

# HARWINTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



OCTOBER 2020

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## A sure sign you are in Harwinton

HARWINTON - At the end of August, the white sign box on the town Green at the intersection of South Road and Route 4 was damaged by a hit-and-run-driver. Almost as quickly as it was knocked down, the popular local landmark was back in place.

News of the damage traveled quickly over social media and offers to help with repairs followed. However, none were faster than the employees of the town's public works department who had the historic landmark repaired and back in place before most people noticed it was gone.

Many towns have signs that point the way for

**See SIGN, page 3**



**The somewhat unique sign box on the town green has been damaged and repaired or replaced several times over the years. This August it happened again, but order was quickly restored.**



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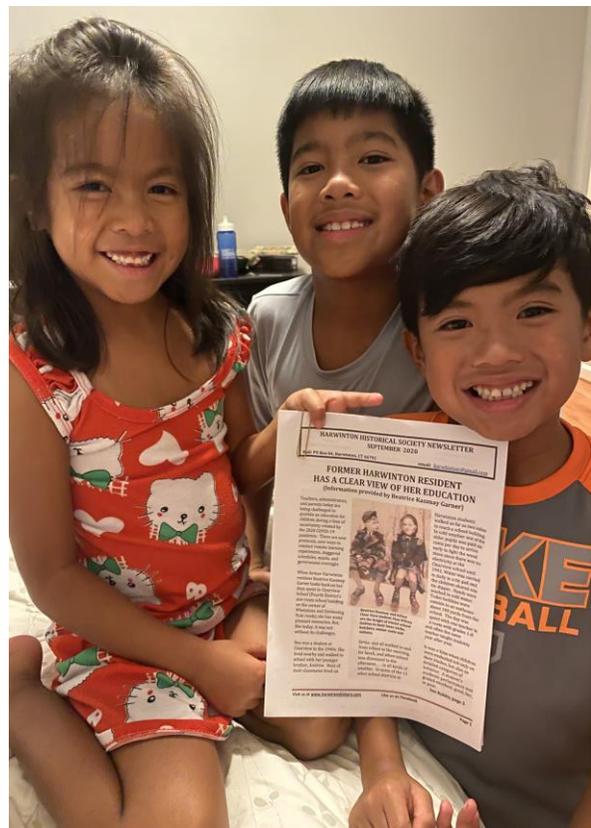
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## Learning About Change

The three Deramos siblings from Silver Spring, Maryland hold up a copy of the Historical Society's September newsletter. Their mother said the children are currently attending school online. They all enjoyed learning about Beatrice Kasznay Garner's story about attending a one-room school in Harwinton in the 1940s and how different that was from the current school situation with on-line learning and social distancing.



**To: Beatrice Kasznay Garner**

*"Thanks so much for sharing your wonderful story! My children really enjoyed learning about your school experience!"*

**From: Rachelle Deramos (professional acquaintance of Bea Garner)**

**SIGN, continued from page 1**

travelers, but the one in the center of Harwinton is different than most. Harwinton's first town historian, the late Raymond Bentley, believed that the style of the Harwinton sign, featuring a large wooden box attached to the top of a sturdy four-sided post, might be the only one of its kind in Connecticut.

In the past, with no rapid way to communicate, it was the town's practice to attach notices to posts throughout the town to inform the residents of pending legal and town matters. Bentley said he remembered notices being stapled to the post in the center of town as late as the 1950s.

According to Town Historian Roger Plaskett, Lewis Smith (during one of his four terms as the town's probate judge) designed the sign box sometime between 1844 and 1860. Smith planned the design so that the legal notices attached to the post would be somewhat protected from the elements by the wood overhang.

A new sign box built by Charles Kirchofer with lettering by Kathy Schenkel was installed in 1984, replacing one constructed by students from the Lewis S. Mills High School Industrial Arts Class that incorporated metal letters and arrows to point the way. In 2006 a new box took the place of one that a wayward motorcyclist destroyed.

The current box was installed on May 26, 2013. It is a replica of the ones that stood for well over 150 years in the same location. This one was built by local resident and "Village Woodworker" Larry Connors. The lettering was done by graduating Lewis S. Mills student Amanda Surveski. Larry and Amanda donated their time and skills while the cost of the materials was paid for by a donation from the Harwinton Historical Society.



**The Harwinton Sign Box many years ago**

This past August, Connors was one of the first people to volunteer to help make repairs when the sign was knocked down and damaged again. The Historical Society also offered to help.

But the town crew was on the job! The historic landmark was soon back in place at the location early records consider to be the center dividing line between east and west Harwinton.

Harwinton today is sometimes referred to as "the gateway to Litchfield County." According to the repaired sign box that directs passersby as they go through Harwinton, the town of Litchfield is just 7 miles to the west.

*-Bonnie Andrews*

**- HHS Programs on Hold until 2021 -**

The Harwinton Historical Society's Program Committee has suspended planned activities until the end of 2020 because pandemic concerns have closed or restricted access to many town buildings. All presenters have been contacted and are anxious to return to live presentations when circumstances allow. Many of them are conducting virtual presentations in lieu of the traditional productions. When we are aware of these, we will inform you.

Meanwhile, be assured that the Harwinton Historical Society's Program Committee will resume its schedule as soon as pandemic restrictions allow.



**South Cemetery, Harwinton - Site of 3 previous night tours**

***No Harwinton Cemetery Tour This Year***

***Virtual Tour Planned in Washington, CT***

Due to the uncertain future of the pandemic, organizer of the Harwinton event town Historian Roger Plaskett, along with co-sponsors the Harwinton Historical Society and Hungerford Museum, decided not to plan a 2020 cemetery tour. It would have been the fourth year for the spirits from Harwinton's history to tell their stories at this popular event.

A cemetery tour has also been held for many years by the Gunn Historical Museum in Washington, CT. That event will continue, but in a new format. This year will be the museum's 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Cemetery Tour. A recent email message from the museum states that, rather than an in-person tour this year, a pre-recorded virtual cemetery tour will be released on line at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, October 30<sup>th</sup>. The tour will reflect on people and events from 100 years ago, including bootleggers, the 1918 epidemic, and suffragists.

Costumed actors will tell their stories: some amusing and others tragic. You will be able to view the video from the comfort of your home. To participate, visit Upcoming Events on the Gunn Library web site at [www.gunnlibrary.org](http://www.gunnlibrary.org) where you will be able to obtain information about how to link to the cemetery tour.



## **“Now It’s Fall”**

October would be a good time to read or re-read “Now It’s Fall,” the classic children’s book by award winning author and illustrator Lois Lenski. First published in 1948, the book celebrates autumn with illustrations of apples, colorful leaves, and big orange pumpkins. Lenski lived on Harmony Hill Road and had a studio there from 1929 to 1964.

## **HARWINTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL APPEAL**

Many thanks to those who have responded to the Historical Society’s 2020 Annual Appeal. Our usual opportunities to gain support through programming and participation in events such as the Harwinton Fair have been eliminated for this year due to concerns surrounding the pandemic. Therefore, contributions to the historical society’s annual appeal are appreciated more than ever.

***Thank you!***



## **CORRECTION**

The description of a picture on page 1 of the September newsletter should have read:

“Beatrice Kasznay and fellow Clearview student Warren Wilcox are the height of winter school fashion in their knee socks, knickers, winter coats and mittens.”

In the photo caption Warren was mistakenly identified as Alan Wilcox. Warren and Alan are first cousins, according to another first cousin Jack Revaz, who reported the error. A former resident of Delay Road in Harwinton, Jack and his wife Peg now live in Florida.