



*THE HAMDEN HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY NEWSLETTER*

SPRING 2000

HISTORICAL SOCIETY SPRING PROGRAM

When putting on programs, we go to The Source and that person is Martha Becker. Speaking in the acknowledgements section of our 1986 *Townwide Historic & Architectural Survey*, the consultant who had worked with town historians all over the state had this to say:

“Mrs. Becker’s knowledge of the history of Hamden and the background of the old houses in town is unsurpassed, and indeed, we have yet to encounter an equally complete and accurate archive of its kind in any other town.”

**On Sunday, April 30, 2000, at 2:00 PM, the Society will again conduct an historical tour of one of our ancient cemeteries, the Mt. Carmel Cemetery, upper Whitney Avenue, Hamden. Mrs. Becker’s tour will focus on the founders of Mt. Carmel, the first organized community in Hamden prior to its independence in 1786. A printed hand-out will be given to attendees. A tent will feature an exhibit to compliment the tour. Refreshments will be available to stimulate your enjoyment and promote your interaction with this Goldenbells event. Come walk with us through this historic cemetery and, to some degree, experience the development of our town’s history from its earliest years. Do not miss it. The public is invited. Invite your friends.**

DIRECTIONS: The cemetery is located on the right side of Whitney Avenue, going north toward Cheshire, just south of the Sleeping Giant Golf Course. Its access is a horseshoe shaped driveway that enters at one point and exits at another, both on Whitney Avenue. Volunteers will be on hand to direct you to park at the side of the cemetery driveway.

On April 25, 2000, at 7:30 PM, the Hamden Public Library and Friends of the Hamden Library will hold its annual Hamden Notables Reception. We are proud to announce that long-time Society member and past president, Bill Doheny, will be honored as a Hamden Notable. Event followed by a reception with refreshments at Thornton Wilder Hall, 2901 Dixwell Avenue, Hamden.

## ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

The Town of Hamden is confronting the need to renovate and repair its ranger's house on the grounds of Brooksvale Park in the north end of town. It was the home of the past Brooksvale Park ranger, Jim Grandy. It is intended to be the home of the new park ranger, Vin Lavorgna.

The building was once part of what was known as the Hamden Poor Farm. In 1861, the owner Enos Brooks died and his will donated the farm to the town with certain stipulations. At that time, a town meeting enabled the construction of suitable buildings on the poor farm to accommodate the paupers of the town. It is assumed that this ranger residence was built in that year. It remained a home for paupers until 1947 when it still had 3 such inhabitants.

Identified as Greek Revival in the Town's 1986 *Townwide Historic and Architectural Survey*, the building represents a good example of that style. As was so often the case in such remote, rural areas, that style continued in use long after being discontinued elsewhere. This building was no exception. Its form of construction was mortise and tenon even though the balloon frame method was then used in the urban centers. The method of supporting the broad and low-pitched roof is visible in the large attic. The house contains a somewhat complicated system of rafters, 4 X 4 hewn purlins and 4 X 4 struts. This skillful and inventive solution demonstrates what we now refer to as Yankee ingenuity.

Some of the above is taken from *Research Report: The Brooksvale Farmhouse*, a college paper by Robert Lathrop, Jan. 1964, written for his History of Art class. It was donated by former ranger Jim Grandy and will be filed in the History Society Library.

## A BRIEF HISTORY: RECTORY SCHOOL BARN

The gift of the Rectory School Barn to Hamden by the owners of Centerville Lumber Company was all but lost last summer. In July, Senator Joseph Crisco, D-17, rushed to its rescue with a \$30,000 grant to your Historical Society to help relocate the barn to Meadowbrook property. Since that time, many supportive citizens, civic organizations and Society members have made generous contributions to this preservation effort. Our estimated budget is \$67,000; while not yet having reached our goal, we are encouraged by the donations received and will work to achieve it. The Board of Directors of the Society recognize the importance of saving the Barn. Its historical and architectural significance are exceeded by its value as a visual reminder of our community's heritage. The Rectory School Barn can be testimony to the importance of human values in the society of Hamden.

Mayor Amento, whose support for this preservation project predates the state's grant, has assisted and encouraged our efforts. Working with the Mayor's staff, our Society has supplied the Legislative Council members with the necessary information, background and inspection reports which they requested. It is the town's Legislative Council that must accept all gifts to the town. April has arrived and the "request to accept the gift" has not yet been acted upon by the Council's Parks and Recreation Committee. Mayor Amento has interceded with Centerville Lumber to delay any action on their part for six months. His action will provide the Society more time to raise funds and prepare for a move in the Fall. As well, there will be no interference with the Community Garden, over which the Barn will

be moved, during the growing season. Also the Council can deliberate and take positive action...hopefully.

Former Council member, Maggie DeVane, has raised the question of "open space" and that Meadowbrook not be violated by placing any structures on it. We concur with her regarding the value of open space and the philosophy of preserving it. But Meadowbrook is not a wilderness and already has a structure-the golf and pro shop and storage bins. The Rectory School Barn's footprint is 48x21 feet and would become a centerpiece of a redesigned Meadowbrook. One that would retain its openness, yet make it more attractive for public use, enhance the landscape, encourage tourists and serve as the heart of our community.

For their help with our project, the Society wishes to express its appreciation first to member Bob Zoni. On short notice, he surveyed and photographed the Rectory Barn's roof and estimated repair costs as requested by the Council. Also our thanks to architect Marvin Michalsen, who forwarded proposed renovation plans to the Council including drawings and a preliminary cost estimate. Our gratitude, as well, is extended to the Fund Raising Committee of Poirier, Doheny, Shields and Rose. Our treasurer, Sam Becker, deserves a tip of the hat for his record keeping and acknowledgements to all contributors. From President Al Gorman

**AND NOW SOME REALLY GOOD NEWS!**  
The Hamden Rotary Club is one of 26,000 Rotary Clubs worldwide. When not participating in a joint effort to eliminate polio throughout the world, it zeros in on local projects with equal boldness and commitment. The Hamden Rotary Club Foundation has offered to match all non-governmental donations to the project up to

\$10,000. We must raise a few thousand more. This is a rare opportunity. Those who gave already, your donations will be doubled. Those who give now, the donation will be doubled. Do not lose this chance to make a significant dent in the fund raising goal. Send your donation to our post office box. Make your tax-deductible check payable to the Hamden Historical Society. Do so today.

### MORE ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In our last newsletter, we listed all current contributors to the Barn fund. We wish to acknowledge additional donations from Norma Luppi, Susan Cutillo, Mr. & Mrs. John Connolly, S. Grove Associates, LLC and Anonymous.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**Sunday, April 30, 2000, 2:00 PM.** Town and Society Historian Martha Becker will lead a tour of the Mt. Carmel Cemetery, rain or shine. Refreshments will be served in the tent set up to house our display. The general public is cordially invited. Spread the word.

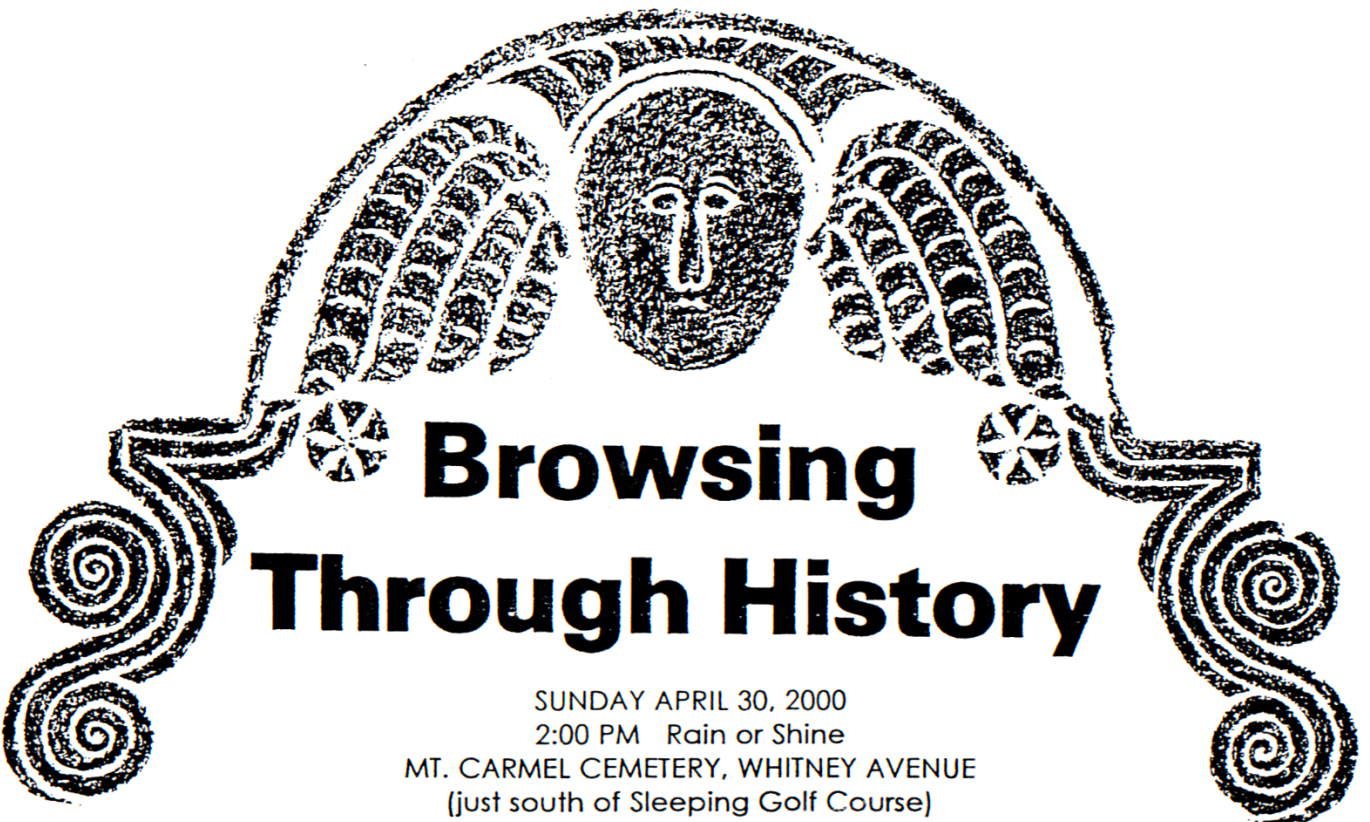
**Saturday, June 24, 2000, 9:00 to 12:00.** Our Annual Meeting will repeat last year's theme of Dickerman House work followed by a business meeting at 11:00 AM. Dress appropriately for house and yard clean-up. Refreshments will be served at the business meeting. Also, at 1:00 PM, an informational tour of the premises for Dickerman House docents will be given by members of the Society. Those of you who have sat for the house in the past or who wish to enjoy this volunteer effort this year, please call Lois Casey at 248-6030 IN ADVANCE.

**July, 2000** Exact date to be announced. A wine-tasting social event for members and their guests. Details to be announced and notice will be given to the membership.

# NEWSLETTER

THE HAMDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. BOX 5512 - HAMDEN, CONNECTICUT 06518



## **Browsing Through History**

SUNDAY APRIL 30, 2000  
2:00 PM Rain or Shine  
MT. CARMEL CEMETERY, WHITNEY AVENUE  
(just south of Sleeping Golf Course)  
A Tour Of Hamden's (Mt. Carmel)  
Early Stones & Early Lives  
By Town Historian Martha Becker  
Refreshments & Exhibit