



The Chronicler

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

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HartlandHistoricalSociety.com

Fall Edition 2019

Fall Membership Meeting and Presentation

Sunday, October 6, 2PM, Town Library

The One Room School House in Hartland: What Was It Really Like?

Mike Day a retired elementary school principal and former college instructor who is now the curator of the Barkhamsted Historical Society's One Room School house will be presenting and answering all the questions one may have about one room school houses. He has authored numerous articles (both print and digital) relating to this and 19th century education.

Come Oct. 6th and learn about your town's past!

Refreshments will be served.

THE WRIGHT FAMILY CEMETERY AND LORE

By Terri Atwood (resources: Gordon Wright 1960-1992 research, recent donation and on-line research)

The history of the Wright family prior to their establishment in Hartland can be traced back to Richard Wright in 1638 when he was authorized to bear arms in Plymouth, Massachusetts. It is assumed that Richard emigrated from somewhere in the British Isles prior to 1638. In 1644, he married Hester Cooke, daughter of Francis Cook of the Mayflower. Their son Adam, married and produced a son, John Sr., whose son John Wright Jr. and his wife Mary (Coomer) and children, William and Urania became part of the Reverend Ralph Smith's flock, following him in the 1740's from Plymouth to Connecticut to the town of Chatham (Chatham as of 1915 is now East Haddam). Another son, Ezekiel, was born June 20, 1747, and after spending his youth in Chatham, Ezekiel married Phebe Smith in 1775, the daughter of Reverend Ralph Smith. From there Ezekiel and Phebe moved to Sandisfield, Massachusetts (at the time including Granville and Tolland), where their family increased in size with the addition of a son, Wyllys (November 24, 1777), and daughter, Lucy (born in 1780). Ezekiel answered the Lexington Alarm and served throughout the Revolutionary War. Family history, although undocumented, notes that he captained a clipper ship and made two trips to China between 1786 and 1793. His gravestone (in the Center Cemetery, Granby, CT) reads "A firm Patriot of '76".

The Wright Family of East Hartland, CT, established their roots in town in 1793, when Captain Ezekiel Wright moved his wife, son Wyllys, and daughter Lucy to East Hartland. They purchased a farm documented as Lot #1, 1st Tier, Second Division as noted on the original survey map of the Town of Hartland. Documents show this land was owned at various times prior by the

The Gaylord House Museum is open the first Sunday of each month, May-October, 2-4PM.

Interested in visiting—have family or friends visiting? Make an appointment:

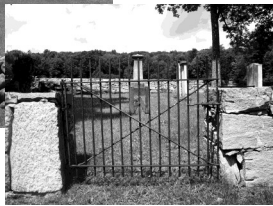
hartlandhistoricalsociety@gmail.com or call or text 860-309-8016.

Ensign, Talcott, and Giddings families. Ezekiel's son, Wyllys purchased the land from his father around 1800. Over his lifetime Wyllys added onto his existing farmland, and at the time of his death in 1854 had three abutting farms totaling 351 acres in East Hartland and Barkhamsted, part of which is now Pedersen Road in East Hartland.

On June 30, 1802 Wyllys married Rhoda Chapman, daughter of William Chapman who lived on South Road, and they had seven children; four boys, and three girls – Ezekiel Wyllys, Phebe Smith, Lucy Robbins, Rhoda Caroline, Nymphas Mastings, George Wyllys, and John Washington. Wyllys was active in the Hartland town government, holding the position of Town Selectman in 1812 and 1825, as well as the position of Captain in the army during the War of 1812. He was also a successful sheep and dairy farmer and a distiller of "apple jack", or cider brandy. Applejack was once the nation's most popular drink; all you needed was three ingredients – apples, a barrel, and cold weather. After cider was produced, and slightly fermented, the barrel could be left overnight during cold weather, and the layers of ice that would form removed, creating a more concentrated drink.



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Wyllys's son, Nymphas Mastings, died in August of 1849, according to a codicil in Wyllys's will – of a "loathsome disease". Family lore notes he died from drinking too much cold water from the well at 36 Pedersen Road while haying. Nymphas was buried on the farm property, the first family member to be buried in an area later designated in Wyllys's will as the "Wright Family Cemetery" *left photos 2008*. Family cemeteries, although uncommon today, were not unusual in America's early years. Wyllys's probate documents show specific requirements for the family cemetery. "Preserving for the use of a family grave-Southeast of my small barn(s), four rods square, to be located on the sum-fifteen rods from (?) small barn – on which place it is my will that my Body shall be interred in a decent and Christian manner and a suitable monument erected at the place of my internment by my Executors whom I shall now appoint".

The expense of the monument for Wyllys and Rhoda Wright born by his estate is noted to be \$100.42. Today the Wright Family Cemetery, following Nymphas's internment, also is the final resting place for several other family members. Wyllys himself was buried here upon his death in 1854, and his wife Rhoda (Chapman) followed in October of 1869, buried next to her husband. Rhoda Caroline, sister to Nymphas and wife of Lewis Emmons, was buried beside her brother in 1858. John Washington Wright, youngest son of Wyllys, died in January of 1892 and was buried next to his son William Hubert Wright (died July 26, 1871). Several other grandchildren of Wyllys and Rhoda are also buried in the family cemetery. Wright Holcomb, eldest son of Phebe Smith Wright and Starr Holcomb died of typhoid fever and was interred on March 29, 1853. Wright's brother, William Hubert Holcomb, died in 1856 and was buried next to him. It is believed that there are additional family members buried at the site, but they are undocumented. Two family members were also removed from the site. It's unknown why the remains of John Washington Wright and his son William Hubert Wright were removed from the family cemetery and re-interred in Center Cemetery in Barkhamsted on October 29, 1929. The MDC (Metropolitan District Commission) removed and relocated both graves to a newly constructed cemetery on Rt. 181 in Barkhamsted on May 26, 1940. The original Barkhamsted Center Cemetery, along with the Hartland Hollow Cemetery, and the Tiffany Private Cemetery were all moved from their original locations as part of the Water Bureau project to construct what is now Lake McDonough and the Barkhamsted Reservoir.



Upon Wyllys's wife, Rhoda's death, the 351 acres of farmland was split up into several parcels. The largest remaining parcel including his home, and the private Wright Family Cemetery, still stand today on Pedersen Road, owned by the Dalene family. Mrs. Thelma and her husband Arne Dalene supplied the materials and the labor to restore the cemetery and cemetery walls to their original condition. The original cemetery wall (enclosing 16 square rods – approximately 4,356 square feet) was erected by E.R. Doolittle in 1858. The restoration process included removing several large trees, and removing and cleaning the tombstones, in addition to replacing and repairing the

granite walls. Paul Crunden is responsible for restoring the walls, and the result is an excellent specimen of dry stonework. The position of the gate to the cemetery was moved, and Wyllys Wright's tombstone is now visible from the street. *Photo of Paul working on wall along road in 1990, see previous photo of gate.*

Many of Wyllys's children stayed in the Hartland area, and descendants of Captain Ezekiel still do today. Lucy Robbins (1807-1871) married Virgil Stebbins – he was a Justice of the Peace, and Probate Judge in Hartland. George Wyllys married Charlotte Phelps, and their son, also named Nymphas Mastings (1850-1934), was a one term Connecticut State Representative, and had the dubious honor of being written about in 2019 on a list of “The Strangest Names in Political History”. Nymphas was a farmer, as well as holding several local political offices in Hartland, including tax assessor, Deputy Sheriff, and was the Town Constable for 23 years. He married Edna May Atwood in 1875. Following his term in the House of Representatives, a large party was thrown for his 63rd birthday in 1914, with a barn dance and fireworks. Part of the collection in the Hartland Historical Society includes a custom made buggy whip embossed with -



N.M. Wright East Hartland - that may have been a gift on this occasion. There is a story in “Hartland Remembers” (a collection of stories compiled and published for the Historical Society’s 25th anniversary), that refers to Sheriff “Nip” Wright chasing bootleggers from Hartland into Riverton. Nymphas’s wife, Edna May, died in 1901, and Nymphas married her sister, Florence two years later. He was widowed a second time when Florence died in 1933, and he passed less than a month later on January 14, 1934. He is buried in the Granby Cemetery with both wives. Nymphas and his first wife Edna’s son, Frederick Cossitt Wright,



was grandfather, and great-grandfather to several current local Hartland residents. *photos of Nymphas Wright’s home “Elm Terrace” on Rt. 20, still standing today; Nymphas with horse and buggy. Visit the Gaylord House to see his buggy whip...*

Hartland School Students Enjoy a Morning at the Gaylord House

Teachers—Amy Bourque and Julia Fuller

The fifth and sixth graders had a wonderful time visiting the Gaylord House in May. They participated in an “Historical” scavenger hunt to learn all about the tools and household items that were central to the lives of people in Hartland many years ago. They heard the story of Hartland Hollow and the Reservoir and also poems written by a student during that time. They were fascinated by the history of their town, and how different life was. One of their favorite parts of the day was playing some of the games that children used to play! They had a great time teaming up for sack races, egg and spoon races, marbles, and other games (no computers required)!



This year’s annual Blueberry Picnic marked 30 years since the opening of the Gaylord House Museum!



What The Heck is a Blueberry Picnic?

By Philip Makin

Every year since living in Hartland it seems my family and I have been invited to the Hartland Historical Society's Blueberry Picnic at the Gaylord House Museum. Summer usually represents a slowing down, perhaps a change of pace from work and kids' activities. In years past there had always been a schedule conflict and we were unable to attend. Well not this year. We made it!

On Sunday, August 11 my family and I made our way to the Blueberry Picnic. We enjoyed all kinds of blueberry treats. There was blueberry cobbler, buckle, pie and even blueberry coffee cake but the biggest treat was learning the history of our beautiful small town.

A wonderful part of our local history is our people. People like Jack Roark.

For years now my family has always purchased and cut our Christmas trees at Jack Roark's Farm. The experience of tagging and cutting our tree and finishing it off with hot cocoa in his garage was part of our holiday tradition. We were all saddened by Jack's passing earlier this year so we loved hearing his story as one of Hartland's original neighbors. During our walk through the Gaylord House we saw some of the tools he had donated and that were talked about. Even though Jack has passed his legacy remains. *2019 Blueberry Picnic photo of Hubie Parmelee remembering Jack and reciting of Jack's 1949 blueberry story. In back l-r Susan Pearson-Prussing, Joanne Groth, Terri Atwood and Scott Levan who spoke on Hartland Hollow and the Reservoir.*



Hartland was originally one big town that was divided by the construction of the reservoir. The story of how the Metropolitan District Commission changed the hollow forever is amazing. Recognizing the need for more drinking water the MDC began purchasing farms in the hollow in 1927. Over the following seventeen years and spanning the Great Depression - roads were built, farms purchased, vast woodlands cleared and burial graves were relocated. The project did not utilize "eminent domain" or other legal actions but rather worked to convince locals it was progress. Many residents took part in clearing land as work was scarce. As the story was being told I could visualize a local map of Hartland changing color, like you might see on the History Channel during a war documentary, as the MDC moved closer and closer to their objective of holding enough land to create the reservoir. Honestly, it was the first time I ever felt the MDC was an invading force - displacing a thousand residents. It took eight years (1940-1948) for the reservoir to fill. The Barkhamsted Reservoir was filled to capacity - 30,000,000 gallons, according to The MDC the largest water supply reservoir in CT, 9 miles long, almost one mile wide in spots, constructed at a total cost of \$10 million. *The Metropolitan District, Hartford, Connecticut Website, Kevin Murphy book, Water for Hartford: The Story of the Hartford Water Works and the Metropolitan District Commission*

So what about the blueberries? According to the "Chronicler" after the farmland was cleared blueberries grew and became the new cash crop in town. Today, if anybody were to ask me about the Hartland Historical Society Blueberry Picnic I would answer it means spending a beautiful sunny afternoon, sharing stories and desserts with our neighbors while hearing about our town's storied past, ensuring the next generation of Hartlanders understands the unique place in which we all live.

Perfect ending to a perfect day! Blueberry Desserts!



READY.....



SET.....



GO.....

This year's HHS exhibit and Blueberry Picnic highlighted the years 1911-1948 "Hartland Hollow and the Barkhamsted Reservoir". This article speaks of the last activity in the hollow and coincidentally the Lions Club of Hartland has planned a Square Dance & Silent Auction September 28, 7:30-10:30pm at the town Library "Be there or be square"

One Last Hoorah in the Valley of Hartland Hollow

1938 Hartford Courant

Hartland Plans Square Dance To Welcome in Spring, Tra-La, by Francis B. Allen

Hartland, March 19, Spring will be greeted in "Hartland Hollow" with the strains of "Darling Nellie Grey" as the swains "swing the corner ladies and promenade all" in Hartland Town Hall Friday night.

Strangers driving along Route 20 can't make a mistake as to where the dance will be held. The Town Hall is the only building there. The others have been demolished to make way for Hartford Metropolitan District's new reservoir. The young folks don't know how much longer the 80 year old structure will be standing, so they are making the most of it and dances will be fortnightly, according to present plans.

Most of the dancers will come from the villages of West Hartland and East Hartland located atop the mountains on either side of the Hollow, but some will be former residents returning to mingle with old friends in the characteristic informality of an old fashioned dance.

The prompter, Howard Feley of East Granby, is representative of this latter group. The Feley homestead was only a quarter of a mile from the Town Hall and the strains of "Old Zip Coon" mingled with the sound of gay voices and stamping feet, were often borne there on quiet summer evenings, for dances have been held in that multi-purpose building since it's earliest days. *Hartford Courant photo of town hall caption: "Hartland's weathered town hall, the site of which will be submerged under 40 feet of water when the Metropolitan Water Bureau reservoir is filled, has none of the advantages of modern civilization."*



Attracted by the festivities, Howard tripped along with older members of the family to see what it was all about and was often called upon by his elders to "fill out a set." Fond of the intricacies of the quadrilles and other "squares" he studied a book of "calls" and soon took a place at the head of the hall with the revelers "balancing" their partners and doing the "needle eye" under his direction.

Today Mr. Feley, still in his twenties, "calls off" at the dances in the towns surrounding his new home, and hardly a week goes by that he tells the escorts to "kiss her if you dare" and "take your lady you know where."

If the Feley's hadn't been forced to give up their farm because of its proximity to the proposed reservoir, the prompter would still be living within walking distance of Hartland Town Hall.

Other local youths will lend their talent to make Friday's dance a success. Some of the players in the Mountain Hill Bellies Orchestra live in West Hartland the balance come from nearby Winsted. They will play not only the "classic" pieces for square dancers but waltzes for those who want to "round dance."

LAURIE FOULKE-GREEN
FAMILY RESEARCHER



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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

In This Issue

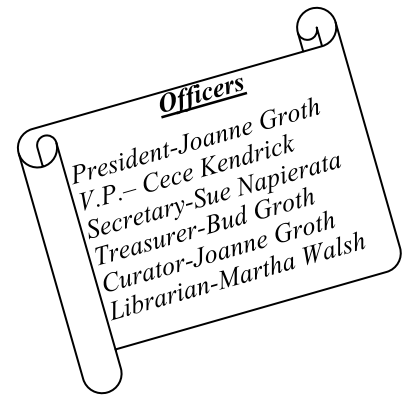
Invitation to Mike Day presentation of **“The One Room School House in Hartland”** at our Oct. 6th Fall Meeting, 2pm, Town Library

The Wright Family Cemetery and Lore

Hartland Students Visit Gaylord House

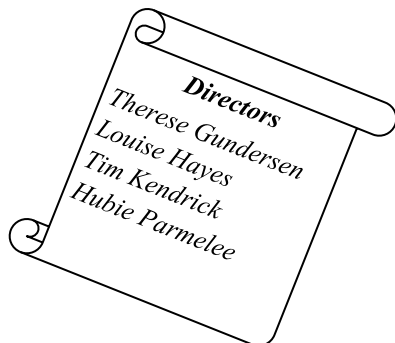
What the Heck is a Blueberry Picnic? A first time attendee to our annual blueberry picnic says it all.

One Last Hoorah in the Valley of Hartland Hollow. 1938 article “Hartland Plans Square Dance to Welcome in Spring, Tra-La”. **Last dance before Town Hall is demolished.**



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Mark your 2019 Calendars

- ◆ Gaylord House Open
Oct. 6, 2-5pm
- ◆ Fall Meeting W.H. Library,
Oct. 6, 2-4pm
- ◆ Santa Breakfast, E.H. Fire House
December 14, 8:00 am—11am