

HARWINTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2018

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The Barn Corner

FLAILING AND WINNOWING

By DAVE RYAN

On display in the Historical Society's Barn Museum (on Litchfield Road) and Country Store (at the Harwinton Fairgrounds) are several examples of a wheat threshing tool known as a FLAIL. Each flail consists of two round sticks, (one about three feet long with a handle) connected by a leather thong to a shorter, heavier stick called a "SWIPPLE."

The swipple beats the wheat in order to separate the grain from its protective coating called the chaff. Separating the two is necessary because the grain can be digested by humans, but the chaff cannot. The chaff, however, can be digested by livestock.

The flail handle was grabbed by both hands and swung, causing the swipple to strike a pile of grain which loosens the husks. Because the flail moved freely, it was hard to beat the grain accurately. A day's work flailing by one man could yield about seven bushels.

The use of the flail declined in the mid-1800's as it was replaced by modern technology such as combine harvesters. The modern combine harvester, or simply COMBINE, is a machine designed to efficiently harvest a variety of grain crops. The name derives from its combining three separate harvesting operations—reaping, threshing, and winnowing—into a single process.



A Flail and Swipple

One place a flail is still used is in the state of Minnesota where, by law, wild rice must be harvested manually by threshing. This flail is different in that it has only one round stick instead of two. Flails used for other cereal grains, such as barley or oats, might be longer or shorter than the ones we have.

The flail came to us from England, where it was called a "peasant flail." Interestingly, it was also used by the peasants as a weapon, sometimes with pointed objects attached to the swipple to make it more effective in doing damage.

While the flail has mostly disappeared from use today, the word remains with us - as a person flails his (or her) arms wildly in no particular pattern.

SEPARATING THE WHEAT FROM THE CHAFF

While the swipple beats (or threshes) most of the grain from the chaff, a certain amount of chaff will remain. Since this is not good for humans, the remaining chaff must be eliminated. This is accomplished by the traditional process of WINNOWING.

See Separating the Grains, page 3

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OFFICERS – 2018

President: Bonnie Andrews
Vice President: Nancy Schnyer
Secretary: Elaine Sederquist
Treasurer: Harry Schuh

DIRECTORS

Term Ends 2018:

Carol Kearns
David Ryan

Term Ends 2019:

Bruce Burnett
Shirley Gay

Term Ends 2020:

Michael Orefice
Candace Jones-Pacholski

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

Eleanor Woike

CURATOR

Bonnie Andrews

BUILDING SUPERVISOR

Dennis Andrews

OTHERS (non-board positions)

HISTORIAN

Roger Plaskett

AUDITOR

Marilyn Mitchell

LEGAL COUNSEL

Patrick Wall

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Officers, Directors Elected for 2019

At a membership meeting held on Sunday, Nov. 11, 2018, the officers and directors listed on this page were re-elected for the 2019 calendar year. The terms of directors Carol Kearns and David Ryan were extended from 2019 through 2021.

Because there were no volunteers to serve on a nominating committee, the slate was proposed by the current Board of Directors. There were no nominations made from the floor at the November 11 meeting.

The Board of Directors meets the last Thursday of each month at 3 p.m. at the Jason Skinner House on Bentley Drive. Board meetings are open to all Historical Society members.

The next general membership meeting will be the annual meeting on Sunday, Jan. 13th at 1 p.m. at the Senior Center on Weingart Road. Snow date is Jan. 20th. Ruthie Shapleigh Brown, executive director of the Connecticut Gravestone Network, will be the guest speaker.

TRIVIA

Question: After Connecticut became a state, how long did it take to adopt a state constitution? Answer on page 4

TWO NEW PROGRAMS SCHEDULED

Sunday, Dec. 2:

A Sacred Place Revisited

2 to 4 p.m., Harwinton Library

Local resident Bob DeFosses will provide an update on his research into what he calls a “Sacred Space on a Hilltop in Harwinton, CT.” This presentation will provide some new insight on the stone formations on his own property as well as information about a ceremonial landscape that DeFosses believes exists on 2,100 acres of land in Harwinton known as the Roraback Property, which has been owned by the state Department of Environmental Protection since 1982.

Sunday, Dec. 9:

The Vietnam War

2 to 4 p.m., Harwinton Library

This program will include the video "Dick Cavett's Vietnam," followed by a discussion period. Cavett interviewed people with a wide range of opinions on the war during his talk show programs in the 1960's and '70's. He interviewed government officials from Wayne Morse, one of two US Senators who voted against the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, to Henry Kissinger, Nixon's national security adviser. Cavett also interviewed veterans with a wide range of opinions. The discussion that follows the video will focus on two questions: What had we learned from history that led to our involvement in Southeast Asia? and What lessons from Vietnam might be applicable to our current involvement in civil strife around the world? The discussion will be led by retired history teacher and Harwinton resident Bruce Burnett.

**Historical Society Receives Support
from Local Businesses**

At the 2018 Harwinton Fair in October a total of 1,275 tickets were entered in the Historical Society's Take-a-Chance drawing. Fourteen businesses participated by offering gift certificates for a variety of products and services. Please help support them for their generosity. They are:

A Healing Trail Wellness Center

Burlington Golf Center

Coach Mel's Health and Fitness for Life

Countryside Market and Pizza

Deeply Rooted Farm

The Edison Grill Restaurant

Harwinton Pizza

Hayward Farms

Hometown Pizza II

KidsPlay Children's Museum

Litchfield Hills Veterinary Hospital

The Liquor Lad

Tony's Drive-in Package Store

The Warner Theatre

Separating the Grains of Wheat from the Chaff, continued from page 1

By tossing the beaten grain and chaff into the air when there is a light wind blowing the problem will be solved. The chaff is much lighter, so the heavier grain will fall to the ground where it can be gathered up onto a

plate-shaped basket or other receptacle and stored for future consumption. The wind will carry the lighter chaff away. Today, the process of winnowing grain by hand has been replaced in most cultures.

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING HISTORICAL SOCIETY EVENTS

DATE	EVENT	COMMENT
November 2 (Sunday)	Free program: A Sacred Place On a Harwinton Hilltop	2 to 4 PM Harwinton Library Bentley Drive Speaker: Bob DeFosses
November 9 (Sunday)	Free Program: Dick Cavett's Vietnam War – video and discussion	2 to 4 PM Harwinton Senior Center 209 Weingart Road
November 29 (Thursday)	Board of Directors * Monthly Meeting	3 PM Skinner House, Bentley Drive
	<i>Merry Christmas</i>	
December 27 (Thursday)	Board of Directors * Monthly Meeting	3 PM Skinner House, Bentley Drive
	<i>Happy New Year</i>	
January 13 (Sunday) (snow date January 20)	Annual Meeting of the Harwinton Historical Society	1 PM Harwinton Senior Center 209 Weingart Road

** Historical Society members are always welcome to attend Board of Directors meetings, which are held the last Thursday of each month at 3 p.m. at the Skinner House on Wintergreen Circle off Bentley Drive.*

Answer to Trivia Question on page 2:

Connecticut was the next-to-last of the original 13 colonies (Rhode Island was the last) to adopt a state constitution – nearly 30 years after Connecticut became a state.