

THE HAMDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER FALL EDITION 2008

Dear Members:

Our summer docents and the visiting public were greeted by a new sign at the Dickerman House museum. It will be in place for the summer months, then removed (lest it get damaged or stolen) and stored for the winter when the nearby student body are about town. We invested \$200 in our new sign and all have been pleased by its appearance.

SALUTE TO DOCENTS

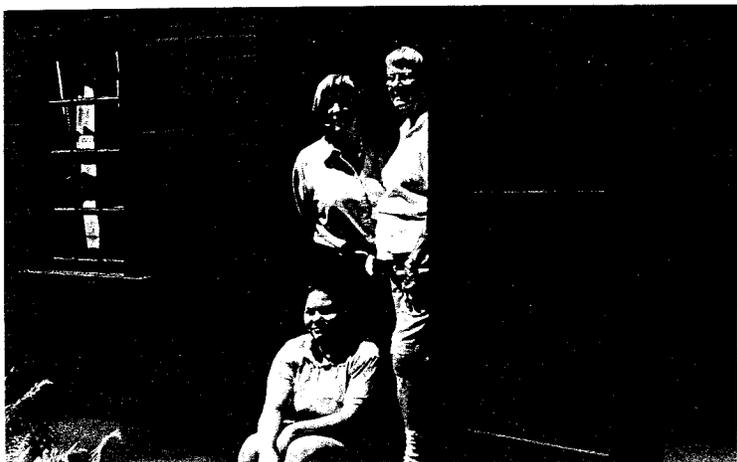
I wish to thank the following members who volunteered their time to welcome the public at the Dickerman House museum this summer season: Connie Griggs, Lois Casey, Al Gorman, Ginny and Werner Zukunft, Joyce Gilbert, Linda and Roger Rovero, Fran Griffen, Barbara Hogan, Connie Whelan, Marlene and John Carolla, Nancy Faughnan, Ken Minkema, Stella Johnson, and Don Werner. We hosted over eighty visitors this summer. A very special thanks to Ginny Zukunft who contacted the docents and arranged the schedule.

ANTIQUES SHOW

Our annual fundraising event will be held in NOVEMBER on the 15th and 16th. Presented by the Giant Valley Association of Antiques Dealers for the last twenty-seven years in Hamden, it is the best show in our area. Please join us in the "gourmet" kitchen, help booth sit, contribute some baked goods, enjoy the antiques, and spread the word.

KEEPING UP APPEARANCES

Once again a faithful team of volunteers spent a Saturday morning cleaning and polishing at the Dickerman House in preparation for our public opening. Special thanks to Barbara Hogan, Betsy Gorman, and Kimberly Casolino. Out and about the property's grounds another team worked on raising the rear step, adjusting bricks around the garden, cutting the forsythia and parking lot brush. The team also installed the trap door in the barn. Thanks to Al Gorman, John Carolla, Bill "bushwhacker" Doheny, and Bob Zoni.



BAD NEWS

Recently a sign, “Land for lease or build to suit,” appeared on the site of the Joseph Cooper House at 2052 Whitney Avenue. The sign indicates that the owner desires to make money from the commercial value of the land and doesn’t care about the house itself, which has been vacant for over a year, since the renter, an antiques store, closed its doors.

The house has an original six-panel door, fluted pilasters carved with geometric motifs, and a cornice above the leaded transom. Typical of the 18th century Connecticut farmhouses, it is a simple center-chimney plan.

The exterior is in relatively original condition. Its Federal style details are notable and may have been added by Cooper’s grandson, James, who received the property in 1808.



The house was built on the Cooper family farm, possibly as early as 1746, in this area later known as “Augerville.” In 1733, Joseph Cooper was appointed an ensign, who was in charge of a “train band,” a group of citizens trained as soldiers charged with protecting the North Parish of New Haven.

GOOD NEWS

What has been referred to as the “old Peck place” on 50 Todd Street is being restored and revitalized by the developer of Trailside Village, a residential community for those aged fifty-five or older.

Actually a grouping of distinct buildings assembled in 1936, the structure not only reflects the agricultural roots of Mount Carmel, but the early crafts which served those neighboring farmers. In 1799, four acres of Isaac Hitchcock’s farm were sold to Dimon Roberts, a cooper, who built the eastern or left portion, a traditional small late Colonial house.



The center section, a two and one half storied house, was originally constructed by Titus Munson around the corner on Whitney Avenue in 1795. It is distinguished by the elaborate Greek Revival entry which was added by Uri Todd after 1823.

In 1817, the Todd Street site was acquired by Joel Hough who built a tannery nearby. In 1825, Henry Peck (1804-1861) purchased the property and converted the tannery to a cobble shop where workers crafted shoes and boots by the hundreds. Later moved to become the western section on the right, it was joined to the center part by an addition, which has a gambrel roof, large chimney, and three gabled dormers. One of the owners was Lorenzo Peck (d.1911); known as "Hallelujah Peck," this ardent Baptist speaker would stop passerby and inquire if they were saved!

Originally red in color, the "old Peck place" has been painted to match the other buildings in the development. Its exterior rehabilitation includes a new shingle roof, repaired or replaced clapboards, and new windows which, while not original, are multipaned sashes. The structure's architectural features have been preserved; its unique character is still evident.

RECTORY SCHOOL BARN...Another step on its journey

Our Society began the effort to save the Rectory School Barn from demolition in 1996. After raising the necessary funds to have the barn moved, the Town of Hamden approved the gift of the barn. In the spring of 2001, it was moved to Meadowbrook Park and placed on temporary cribbing. Since then it has sat idle waiting for someone to present a workable program for its use and a rehabilitation plan that would respect its architecture.

In July, 2008, the structure was leased to Partnerships in Learning and Creative Exploration, Inc. for twenty-five years; P.L.A.C.E. will establish a multi cultural children's museum and arts center. This 139 year old unique Victorian barn will be moved again next spring and placed on a permanent foundation.

As part of our local history and a visual reminder of our architectural heritage, the effort to save this barn was worthwhile. Our Society had a vision, made a commitment, and worked diligently on this project. In another year or two, the Rectory School Barn will be fully reborn with a renewed purpose, and in its newly restored state will welcome visitors as it will stand at the entrance of Hamden's Town Center Park at Meadowbrook.

RAFFLE ...At the Antique Show, we will raffle a handmade, beautiful AFGHAN which was made and donated by Society member, Kathleen Casolino. It is the perfect prize to keep you warm during the coming chilly, winter nights. Please stop by our bake table and take a chance.

FOOTNOTE...In the last Newsletter, the Spring Edition, the original Miller Library was referred to as the "new" Miller Memorial Library, of course, it is not. The newest Town library opened in 1980 at its present location at 2901 Dixwell Avenue replacing the first Miller Memorial Library which had replaced the older Hamden Public Free Library.