



# THE CHRONICLE QUARTERLY

Vol. 5 No. 1 March 1986

Published By The  
Weston Historical Society

## THE EDITOR'S EDGE

Societies like ours need three things to keep them going strong: a purpose, active participants, and a swelling membership to lend monetary support.

We have a purpose: to preserve and explain Weston's history and we have active volunteers (we can always use more). We do have loyal members but not enough to keep this Society growing.

This issue has been sent out with the Weston Forum so we can reach all Weston households. **WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT.**

A convenient membership application form is included in this issue. Won't you take the time now to fill it out and send it in with your check?

Remember, it is tax deductible now.

Herb Day ~ Editor

## WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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## WESTON'S HISTORICAL NOTEBOOK

### WHAT'S NEW IN THE MUSEUM

The newest item in the museum is a water pump used in the Alexander Nichols house on Goodhill road. Actually, it was used by the Fitch family during part of the time they owned the house and ran a farm here. Mr. James Daniels, who now owns this beautiful old home presented this pump to the Society. Jim sent us a letter concerning the use of this pump at the Fitch home and other interesting insights into other water problems on this farm.

#### MEMO TO THE WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The electric pump you are picking up today was in the house at 183 Good Hill Road when we bought it in 1964, still set up to draw water from a shallow well immediately across our side driveway. When a deep well was drilled on the other side of the house both were connected to a thousand gallon tank the Fitches had installed around the time of the first World war. The tank sprang leaks and we discarded it.

The shallow well pump was not in use and, in fact, the valve to the shallow well was closed. But when we put electricity to it, the motor turned like new.

I think when the society looks at it they will see that this pump has much in common with the industrial machinery the Smithsonian exhibits in Washington. It contrasts with the submersible electric pump now in use in Weston.

This is probably the first stage of electric pumps. Raymond Fitch told me that his father gave 17 chestnut trees to provide the poles that brought power up Good Hill Road in 1917 and that as a boy he used to lie awake in the small bedroom above the cellar point where the pump was and hear it going in the night when somebody drew water.



Water pump used on the Fitch property. The pump was made by Kewanee Water Supply Co., Kewanee, Ill. The motor was made by Wagner Electric Manuf. Co. St. Louis, Mo.



The pump was in the basement of the house on the left and pumped water from the well on the right into a large tank in the basement.

# 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

We did not receive any answers to our last quiz. We are not sure but we think this is a cheese press. If it is, there may be some parts missing, such as a top board and a lever of some sort to press the cheese. If we find out anymore, we will tell all.

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# LETTERS

We received an informative letter from Mrs. Margaret Gifford. She writes in response to a short article we published several issues ago on the problem that mailman Charles Keene had delivering the mail. Mrs. Gifford lived in Weston for many years and now resides in Richmond, VT.

To the Weston Historical Society:

My recollections of Charlie Keene (mailman). My parents purchased the former Brewster Sturges farm on Godfrey Street and moved there on June 11, 1916.

Mr. Keene was the first person we met. He drove off his regular route to tell us where we could pick up our mail. At that time, those living on Godfrey St. had to go over to the four corners on Newtown Turnpike, 'route 57'.

Mr. Keene had a long trip each day starting very early from his home on Broad St. and 57 driving his lively carriage horse to Westport post office. The office handled the Weston mail.

His daily delivery began at the Lyons Plain Rd. and '57' and continued thru Lyons Plain, Goodhill, Norfield, the Glen to the Redding line, then down 57 back to the Westport post office. Usually all those on side roads or lanes had to go out to '57' to a box on their corner, perhaps nailed to a nearby tree.

The other Weston road--'53'--was taken care of by a Georgetown postman, as far down as Cobbs Corner.

As a youngster it became a great privilege to walk over to '57' to wait for Charlie. Yes, you always knew he was getting near for you would hear his hearty voice singing old dance tunes, or even whistling them.

He maintained 3 horses, always one at his home and two he kept at a farm on his route. These horses knew to stop in front of each mailbox. It was a real job to care for his horses, the carriage, and feeding, grooming and shoeing.

Charlie was a big man with a bushy head of curly hair. He never wore a hat but I remember that from late fall to late spring he bundled himself in a fine horsehair coat. It came down to his heels so he claimed that he kept warm. Kind and willing to help wherever or when he could as he toured those lonely country roads.

Often brought needed medicine or even a pair of boots if asked to do so.

I can still see him in his small light carriage, surrounded with many seasonal catalogs, seeds, Montgomery Wards and Sears Roebuck.

At that time he didn't have electric or telephone bills, but did have many local papers, such as the Norwalk Hour and the Westport Herald. Also many packages from the catalog stores.

He put in very long days and especially during the Christmas holidays.

When Henry Ford came out with the Model T car, Charlie gave up the horse and laughingly remarked it was hard to train the thing to stop at a box even tho he hollered WHOA!

Charlie was a good dancer and rarely missed a barn dance for miles around the area. He taught me my first steps and it was real fun to be in a square dance with him.

Memories are precious and Mr. Keene remains a great hero. His job--well done--to all on Route 1 Weston.

Sincerely, Margaret M. Gifford  
P.O. Box 506, Richmond, VT 05477

Mrs. Gifford; thank you for taking the time to write us such a wonderful letter on a part of Weston's history. The Editor.

Mrs. Gifford added a note to the letter: Have enjoyed your interesting newsy paper. Hope you will be able to find room for this story about Charlie Keene. I do not know whether Anson and Harold Keene are living there now. I remember them as nice men. The past becomes clearer as we get older. I am 79 years now. Much good luck and best personal wishes.  
from Mrs. Margaret M. Gifford

## NEXT ISSUE

SPRING IS PLANTING TIME  
WESTON'S TAVERNS  
PICTURE QUIZ  
POST OFFICE UPDATE  
FIFTY YEARS AGO

# FIFTY YEARS AGO

## FIRE DEPT. TO HAVE USE OF THE NORFIELD SCHOOL FOR QUARTERS

The Weston School Board held a special meeting Tuesday evening with Superintendent Frank Knight for the purpose of completing plans for the opening of school. The school board favored granting the use of the Norfield school to the Weston Volunteer Fire Department after September 6th.

The board has been advised that Goodhill and Upper Parish schools may be sold and it has been suggested to them that a quit claim be given the residents of Valley Forge for the school house there as they have a community use for it. Those present at the meeting were Mrs. Thomas Treadwell, Mrs. John T. Fox, Mrs. Bertram Lambert, George Waterbury, Frank Knight, and Jack Anderson.

## GLEANS FROM TOWN MEETING REPORTS

Nov. 24, 1787 (the first town meeting as *Weston*)

Notices of meetings to be put up on a birch tree near Henry Summers, on the post in the Society of North Fairfield, and on the post in the Society of Norfield.

Voted that the Selectmen allow old Mr. Booth, now supported by the town, one qt. of rum per month.

December 22, 1788—All owners of rams in the town shall restrain their rams from the first day of September until the first day of November in each year. If any owners of any ram shall suffer his rams to run at large in the town he shall forfeit and pay sum of ten shillings lawful money into the town treasury.

(Editor's note—Farmers even in this time were trying to breed pure bred stock and they did not want stray rams of different breeds around their flock.)

## POST OFFICE UPDATE

Well, we mentioned last issue that the post office was on its new foundation. We really expected it to be there. However the moving company, A.L. Vening Co. has not seen fit to complete the job they started last fall, claiming pressure of other business. We are as frustrated as everyone else at this setback, and hope that the Vening Co. will try to preserve their good reputation by completing this job as soon as possible. They have been contacted frequently.

As this issue goes to press, we see some activity and expect the post office to be moved this week. The foundation will be built up and the building will be set on a new location.

## GRACE ROBINSON—WESTON RESIDENT

I never knew Grace Robinson but I wish I had. She had some of the same interests that I and others do, namely, gardening and local history. Grace died last fall at the age of 82. She moved to Weston in 1922, buying the house on Newtown Turnpike known as the Toll House. The house was built by *Silliman Godfrey* in 1770, but is known as the home of Henry Hamilton, the cobbler and toll collector on the Norwalk-Newtown Turnpike (now known as Newtown turnpike).

Grace Robinson worked for many years for the New York News (now the N.Y. Daily News) as a correspondent. She covered many events and wrote on gardening for the paper. She also wrote news of the Weston Historical Society which she sent to local papers. Grace was married to Robert Conway who was a correspondent for the New York Times. He was a charter trustee of this Society.

Grace kept a garden notebook in which she recorded all the plantings and harvests, canning and jelly-making dates, her landscaping efforts, visits of friends and historical notes. She recorded that Mrs. Sara Hamilton visited her on Sept. 20, 1936. Sara was the wife of Theodore Hamilton, Henry Hamilton's son. She was 90 years old and had come with her daughter to pick some crabapples. She had lived in the house when first married. Sara told Grace that Henry Hamilton had been related to Alexander Hamilton.

Grace Robinson also was a newspaper "clipper". She gave the Society many articles cut from the Fairfield County and New York Newspapers on important people and happenings of historical interest.

She and her husband loved Weston because of the seclusion it provided after a long work day in New York or a long trip around the globe. In a note sent to a friend who was inquiring about available land for sale, she wrote on Sept. 8, 1933 "Weston is mightily changed from the time you saw it; an improved road running past my house; we have electricity; and last summer even a symphony concert, to my horror, because it brought traffic past me. Personally, I'm beginning to despair of much seclusion in Weston anymore."

Well, she lived to see more changes in Weston, and the world. But she kept her mind active and was interested in many of the events in the world around her.

Weston will miss Grace Robinson and her contributions.

## HISTORICAL NOTEBOOK (Continued from page 1.)

Our drilled well when we bought in 1964 had an intermediate stage of electric pump which, alas, we threw away. It was a contraption with, as I recall, a fly wheel which lifted and lowered about 140 feet of one-inch diameter ash poles screwed together with brass fittings to activate a valve of some sort at the bottom of the well, opening and closing it as the pump took in water, closed and then brought water to the surface.

That later pump involved a four-inch diameter iron pipe which was pulled out when the submersible pump was installed. Much of the pipe from it was given by me to Weston when I was selectman to form the guard rail where the police park in the plaza between the rear of Town Hall and the Library.

Our shallow well has a depth, measured by me, of 16 or 17 feet, with, even in August, 5 feet of water in the bottom and a recovery rate in August of about 5 gallons a minute. It was used by the Fitches when they ran a dairy farm here. They also had a spring fed place for cooling milk cans, which I have rebuilt from Eric Sloane designs. Much earlier, 183 Good Hill Road had a gravity fed lead pipe that conducted spring water from behind the main house, in property Katherine Ordway left to the Nature Conservancy. According to her, after her property was split off from our farm in the 19th century there was a fight between the two owners. In spite, the owner of her property cut the lead pipe. The owner of our property moved west to where I have rebuilt the spring house and dug a new spring which, Ordway said, according to what she had been told "took the bottom" out of the old spring.

I mention all this because having good water nearby influenced the siting of old houses. Ours had excellent springs. In our side field, once when putting in a drainage ditch, I came on evidence of a still earlier house. Nearby is a dug, rough stone walled, shallow well, now no more than five feet deep, which I would hazard a guess in the 18th century could have had a well sweep, if I use the right term: one of those long poles balanced on a high forked "sling shot" looking pole to counterbalance the weight of a bucket of water.

We have a round boulder with an eyelet of wrought iron set in which could have been used either to counterbalance a well bucket or as a weight to tether a large animal, perhaps an ox with a ring in its nose.

Anson Morton might be able to identify the stone. If it is a well counterbalance weight and if you set up an exhibit tracing the way people have dealt with the problem of obtaining domestic water, you are welcome to the stone.

Taking the bottom out of a spring was a common occurrence. There is a man who works for the town highway department who as a lad attended Good Hill School. His job was to fill the water bucket from a spring on the east side of the road, but he told me that dynamiting took the bottom out of the spring and afterwards he had to walk to the Fitches and that Mother Fitch would often give him a cookie while he was filling the water bucket.

James Daniel

### MEMBERSHIP FORM

#### THE WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

( ) Youth Membership (To Age 18)	\$1.00 per year
( ) General Membership	\$10.00 per year
( ) Sustaining Membership	\$25.00 per year
( ) Senior Citizen	\$5.00 per year
( ) Contributing Membership	\$100.00 per year
( ) Life Membership	\$250.00

**Contributing** and **Life** members receive a marble paper weight with WHS crest.

Please send this form and your check to:

Membership Chairman  
Weston Historical Society  
P.O. Box 1092, Weston, CT 06883

# COMING EVENTS

## WESTON AND THOSE GOOD OLD DAYS!

Want to learn more about what Weston was like 30 years ago? . . . 40 years ago? . . . 50 years ago? What was life like before all the shopping conveniences we now have in the WESTON CENTER? How did residents "spread the word" before we discovered the onion barn? Want to hear the best stories about life in Weston? What was it like before Weston had its own police force?

If you'd like to hear the answers to these and other questions plan on attending 1986's first meeting of the Weston Historical Society. The meeting is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. Tuesday April 1, at the Norfield Church Hall.

## HOP ON BOARD FOR A TRIP INTO WESTON'S PAST

On Sunday April 13 you'll see the location of Weston's once thriving industrial complex. Learn who your famous neighbors have been. Did you know that Weston is the site of an ancient Indian burial ground? Become familiar with some of the oldest homes in Connecticut. Top this all off with a light lunch and visit to the Weston Historical Society Museum located on the picturesque grounds of the Coley Farm.

Your trip will leave the Weston Historical Society (located at the corner of High Acre and Weston Road) at 1:00 p.m. on Sunday April 13. Trip cost is \$1.00 for adults and \$.50 for children and senior citizens. Make your reservations by sending your check to Nadine Tichy, 40 Powder Horn Hill, Weston, CT.

## TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Your support of the Weston Historical Society is the most important thing you can do for the Society. We need not only present members to renew their memberships, but we need all the residents of Weston who are not members to send the enclosed form in with their contribution.

The Society has about 200 members. This is a very low percentage of the total Weston population.

Membership in the Society brings a subscription to the Chronicle Quarterly and supports the Society in its preservation of Weston's history. The Society operates the Barn Museum on the Coley Homestead property on Weston Road. We plan to open the Coley house as a museum and maintain a regular schedule of visitor hours. We also will be maintaining the Old post office as a museum. All this takes a lot of volunteer effort and monetary support to provide museum services.

We hope you will renew your membership or send your new membership application in this month. The form is printed on the other side of this message.

THE

# CHRONICLE

QUARTERLY

A PUBLICATION OF THE WESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
FOUNDED IN 1961

**MARCH 1986**

**THE CHRONICLE  
QUARTERLY  
P.O. BOX 1092  
WESTON, CT. 06883**

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