

HARWINTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2018

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The Barn Corner

On the farm: Make it, grow it, or do without

By David Ryan

Harwinton has a long history as a farming community. Although this is no longer the case, for most of Harwinton's past, families lived on farms. Often, if a family couldn't make it, grow it, or raise it, they did without.

The Historical Society's barn museum displays many examples of the artifacts used in the past by a typical farming family. Although some of the objects mentioned here have been mentioned in other Barn Corner articles, the purpose this time is to group them together to illustrate how Harwinton family members spent their time years ago.

Corn. Corn was planted in the spring, grown in the summer, and dried in the fall for use in the winter. One way to dry individual corn cobs was with a corn dryer (pictured at top of right column). The dryer was suspended from a rafter in the barn to allow individual corn cobs to dry while keeping mice and other animals away from the kernels. Vintage dryers usually held up to 10 ears of corn. One dryer could be "attached" to another, forming a chain that was suspended from a beam in the barn.

Once the corn was dry, the kernels could be stripped by hand or passed through a mechanical sheller. The handle on a corn sheller was often turned by the oldest child who was strong enough to keep it moving at a fast speed before inserting the corn. It should be noted that nothing was wasted - the empty cobs were stored in the

outhouse to be used as toilet paper or sliced and used for a game of checkers. Today, operating the corn sheller is very popular with young visitors to the barn museum.



Laundry. Doing laundry was another time-consuming chore. Often one or two days a week were set aside as regular "laundry days." Soap was made beforehand by combining wood ash and animal fat. Sometimes lye was added to the mix. Clothes were washed in a tub with the use of a wash board to help remove dirt or stains. If a family was wealthy enough they might have a soapstone sink (soapstone feels slippery like soap). The sink usually had two basins - one for washing and one for rinsing. After the water was heated on a stove or fireplace, the clothes were stirred with a fork-shaped stick. The stick was then used to remove the clothing from the hot water. After rinsing, the clothes were rung out by hand or put through a ringer like the one mounted on the sink at the Historical Society barn. The wet, heavy clothes were then deposited in a clothes basket and carried outside to be hung to dry on a clothesline using wooden clothespins. While there were a lot of steps in the laundry process and it was a lot of work, it should be noted that in the past people had fewer clothes to wash than we do today. Often one or two sets of clothing sufficed for wear during the week and another set of clothes was considered "Sunday best." Women usually wore an apron to help protect their dress or skirt.

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DON'T MISS IT!!!

ANNUAL ICE CREAM SOCIAL

Sunday, August 5th

2 to 4 PM

In front of the Consolidated School

Ice Cream from A & J's Ice Cream Parlor

\$1 per scoop

**Entertainment for all ages by
Matica Arts**

Harwinton native Heidi Kirchofer is co-founder and managing director of Matica Arts whose focus is on Circus, World Music and the Moving Arts. You may have seen members of Matica Arts in this year's Harwinton Memorial Day parade.

**The Schoolhouse and Barn Museum will
be open during the social**

PLEASE BRING A LAWN CHAIR

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**Notice to members of the
Harwinton Historical Society**

Watch your mailboxes for an invitation to a Members Appreciation Open House on Sunday, September 16th from 2 to 4 p.m. at the Jason Skinner House on Bentley Drive. Appetizers and beverages will be served. Come and meet other members, visit the second-floor office space and learn how you can help continue to help preserve Harwinton's history.

Looking Back in Harwinton History

Horse Trough Offers a Piece of Local History

By Joyce Peck

Not many horses trot smartly along Bentley Drive from Route 4 to Town Hall and the town Sports Complex these days. In fact, Bentley Drive had not even been created during the days of horse-drawn vehicles and horse riders.

Yet a dignified horse trough is located along the road just before the entrance to the Wintergreen elderly housing complex. The granite trough sits in a curved patch of green neatly carved out at the side of the road. An historical information sign, erected by the Harwinton Historical Society, pays tribute to a day gone by. Nearby is a town fire pond with a bench and newly planted shade trees encircling it. It's a pretty place to sit and contemplate nature and the past.



The cement trough once was one of several such watering holes for horses and other farm animals, as well as thirsty travelers along the popular Hartford-Litchfield route, now known as Route 4 or Burlington Road. The trough stood on the east side of Route 4 between Harmony Hill Road and Further Lane with gravity-fed water from a nearby spring. The site in the 19th century was near what was then the center of town.

Other troughs were located on Terryville Road (Route 72), Birge Park Road (Route 4) near Spring Hill Road, at the intersection of Litchfield and Hill roads, along Valley Road in East Litchfield and in the Campville section of town.

At first such troughs were carved out of wood logs. At one time the location of the trough noted here included a low trough for cattle and a higher one for horses in addition to a fountain for people.

The old wooden trough on Burlington Road was replaced with a granite one and a marker by Newman Hungerford as a memorial to Abijah Catlin (1715-1778), an early settler. The "bubbler" or water fountain was added at the location in 1916 in memory of Caroline Catlin Hungerford (1815-1900). Catlin descendants wanted to honor their ancestors for whom Catlin Corner, the intersection of Burlington, Locust and Harmony Hill roads, was named.

Improvements to Route 4 in the area by the state Department of Transportation in 2005 prompted the move of the trough to Bentley Drive.

Source: More Memories of Harwinton published by the Harwinton Historical Society.

TRIVIA QUESTION: Who was the first woman to receive a U.S. patent?

Answer on page 5

Farm chores left little free time

Continued from page 1

Ironing. Once the clothes were dry, two or more heavy irons were placed on the hot stove or fireplace stone. When one was judged hot enough to use, a handle or pot holder would be attached to it. I remember my grandmother ironing clothes in this way. She would lick her finger and touch it lightly to the iron. If it went "pssss" the iron was hot enough to be used. When the iron cooled off, it was put back on the stove to reheat and another one was used. My grandmother used three irons at a time to always have a hot iron read to go. There are several examples of irons in the barn museum. Pick one up to see how heavy it is!

Butter churns. Butter was also made on the farm. Heavy cream was put in a churn and turned and turned until it became butter. The buttermilk was used in cooking. Often the skim milk was used to feed cattle or pigs.

Eggs. The younger children were often assigned the task of collecting eggs from the chicken coop. They learned to be careful and not crack the eggs.

Shoes. Shoe lasts, such as those on display on the shelf next to the sink in the museum, were used either to make shoes or replace or repair worn out

soles. This was usually the job of the man of the family, but it was still a household chore.

Early shoes were made for neither right nor left feet but were painfully broken in by the wearer. Sometimes shoes were rented for the winter months. Many children went barefoot when weather permitted, and it is easy to understand why. I can remember my father using a shoe last (such as the one pictured above) to replace the soles on his work shoes, using materials he cut out of old automobile tires. His work caused him to wear the shoes out quickly, and since he was not wealthy did not want to waste scarce money buying new shoes. He made his shoe repairs on his day off.

Seeing the artifacts in the barn makes it is easier to understand why home chores took up a great deal of time for all family members. Watching soap operas and football games, going to the mall, or working at a job outside of the house would not have fit into the busy schedule of early farm days. In fact, today's farming families probably have little free time either due to the many daily responsibilities of farm life.



“VOICES OF THE PAST” NIGHT TIME GUIDED TOUR OF SOUTH CEMETERY

COMING FRIDAY- OCTOBER 12TH - 5:30 TO 8:00 PM

All visitors must meet at Town Hall and check in to receive a free ticket. A shuttle bus will transport groups of up to 25 people back and forth from the Town Hall to the cemetery. This is a non-frightening adventure into Harwinton's past. Come and meet some interesting people who will tell you about their lives.

SPONSORED BY THE HARWINTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY & T.A. HUNGERFORD MUSEUM.

Bring a flashlight, dress for the weather, and have fun!

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING HISTORICAL SOCIETY EVENTS

DATE	EVENT	COMMENT
August 5 (Sunday)	Ice Cream Social	2-4 PM at Schoolhouse and Barn in front of Consolidated School, Route 118. Ice Cream (\$1/scoop) and entertainment for all ages by Matica Circus Arts.
August 25 (Saturday)	Annual Appeal Work Party	9 a.m. to noon. Volunteers meet to prepare envelopes for mailing.
August 30 (Thursday)	Board of Directors Meeting	3 PM Skinner House
September 16 (Sunday)	Members Only Appreciation Open House 2 to 4 p.m. Skinner House	Details by Invitation
October 5, 6, 7 (Fri, Sat, Sun)	Harwinton Fair	Volunteers Needed – call 860-482-7978 !!
October 12th (Friday)	“Voices of the Past” night time guided tour of South Cemetery 5:30 to 8 p.m.	Rain date Saturday, Oct. 13
October 25 (Thursday)	Board of Directors Meeting and appointment of nominating committee	3 PM Skinner House
November 29 (Thursday)	Board of Directors Meeting and Nomination officers for 2019	3 PM Skinner House

ANSWER TO TRIVIA QUESTION ON PAGE 3: Mary Kies of South Killingly received the first U.S. Patent on May 15, 1809. The patent was for a method of weaving straw with silk. U.S. Patent No .1 was issued on July 31, 1790, to Samuel Hopkins, a Philadelphia Quaker, for a method of producing potash. Congress had passed the first patent act on April 10, 1790.