

HARWINTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2019

Mail: PO Box 84, Harwinton, CT 06791

email: harwhistsoc@gmail.com



In photo above, Warren Wilcox looks on as Mike Orefice ties down the wheel of a horse-drawn buggy-carriage Mr. Wilcox donated to the Historical society. Below, Mr. Wilcox stands by an ox yoke made by his grandfather. Both items have a strong Harwinton history and are wonderful additions to our collection.



Buggy is Back

By Michael Orefice

On September 12, 2019, Dennis Andrews and Michael Orefice traveled to Sheffield, Massachusetts to pick up several donations to the Historical Society, including a horse-drawn buggy. The donor is 84-year-old farmer Warren Wilcox, who grew up on Hill Road.

According to Mr. Wilcox, the light horse-drawn carriage originally belonged to Paul and Mary Peckham who lived in a stone house on South Road. According to Mr. Wilcox, the Peckhams had three wagons. One was taken to Lloyd Shanley's barn by Danny Easton where it burned in a fire. The second one was stolen on Halloween, "sent down Center Hill" and demolished. The third wagon became the possession of John "Jack" Kelly of North Road who, in turn, gave it to Mr. Wilcox "because he knew he would take care of it." It is this third buggy that Mr. Wilcox has donated to the Historical Society.

Among the stories Mr. Wilcox relayed, several involved his work history. When he was a young man in Harwinton, he worked for Bill Hooper on Woodchuck Lane. He also did work for Lloyd Shanley and, later, worked on a rented farm in Litchfield. After that he was employed at Lyman Orchards in Middlefield where he milked about 80 cows. The Lyman barn was struck by lightning and burned down killing only one cow and one bull. The Lyman family rebuilt the barn and Mr. Wilcox ran the farm operation until the Lyman family decided to build a golf course.

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OFFICERS – 2019

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

DIRECTORS

Term Ends 2019

Bruce Burnett
Shirley Gay

Term Ends 2020

Michael Orefice
Vacancy

Term Ends 2021

Carol Kearns
David Ryan

**IMMEDIATE PAST
PRESIDENT**

CURATOR

Bonnie Andrews

BUILDING SUPERVISOR

Dennis Andrews

OTHERS

(non-board positions)

HISTORIAN

Roger Plaskett

AUDITOR

Marilyn Mitchell

LEGAL COUNSEL

Patrick Wall

Email:

harwhistsoc@gmail.com

Harwinton Historical Society

**PO Box 84
Harwinton, CT 06791**

860-482-7978

LIST OF UPCOMING PROGRAMS

2019

Trouble in the Land of Steady Habits: Constitution of 1818 - Walt Woodward, CT State Historian:

Sunday, October 20 @2 - Town Hall Assembly Room

The American St. Nick - Peter Lion:

Sunday, November 3 @2- Harwinton Public Library, 80 Bentley Drive. Books will be available for purchase.

Bus Trip to the Knights of Columbus Museum, New Haven CT – Crèches of Europe & 24 decorated trees

\$7.50 fee for transit bus/ museum admission is free
Wednesday, Dec. 11 @ 12:30- Departure from Harwinton Library Overflow Lot. Details TBA.

** Reserve your seat on the bus now by mailing a check made out to the Harwinton Historical Society to PO Box 84, Harwinton, CT 06791.

2020

Mary Lincoln, From Birth to Death - Carol Deleppo:

Sunday, February 9 at 2 p.m. - Location TBA

The Year Without a Summer - Roger Plaskett, Harwinton Historian:

Sunday, March 8 at 2 p.m. Harwinton Congregational Church

19th Amendment - Mariann Millard (First Ladies presenter!):

Sunday, April 5 at 2- Location TBA

Reliving the Holocaust: "The Crate: A story of war, a murder and justice" with author Debbie Levison. Co-sponsored by the Historical Society and the Harwinton Public Library.

Sunday, May 3, 2020 at 6:30 p.m.
Harwinton Public Library, 80 Bentley Drive

**Forward your program suggestions to
harwhistsoc@gmail.com**

How the “witches” in Salem died

The town of Salem, Massachusetts is synonymous with the Salem Witch Trials of the 1600s, and when we think of witches, we likely think of them being burned at the stake. While it is true that many women in the Puritan settlement were sentenced to death for acting like witches, none of them were burned at the stake. That practice was used in the persecution of European “witches” from the 15th to the 18th centuries where an appalling 50,000 people were executed for practicing witchcraft.



South Cemetery

SPIRITS SET TO RETURN FRIDAY NIGHT OCT. 11th

Come join in as many old spirits from Harwinton’s history come alive again to tell their stories on one night only - Friday, October 11th. Meet railroad magnate Collis P. Huntington; Harwinton’s doctor Andrew Abernethy; patriot and Tory antagonist Captain John Wilson; our town’s first centenarian, Belinda Bartholomew; early clock maker Augustus Alfred and others as they stop by historic South Cemetery to chat with modern day visitors.

Sponsored by the Harwinton Historical Society and Hungerford Museum, this event is free to the public. A shuttle bus will run every 15 minutes from Town Hall where all visitors should park and obtain a bus ticket. **No parking will be allowed at the cemetery.** This night is intended to be fun and educational, not frightening. First bus is at 5:30.

Be sure to allow time to stop in Town Hall before or after the tour for refreshments and more information about the spirits you will meet in the cemetery.

Horse-drawn Buggy Returns to its Harwinton Roots Continued from page 1

Mr. Wilcox remembers much about his past and enjoys talking about some of his escapades including the following. After Henry Delay “retired” from his job as fire boy for the Clearview School, Wilcox took over. He relayed a story of arriving at the schoolhouse one day, only to realize he had lost his key to the door. He tried to access the windows but found only one on the north side that he could open. But it was high up. He took a log to stand on and lifted the window. As he was climbing inside, the window fell on him and pinned him so he couldn’t move. He was afraid that he was going to be found and arrested for breaking into the building. Eventually, he managed to crawl inside where he lit the fire. He later found the school key in his sock. His pants pocket had a hole in it and the key had slid down into his sock.

Exact dates for the carriage are not available but they were popular during the end of the 19th century and first quarter of the 20th century. They were advertised in 1903 Montgomery Ward catalog. At the time, horse-drawn carriages made in England had two wheels; those made in the United States had four wheels.

Ox yoke

Mr. Wilcox has also donated an ox yoke, which was made of elm by his grandfather, Martin Wilcox, who was born in 1875. The bows were made of hickory by Ed Jones who lived on the South side of Route 4 east of Cook’s Dam. The pins that hold the bows in place were provided by Henry Delay Sr.

The donations include a set of horse harnesses that appear in a picture in the book “Campville Chronicles” by Romily Cofrancesco. The harnesses belonged to Mr. Wilcox’ maternal grandfather, Matthew Fritch. The donations also include a set of horse collars and red colored hames.

The Wilcox donations include a photo of a buggy that was owned by Mr. Peckham that is very similar to the buggy donated to the historical society.

Harwinton Fair weekend Oct. 4, 5 and 6

The Historical Society has long been a presence at the annual Harwinton Fair in the Country Store, Blacksmith Shop and Shingle Mill. It is becoming more and more difficult to communicate the many tasks that make this event a success. Contacting people to work or donate has become a great challenge especially since the hours the fair is open have expanded to include Friday until 9 p.m. and Saturday until 8.

Without having been contacted personally, we are hopeful that our members will know to contribute baked goods or items to sell. Also, please offer to work in the country store or shingle mill for a few hours. Send an email to harwhistsoc@gmail.com or call 860-482-7978 if you can help. Someone will be at the fairgrounds from 4 to 6 p.m. Monday to Thursday the week before the fair to accept your help.

The Barn Corner

Never Underestimate the Importance of the Apple

By David Ryan

Leaning against the wall in the barn museum is a metal basket attached to a long pole. This is an apple basket. While "picking the low-hanging fruit" is easy, the basket allowed pickers to harvest the fruit higher up in the tree. If a tree grew large because it was not pruned, a triangle-shaped three-point ladder that was made to fit between the higher branches could be used to pick the fruit.



Because of the Biblical story of Adam and Eve, the apple became a symbol of immorality and sin. In men the larynx contained the "Adam's apple," caused by the forbidden fruit becoming lodged in Adam's throat as he tried to swallow it.

Far from being sinful or evil, in fact, the apple can provide a lot that is good. The early 20th century saying "an apple a day keeps the doctor away" may have some truth to it. Apples contain many vitamins and minerals that can lower the risk of some cancers, strokes, indigestion and diabetes. They may also help protect against Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease and lower the risk of tooth decay.

In the book "History of Harwinton" author Raymond G. Bentley, the Harwinton's first historian, notes that "agriculture was probably the most important activity during the first one hundred years" of the town's existence. Based on his research, Bentley noted that during the 50 years between 1840 and 1890 a large quantity of produce was shipped from Harwinton to other places such as New York.

At one time it was noted that "C.S. Barber has shipped about 400 barrels (1200 bushels) of apples to parties in New York." Also, "Thomas Hogan made 1,000 barrels of cider this Fall. It was recorded that Henry Catlin has 1,000 apple trees."

In 1845 there were 1,121 people living in town in 231 houses. They produced 24,146 bushels of apples.

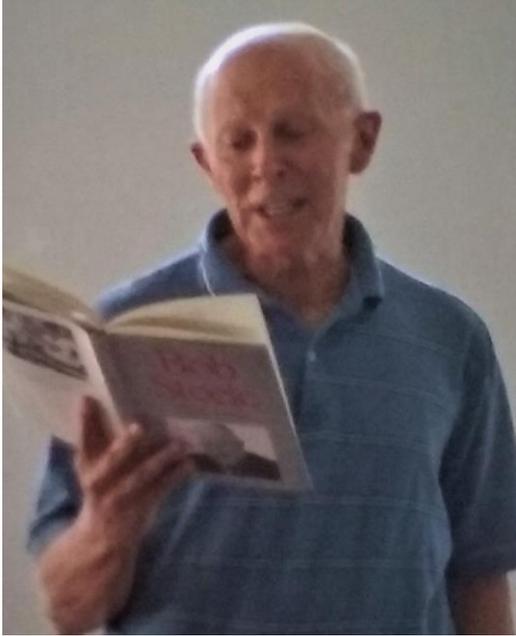
So, the apple was an important crop in early Harwinton, as was its by-product, cider. The importance of apples should not be underestimated.

"Barn Corner" articles, written by Harwinton Historical Society director David Ryan, appear in this newsletter periodically and focus on artifacts on display in the society's barn museum.



Quote from History

"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do." - Mark Twain



Recalling Radio Legend Bob Steele

Phil Steele, left, reads a passage from one of his father's best loved stories during a presentation September 15th at Town Hall. More than 40 people attended the program on Radio Hall of Fame and WTIC broadcaster Bob Steele.

Bob Steele entertained Connecticut radio listeners for over half a century. His morning show was broadcast from 1943 until 1991. He spent 65 years with WTIC radio.

Bob Steele died in 2002 at age 91.

Looking Back in Harwinton History

25 years ago – 1994

- A long, cold rain caused Saturday to be a wash out for the Harwinton Fair, but Sunday was a crisp, fall day. The weekend crowd was estimated at 28,000 to 30,000.
- Town officials study the possibility of contracting municipal trash collection after Torrington barred Harwinton residents from its landfill.
- The town considers purchasing the Jehovah's Witness Hall on Weingart Road for use as a senior center. The building was built in the 1960s and renovated in the 1970s. The owners have outgrown the building and want to move to a larger facility in Torrington.
- Work was set to begin on a \$3.25 million renovation of the Harwinton Consolidated School.

10 Years ago – 2009

- State police and animal control officers raided a home on Litchfield Road where they discovered many chickens that appeared to be raised for fighting. In all, 357 birds were captured.
- Two long-time municipal employees leave town service. Tax Collector John Thrall had worked for the town for 46 years and Administrative Assistant Loda Sheehan for 32 years.
- Zirkus Wallendas brought their high wire act to the Harwinton Fair. They performed 30 feet above the fairground midway.

Information for Looking Back in Harwinton History comes from the archives of the Harwinton Historical Society.