



THE

CHRONICLE

QUARTERLY

Volume 9

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Weston Historical Society

THE EDITOR'S EDGE

AND EACH GENERATION —

'And each generation lays down the plow share and sword at the ebb tide — for a new generation is waiting to pick it up — to till the soil again and to slay other dragons.'

— Unknown

All of us know that statement to be true, even if we don't think about it. It really comes to mind when I read some of the oral histories we have of Weston's native-born residents talking about their lives and the lives of their parents and grand parents. The names and places may change, but the same types of happenings occur in each family, each town, and each country, in each generation.

Herb Day - Editor

CURRENT EVENTS

TAG SALE

The Tag Sale which we ran last month was a success, despite a rainy day. We have items left over, and plan to have another tag sale in the future.

PHOTO EXHIBIT

The photo exhibit was held from May 5-13 at the Coley homestead. We thank all of you who came out to see the seventy-plus photos on exhibit. Since these pictures are now a permanent part of our museum collection, we will have them on exhibit with others, at some time in the future.

CIDER PRESS SHED

We received 'approval' from the Historic District Commission to construct the shed to house the cider press from the old toy factory. We are in the process of having building plans drawn up and hope to have the foundation complete by late summer. We will then have the cider press and the engine placed on the foundation, before constructing the building around it. Your Society will be starting a building fund drive soon, to get financial and/or material support for this building.

SENIORS PICNIC

The Seniors Picnic will be held on July 11 at the Coley Homestead. A letter will be sent out to many seniors inviting them to be our guests. If you don't get a letter and wish to come to this event, please call us or write us a note, so we can be aware of your interest.

SUMMER HOURS AT THE MUSEUM

We will have the POST OFFICE AND GENERAL STORE open on Sunday afternoons from JULY 1 UNTIL SEPTEMBER 30; however, we may miss Sunday now and then, so please check the sign in front of the Adams-Scribner museum, to be sure that the Post Office is open. The hours will be 2-4 pm.

The BARN MUSEUM is in the process of some exhibit rearranging, and will be closed for part of the early summer. We hope to be able to have visitors when most of the exhibits are in place. A number of items were moved to make room for the quilt show last fall, and this has given us an opportunity to make some needed changes.

DUES ARE DUE

We hope you have paid your dues for 1990. If not, we ask that you send your check for the membership level you are interested in.

PICTURE QUIZ



CAN YOU NAME THIS?

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

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

This picture in the last issue was of a large boulder, resting on a bigger rock outcropping, and supported on two sides by two smaller stones. The person who's land this is located, told us that a Weston resident told her that it was one of about six such boulders in the state.

We ran the picture in the hopes that she or someone else who knew something about it would see the picture and write to us.

Scott Hill wrote and said that it looks like the large boulders on west Godfrey which were deposited by the glacier. This is probably what created this unique placement of rock, and not a few men.

This boulder is on what is close to being a high point in Weston, which makes it more interesting.

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ONIONS, THE CASH CROP OF WESTON

For those of us who were raised on a farm, or have done a lot of vegetable growing, onions have always been one of the vegetables grown. It has been so for many generations of people in love with the soil and with growing crops. Onions were easy to grow and they keep well, providing a staple vegetable for use during the winter.

For the dairy farmer in Weston 75-125 years ago, onions were a cash crop. A cash crop is one that the farmer can take to market, even in small quantities, and sell readily for some cash, to buy staples or other items which he can not barter for or make at home. He could keep the onions in a root cellar for months, until he needed to buy something. The onions were often braided together in a bunch of maybe 24 and hung up in a dry and dark place. If he had a large quantity of onions, he would put them in barrels and take a bushel or more to market. The market for Weston's farmers was usually Norwalk, since the Greens Farms section of Fairfield, and then Westport, grew many onions. If a farmer had a large quantity of onions, he might arrange to have them sold in New York, and he would deliver them to the next sloop leaving from Saugatuck harbor, or, in late years, on the next train from the Westport depot.

We checked with several old-time residents, and none could remember any commercial onion farmers in Weston, with the exception of maybe Fred Banks and his son Willis, who lived at the corner of Weston road and Norfield road. They grew about one acre of onions, and onion seed (Southport Globe Variety). Fred took his onions to Westport where they were taken to New York by boat. The onion barn which is currently being renovated by the Kiwanis club was owned by the Banks family and used for their onion storage. However, there was an onion farmer on this farm before Fred Banks. This property was owned by Eliphalet Coley, who built this house (and probably the onion barn) around 1830. We suspect that he grew some onions for market, with a new onion barn. Unfortunately, he lived only until 1841. His wife farmed the land as did their son, Burr Coley, who inherited the nine acres and the buildings from his mother. His wife, Elizabeth left the property to Fred Banks wife, Mary who was their daughter. Willis, their son, farmed for a few years, and then pursued other interests.

Anna Corsa, a sister of Willis Banks, reminisced about her father and his farming

in her oral history 'Everybody farmed, that's all we did. My father raised more onions than anybody else in town. He came from Fairfield where that it was the chief occupation. He raised onion seed that was known for miles around — Southport Globe Onion Seed. If you get any of that, you get good onion seed. My father raised a lot of it. It was quite a process to go through to get it ready to sell. They cut the

tops off and put them in big washtub full of water and the blossom-like tops would rise to the top and the seed would fall on the bottom. Then they drained that water off and dried the seed. He sold it to a seedman in Milford. He used to take the onions to Saugatuck in barrels. He'd take five big barrels in this wagon that was pulled by one horse and ship them to New York on the boat.'

In an interview with Elizabeth Krapp in 1956, Wallace Brown, who was 78 at the time, talked about the crops his grandfather grew. He mentions potatoes, and a half acre of onions. At the time, the Browns lived on Steep Hill Rd.

Horace B. Coley, who lived on Lyons Plains road about 100 years ago, wrote in his diaries several references to onions, and other crops:

February, 1893. Took 2 barrels large red onions, 4 barrels medium red onions, and 1 barrel small red onions to the depot.

April 9, 1895. Took to Norwalk: ½ bushel carrots, 2 bushels potatoes, 1 ½ bushels onions, 4 dozen eggs.

April 16, 1895. ½ bushel onions for \$.40

Horace was on jury duty during April, in Norwalk, and apparently took some surplus vegetables with him each day to sell in the market.

June 22, 1895 went to Norwalk with 7 bushels onions.

January 3, 1901. ½ bushel red onions to Norwalk \$.45

April 1911. Sold onion sets in Norwalk

While Horace seemed to have a surplus of red onions to sell, the main variety



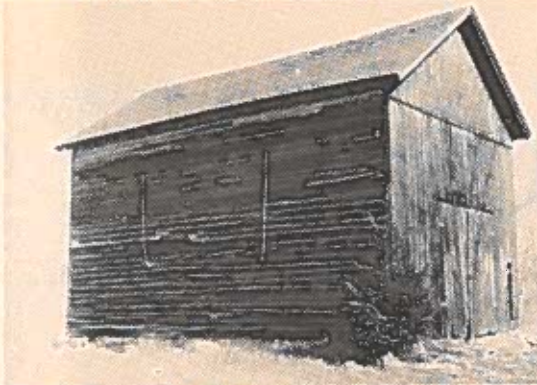
Onion Barn sign, showing it to be about 160 years old.

liked by the farmers was the Southport Globe. It had been developed in the Fairfield area and was a good producer and a good keeper. It still is and can be found listed in the vegetable seed catalogs of today.

In the annual handbook for farmers (dated— 1892) from the H.J. BAKER CO. in NEW YORK, they list a product called ONION MANURE. This was a commercial ammoniated fertilizer which was used at a rate of 800-2000 lbs. per acre. The handbook goes on to say 'The greatest expense in raising onion is in weeding the crop when small. By using this fertilizer manufactured from the best chemical form, which contains no weed seed much of this expense may be avoided.' A Mr. Hart, of Southington, Connecticut wrote to the company, 'I used the ammoniated phosphate on onions on seven and one half acres. The yield was 5300 bushels of fine quality red and white onions.'

Onions were a big crop in Fairfield, and especially in the Southport part. Thomas Farnham, in his book 'FAIRFIELD, THE BIOGRAPHY OF A COMMUNITY 1639-1989' states that the shipments of onions from the Southport harbor in 1895 reached 100,000 barrels. However, in 1896, the areas onion farmers lost much of their crop to cutworms. The yields never reached the levels they were at in previous years.

And as other areas of the country developed into large vegetable growing regions, the farms of Fairfield county became memories and turned into residential areas.



Onion Barn showing it to be about 160 years old.

—50 YEARS (OR MORE) AGO—

From the Code of Laws, Colonial Records for 1639:

It is ordered, that the prises of Corne for the years ensuing, for all Country Rates, (except where engagements to the contrary are expressed,) shall bee as followeth:

Wheat, foure shillings six pence p' bush:
Pease, three shillings six pence p' bush
Rye, three shillings six pence p' bush;
Indian, three shillings p' bush:

And that there shall bee libberty for all men to pay on thirde parte of such rates, in good Wampum.

From Horace B. Coley's diaries.

September 17, 1893, went to church. M. Peck preached. Towards night Malony came over and told me that one of my oxen was most dead. I went over to Goodsells land where they were turned. I found the ox down in bushes and apparently most dead. He must have lain there several days.

Monday. In the morning went over to see if my ox was alive. I found him alive, but no better. I got Samuel Coley to look at him — he say he cannot live. He thinks he was hurt by lightning. I had my oxen insured for \$80. I went over and told the agent, A.E. Wilson. He said he would write the company about it.

Tuesday, October 24, 1873. In the morning Henry helped me load up some cider apples and I went to Merwin's mill with them. Got there about ½ past 11, there were 8 loads before me. I waited my turn and did not get home until 8 in the evening.

REMEMBERING THE JARVIS MILITARY ACADEMY

The Jarvis Military Academy closed its doors about 1888 after a dozen years of poor attendance. But those who had gone to this school remembered the good times and they celebrated with a reunion in 1914.

A copy of the program for this day, is printed to the right. When the school closed, there were about six pupils. Andrew Jarvis lost all his investment and moved away from Weston. Many of his buildings were used for other purposes; the Grange met in one of them; the building used as a bakery is now a private home on Hurlbutt street in Wilton. Many of the buildings burned down. The main building remains and is the home of Mrs. Peter Vetromile. Two out buildings are also standing behind her house.

JARVIS DAY

WESTON, CONN.

JUNE 20, 1914

PROGRAM

MEDLEY OF PATRIOTIC SONGS

MR. BRAND	at the Praying Prayer Place	
REVELLE	Rejoice	
INVOCATION	Rev. Mr. McKim, Pastor, Methodist Church	
SONG - "AULD LANG SYNE"	Antiphona	
ADDRESS OF WELCOME	Mrs. Charles Goodfield	
RESPONSE	Mr. George Davis	
	SOPRANO SOLOS	
A. HAPPY BIRTH	Did Stop	
B. LAST NIGHT I HEARD THE HOODED GHOUL	Shout	
C. BOAT SONG	March War	
	MISS TOMPKA FRENCH	
	MISS LILLIAN C. BUCKTON Accompanist	
TEN MINTIE ADDRESSES	by Cadets	
ASSOCIATION	Miss Grace Goodfield	
VERDIN SOLO, Selected	Master Hayward	
TEN MINTIE ADDRESSES	by Cadets	
SOPR. - "BOARDING SCHOOL"	Solo and Antiphona	
ADDRESS	by the Veterans Congress	
	SOPRANO SOLOS	
A. PASTORAL	Cory	
B. THE SEA HATH ITS PEARLS	Trot	
C. RECONSTRUCTION	Trombone	
	MISS TOMPKA FRENCH	
ADDRESS	by Veterans	
SONG - "GOD BE WITH YOU TILL WE MEET AGAIN"	Antiphona	
	TAPS	
BENEDICTION	Rev. Mr. McKim	

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CURRENT EVENTS

CIDER PRESS SHED PROGRESS

SOME NEW PHOTOS RECEIVED

THANKSGIVING DAY — WHEN?

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