



Windsor Historical Society Goes to Washington

Julia Baldini, Museum Educator

On a cold Christmas Eve in 1923, President Calvin Coolidge walked from the White House to the Ellipse to light the National Christmas Tree, a 48-foot fir tree decorated with 2,500 red, white and green bulbs. Close by, a local choir and quartet from the U.S. Marine Band performed holiday music to the delight of onlookers. And thus, an annual tradition was founded. A lot has changed at the White House and the annual holiday celebration during the past 86 years including new trees, the addition of smaller state-decorated trees and a menorah to honor the Jewish holiday, Hanukah. As

Connecticut's first town, the Windsor Historical Society was thrilled to take part in this year's celebration by designing and providing ornaments to decorate the Connecticut state tree.

Each year schools and community organizations team up with the National Park Service to create 51 ornaments to cover the state trees that surround the National Christmas Tree. The Windsor Historical Society inherited this honor from the Harriet Beecher Stowe Museum in Hartford whose staff had previously decorated the tree. While ornament designs are limited by size and weight requirements, choosing one design to showcase our town's long history proved to be a daunting task. I finally settled on highlighting our town's beautiful architecture using historic photographs from our library's research collection, which would visually appeal to spectators who visited the tree. After the ornaments were decorated and assembled, they were shipped down to



2009 National Christmas Tree on the Ellipse. This year's tree was powered completely by LED lights making it the most energy-efficient National Christmas Tree ever. WHS Collections.

Washington, D.C. to prepare for the tree-lighting ceremony in December.

The 2009 Tree Lighting Ceremony on December 3rd was special for many reasons. Most importantly, this historic year marks the election of the first black President of the United States. Also, for the first time the lights for the National Christmas Tree, donated by General Electric, are all LEDs making this year's celebration the most energy-efficient ever. Additionally, over 9,000 tickets to the ceremony were distributed to people all over the country. The

ceremony, which featured a visit from Santa, performances by Sheryl Crow, Jordin Sparks, Brad Mehldau, the U.S. Marine Band and others, was available via a live broadcast online and on TV making this the most watched celebration to date. My mother and I were proud to represent the Society in the audience, only throwing distance from the President and his family at this spectacular but chilly event.

The original Christmas tree lit by President Coolidge is long gone, but other stately trees have taken its place. From 1934 to 1938 the tree was located in Lafayette Park on the north side of the White House. In 1939 and 1940 it was relocated to a spot just south of the center of the Ellipse. From 1941 to 1953 it was located on the South Lawn of the White House. Since 1954 the National Christmas Tree has been located on the Ellipse, the lawn between the White House and the National Mall. *(Continued on page 6)*

WINDSOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Our Mission

The Windsor Historical Society aims to inspire public awareness and appreciation of the diverse peoples, places, and events that contribute to Windsor's evolving history. We preserve and interpret Windsor's historical record through active collecting, research, exhibitions, programs, and communications in the belief that an understanding of history can provide individuals and communities with connections to the past, a sense of belonging in the present, and responsibility for the future.

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Windsor Historical Society of Windsor, CT, Inc.
Vol. 27, No. 4 December 2009

Director's Message

Christine Ermenc, Executive Director



Windsor Historical Society is excited to be planning a new and expanded exhibition on Windsor history. This will be installed in our North and South Galleries sometime in 2010 or 2011 depending on funding. Last spring, we circulated a survey that asked people to help us determine which historical questions and issues the exhibition should treat. Over 200 people gave us their opinions. If you were among those people, thank-you! Working from Ohio, Curatorial Consultant Erin Stevic used answers from the survey questions to develop a ten-minute PowerPoint presentation that sketches out a potential storyline for the exhibition.

Now that the rush of the holiday season is over, we'd like to ask for your help one more time. We invite you to the Society on January 12th at noon or at 5:30 p.m. to view the PowerPoint presentation on the exhibition, enjoy refreshments, and fill out a brief questionnaire. We also value the opinions of our non-local members and those who can't be with us on January 12. This is why we are putting the PowerPoint presentation and the survey on-line as of January 6, 2010. Access our website <http://windsorhistoricalsociety.org>, and follow the link on the opening page.

The survey is short. The only personal information we ask for is your age as we want this exhibition to appeal to multiple generations of visitors.

- We will ask you to rank exhibition themes. While each theme mentioned in the survey will be represented in the exhibition, those that have the broadest public appeal will be allocated more space in our exhibition designs.
- We have been preparing for this exhibit by collecting and transcribing oral histories and memoirs in our archives. How would you like to access these in the exhibition: through text quotes? Headphones? Cell phone tours? Your answers to these questions will help us design the audio portion of the exhibition -- or forego it.
- **A major anticipated audience for the new exhibition is school groups.** We have listed a number of hands-on exhibition activities in this survey and will ask you to tell us which are most and least appealing to you. **Just because something works well with young children doesn't mean it works well with other age groups.** We anticipate visitors of all ages and hope to engage each one.

We are striving for accuracy, interest, and balance in a new Windsor history exhibition that will be on view for years. Please help us design it. Our recent year-end appeal asked for funds to match the Connecticut Humanities Council grant we will be applying for to construct the exhibition. Every dollar you contribute will be matched with two dollars from the Humanities Council if we are successful in our application. It is not too late to participate. Happy New Year – and thanks for sticking with us in tough times!

Conversations with the Past: Hayden Family Letters, 1821-1894

Diane Cameron, Volunteer

My dear wife died the last day of October and breathed her last. . . . her only regret in leaving this world was parting with our dear little daughter, her only wish was to see me – almost five years ago we took our leave of each other but how little did we think it was the last this side of Eternity. . . . But she is gone, and . . . I have now only the dear pledge of our affections left me, and a dear child she is far exceeding my expectations, she is becoming very fond of me, . . .

*Your affectionate and afflicted brother,
Anson B. Hayden*

This is the earliest in a collection of 150 letters recently received by the Windsor Historical Society. Written between 1821 and 1894, most were addressed to Sarah Hayden Fowler, “the dear pledge” of Anson and Laura Hayden's affections. Authored by Sarah's relatives and friends throughout the United States and Cuba, the correspondence is remarkable for topical range and conversational tone.

The collection journals a 19th-century woman's life from childhood through teenage and early adult years, marriage, and life as mother, stepmother, grandmother, and widow. Fleeting references to events, trends, and celebrities illustrate U.S. territorial expansion, changing culture, and political and economic crises. Reports of fluctuating stocks, bank failures, job security, health, dietary trends, religious movements, and ambivalence toward emerging technologies resonate in our 21st century.

Among the few letters Sarah authored were those written in 1842 while visiting her Aunt Martha and Uncle William Fales' sugar estate in Cuba. Observing the politically, socially, racially, and economically complex Cuban society, twenty-six year old Sarah saw

“so many strange things.” She describes surviving a storm at sea, economics of managing a sugar plantation, and hard lives of “Negroes.”

Vermont cousins Ann and Chauncey Hayden wrote “talking letters,” the kind that make you feel you're right beside them. As editor of the small St. Albans, VT, paper, Chauncey rants about politics and complains about the *Connecticut Courant* [today's Hartford Courant]. He scoffs at predictions of the world's end and dismisses 19th century health fads.

...Grandfather's health is feeble . . . Yet is cheerful – can read, think, talk, laugh and be happy. Does not belong to the 'anti-anything' society – is a Whig – asks no advice of Dr. Graham, can sleep without the aid of Mesmerism, and can believe that the world is to have an end without the aid of man and without attending 'Second Advent' meetings month after month.

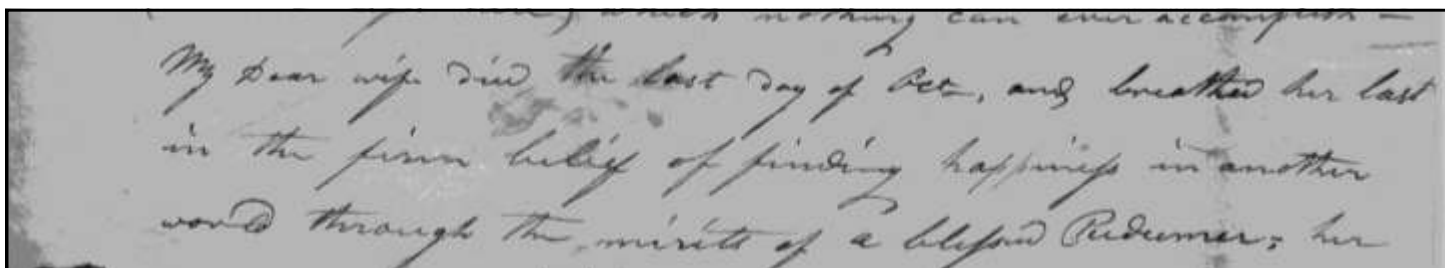
In tiny, faint script, Chauncey's sister Ann spilled thoughts across the paper, filling pages in one direction and turning the sheet sideways to write across her earlier words. Sending news from her thirteen-member, three-generation family, Ann explains brother Mozart

“is as much an Abolitionist as a Whig...and hopes the time is coming when the party will gain...complete triumph over the Southern nabobs....”

As a young teacher, she comments “many parents are... disinterested in education.”

From Savannah, stepmother Catherine reports on Indian conflicts and “prejudice against the North on account of the fugitive slave law opposition” Cautioning Sarah not to become a “coquette,”

(Continued on page 7)



The Windsor Grange

Barbara Goodwin, Librarian

There was a time in the not-to-distant past when the local Grange Hall was the center of community life in many small towns. It was a place of social gathering, a political rallying point, an economic cooperative, a fraternal order, a service organization, and an agricultural forum. It instilled love of God, family and country. It helped farmers band together to protect their mutual interests. And, more than any other institution, it embodied an American way of life.
<http://www.phoenixmasonry.org>

The Order of Patrons of Husbandry, the national Grange movement, began in 1867 with a mission that combined nationwide support for farmers, including education and lobbying, and family-based social and community-service activities. The initiative was widely embraced and spread rapidly across the country. The first Grange in Windsor was organized in 1874. The twenty-four charter members included many of the prominent families in Windsor involved in agricultural pursuits. Records of this group are sparse, but it appears that they met regularly for several years and then dissolved about 1881.

The revitalized Windsor Grange #196 was chartered in 1929. They met at the Odd Fellows Hall at 19 Maple Avenue for monthly meetings and a variety of activities such as musical programs, debates, outings and picnics, and meetings with other area granges. Dances and card parties were particularly popular and were often open to the public. In 1940 the original 1874 charter was rediscovered, enabling the group to regain its proud designation as Windsor #2, the second-oldest local Grange in the state.



In 1949 the Town of Windsor closed four of the smaller schools in the Poquonock section of town and built a new elementary school. The Windsor Grange took this opportunity to obtain a permanent home for itself and bought the former Elm Grove School located at the intersection of Prospect Hill Road and Poquonock Avenue. Grange members did much of the extensive remodeling work on both the first and second floors, adding a new furnace, modern kitchen, lodge hall, and connecting the building to city water and sewers. The new Grange Hall was dedicated on December 10, 1949, at the same time the group celebrated its 20th anniversary.

Windsor Grange #2 benefited from its new home and enjoyed activities there for several decades. However, the gradual aging and loss of members eventually led the group to the point of a difficult decision: in 2003 the Grange Hall was put up for sale and was converted into a private residence. The Windsor Grange Hall Association, Inc. formally dissolved at the end of 2006.

Sometimes ideas for newsletter articles come from our readers – and we welcome them. This piece about the Windsor Grange was prompted by a call from Grange members concerned about a misidentified photo in our [Images of America: Windsor](#) book. The structure pictured on the left served as the Elm Grove School for nearly 100 years and then as the home of the Windsor Grange. It is similar architecturally to the former Spiritualists Society Hall on West Street in Poquonock, shown in the photo to the right. WHS Collections



William Yokel: Windsor Artisan in Glass and Light

Erin Stevic, Curatorial Consultant

You are invited to view the new mini-exhibit installed in the display case in the Society's library. Children and adults can try creating their own stained-glass designs at the William Yokel activity station in the Hands-on-History Learning Center.

Artisan William G. Yokel designed and repaired lighting fixtures and stained-glass windows from his Hartford and Windsor workshops during the early 20th century. The materials displayed in the case are examples of the tools and decorative lamp parts found in his Windsor workshop. Included in the collection are salesmen's samples of colored glass, plaster molds used to cast lamp details, unfinished lamp parts, and technical drawings for several lighting fixtures.

Born in 1891, Yokel was the son of lighting designer Frank Yokel, a German native who moved to the United States in the late 19th century. William apprenticed in his father's Meriden, Connecticut, shop. Although trained to produce oil and kerosene fixtures, Yokel transitioned to electrified lights as they became more common in the area. In his shop, he cast, electroplated, and assembled lamp parts. He also designed and repaired stained-glass windows for ecclesiastical and domestic clients and dabbled in decorative ceramic painting.

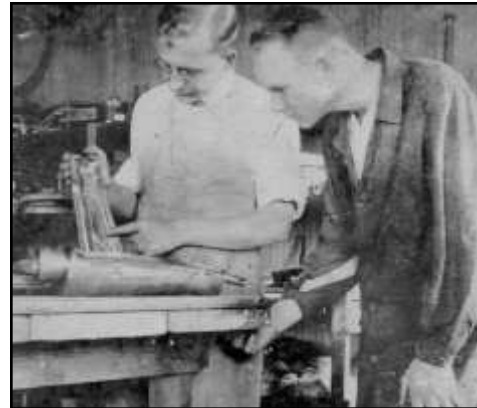
In 1920, William and his father opened the Yokel Corporation on Homestead Road in Hartford. The company produced lighting fixtures and stained-glass windows, focusing on a wholesale clientele. In January 1923, the company's work was featured in a display at the Hartford Electric Light Company and the Yokel

Children's Exhibition on View

Julia Baldini, Educator

Visit the Hands-On-History Learning Center to view an art exhibition by six Windsor students. This project stems from a 2009 summer workshop where area students worked closely with Windsor artist Jeanne Manzelli to create their own canvas paintings comparing Windsor's past and present. Students spent the week analyzing Windsor's history through artifacts, maps, and photographs. While each student expressed their vision of Windsor's history individually, the group collaborated on a border that would tie each art work together. The students also wrote their own exhibition labels. The exhibition will be on view until May.

Corporation was advertised as an up-and-coming business. Unfortunately, the Yokel family's debts forced the foreclosure of the Homestead Road shop later that year, likely leading to their relocation to Windsor.



Yokel Corporation craftsmen examining a mold used to prepare one part of a lighting fixture.
WHS Collections

The family had moved to their own home on Deerfield Road by 1930. At that time, the Deerfield and Wilson areas were becoming suburban communities that were home to a growing number of first and second-generation Americans. Yokel's neighbors included Polish, Lithuanian, Swedish, French-Canadian, and Italian families. Like many of his neighbors, Yokel probably commuted to Hartford for work; he also kept a workshop at his residence. After his death in 1957, the Windsor workshop remained closed for many years. Some of Yokel's materials, tools, and products were donated to the Society after the shop was cleaned out in the 1990's.



Anna puts the final touches on her canvas.
WHS Collections.

Education Corner

Julia Baldini, Museum Educator

School Field Trips

Fall is a busy time of the year for field trips to the Society by local school groups, and this year was no exception. Windsor has so many connections to early settlement, colonial and Revolutionary War history, **it's hard not to take advantage of the resources in our own town.**

The Sage Park Middle School 8th grade visited the Society for an all-day program on Colonial Life. Students explored architecture and the early role of **the First Church in Windsor's founding, studied the work of three distinct stone carvers in Palisado Cemetery, explored the conflict and compromise behind the John Mason statue, and applied critical thinking and object-analysis skills when they toured the 1758 John and Sarah Strong House. To improve upon last year's trip, the students also met with a costumed interpreter who taught three different types of colonial dances. The students practiced these dances together along with their colonial manners.**

Elementary school students from John F. Kennedy School, Saint Gabriel's School, Trinity Christian School, and the Milo Peck Montessori School took advantage of our hands-on programs exploring interactions between Native Americans and the colonists in Windsor. School and youth groups can take advantage of a variety of thematic programs in their classroom or at the Society which focus on the **town's long history. Each program utilizes hands-on materials, artifacts, and documents which bring to life the history of our community.**

(Continued from page one, WHS Goes to Washington)

This year's National Christmas Tree was planted on the Ellipse on 1978. It was a 15 year old, 30 foot, Colorado blue spruce when it arrived from York, Pennsylvania. The National Park Service horticulturalists who selected this tree looked for climate conditions similar to those in Washington, D.C. to ensure that the tree would be strong enough to thrive in its new home. Today the tree is 46 years old and over 40 feet tall.

The Wheels on the Bus Go Round and Round to the Society

Our annual Pre-Holiday Auction raises money to support a variety of programs at the Society. In 2008, we added something special for school groups. A BIG thank you goes out to the following families who **"donated" a school bus for trips to the Society for Windsor's private and public school students. Your generosity is heartfelt and appreciated by Society staff and the school groups who use them. We are grateful to Windsor Rotary, Andy and Claudette Johnson, Bob and Dottie McAllister, Kerry and Carissa Ruiz, Wells Lindsay and Marti Collier, Mike and Lu Rabbett, Suzie Jacques and Al Stalb, Kate and Hugh McLean, Sam and Marcia Hinckley, Stephany Wall, Lon and Jane Pelton, Nan Carmon, and Agnes and John Pier.**

Our November 2009 auction inspired the same holiday spirit with an additional seven buses donated by community members, each one matched with an additional donation from Sterling Viets, President of Rainbow Bus Lines, Inc.

Winter Break - Candle Dipping

Wondering how to entertain your children over winter break? Introduce them to candle dipping! We'll provide different colors and scents to make each candle unique. The Society's Hands-On-History Learning Center will be open where children can try on reproduction colonial clothing, try out a child-sized rope bed, or "milk" Flavia the cow. We'll provide cookies and juice to warm up our winter bones. Please take a look at our programs calendar for additional information.



The WHS decorated the Connecticut State Tree with ornaments depicting Windsor's architecture. WHS Collections.

(Continued from page 3, *Conversations With The Past*)

Catherine also complains about rheumatism, doctors, and recommends using leeches.

When 38-year old Sarah chose to marry an older widower, Catherine replies, "It seems you have resolved on living a life of celibacy no longer and have considered taking your intended for better or worse, for better I sincerely trust it will be."

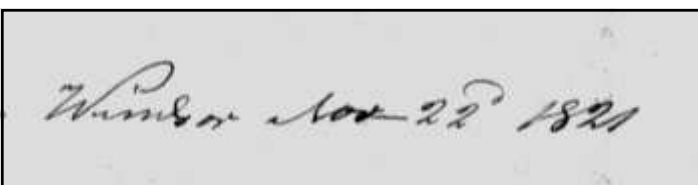
Before the birth of Sarah's only child Laura, Catherine reassures: "There have been others older than you who have married and lived to have several children, therefore take courage and hope for the best."

Throughout her life, Sarah read, answered, and saved correspondence. In her final year, she re-read a letter Chauncey wrote forty-three years earlier, following twenty-five year old sister Ann's death:

I feel I have allowed her death to affect me too deeply and allowed it to minister to a morbid feeling of loneliness and that this world is a failure. . . [We] cannot allow our grief for the departed to lessen our efforts for the living. By the death of friends we ought to learn to value the realities of life more, and to estimate its follies lower.

With humor, sorrow, and love, Sarah, her family and friends reach out to us. Reading the letters, one experiences the 19th century as history yet unwritten. Unlike other period documents and, in contrast to e-mail easily deleted with a click, personal letters possess an immediacy connecting past and present. By saving what was personally important to her, Sarah opened an otherwise inaccessible window to the 19th century.

The Sarah Hayden Fowler Papers (2009.44) are available in the Society's library for your research and enjoyment. A detailed guide to the collection is in preparation.



Auction 2009 at the Loomis Chaffee School which raised over \$9000 for the Society. Photo by Jack Alberti.

Volunteers

We are so grateful to the following volunteers:

Bakers: Marillyn Loomis, Josephine Mitchell, Helene Westenburg. Educators: Jay Davenport, Carolyn Doyle, Heather Renaud, Carl Parkinson, Jan Stevens. Front desk and administrative: Bill Allen, Betsey Blaisdell, Abbey Blough, Marie Bruhn, Doris Butler, Barbara Byczkowicz, Pat Congelosi, Carolyn Doyle, Elaine Hargrove, Bill Harris, Cora Lee Jones, Sue Lescher, Marni Lydecker, Mary Ann Maksimoski, Dorothy McAllister, Dot McCahill, Stephen McGoldrick, Josephine Mitchell, Willa Nemetz, Elizabeth Parker, Margaret Quigley, Mary Ransom, Dorothy Simon, Sisters Darrington, Mortimer, Pulham, and Thomas of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Mary Fran Sumple, Jim Trocchi, Nancy von Hollen, Connie Whigham, Christina Wilson, Ellie Word. Grounds: Willa Nemetz. Library: Elaine Brophy, Diane Cameron, Elaine Colli, Beverly Garvan, Marni Lydecker, Sandy McGraw, Mary Ransom, Susan Smoktunowicz, Nancy von Hollen. Tea Party helpers/cleaners: Elaine Brophy, Marie Bruhn, Karen Busczak, May Checho, Pat Congelosi, Barbara Davis, Sally Foster, Barbara Fowler, Sue Gallagher, Nancy Gay, Jan Grace, Mary Jane Halstead, Ann Hodgdon-Cyr, Barbara Kline, Judy Locker, Dot McCahill, Yvonne MacGregor, Ada Martin, Dottie McAllister, Anna McManus, Anita Mips, Willa Nemetz, Liz Paklos, Joyce Phillips, Sheila Sikora, Barbara Staven, Mary Vaca, Nancy Von Hollen, Ann Walsh, Mimi Weiner, Christina Wilson.

Upcoming Events at Windsor Historical Society

All programs are held at 96 Palisado Avenue (Rt. 159), Windsor, CT, unless stated otherwise. For more information, call 860/688-3813 or see <http://windsorhistoricalsociety.org>. Program fees offset program costs, but we turn nobody away for lack of funds.

Tuesday, January 12 Noon or 5:30 p.m.
OPEN HOUSE AND EXHIBITION PREVIEW
Browse through our current exhibit and view a ten-minute PowerPoint presentation previewing the new exhibit. Help us refine the new exhibit's design by filling out a short survey. **Bring your lunch; we'll provide dessert and coffee.** Wine and cheese provided for evening participants. Snow date: January 13, 2010. COST: Free.

Saturday, January 30 2 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.
SILENT MOVIE AFTERNOON
Beat the winter doldrums, get out of the house, and enjoy Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, Harold Lloyd, Rudolph Valentino, Douglas Fairbanks, Lillian Gish, and Mary Pickford on the big screen with fabulous live music and percussion courtesy of Donald Sosin and Joanna Seaton. Popcorn and drinks provided. COST: \$6/adults; \$5/seniors and students; \$4/Society members.

Saturday, February 6 2 p.m. - 3 p.m.
SANKOFA KUUMBA PERFORMANCE ENSEMBLE
This group will open your eyes to African cultures throughout West and South Africa, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Jamaica, the Caribbean, and the United States. Their

"Sowing Seeds" performance features traditional music, songs, dance, visual, and textile arts. COST: \$6/adults; \$5/seniors and students; \$4/Society or Windsor Conversations On Race members.

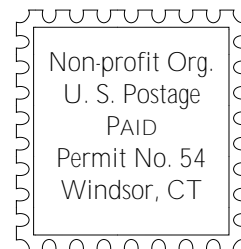
February 15 - 19 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
WINTER BREAK FUN
Wondering how to entertain your children over winter break? **Introduce them to candle dipping. We'll provide different colors and scents to make each candle unique.** The Society's Hands-On-History Learning Center will be open where children can try on reproduction colonial clothing, try out a child-sized rope bed, or "milk" Flavia, the cow. **And we'll be providing cookies and juice.** A parent or guardian must remain with the child during the activities. COST: \$5/adults; \$4/seniors; \$3/children; \$2/Society members; or \$10/family.

Tuesday, March 16 7 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
ST. PATRICK'S DAY
A toe-tapping performance of Irish music with harpist Wendy Lucas and fiddler Kate O'Brien will include history, poetry, and songs by the group "Themselves." COST: \$6/adults; \$5/seniors and students; \$4/Society members.



Windsor
Historical Society

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