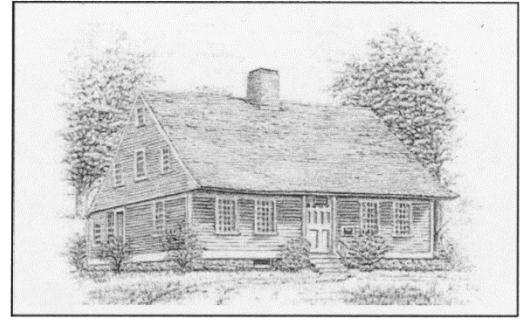


THE HAMDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

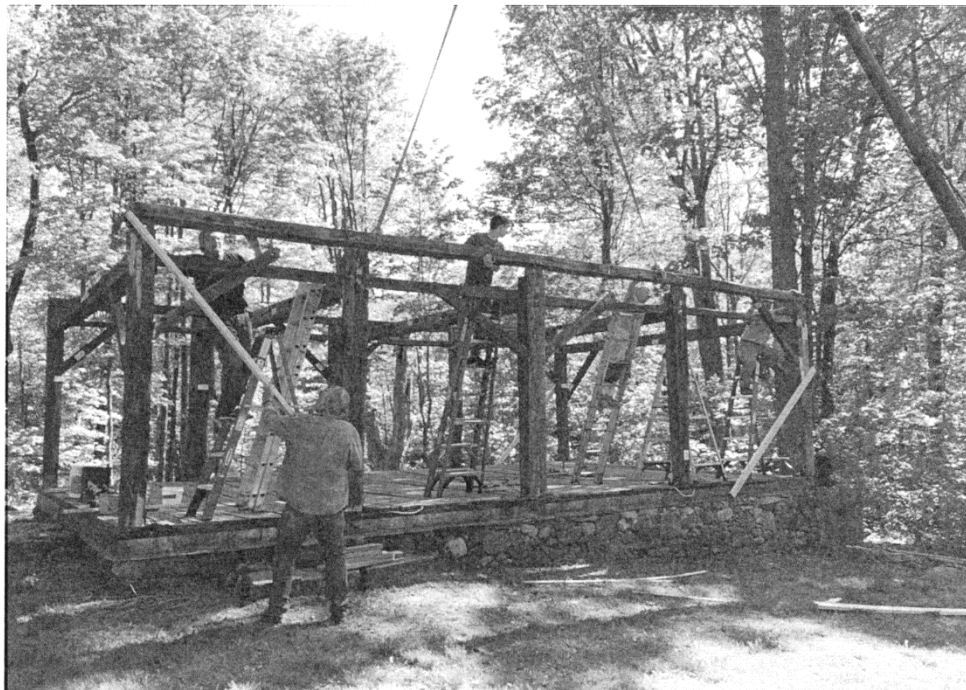
Summer 2020



TALMADGE CIDER MILL RE-ERECTED

We all remember that terrible day in May 2018 when a tornado tore through Hamden, destroying many structures and lives. Among the buildings damaged were the Dickerman House and the Talmadge Cider Mill. While the Dickerman House was badly affected, the Cider Mill was so severely damaged that it had to be completely deconstructed. The person who deserves a multitude of thanks for heading up the effort to shore up the two buildings right after the tornado, for repairing the Dickerman House, and for dismembering, numbering, storing, and fixing the pieces of the Cider Mill, is none other than Bob Zoni. Bob has put in countless hours, reconstituting hand-hewn beams, for many months, in all types of weather. Through it all, he has had the help of a number of volunteers, who we also want to acknowledge.

In late May 2020, two years after the fateful day, under Bob's leadership, the two centuries' old frame of the Cider Mill was re-erected. The event had the feel of an old-fashioned barn raising--though with the advantage of a modern crane to lift the heavy timbers into place. It was fitting, too, that members of the Talmadge family were on hand to help resurrect the structure that their ancestors had first hewed out and put up. Hearty thanks to Bob and to all who were involved in this meaningful day. We hope our members will have an opportunity to drive by and see the progress, as a tangible proof of how important their support of the Society is.



HAMDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY RECEIVES MAJOR GRANTS

The Society has received two grants from the State Historic Preservation Office, as part of its new “Good to Great” program, which is designed to help organizations grow their activities and resources. The first grant is a Survey and Planning Grant with which the Society will commission an architecture firm with experience in working with historic structures to draw up plans and specifications. This will be the first phase of the project. The second is a significant grant, with a matching component, that will enable the historically sensitive updating of some aspects of the Dickerman House in order to make it safer, capable of hosting more programs, and ensuring the continued integrity of the Little Red House for generations to come. These updates include a ramp for handicapped access, climate control for the basement and first floor, new bathroom facilities, and restoration of the basement as a meeting and exhibit space. Work related to these grants will begin once the damage caused to the house by the tornado is completed.

WHEN WILL THE DICKERMAN HOUSE REOPEN?

The short answer: Not this summer. Restoring an eighteenth-century building that is on the National Registry of Historic Places has to be done correctly, using traditional materials and practices. And of course, the challenge is doubled by the pandemic shutdown. So it all takes time--to be precise, Bob Zoni’s time, and the time of whoever has generously assisted him. But we will keep members abreast of progress in forthcoming newsletters and on our website, newly designed by Municipal Historian Dave Johnson. Hopefully, we will one day soon be able to have a grand re-opening event. Meanwhile, the Society’s Archivist, Kathy Lindbeck, hopes to re-open the History Room soon, following the shutdown caused by the pandemic. Again, see the Society’s website for updates.

A HAMDEN HISTORY MINUTE

William Singleton began his life as a slave in North Carolina, but during the Civil War ran away to do his part fighting the Confederacy. He even met with Lincoln in order to convince him to let him and other former slaves fight for the Union. When Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, Singleton joined the Thirty-fifth U.S. Infantry, fought bravely, and commanded sixty of his troops in Lincoln’s funeral procession. After the war, he moved north to Hamden and finally had the time to satisfy one of his life goals, to learn to read. It took this extraordinary American only one month to do so.

-Contributed by Eric Lehman

DOOR TREE PEN CEREMONY



About a year ago, a person felled Hamden's Door-Tree with a chain saw. The damage was discovered 17 days later, and the crime solved just two days after that. Tuesday, June 30th, marked the first anniversary of the total destruction of that iconic local landmark. During the past eleven months, Dave Landino of D.L. Heritage in Clinton has worked on designing and crafting five beautiful commemorative presentation pens from the wood of the Door-Tree. He will be making more of the pens which will be available for sale to benefit the Hamden Historical Society.

At a masked and socially distanced ceremony on that day at the Jonathan Dickerman House, Door-Tree commemorative pens were presented to Officer Celeste Robitaille of the RWA Police Dept., for solving the crime; to Woody Hoyt, for discovering the crime; and to Mayor Curt Leng, for his immediate assistance in addressing the crime and for his continued support for memorializing the Door-Tree. The presentation was brief and informal, but it was a great opportunity for us to show our appreciation to these individuals.

Municipal historian Dave Johnson has been the driving force behind the effort to commemorate the Door Tree. Many thanks, Dave, for all his care and work.



THE DOOR-TREE.

MEMBER NEWS

We must with sadness announce the passing of two long-time members of the Society:

Lois Casey died on April 25 at the age of 90. Lois came to our group in an unusual way. She and a friend spent a weekend touring historic sites in CT, saving our Jonathan Dickerman House till last. They arrived during what should have been an open house on a summer Sunday afternoon. Finding the house closed and no one on the property, Lois called the home of Al Gorman who was the Society's president at the time. As she expressed her disappointment and unhappiness about the situation, she was told that as an all-volunteer organization with a small docent staff, this happened once in a while. While many might have hung up with a huff, Lois said, "Well then my friend Nancy and I had better get involved and help you!" And indeed they did. Lois Casey and her friend, Nancy Faughnan, took on the task of docent chairs and organized not only weekend staffing but guiding school tours for many, many years as well. They both served on the Board of Directors and contributed mightily throughout the years in many ways.

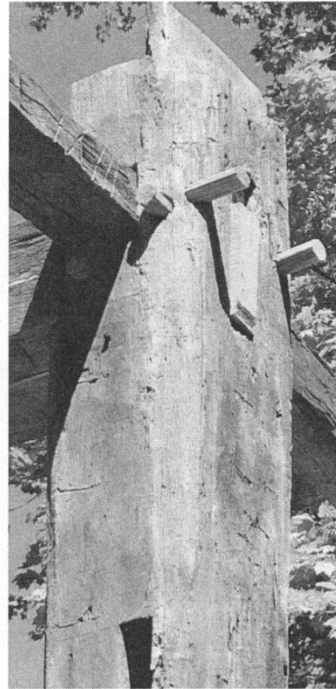
Virginia Zukunft died on May 1 at the age of 98. Her active tenure with the society began before any of us can remember (our history resource room located in Miller Library is closed because of the pandemic so we can't fact check!) but we know it was longer than 50 years. Famous for her fresh baked pumpkin pies at our annual antiques show and sale, Ginny was the energetic and happy spirit behind so many of the programs and activities throughout the years. One of her favorites was gathering a group of her friends to monitor and guide the public through the houses on our Hamden Sampler House Tours from 1991-1996. From serving soup and sandwiches at the antiques show to serving on the Board of Directors, Ginny's beautiful smile and warm personality made everything better.

For more articles on Hamden's history, go to
<http://www.hamdenhistoric>

MORE PICTURES OF THE CIDER-MILL RECONSTRUCTION



First Vent Raised



Pegged Joints



Roof Rafters Completed

MEMBER INPUT AND DUES REQUESTED

Do you have ideas or suggestions about how the Society can better serve its mission of preserving, encouraging research, and educating the public about the history of our town? About how to attract more members? Please send your thoughts to hhs@hamdenlibrary.org. Also, we hope that the activities mentioned in this newsletter show how busily the Society works on behalf of its members.

DUES ARE DUE! PLEASE HELP BY PUTTING YOUR ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES PAYMENT INTO THE ENCLOSED ENVELOPE AND RETURNING IT RIGHT AWAY. DURING THESE UNUSUAL TIMES, YOUR MEMBERSHIP IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT TO US. THANK YOU!

Our mailing address:

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Newsletter
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