

THE HAMDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER SUMMER EDITION 2005

WHO WE ARE

Board of Directors

Al Gorman
President

Ken Minkema
Vice-president

Barbara Hogan
Recording Secretary

Sam Becker
Treasurer

Martha Becker
Historian

Committee Chairs

Louise Brundage

Lois Casey

Bill Doheny

Betsy Gorman

Stella Johnson

Joe Pepe

Virginia Zukunft

The above list does not do justice to the Board members who wear more than one hat serving on many committees, assuming a variety of roles and contributing in numerous ways, making our Society an active and responsible community organization. Help us, help Hamden.

Dear Members,

The Society held its annual meeting in May. Congratulations are in order for the officers who were elected for a two-year term. Their time and efforts are greatly appreciated by the membership. They are listed on the left of this page.

At the meeting, the Society hosted a slide lecture by sculptor, conservator and Hamden resident, Francis Miller. He discussed a range of problems that affect outdoor art and illustrated them with pictures of public sculpture, tombstones, statues, monuments, and memorials, many of which are found in the New Haven area. Various deterioration processes and remedial conservation measures were explained by Mr. Miller, who answered audience questions. Following the talk, refreshments, delicious as always, were offered by Mrs. Osgood and Mrs. Zukunft .

No, the group below is not the Dickerman Family wedding photo. Nor is it the spring clean up committee. And it is not the Society's Board of Directors celebrating their election or their celebrating the second printing of our book, *Images of Hamden*. But, since we have your attention, please plan to stop by the Jonathan Dickerman House on **SUNDAY, AUGUST 28th**, to **help celebrate your Society's birthday. 60 years old!** We were incorporated in July of 1945. Join us for birthday cake and lemonade and maybe some wine between **1:00 and 4:00 P.M.** Gifts are not required nor is formal attire.



“Rocky Top” York Mountain, Mt. Carmel, Connecticut

Rocky Top in the Mt. Carmel section of Hamden has been in the news over the past few years because part of it will be the site of an athletic complex being constructed by Quinnipiac University. The area off Sherman Avenue will be the home of a new basketball arena, an ice hockey facility, as well as parking. The University plans to add more buildings in the future creating the “Rocky Top Campus.”

History shows us that the area did have a recreational use in the past. “An ideal summer camp in the deep woods, yet close to civilization. Come and sojourn in the woods in anyway you like: housekeeping or camping. Bring your automobile, your horse or your bicycle. Sleep in the open air, if you like, in a shake-down of hemlock boughs. Within fifteen minutes walk of Trolley or N.Y.N.H.&H.R.R.” These words appeared in the Saturday Chronicle of May 23, 1903.

Mrs. Widmann and her husband, who ran Konold’s Coal at 111 Church Street in New Haven, had constructed a “camp” with cottages and cabins atop York Mountain in Mt. Carmel, the same Rocky Top where the sports center is being built by Quinnipiac. At times the Widmann’s would rent the dwellings for summer use. The main house, “Rocky Top,” had seven rooms, which were furnished with antique furniture. “The cottage had in it running water, a bath tub and all the conveniences needed for personal comfort for a long or short stay.” The advertisement boasted of “a veritable bathroom—a luxury scarcely expected among the mountain wilds.”

Drinking water was obtained from a 150-foot deep, artesian well. The water was pumped by a nearby windmill to an 800-gallon tank and it was suggested that the “clear and sparkling water” contained mineral qualities favorable to one’s health. Guests were invited to hunt or fish, horseback ride, or just enjoy the pure air. The “camp” could be reached by “an excellent carriage road leading directly to the stables. The view from Rocky Top is simply enchanting. All care is forgotten as one looks out upon the beautiful scene.

Cottages and Terms

“Rocky Top,” seven rooms and bath.....\$250 for the season.

“Rockledge,” four sleeping rooms, one large living room, kitchen and bathroom.....\$150 for the season.

“Texas,” five rooms and bath.....\$150 for the season.

“Little Germany”.....\$35 for the season.

Log cabins with folding bunks for eight people.....\$75 and \$60 for the season.

Tents, located according to choice, with camping stoves and cooking utensils.....\$30 for the season.

All the cottages and cabins are completely furnished excepting table linen and bed linen.

Cots and hammocks may be rented at extra charge, if desired.

Our appreciation to Hamden Fire Chief James Leddy for sharing the article with us.

John H. Dickerman, who owned nearby Sleeping Giant, wanted to develop it as a resort in the late 1800’s. Blue Hill’s Park opened in 1888 with a carriage road to the top and pavilion. Soon he began to sell off sections for development and by 1913, the year he died, there were ten houses as well as cabins used for weekend and summer vacations. (Note Born Among the Hills by N. Sachse for details.

THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

THANK YOU to all our members who have renewed their membership in the Society. Each renewal brought a smile to our Treasurer. He is especially gratified by those who generously included an extra donation. There is nothing better than a happy Treasurer.

DICKERMAN HOUSE SPRING CLEANING

Each spring a group of Society volunteers meet at the Dickerman House museum to prepare it for the season's opening in July. Besides the interior cleaning, window washing, dusting, curtain changing, etc., work on the exterior grounds is performed. This year the raising of the bricks in the front walk was begun, as well as, weed whacking, tree trimming, and stairwell cleaning.

Our appreciation is extended to Joe Pepe, Barbara Hogan, Bill Doheny, Betsy Gorman, Bob Zoni, and Kimberly Casolino.

Also our continued thanks to the Spring Glen Garden Club for preparing the Dickerman House Herb garden. This is only one of their volunteer garden care projects in Hamden.



OF SPECIAL NOTE

Society member, Nancy Sachase has donated an antique sundial for the Dickerman House garden in the memory of her father and mother, Louis and Bessie Davis. He was a member of the Society's Board when it was formed and had a strong interest in the restoration of old houses in our area. The sundial, which is dated 1792, is mounted on an ornamental base. Nancy co-authored the Society's publication, Hamden: Our Architectural Heritage.

EVENTS

Connecticut Valley Furniture. An exhibit through January at the CT Historical Society Museum.
Faith and art from Mexico. An exhibit through October 9th at the Knights of Columbus Museum.
"Old House Workshop Series" presented by the Cheshire Historical Society in September, The Impact of Cheshire's Agricultural and Barite Mining History on Home Style and Design, call (203)272-8980.

SAVE THE DATE! PUT IT ON YOUR CALENDAR!

NOVEMBER 5th AND 6th

The Annual Giant Valley Association of

Antiques Dealers Show

At The Miller Cultural Complex, Dixwell Avenue

PLAN TO ATTEND!

NEWSLETTER

THE HAMDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 5512, HAMDEN, CONNECTICUT 06518