



THE HAMDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER WINTER EDITION 2006

WHO WE ARE Board of Directors

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Dear Members:

The celebration marking the Society's 60th year of incorporation that was held at the Dickerman House Museum, August 28, was a success. About thirty members and friends visited the museum and enjoyed cake and cold drinks. Our Society was incorporated in 1945 although its beginnings date back to 1928. It was a good excuse to celebrate and close the J. D. House for the season on a high note.

Our thanks to Mr. Clifford Gilmond, who attended the event and presented to the Society the "Annual Reports of the Selectman and Treasurer of the Town of Hamden" for 1902 and 1903. Included are school committee and health reports. These items are now housed in our Hamden History Library.

Another donation came to us from the Hamden Chamber of Commerce, a framed photograph of the Church Street School, class of 1932. Also photo albums from the Margaret L. Keefe School representing the classes of 1965-66, 1966-67, 1967-68, 1968-69, (1969-70 was missing), 1970-71, and 1971-72. Within a week two photographs were sent by the Board of Education of "Miss Keefe" for our library. Margaret L. Keefe was named school superintendent in 1911 and the Pine Street School was renamed in her honor.

A few days after our celebration, the Society received a small collection of photos from Mr. Chris Wanamaker, one of those appears below. It is Grace Episcopal Church shown in its original location next to Memorial Town Hall. It was moved in 1966 to its present location across the street to make room for a parking lot.



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.

44th Annual Antiques Show and Sale

Yet again, the annual antiques show was a resounding success! The dealers, the public, and the Historical Society volunteers all played their part in making the weekend fun as well as profitable. This year the kitchen added sausage and peppers as a new menu item, thanks to the culinary talents and generosity of Roger Rovero. From setup by Al Gorman and John Carolla to the cleanup by Bob Zoni, the usual kitchen crew of Louise Brundage, Marlene Carolla, Lois Casey, Kathy and Kim Casolino, Mary Emblar, Joyce Gilbert, Al and Betsy Gorman, Barbara Hogan, Ken Minkema, Pamela Rendeiro, Linda and Roger Rovero, and Virginia Zukunft worked together like a well oiled machine. Heartfelt thanks also to the many talented bakers whose confections were quickly bought up and devoured by our many patrons. Tom Whelan's key lime pies continue to draw a pre-opening crowd. These efforts made a handsome profit of \$781.00 for the Society as well as continued good will between the Giant Valley Association of Antiques Dealers and the Hamden Historical Society. As the recipient of the admission fees paid by the public, we are most grateful and fortunate to have the GVAAD in our lives. The dealers donated \$3500 this year to the Society.

UPDATES

Each summer we are able to open the Dickerman House to the public on weekends because of the generous time given by our volunteer docents. Our appreciation to the following and especially to Lois Casey who made the arrangements with the docents and was always on hand when needed.

Betty Osgood	Werner and Ginny Zukunft	Lorraine Velardi	Judy Korte
Fran Griffin	John and Marlene Carolla	Barbara Hogan	Lois Casey
Joyce Gilbert	Roger and Linda Rovero	Connie Whalen	Sue Croup
Stella Johnson	Ken Minkama	Pam Rendeiro	Al Gorman

Over one hundred Summer visitors signed our guest book. In the Spring, 244 school children were given tours of the House by Lois and Nancy. Thank you!

In November, the Society lost longtime member Leland Robinson.

Not just a member, but an active participant in our projects. Lee was a well-known photographer and took all the photos of *Hamden: Our Architectural Heritage* and his work was featured in our publication, *Images of Hamden*.

Time to Change Your Plaque, Pete

by Ken Minkema

Chair, Hamden Historic Properties Commission; Vice President, Hamden Historical Society

The historic marker on the picturesque home at 184 Todd Street reads “Lazarus Ives, 1745.” Like many markers, however, it’s misleading. Unfortunately, back around the time of the 150th anniversary of Hamden’s incorporation in 1936, many homes, apparently in a well-intentioned effort to make the past more visible were given markers, many of which are questionable, if not plain wrong. For example, the Mt. Carmel home my family moved into back in 1999 for many years sported a plaque that said it was built in 1761, but, thanks to detailed research into the original land records by Hamden’s historian, Martha Becker, we know the house was actually built around 1807. The lay person does not realize how much work this is: it’s almost like doing archaeology, reconstructing “layers” of history as land and structures passed from one hand to another. Knowing our house was built in 1807 rather than several decades earlier doesn’t make our home any less historic or important – besides, knowing the truth is better than perpetuating a myth, however it may add to the age or romance of your home. Same with the home at 184 Todd, and there’s a story there, as there is behind so many historic structures in town.

Sure, there was a Lazarus Ives, born in 1715. He built a home on the Cheshire Turnpike (what is today Whitney Avenue), opposite where Tuttle Street intersects. Ives then moved to the area of North Branford in the early 1750’s, only to return around 1760 to build another house on the Turnpike near Sherman Avenue. This Lazarus Ives died very shortly afterwards, in 1762, without having served in the Revolution, as our town histories claim. One of the myths to untangle about “our” Lazarus Ives is that he may have been confused with a relative by the same name, a resident of Wallingford and later New York State, who did indeed serve in the Revolution and died in 1812 at age 78. Naming patterns in colonial America included the recycling of certain names, especially ones from the Hebrew Bible, within families and across generations, causing confusion for perplexed purveyors of the past.

So lets retrace our steps and follow another family of local (not to mention state and national) prominence, the Hitchcocks. In 1708, John Hitchcock was one of the first settlers of the upper part of what would later be Hamden; his homestead originally stood at the corner of Whitney Avenue and Todd Street. One of his sons was Isaac, born in 1745. He married into the influential Stiles family and died sometime after 1777, after he and his wife Hannah had four children. Around 1770, they built a “simple cottage” with a small wing. At the corner was a well enclosed in a small wellhouse (see photo 1). This structure was built on the south side of Todd Street, a little east of where it currently stands. Hitchcock owned thirty-some acres along the road here, which he probably farmed.



Photo 1

As time went on, the house passed from the Hitchcocks to distant descendants of -you guessed it- Lazarus Ives. This is probably how the house became associated with him. This may also explain why the house is thought to have originally stood on Whitney Avenue somewhere near the Mt. Carmel church. That indeed was where Lazarus Ives's second house stood, but that was an entirely different structure. See how the historical thread gets more and more tangled?

The nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth, and the country became caught up in a new style called "Colonial Revival." Among other things, Colonial Revival romanticized the pre-Revolutionary past, sparked the antiques craze, made Wallace Nutting's photographic recreations of domestic colonial scenes popular, and caused people to hunt around for old houses to salvage. (That it did so in the interest of making African-Americans and immigrants conform to a particular idea of what being an "American" meant would require a lot more space than I have here.)

In Mt. Carmel, Mr. and Mrs. William Todd purchased the Hitchcock house. They then proceeded in 1926 to move the entire house a little to the west (see photo 2), on a five-acre spread adjoining a stream.



Photo 2

Moving entire houses was actually more common than we think. I know of at least four in the Mt. Carmel area alone that were moved during the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries. Since these were of post-and-beam construction, they could be taken off their

foundations by their sills, hauled by oxen, and hold up under the process quite well. A new foundation was built, and the house suspended over it and eventually lowered. The Todds “modernized” the house by adding modern facilities, eventually expanding the wings and partitioning the second floor, and rebuilding the chimney stack (see photo 3, which shows the original fireplace). They also constructed an outbuilding, called the “book room,” a guesthouse flanked by garages (see photo 4).



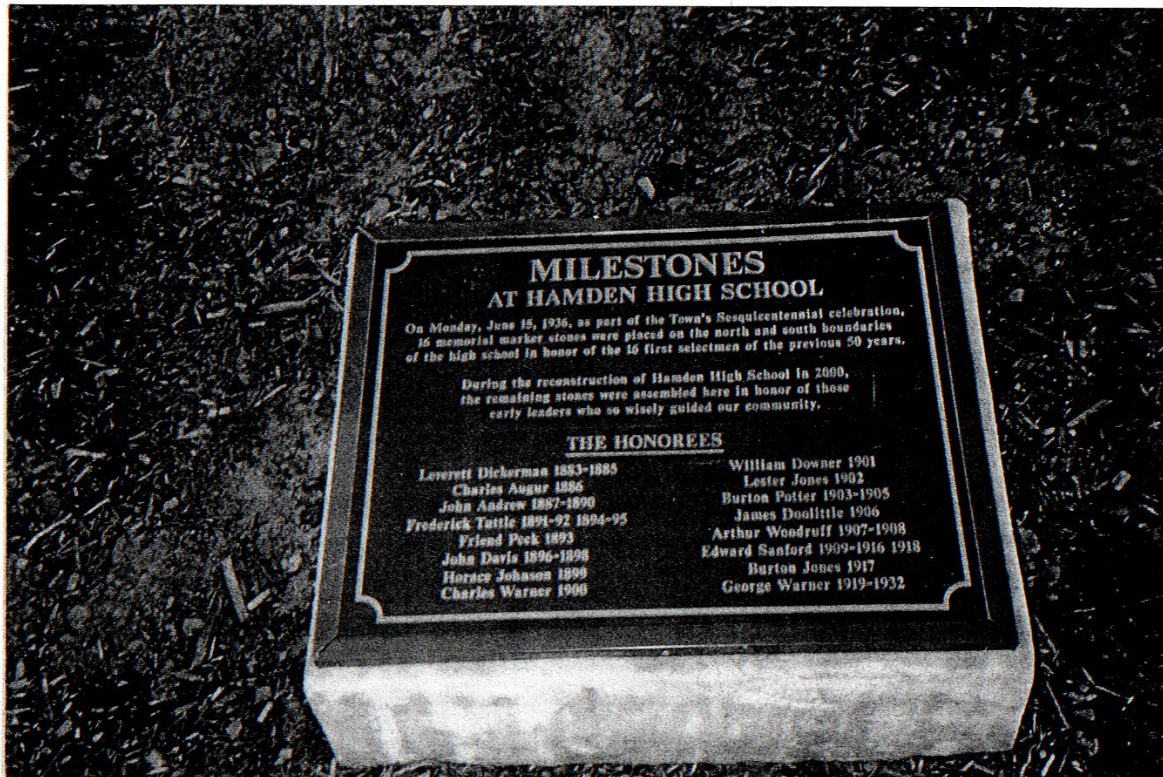
Photo 3



Photo 4

As the century progressed, the Baue family purchased the property, which was advertised by realtors, who were only using current historical knowledge, as the “Lazarus Ives House.” Today, the property is owned by Pete Nizen and his family, who kindly shared original photographs taken by the Todds. One of the oldest houses in Hamden, retaining many of its original features and standing nearly on its original site, it has a story to tell – several, in fact—first as the Lazarus Ives House, now as the Isaac Hitchcock House.

Time to change the plaque, Pete.



Finally, the Millstones in front of Hamden High School have been properly marked by signage.

NEWSLETTER

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