



The Chronicler

Newsletter of the Hartland Historical Society, Inc.
Gaylord House Museum, 141 Center Hill Street, West Hartland

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HartlandHistoricalSociety.com

Fall Edition 2013

MEMBERSHIP MEETING & PRESENTATION

All Welcome

Sunday, October 6th, 2pm - Camp Alice Merritt

Alice Merritt 1930 Old Town Canoe is back in Hartland thanks to resident donations and memorial donations given in the names of Leon Stoltze and John Raabe.

Come to the dedication of the canoe and hear about Leon and John's adventures on the water.

If weather permitting ride or paddle in the canoe too!

Cider and donuts will be served

SNIPPETS OF MEMORIES, WILLIAM ANSTETT OF WEST HARTLAND

Interviewed by Joanne Groth

A little family history...

William Anstett was born in 1931 and grew up on the property now used for Lamont Tree Farm on Hi-View Road. The original family house burned and the road at that time was named Shenesky Road.

Bill's mother, Mary Shenesky was a registered nurse before marrying Frank Anstett. The Anstetts lived just over the town line on Shenesky Road. Frank & Mary owned 300 acres, that ran from Beaver Brook through the Platt farm, property now owned by the State of Connecticut. The Shenesky family members owned many acres of land in West Hartland during the 1800s-1950s. The properties on Shenesky/Hi-View Road were the homes to parents Mary & Frank, grandfather William, Aunt May, Uncle Bill C., Carl Shenesky and Florence Shenesky Law. At the top of the hill there was an inn where travelers stopped. You could see all the way to New Boston, to what was known as the largest ski jump in the U.S. People came from near and far to ski. Shenesky Road was also the route that the ore industry used. On the other side of Rt. 20 they owned property along Mill Street which included the Mill Street school house, part of the Baranowich farm, and the property just before Thorne farm on Old Forge.

Cont. next page

CHILD'S PLAY AND A BIT OF FAME...

As a young boy of 10-12 years old , Bill would go to Maurice and Annie Laurie Williams Crain's summer home which is the stone house on Shenesky/Hi-View Road. The Crains lived in New York but at their summer home in West Hartland friends and family would put on small skits every other week. The "cast" included: Bill, part-time cook and music director using a crank operated record player, Fern Haefner, a ballet dancer and sister to Annie Laurie, Dutch Haefner, pianist and husband to Fern. Also joining them were Bill's Aunt Florence, who was a gifted musician, pianist and teacher at the Center and Mill Street Schools and Florence's children Fern and Ann Elizabeth Law. They would perform in what was known as the "play barn" located on the property lit only by candles and kerosene lights. Electricity did not come to the side streets until 1955.

Annie Laurie Williams, which was the name she went by, was a literary agent. She would turn books she reviewed into movies by representing the authors and selling the rights to Hollywood. To her credit are many movies and plays. Most notably she was the agent for Gone with the Wind author Margaret Mitchell and Of Mice and Man and Grapes of Wrath author John Steinbeck. It is said that the deal for "Gone with the Wind" was signed in the stone house and Steinbeck is known to have done some of his writing there too. Annie Laurie's husband Maurice was also a literary agent and brought her Stalag 17. Bill remembers one summer Life Magazine personnel came to Annie Laurie's for a whole month to cover the movie "Forever Amber" which she represented for the author Kathleen Winsor. Kathleen was a frequent visitor and participated in their skits. Bill obtained originals of many of the photos taken during that time which were published in Life Magazine in 1942.

Sadly, the original barn where the plays were staged burned down in the 1950s. Bill's Uncle Roy rebuilt it.

Another one of Annie Laurie's friends was Daryl Barrigan who worked for a New York newspaper as a Far East correspondent covering WWII. Bill remembers him visiting and writing to him. He vividly remembers the time when he and his cousin Tom were put on a train to visit him in New York in 1941-42. Daryl showed them the newspaper room and Chinatown where they had lunch. Never had Bill seen so many bowls of unknown food and then to have Daryl say "No silverware needed!" Bill uses chopsticks to this day.

One of the favorite past times of children in early 1940s was to become a "railroad buff". At the time there were 350 railroads in service. You would write 10 companies each week, for a one cent stamp on each envelope, asking for information about the company and requesting train schedules. The anticipation of getting something in the mail was a thrill.

CHILD'S WORK...

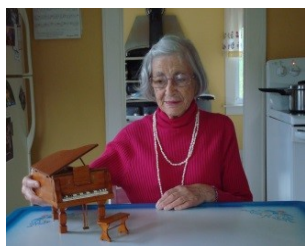
Bill remembers as a kid the days when you would cut your own ice from the pond and store it in the "ice house". First, you would cut 1' x 3' ice blocks with an ice saw and grasp it with an ice tong. The blocks would be loaded onto a horse drawn sleigh and brought to the ice house. There they would be stacked with snow between the blocks. Bill would help with the gathering of snow for this. You would use a shovel to take out blocks of ice when needed, leaving the shovel positioned for taking the next block. Saw dust from 1" to 18" deep was used to insulate the outside of the building . During the winter of 1938-39, there was no snow to be had to complete this job and the ski jump had to be closed too. *photo of ice harvesting Ransom pond, E.Hartland 1938*



In the 1940s, when there was gas rationing, the streets of Hartland were quiet. You could walk on the dirt roads to your destination without seeing a car. Bill would walk down to Riverton for Boys Scouts when Doug Roberts was scout leader. Bill Remembers Nelson Four Corners gas station (rt. 181 & 20) where the pumps had a crank operation and

the cost was 9 cents a gallon. These pumps came in handy when the town was hit by the Flood of '55 and the electricity was out.

In the 1960s Bill was asked by Maurice Crain and Dutch Haefner to build a fireplace at the stone house. Maurice, Annie Laurie's husband, served in WWII as a navigator pilot, was shot down in a B17 bomber and became a prisoner of war of the real Stalag 17 for a year or so. It was funny that Maurice never learned to drive a car. Dutch, husband to Annie Laurie's sister, who was also from New York, agreed to be Bill's helper by lugging in the mud and bricks. They would come up on weekends by train and bring along cases of Old Fox Ale. One question was asked: "How many cases will it take before the job is finished?" Of note is that they took a stone step from outside one of the doors at the house and used it as the hearth. Bill has been doing masonry work for 60 plus years and has been a part of many area building projects including Ethel Walker School, Hartland School, Cherry Brook School and he continues to love life in West Hartland.



EDITH PASQUARIELLO ADDS TO STORY OF FAMED STONE HOUSE AND PRESENTS PIANO AT BLUEBERRY PICNIC

During the 1930s-1970, friends and family were known to join Annie Laurie Williams and her husband Maurice Crain, both New York literary agents, at the family summer home, known as the stone house, and located on Hi View Road. Annie Laurie brought Gone with the Wind and Grapes of Wrath among many books to the movie screen. One family friend who was a friend of Margaret Shenesky, Bill's aunt, was Knut Larsen who came to be the second husband of Annie Laurie's sister Fern Haefner in the 1960s.

Knut came from a family of 13 brothers and sisters from Denmark. He worked as a security guard at a bank in Westchester County and would stay at the stone house when he came to town. Bill Anstett remembers Knut joining family at the Firemen's Carnival for years.

When Knut's wife Fern passed away, he stayed at the stone house for a while. During that time the Pasquariello family invited him for dinner. On one of these occasions Knut brought a miniature piano music box, handmade by him as a gift. It is believed he made this while staying at the famed stone house. Thank you to Edith for this piece of Hartland history and donation to HHS. *photo of Edith Pasquariello and piano 2013*



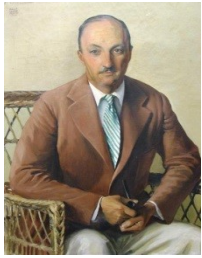
We've Got Mail

Sally Laubin Jones shared this sad and somewhat gruesome story that her mother, Esther Hayes Laubin, recalled after seeing the picture of the Rengerman Hill Road tower in the October 2012 HHS newsletter. The wooden tower used to sit on Round View Acres which was located toward the western part of Rengerman Hill Road.

A true tale of fright and tragedy took place at the tower. Around 1930, the land where the tower was located was owned by a Dr. Fox, a physician from Wethersfield, who had a summer home near the pond on Rengerman Hill Road. His daughter liked to hunt and would climb the tower to take pot shots at squirrels or other rodents. On the way down the tower one day, she lost her footing and the gun dropped onto the stairs. It fired and killed her. Esther Hayes Laubin's father, Robert Hayes, was Justice of the Peace and was called to the scene. He took Esther's mother along as a witness. The young girl's body was still lying on the ground when they arrived.

TWO OLD HOMES GONE

DAWN IRWIN SHAW



My grandfather, Mortimer Bristol Foster's grandfather was Isaac Singer of the Singer Sewing Machine Company. Mortimer's mother was Caroline Virginia Singer Foster, one of Isaac's daughters. *Photo is of 1932 oil painting of M.B.Foster*

In the early 1900s my grandfather built a thirteen room home in Old Greenwich, Connecticut, for his large family. My mother, Alice and oldest brother grew up there. In the 1930s Gramp sold this home.

I had heard many stories about Old Greenwich but had never been there until 2008 when I attended a family reunion held nearby. We went to Old Greenwich and found my grandfather's former home. The current owners graciously allowed us to take pictures of the outside. In the fall of 2012 during hurricane Sandy, this big beautiful old home burned down. I am glad I was able to have seen this home before this happened. *right photo is of Old Greenwich home*



Gram and Gramp had moved to an old 1852 farm house in West Hartland, Connecticut, named Laural Heath, but it was called "The Farm". This old winter kitchen with a big wood There were wide board floors that a glassed in sleeping porch with ers, a Chinese wind chime, Gramp's was a beautiful old home with the front yard.



home had spring water piped in, a summer and stove, a large wood box and a spacious pantry. squeaked when we walked on them. Upstairs was eight beds, a rope swing hanging from open raft-hunting trophies, and the occasional bat flying. It swings on a wide front veranda and large trees in *photo is of "The Farm"*

At that time, we lived in Durham Center, Connecticut, which was sixty miles from West Hartland, and we frequently drove there in our 1936 Desoto. On these trips we played games like alphabet, search for a gray horse, hangman, vetch, name the car and pack your trunk. Before we knew it we were there.

West Hartland is in the mountains of north central Connecticut. My dad, Harry Irwin decided to ride his bicycle there one weekend so mom drove us kids to the "The Farm" early. When dad got off work Friday afternoon he started riding his bike to join us. I don't know how long it actually took him that night but pedaling up those mountains was quite a chore for him. He had to walk some of the way and when he got to "The Farm," he had terrible leg cramps which kept mom up most of the night.

We would go out in the pasture and pick wild blueberries, ate fresh rhubarb pie, gathered currants, had fresh milk right from the cow, killed and baked fresh chicken, ate fresh eggs and drank ice cold spring water. Gramp grew mushrooms in the cellar, picked them and brought them up to Gram who immediately sautéed them in butter and were they delicious! We walked a quarter mile to the post office for the mail and so much more. There was always something to do.

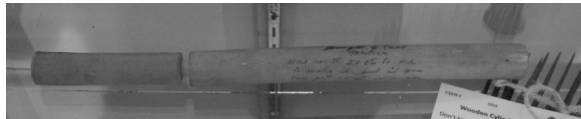
When Gram and Gramp died, "The Farm" was sold and shortly thereafter it also burned down in 1961. Now both of these lovely family homes are gone due to fire but what wonderful memories we have. I think these early experiences at "The Farm" helped me to choose farm life too. (Dawn runs a farm in Virginia raising cattle, chickens and horses)

JIM FOSTER, GRANDSON TO MORTIMER B. FOSTER RECENT VISIT TO GAYLORD HOUSE MUSUEM



Jim travels to Hartland on occasion to take care of the family grave sites (Grandparents Mortimer & Isabelle and parents William & Janet) in the West Hartland cemetery. He was prompted to visit our museum from our last newsletter that spoke of the Foster farm. While in the house it was discovered that another one of Stanly Ransom's paintings included the summer home of Mortimer's sister-in-law Florence Hurty. May Griffith another sister-in-law also had a summer home here. Jim has many fond memories of his visits and stays with Grandpa & Grandma Foster. *Photo Jim Foster holding M.B. Foster farm painting*

While Jim was visiting he took a look at an item in our tool room labeled "Don't know what this is?" He picked it up and turned the moving parts and said "this is a bird call – a turkey call". Mystery solved!? Written on it is "Dwight S. maker, was worth .50 cent to me to make it, but if you can cent let it go."



possibly
Case,
get .25

GAYLORD HOUSE STEAP GRANT ALLOWS NEEDED REPAIRS TO BE DONE

Thanks to the Town of Hartland, the Hartland Historical Society was pleased to be the recipient of a STEAP grant from the State of Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development. Funds from this \$30,000 grant were used for a part of the following repairs to the Gaylord House in 2012:

- ◆ Basement: replaced 6 x 6 beams and floor joists , new lally columns, cellar stairs, cellar and crawl space steel doors, poured concrete floor, masonry work on crawl space walls, electrical work and footing drains/sump pit
- ◆ Outside: masonry foundation repair
- ◆ First floor: weather-stripped exterior doors
- ◆ Second floor: added dehumidifier
- ◆ Second floor attic: removed chimney brick and added fluorescent lighting
- ◆ Third Floor attic: insulated attic and built 2 wood storage platforms
- ◆ Roof : installed ridge vent
- ◆ Misc.: electrical and masonry work, archival supplies

Also a thank you to committee members Joe Alicata, Paul Eseppi and Bud Groth!

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BLUEBERRY PICNIC – GREAT MUSIC, GREAT WEATHER, GREAT FOOD, GREAT ATTENDANCE,
GREAT PROGRAM, GREAT BLUEBERRY DESSERTS!!! WHAT MORE COULD YOU ASK FOR?
 * * * * *
 * * * * *
 Music by locals Grace Jones, Sally Dewey, Ed Baldwin and also Cindy Rines sang her own family blueberry song/story while young and old danced along. Roxanne Kane recited blueberry stories of old. We heard from 3 daughters of servicemen on exhibit-Heather Lehman for Doug Johnson, Joan Makowski for Walter Yanchak and Mary Root for Tim Root. Many servicemen families were in attendance. Surprise donation to HHS presented (see Edith story). Family and friends enjoyed conversation, listened and ate in the shade of the trees!
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 Thank you to all volunteers who made this day a complete success!
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2013 Blueberry Picnic photos courtesy of Mary Root. Thank you Mary!

Tear Out and Keep for a Reminder!!!



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06027

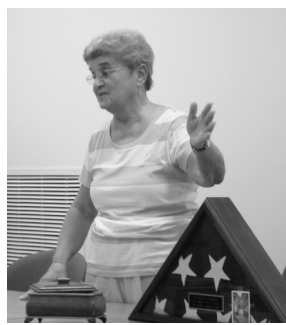
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The Hartland Historical Society's mission is to discover, procure and preserve whatever historical facts may be available relating to the civil, military, literary, cultural, and ecclesiastical history of the town of Hartland; and to investigate and preserve such traditions and knowledge as now exist only in the memory of persons. The Society will be responsible for sponsoring and exhibiting the collection of historical articles, pictures and other items relating to the town.

Hartland Resident
Postal Customer

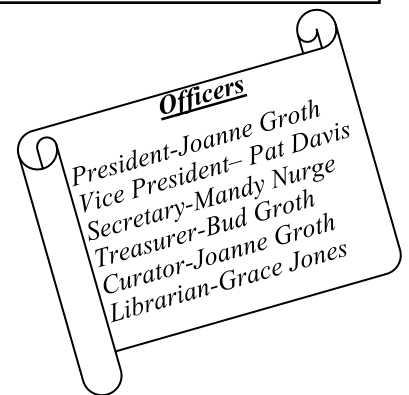
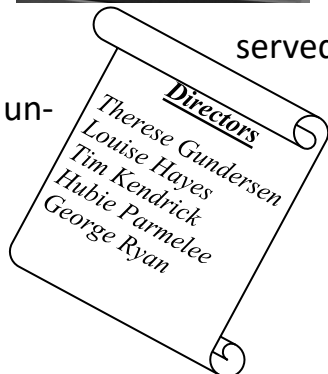
Personal military stories told at HHS May 2013 meeting

George Ryan, Chuck Osborn and Louise Hayes told interesting stories and showed items from a great grandfather who



served in the Civil War and a father and an uncle from WWII respectively. Thank you George, Chuck and Louise!

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Editor Corrections for 2012 Spring edition:

Misprint: Rev. Irving Berg and son Arthur were not both chaplains during war time. Arthur was in ordnance.

Still a little confusion as to where the "Higher than Mt. Tom" sign was really located .