be made. We expect it to be moved and put in a new foundation by early summer.

THE TREADWELL HOUSE

Our request in the last issue for help in identifying the location of the Treadwell house was answered promptly. We received two phone calls and a letter with a picture of the house as it looks today. The house is on Codfish Lane across from the home of Margaret Brooks, who sent us the picture. We have published the picture so you can compare the old picture with the new one taken last December 30. Thank you for your help.



Treadwell House Codfish Lane

MATCHING GRANTS

The Trustees are pleased to announce that the Society has received a matching grant from the Equitable Life Assurance Company. Matching grants can double your contribution to the WHS if you work for a company offering such grants. We hope you consider this opportunity.

FIFTY YEARS AGO

TREADWELL HOME IS RAZED BY FIRE EARLY SUN. A.M.

The home of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Treadwell, Lyons Plains, was razed by fire early Sunday morning. Mr. and Mrs. Treadwell were awakened by the alarm clock about 6:00 and, on smelling smoke, Mr. Treadwell made an investigation to find the house on fire. The Weston Volunteer Fire company was called but due to lack of sufficient water supply the firemen were unable to get the fire under control.

The house was of the bungalow type and had been built about a year. The fire started in back of an electric refrigerator and was believed to be due to some defect in the electric wiring.

Mr. and Mrs. Treadwell were unable to save any of their belongings.

THREE HUNDRED DINERS EXPECTED AT FIREMEN'S BENEFIT

Final arrangements for the roast pig supper to be held at the Town Hall Thursday evening for the benefit of the Weston Fire Department have been completed. About three hundred persons are expected, and all tickets have been disposed of.

In order to take care of such an unprecedented number, a 100 pound pig has been ordered and half a dozen legs of lamb, together with large quantities of vegetables and over one hundred pies.

Every detail that will contribute to the success of the affair is being carefully handled by the committee and the success of the affair is already assured. Following the dinner, cards will be played. The additional small charge for cards will include a prize for each table.

When they butchered the beef they waited until a certain time of year when the air was cool enough to hang it in the barn by pulleys after it was cut in half. It was hung for three weeks as a rule if the weather was all right. If it began to freeze too much, then it was brought in and put in the cellarway here where there was an inside door from the inner cellar to the outside cellar doors. That was kept tightly closed. A thermometer was hung out there and watched. The temperature would be between 35 and 40 degrees. It would keep two or three months that way.

My husband used to do all his own butchering for quite awhile until we got into raising beef cattle. My father-in-law had had a nice herd of milking cows but with my husband's business, he couldn't handle it all and so he sold them out and started raising beef cattle and buying steers when they were calves and training them to be oxen. He sold those. Working with oxen was a great pleasure for him. Finally he decided the beef cattle were too much for him alone so he had to get a butcher. It was difficult, we had to get a butcher either from Danbury or Durham.

To get back to the buildings, there's a privy. There's an implement shed attached to the barn which is the museum now and back of it is another piece of the barn to the west that was the cattle barn and there's a door where they had a barnyard. The shed was for the cattle to go under in case of storms during the daytime when they were out. Then finally, on the west side of the main barn which is used for the museum, were box stalls for oxen. Upstairs on the west side was used for hay and straw. They also had some grain up there. At the northwest corner of that is an opening and a pair of stairs that goes right down under the shed. That used to be open and they used that all the time for going up to feed the animals. They had openings over the mangers where the cattle ate so they could push the hay down.

There were 13 head of milk cows here when my father-in-law died and there was one pair of oxen at that time. Of course he hadn't farmed in quite some time due to ill health. There were 100 acres here up until 1960 when my husband sold some of the back property and they started building over there. That was a sad situation for him. He knew his health was failing, he wasn't feeling well and that is the reason he did it. He was going to have to give up his business.

After David Dimon Coley died, my father-in-law had a sheep fort built of stone at the end of that big field down here, in back of where that white house is now, the first little white house. As I understand, they've torn it all down, taken it all away. It was falling down when that land was sold. It was stone walls, that's all it was. It was four stone walls with just an opening in it like a doorway. They put a wooden top on it, just a flat wooden top and heaped it with hay. The opening was to the south so it wouldn't get the north wind because it is very severe here. The sheep ran loose and it was a shelter for them. They raised many, many sheep here. They used the wool for making blankets and those long knitted wool stockings that came way above the knee for the winter time. Even the men wore long woolen stockings. They made caps and sweaters, pull-overs, like the sweat shirts are today.

In the big barn the haymow was over on the west side. The original floor is still there. The east side did not have an upper floor until the Historical Society put one in. That was all hay from the bottom right straight up to the roof. They drove the loads of hay in the big doors on the north and used the hay fork. It was one of those long metal forks with a heavy sort of thing with something like a tweezer on the end of it that grabbed the hay. Then they had a rope going through a pulley at the top of the barn and carried the hay to whichever mow they wanted it. They had to change the track when they wanted it to go from one mow to the other. The rope was pulled by oxen in those days. When we came here, Father Coley had it pulled up by horses and then eventually it was pulled up by a tractor. There's a sliding door on the south side of the big barn. They may have used that to bring their onions in from the field and storing them there before they had the cattle in there. Where the herb garden is today was a big barn exactly the size of the one where the shed is now, only it was two stories. It wasn't a saltbox type, just the regular roof. That was full of horse stables. There was a ramp that went from those horse stables to the north end of the barn where the museum is. On this side they had their vehicles. They brought the horses from the stables into that part of the barn, harnessed them, and attached them to the sleighs or carriages before they went out. There was another one upstairs on the little floor that my husband put in for his building materials. It is a very beautiful, very fancy sleigh that belonged to his sister, a Mrs. Coburn in Wilton. She used it for awhile. It was all done in red plush with a beautiful curving dash. It had just a single seat. Mother Coley said that they had very heavy robes. They were gone when I came here. Even after I was married in '31, every winter we used to go sleighing. You could still go on the roads with horses. We used very heavy blankets to pull over us.

The Old Weston Road was a dirt road for many, many years until they built this new one out here. It was never muddy through there. Evidently it had a very sturdy foundation. Mother and Father Coley called the hill down below here Gifford's Hill, but we just spoke of it as the hill."

NEXT ISSUE

Sixth Cross Highway

Post Office update

What's new in the museum

Annual town reports

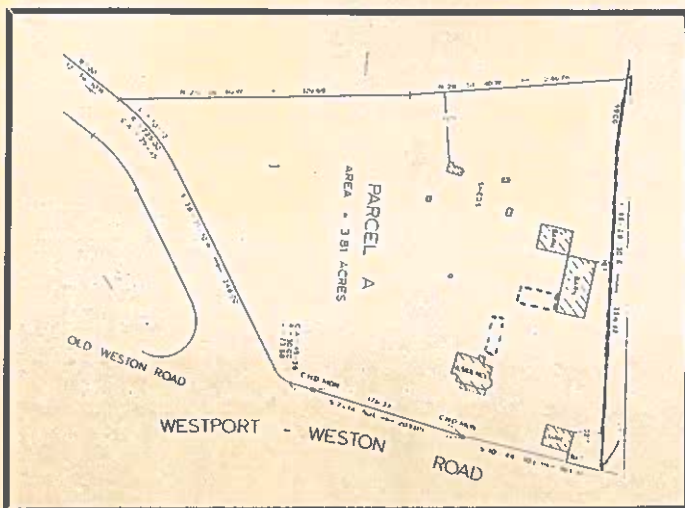
50 years ago

Picture Quiz

OLD FARM EQUIPMENT



David Dimon Coley (1811-1894) and wife, Mary E. Andrews Coley



Map of the Coley Homestead property from a 1966 survey. The dotted lines show where the horse barn and the wood shed were. The Coley's owned land on all three sides of the property shown on the map.

"I came to Weston in 1931 when I married Jim, James Sturges Coley. There were three divisions of the Coley family. One was the David Levi family. He was the grandfather of the David L. Coley who is the Road Supervisor here in town. They lived at 24 River Road in the old Coley home, the big house across from the Wiehls on the right as you go across the bridge and up the hill. Then there was the Reverend James Coley who lived in Westport on Edgehill Road off Wilton Road across from the Famous Artists School. And then there was the Eliphalet Coley whose home was at Norfield Corners where Dr. Bush lives at 177 Weston Road. The Banks family lived there for many years. There was an old saltbox between that house on the corner and the Weston Library. Probably the father of the Eliphalet Coley who built Dr. Bush's house lived there. My husband was from the Eliphalet Coley family. His father was James Louis Coley, the son of James Louis Coley, the son of David Dimon Coley. David Dimon was the son of Eliphalet Coley and the grandson of Eliphalet Coley.

David Dimon bought this place that was built in 1841 and also those long lots that went way up to Georgetown. He had to clear a lot of it and this is why there are large stonewall fences as wide as this living room at the back of the farm. They picked up stones and dug them out of the ground because most of the farms in this section, and this farm here was I know to be a fact, were onion farms. They raised bushels and bushels of onions. They took them to Westport, Fairfield and Norwalk to be shipped. In those days they used oxen to transport them. I know they had oxen on this farm many, many years. I don't know exactly when the horses came in. They had big teams of big heavy workhorses. They built a horse barn out there on this side which has been taken down. It was where the herb garden is.

When I first knew Jim, only his grandmother was living. She died in the late twenties. She was the one who wrote the genealogy of the Coley family which is really correct because my husband and she spent many, many months on that. James Louis, the father of my husband's father died when he was very young only 29 years old. His sister died shortly after that. Recently I had this visit from a Russell Coley from Michigan. His father was a Coley and he was born and brought up here in Weston and later moved to Westport. I asked him if he knew of the division in the Coley family, how it came about because all the Coleys came from Fairfield. That's where they originally settled. He said it was some sort of disagreement among the families because the David Levi family was a very large family and we were all related. When I came to Weston, the David Levi Coleys were very, very friendly with this family. But the James Coley family in Westport were not that friendly. I don't know if there had been any trouble between them.

My husband was a builder. He did a lot for this house. When he was a small boy, his father was afraid to use the chimney. It did not have a tile lining and was built of stone and brick combined. It was very dangerous and my father-in-law was very much afraid of fire. This chimney was so large at the bottom that it filled up the whole front hallway and there was just a little tiny winding stairway that went up beside it, not straight, but around the chimney to a small hall. He had it torn down. It only entered one bedroom up there and they you had to come down and go up these steep stairs here, which at that time was a kitchen, up to the other three bedrooms. So there was a Dutch oven and a large stone fireplace in what is now our dining room. That used to be a kitchen in those days. He had it all torn down because he said it was in really bad condition and they were afraid of it. At that time they had this addition put on, which is now our kitchen. It's the only addition that has ever been put on outside of the bathrooms. The house is basically as it was 125 years ago when David Dimon came here. You see the dining room was the kitchen at that time, then off the dining room toward the west was this small room, which we use now for an office, a downstairs bedroom. There was a door to the back of the house that went out that way toward the outbuildings. There was a large woodshed out here that went part way to the barn where they brought their wood and stored it for the winter so they could go out this door through this little room to the shed. They wouldn't have to go outside in the snow in the wintertime. (Continued on page 5.)

The little outbuilding that is furthest west that seems to have two little rooms in it was a larger house. It was built for the help. They had two bedrooms, a bath, a large living room and dining room combined, a kitchen and a closed porch. . . In 1954 my husband transferred the living room, the bathroom and two bedrooms and joined them to the old schoolhouse that my father-in-law had bought for help also. They'd have men working here on the farm all the time and they lived here. The old schoolhouse is now a three bedroom house with two bathrooms. The school itself is now the living room and dining room combined. My husband was very careful not to touch the main part, only to repair it. It's a large room. Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Wolston Smith live there now, it's on Old Weston Road. Mrs. Smith is Jimmy Hogg's sister.

There's just the kitchen part and the closed porch left up here. We use that for horses. The kitchen is where they keep the forks, the grain and the hay. Another little building was put up out there, oh about five years ago, to shelter the horses during storms.

The other little building out here was a smokehouse. The clamps are still hanging in there. The hams and bacon were put in there and smoked with corncobs and hickory bark. It would take a couple of weeks. It would have been done much quicker if they could have left it burning at night, but they were afraid of fire so they never left it burning at night. When I came here, they used regular heavy ten quart kettles to render the fat. It had to be watched all the time. The women did that and made the sausage and put it in cotton sheeting that they bought for that purpose. After it was washed and boiled, they made it into tubes. They stuffed the sausage in these casings or tubes, then they melted lard from that same animal and coated the whole thing. They'd let that cool, then they'd put on another coat while the lard was fairly warm, but not so hot you couldn't handle it. That sausage would keep for months.

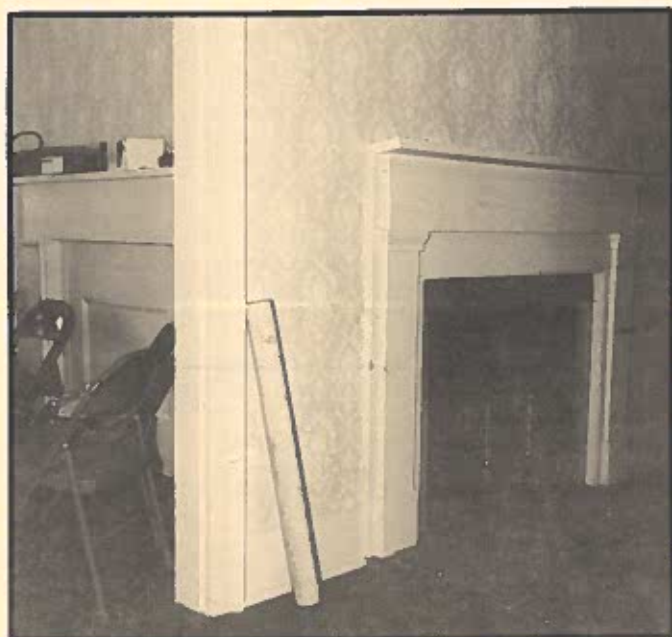
Then they made head cheese. That was of course the women's job. The head was first scrubbed with a brush and the hair was singed off, then it was skinned. Why they singed it when they were going to skin it, I don't know but that's what I saw them do. They took off all the meat they could get with very sharp knives and it was ground up in a sausage grinder. Head cheese was only made from pigs. We never used beef for head cheese, they just cut the cheeks off the cattle and the rest of the head was left. The tongue was saved. Liver was only kept a short time because it deteriorated more rapidly than most of the meat.



The Coley House, built 1841
The slant roof addition on the left is the (new) kitchen which was probably added by Cleora's father-in-law.



The original kitchen of the house.
This became the dining room when the new kitchen was added. The long windows in front of the house were modified from the outside to give the appearance of shorter windows. The glass still extends to the floor.



This picture was taken from the old dining room looking toward the fireplace in this room. The other mantel on the left is all that is left of the fireplace in the living room or parlor. There was a massive chimney in this house which served these two fireplaces and one which was in the old kitchen.



The south side of the barn. Where the shrubs are on the right is where the two story horse barn stood. The horses were on the first floor and hay was kept on the top.

THE

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