



Grab Your Skates and Let's Go!

Christina Keyser Vida, Curator

As the mercury sinks below freezing and the snow drifts pile high, many New Englanders are inclined to nestle into a cozy spot by the hearth. Others prefer to take in the brisk winter air and enjoy outdoor activities including sledding, skiing, and ice skating. Until the nineteenth century, such outdoor recreations were a luxury for only wealthy Americans. However, the Industrial Revolution produced both an increase in leisure time for the middle class and a profusion of affordable recreational equipment. It is this equipment that fills many of the Windsor Historical Society's storage shelves, including six pairs of ice skates, a lone single skate, and a few pairs of steel blades.

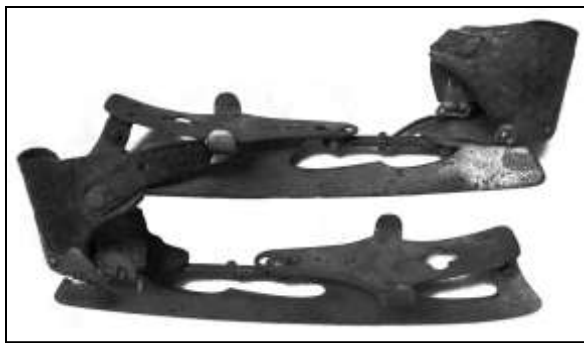


Figure 2
Barney & Berry Ladies' Skates, 1880-1930
WHS Collection 2010.1.69

The Samuel Winslow Skate Manufacturing Company crafted one pair of ladies' skates in the collection. (Fig. 1) Winslow opened his factory in Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1856 and by the 1880s was making 260,000 pairs of ice and roller skates per year. Barney and Berry, Inc. were one of the largest skate manufacturers in the country. (Fig. 2) At its height, B&B produced around 600,000 pairs of skates annually at their Springfield, Massachusetts, plant and employed nearly 250 workers. In the 1860s a pair of their ladies' skates would have cost around seven dollars, or about a week's wage for an average worker.



Figure 1
Winslow Ladies' Skates with key, 1875-1920
WHS Collection 2010.1.36

Almost forty years later the 1897 Sears Roebuck & Co. Catalogue offered a similar pair for sixty-two cents. Between the Civil War and the turn of the twentieth century, the rise in skate manufacturing, profusion of affordable skates, and the expansion of leisure time for workers turned ice skating into one of America's national pastimes.

In January 1865 the *Hartford Daily Courant* noted the locales for good skating including:

"on the Connecticut [River], above the East Hartford bridge; on Wethersfield Cove – to reach which take the horse cars; and on Way's pond – take the cars to Canton street, and you can skate from the pond to the river."

The skating season was in full swing as early as December 10th in 1867: *"The ringing and the clanging of the steel, And the darting here and there of pretty feet can be seen and heard."* Skating was so popular that a group of Hartford businessmen built an indoor skating rink on Elm Street along Bushnell Park in 1869. Children paid fifteen cents each, and Saturday afternoons included ice skating races for boys and girls under the age of fourteen. But, the presence of the indoor rink did not keep ice skaters off the rivers and ponds. In February 1875 one Wethersfield resident was

(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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Director's Message

Christine Ermenc, Executive Director



Anniversaries

As we come to the turn of another new year, most of us take stock of accomplishments in the previous year and think ahead to what we would like to accomplish in 2011. New Year's Day is just one of many seasonal turning points we mark; May Day is a time to look forward to the beauties spring and summer can offer, and Labor Day is a time most people pause to say a reluctant goodbye to the lazy days of summer and gird for a productive fall or school year. Most of us celebrate personal turning points such as birthdays and wedding anniversaries. Our annual calendars are populated with holidays commemorating significant people, events, and religious celebrations.

One trait that makes humans human is resistance to just floating on down the waters of time. Somehow, we are hard-wired to jam our oars into the stream and pause long enough to take stock of where we are, where we have come from, and where we'd like to go. This is self-awareness. Take this trait beyond the span of the personal or the span of a single lifetime and you have community and historical consciousness.

People of my parents' generation remember exactly where they were when word reached them of the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Their grandparents and great-grandparents did not have the immediacy of the internet or radio to inform them of the outbreak of the Civil War in April of 1861, 150 years ago this coming April. Evocative Civil War memorials and monuments still standing guard on most town greens attest to the enduring impact of this long-ago conflict which continues to shape our country to this day. We'll be offering Civil War oriented programming over the next four years, marking the courage and the sacrifices of those this conflict touched.

Ninety years ago in August of 1920, the 19th Amendment to the Constitution was passed, allowing American women the right to vote. Imagine the exhilaration and the exhaustion: it had taken three generations from the time of the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 to make this particular dream a reality. Put January 6th on your calendar now. That's when we'll unveil an exhibit prepared by Windsor's League of Women Voters that will showcase the hard work of suffragists in our town and our state so necessary to achieve one of the freedoms we now take for granted.

In the end, it's about those people who forcefully or with some subtlety jam their oars in the water. Here's to them, and to you, and to aspirations and dreams. Happy New Year!

United Way Day of Caring

Christine Ermenc, Director



September 3rd, 2010 dawned hot and humid. The Society's refrigerator was stocked with two cases of ice-cold bottled water and our small kitchen was crammed to bursting with luncheon supplies. Shortly after 9 a.m., seventeen volunteers from United Healthcare began to arrive to participate in United Way's Day of Caring. There was lots of work to do. All the flowerbeds needed weeding. Bushes and shrubs needed trimming. Iron stair railings needed to be scraped and painted. The Society's newsletter needed to be folded, stapled, and organized for a bulk mailing to members. Old letters in the Society's archives needed to be indexed. And a brick walkway from the sidewalk into the Society's courtyard and herb garden needed to be dug and laid to allow handicapped access to the Society's lovely courtyard and herb garden.

The crew was amazing, and the bottled water was gone by noon. By the end of the day, the newsletter was on its way to the post office, letters were indexed, flowerbeds were denuded of weeds, and bushes were trimmed. The last brick of the walkway was laid by 3 p.m. to great applause! Our thanks goes to the hard-working crew from United Healthcare and to United Way for a hugely productive day at the Society.



Welcome Christina Vida! WHS's new Curator



As the new Curator for Collections and Interpretation for the Windsor Historical Society, I want to thank the staff, volunteers, and Windsor community for graciously welcoming me into this position. In comparison to Windsor's 377-year history, my personal story is rather brief. I was born in Charleston, SC, and raised in Jacksonville, FL. Having graduated from the College of William and Mary in 2005, I earned my Master's degree from the Winterthur Program in Early American Culture at the University of Delaware in 2007. I made my way north from Virginia in the summer of 2009 after two years as an Assistant Curator at George Washington's Mount Vernon. My time there was filled with reinterpreting the eighteenth-century Gardener's House as well as George Washington's private study. Prior to joining the WHS team, I worked at Winter Associates, Inc., a local auction gallery in Plainville, CT, where I conducted appraisal research and crafted advertisements for their auctions. My husband and I live in West Hartford and enjoy golfing, kayaking, and traveling.

My first few months here have been extremely fulfilling, and I look forward to building on the firm foundations laid by my predecessors. I have the restoration of the Strong House on my horizon and hope to continue expanding our educational programming and outreach. This will not be possible without the support of our volunteers! If you are interested in volunteering to teach school programs or guide tours, please do not hesitate to contact me at cvida@windsorhistoricalsociety.org.

4 Lithuanians Celebrate Their Roots in Windsor

Barbara Goodwin, Librarian

Windsor's Saint Casimir's Lithuanian Society celebrated its 100th anniversary in May 2010 by honoring its founders and former members and recognizing the legacy of cultural heritage which the organization has made such efforts to preserve. Social historians make note of the formation of groups such as this fraternal benefit society as one step in the characteristic path an immigrant cultural group takes as it progresses from isolated ethnic community to assimilated citizens.

Lithuania is nestled on the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea and is bordered by Latvia, Belarus, Poland, and Russia. For centuries, this eastern European ethnic group was buffeted by waves of German, Russian, and Polish sovereignty. As a result, the people were subjected to periods of political, religious, and militaristic domination. Near the end of the 19th century, a strong nationalistic movement began to demand cultural and political autonomy. Between 1918 and 1940, the Lithuanians had a brief period of independence, but they were reoccupied during World War II. In 1991 Lithuania became the first Soviet republic to achieve independence.

Years of famine, unrest, repression, and forced army conscription finally drove many Lithuanians to emigrate during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Most of the 300,000 or so Lithuanians who journeyed to the United States during this period had been peasants in their native villages and were eager to improve their socioeconomic status. Frequently they found work as unskilled laborers in the coal mines of Pennsylvania, on the docks in New York City, or in the textile, paper, and shoe factories of New England. The nucleus of new Lithuanian-American communities soon became established in these areas. A second wave of immigration following World War II was much smaller and consisted of a variety of social groups including professionals and political exiles.

Many Lithuanian immigrants were either young bachelors or married men who left their wives and children behind in the Old World. The *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* describes the familiar stages as these first arrivals began to put down roots:

As the newcomers gradually became established, many would write home to invite relatives and friends to join them and often sent back money or tickets for the trip. Those who crossed the Atlantic in this manner could usually also expect their American sponsors to provide them with temporary board and lodging until a job could be found ... This pattern of informal mutual assistance within hundreds of families and villages produced numerous migrant chains that stretched from the dispersed peasant communities of tsarist Lithuania to the major American urban industrial centers. ... Within most Lithuanian colonies, a small group of newcomers also succeeded in establishing retail and service trades that catered primarily to the special needs of their countrymen. The most common of these enterprises was the saloon, an institution that often combined under one roof the functions of social center, boarding house, restaurant, travel agency, bank, and labor exchange. ... These ethnic entrepreneurs often took the lead in organizing the numerous fraternal, religious, and cultural associations that appeared in most Lithuanian colonies after 1890.¹

John Paul Cranouski is recognized as the first Lithuanian to settle in Poquonock, arriving in 1891 and finding work on John DuBon's farm. Within ten years he had been followed by scores of other young, single men who found jobs as farm hands or in the Poquonock paper and textile mills. They often gathered in the local pool hall or saloon after work to exchange family and political news from their homeland. Gradually friends and family members joined them in Connecticut, and the Lithuanian population in Windsor grew to nearly 400 persons by 1920. By the time the Poquonock mills began to close in the 1920's, many Lithuanians were able to buy their



St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Poquonock center, 1895.
Courtesy of Julius Rusavage. WHS Collection 2000.30.149

own farms or establish local businesses. Long-time Poquonock residents may remember Peter Linonis' gas station, John Shimkus the barber, Anthony Vogus the blacksmith, and John Griskewicz's Central Market.

In the first wave of immigration, the majority of the Lithuanian émigrés came from three adjacent provinces: Kaunas, Suvalkija, and Vilnius. John Rimosukas, in a 1962 recorded presentation at the Windsor Historical Society, describes how some of the young men, teenagers for the most part,

“were very boisterous and they were not giving the nationality a good name... they were fighting amongst themselves ... So the older men got together and said, ‘Let’s form a brotherhood and see if we can make them forget about coming from Kaunas or coming from Vilnius and make them all feel that they’re all one group now.’”²

With this impetus, the local St. Casimir's fraternal society was founded. Its purpose was to unite the Lithuanians into a group that would enable the members to preserve their historical and cultural identity, to provide care for each other and their families in times of sickness and death, and to follow the example and guidance of Saint Casimir, the patron saint of Lithuanians. The original membership was comprised of 108 male members between the ages of 13 and 45; each member had to be a practicing Roman Catholic and was obligated to file papers to become an American citizen. At first the meetings were held in the homes of members. Later they gathered in the former Poquonock Town Hall, and in 1940 the society purchased from the Spiritualist Society the building located at 28 West Street. A **Women's Auxiliary** was formed in 1974; just recently women have been admitted as full members. This small but active group of second and third-generation Lithuanian families gathers regularly to participate in community activities, sponsor educational scholarships, and maintain their cultural heritage through social events and holiday traditions.

¹ Thernstrom, Stephan, ed. *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980. pp. 667-668.

² Rimosukas, John. *Lithuanians in Poquonock*. (Acc. #1962.29.1), p. 9

Calling All Genealogists

The New England Regional Genealogical Consortium will present “Exploring New Paths to Your Roots” from April 6-10, 2011 in Springfield, MA. The conference will offer genealogical lectures, seminars and workshops, an exhibit hall, special interest groups, and the Ancestors Road Show. The conference is fun and rewarding for both new and experienced genealogists. The program and registration brochure along with more information is available at www.NERGC.org.

Wish List



Do you have used Advent candles? Cleaning out your candle drawer? Please donate any unwanted candles to be recycled for our candle-dipping program on Feb. 17-21.

Also, does anyone have a 24”x57” refrigerator in good working order for the Society's kitchen?

House Tour 2010 Conundrum



Many visitors to the 101 Hayden Station Road property questioned an object found in the kitchen. It is a modern-day learning tower for children to safely stand in and assist with counter-high kitchen tasks!

Correction

Inadvertently the last line of the Filley Record article in the September 2010 newsletter was omitted. The missing line provides the link to the online version of the DAR cemetery inscription book. A full-text copy of the original 1929 publication (no index) can be found by using the Title Search feature in the library catalog at the FamilySearch website www.familysearch.org. For the title *Filley Records*, the first entry for [Cemetery inscriptions in Windsor, Connecticut : appendix containing Filley records](#) is the one to choose – it has a link for the digital version of the book.

(Continued from page one, Skates)

highlighted in Middletown's *Daily Constitution* for his full day of ice skating on the Connecticut River:

"Mr. Buck, of Wethersfield, on Saturday last, skated from that place to Windsor Locks, and then back again. He then took the cars at Wethersfield, and went to Saybrook Junction, and skated from there on the river to this city [Middletown]. He stopped here an hour or two, and in the evening started for home on the ice."



Figure 3

Gemmill, Burnham, & Co. trade card, 1871-1882
WHS Collection 1986.75.900.274

By the 1880s ice skating was a suitable recreational activity for both the young and the young-at-heart. Gemmill, Burnham & Co. in Hartford utilized an image of two boys and a girl ice skating on one of their trade cards. (Fig. 3) Similar imagery is found on a twentieth-century postcard sent to Laura Hastings of Windsor around 1910. (Fig. 4) This repeated portrayal of happy children skating cemented the idea of ice skating as a national pastime and as a topic about which adults could fondly reminisce.

The Oral History Project at the Society has captured many Windsor residents recalling their ice skating adventures in the early twentieth century. Albert Endee recollected that in the 1920s ice skating was very safe on the Connecticut River as well as the Farmington River and at Hatheway's Pond. Anne Wittenzellner Drake remembered skating in the 1930s on a low spot in her family's pasture that froze over in the wintertime and on the Park Avenue pond where the "older kids would build a bonfire." She also detailed her singular solo excursion on to the Connecticut River:

"I looked at the [Connecticut] River, and it was all frozen. It was so nice, and I decided I was going to try it. I got down on it, and you know because the water is moving, that's not frozen. And so it started cracking...I wanted to get back to where I was supposed to...I finally did, but I learned a lesson. I never did it again."

Washington Park in the 1940s was another hot spot for ice skating according to Symond Yavener and Elizabeth Bryant Parker. Parker noted that it was well lit so you could skate there at night with music piped in courtesy of Michael's Jewelry Store from Hartford. Windsor interviewees also spoke of ice skating on Loomis Pond, Rainbow Pond, and Mill Brook. Today most ice skating takes place at rinks with Zamboni machines, skate rentals, and copious adult supervision, so the Oral History Project has captured a fleeting part of the history of childhood recreation and ice skating in twentieth-century Windsor.

The ice skates in the Society's collection speak to a time when any frozen body of water was an opportunity for this wintertime recreation. Do you



Figure 4

Postcard, ca. 1910

WHS Collection 2007.9.1.189

remember where you used to skate in Windsor? What happened to your old ice skates? Come visit WHS this winter to view some ice skates from our collection, and please feel free to share your ice skating stories with me at cvida@windsorhistoricalsociety.org.

Selected References: Ann Bates, "Antique Ice Skates in America," *Maine Antique Digest* (February 2010); correspondence with Karen Cameron, Co-President of the Antique Ice Skate Club; *Historic Hartford Courant*; *Inland Massachusetts Illustrated*, 1891; *Sears Roebuck & Co. Catalogue*, 1897; WHS Oral History Project.

Many thanks to Karen Cameron and the Antique Ice Skate Club for their assistance dating some of the ice skates in our collection.

Volunteer Highlight



We are featuring a Society volunteer in most future newsletters. Our volunteers supplement the work of our paid staff by presenting school and adult programs, conducting tours for guests, maintaining our facilities, and helping our librarian. It is a privilege and honor to be entrusted with our local history, and together we get it done!

Beverly Garvan

When did you start volunteering at the Society?

I started volunteering when I retired in 1993. I shared the front desk with Eleanor Anderson at that time.

What types of programs or events have you volunteered for?

When Elaine Olson started as curator, I began helping her with the collection; and we developed a wonderful working relationship. For seven years I helped her identify and describe hundreds of items in the collection and built all the shelves in the basement to store them. At that time we changed the main exhibit twice a year, which was a lot of work and **I helped her with that. We weren't fortunate enough to have a Jack Alberti so we had to do all the painting and hauling ourselves. You never knew what you'd see the two of us doing!**

What do you like most about volunteering at WHS?

When we acquired Chaffee House from the town, I made my first foray into research and have been at it ever since. I researched Chaffee House from Sgt. Staires up to the present day. It was fun! Elaine was instrumental in investigating whether or not we really did have a 1640 Walter Fyler house, and I took on that research task. I will always feel very proud of being successful in that undertaking and discovering **John Strong's deed in 1758 stating that he was selling "his dwelling house, small barn and well," thus dating our wonderful little house correctly into the 18th**

century. Since then I have researched events like the Ghost Walks and house tours through the years. I also wrote and conducted a town-wide bus tour. I spent three years trying to identify all the correct dates on the old houses in town. I have learned a lot about Windsor and its people through all of this.

What is your connection to Windsor history?

I think my interest in old Windsor comes by way of family. My ancestors left Ireland about 1840 and shortly after settled here in Windsor. They rented the Chaffee House at one point in time, and my grandfather John H. Garvan was born there in 1865. That same year they bought the Jonathan Alvord house on the bend of North Meadow Road, and they lived there in this very unique neighborhood for many years.

Do you have any advice for someone interested in volunteering but might be nervous about getting started?

I would encourage people, young and old, to get involved. You meet so many interesting people and learn something new all the time. You just never know what is going to pop up on any given day! The place is full of surprises, so come and find them.

Volunteers

We are so grateful to all our volunteers. Between our volunteers, staff, and donors, we are able to do so much more and even surprise ourselves!

Arts/crafts fair: Bill Harris, Cathy Lavallee, Ada Martin, Yvonne McGregor, Anita Mips, Libby Parker, Janice Provost, Ron Renaud. Education: Jay and Tony Davenport, Carolyn Doyle, Mary Kelling, Carlton Parkinson, Chelsea Perkins, Heather Renaud, Jan Stevens, Barbara Tanguay, and Jim Trocchi. Front desk and administrative: Bill Allen, Elaine Colli, Carolyn Doyle, Bill Harris, Coralee Jones, Dee Jubrey, Mary Kelling, Sue Lescher, Mary Ann Maksimoski, Stephen McGoldrick, Willa Nemetz, Libby Parker, Carlton Parkinson, Margaret Quigley, Mary Ransom, Dorothy Simon, Barbara Tanguay, and Jim Trocchi. Grounds: Jim Trocchi. Legal counsel: Kevin Ferrigno of Reid & Reige, PC; Library: Elaine Brophy, Elaine Colli, Carolyn Doyle, Bev Garvan, Sara Hawran, Coralee Jones, Mary Ann Maksimoski, Sandy McGraw, Willa Nemetz, Margaret Quigley, Carol Ann Stephenson.

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.

Thursday, January 6 4 p.m. - 6 p.m.

EXHIBITION OPENING: *Marching In Their Footsteps*.

This League of Women Voters' exhibit commemorates the 90th anniversary of the passage of the 19th amendment giving women the right to vote. The exhibit covers the National Suffrage Movement from 1848 and highlights a few Windsor connections. COST: Free.

Thursday, January 20 7 p.m. - 8 p.m.

LECTURE: Votes for Women! A Brief History of Our Right to Vote by Dr. Laurel A. Clark, Assistant Professor of History/UCONN. COST: \$6/adults; \$5/seniors & students; \$4/Society and LWV members.

Saturday, January 22 2 p.m. - 3 p.m.

FAMILY VAUDEVILLE SHOW

Long before movies or TV, families enjoyed vaudeville variety shows featuring music, dance, comedy, magic tricks, and circus acts. Bring the family, sit down, and enjoy the JuggleJoy performers. COST: \$6/adults; \$5/seniors & students; \$4/Society members.

Monday, February 14  noon - 1 p.m.

LUNCH AND LEARN: Victorian Valentines

Bring your lunch and we'll supply drinks and dessert.

Society Director Christine Ermenc will show Valentines from three centuries, explain how the U. S. postal service stimulated the greeting-card industry, tell us about Esther Howland, and explain the symbols appearing on historic Valentines. RSVP by calling the Society by February 11. COST: \$6/adults; \$5/seniors & students; \$4/Society members.

February 21-25 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

SCHOOL WINTER-BREAK ACTIVITIES

Come to our candle-dipping workshop for parents and their children. Cookies and juice provided. Have some fun dressing up in reproduction clothing, "cooking" a Colonial dinner, "milking" Flavia the cow, and more in our learning center. Bring your camera! COST: \$5/adults; \$4/seniors; \$3/children; \$2/Society members; \$10/family.

Saturday, February 26 2 p.m. - 3 p.m.

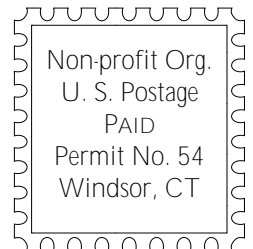
STORIES OF SURVIVAL

Hear storyteller Gwendolyn Quezaire-Presutti describe nineteen-year-old Sarah Harris's trials trying to open a school for African American children in 1834. Boycotts, harassment, and attacks! COST: \$6/adults; \$5/seniors & students; \$4/Society members.



Windsor
Historical Society

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