



John Hampden 1594-1643

# The Hamden Historical Society Newsletter Spring Edition 2002

**Spring Clean-Up Day at the J. D. House, June 15: Jonathan Dickerman House  
Season Opening, June 30: Hamden History Room Summer Closing, June 30.**

## *President's Letter*

### **About John Hampden**

More About  
John Hampden:  
Special thanks to  
Vera Morrison

### **History Room at the Library**

*Clean-Up at  
J. D. House*

### **J. D. House Opening Day**

J.D. House  
Chimney  
Restoration

*Hamden: Our  
Architectural  
Heritage 3rd  
Edition*

## *Dear Members*

When you visit the Hamden History Library, you will be greeted by an old black and white, framed photograph of Arthur John Ralph, the first President of the Hamden Historical Society, 1928-1936. It is upon his shoulders that the long and distinguished history of our Society rests. According to an "Article of Past Presidents" (author unknown), Arthur Ralph (b. 1861) was not a native Hamdenite, but had an "unretiring interest" in "the records of everything concerning Hamden historically. . ." He lived in Mt. Carmel section at 3656 Whitney Avenue in a Greek Revival style home of c. 1850. In 1929, he had installed a tablet at the Whitney Lake dam dedicated to Eli Whitney and later in 1935, another at the site of Steps in Mount Carmel (a natural formation of trap rock south of West Woods Road).



Unfortunately, this one was stolen in 1937 for its copper value. Ralph was a collector and arranged exhibits of books and pictures dealing with history. Joining the Day Spring Lodge No. 30 in 1921, he was the historian of their booklet commemorating the Public Opening

of the Masonic Temple on Whitney Avenue in 1925. As Society President, he obtained the lease of the Dickerman House from the State Park and Forest Commission in 1936, served on Hamden's Sesquicentennial Committee and chaired the committee for Hamden's celebration of Connecticut's Tercentenary.

Arthur J. Ralph died in 1936 at the age of 75. His life illustrated that the real strengths of our Society are its people, and their sense of community. All his records as well as other past presidents' records are archived in the Hamden History Room.

## Our Town: About John Hampden

Dr. Kenneth Minkema

The names of Connecticut towns reveal much about the history of the colony and state. Our revolutionary Puritan roots are seen in the naming of localities such as Cromwell, for Oliver Cromwell, leader of England during the Interregnum. Closer at hand, the town of Orange honors William of Orange, who became king of England following the Glorious Revolution of 1688. But not many Hamdenites know that their hometown, too, is named for a person who figured prominently in the English fight for constitutional and individual rights during the early 17th century.

Colonel John Hampden was the scion of an ancient family, dating back to the time of William the Conqueror, with vast landholdings in and around Buckinghamshire, England. His ancestors figured prominently in the reign of Henry VIII. His father married Elizabeth Cromwell aunt of Oliver. When the three-year-old John inherited the great family estates following his father's death in 1597, he became one of the wealthiest commoners in the entire country. Educated at Magdalene College, Oxford, and then at the Inner Temple where he studied law, John became one of the most respected leaders of the age-- "a complete man," he was called. Though a Puritan, he does not fit the stereotype. He loved sports, hunting, conversation and scholarship, and with his wife Elizabeth Simeon, who he married in 1619, had nine children

But his great talent was politics, and it was here that he was uniquely adept at serving the Puritans' cause of reform. Upon completing his education, he was elected to Parliament, which during those tempestuous times was vying to restrict the king's arbitrary power and to establish constitutional rights. For his efforts, John was arrested, imprisoned, and brought to trial several times.

Throughout England, religious and political Nonconformists were oppressed, so much so that a number sought to migrate to the New World. Hampden himself, along with other prominent leaders such as Cromwell, contemplated the same. In 1632, Hampden was among the twelve grantees of the colony that was to become Connecticut and in 1638 he would actually have made the voyage had not the king forbidden the fleet to sail at the last moment. Hampden was instrumental in the fight to rid the government of corrupt officials and to end illegal taxation. Most important to him was the rule of law, which applied to the king. Measures were to be enacted only with the consent of Parliament, the main representative of the nation's sovereignty. In time of divine and absolute monarchy, these were revolutionary ideas.

In 1642, the struggle between the Parliament and King Charles had to be taken on to the field of battle in clashes between pro-royalist Cavaliers and parliamentarian Roundheads. After suffering many reproaches at the hands of the monarchy, Hampden was eager to fight. He raised a regiment of a thousand men. Unfortunately, his life was cut short at the battle of Chalgrove Field, not far from his family's estate, in June 1643.

The Parliament and Puritan cause had lost one of its most valuable leaders. The prominent Puritan minister, Richard Baxter, recalled that Hampden had "the most praise of any gentleman of that age." With Hampden gone, the revolution was left in the hands of his cousin, Oliver Cromwell, who would eventually oversee the execution of King Charles.

## Help Us Clean Up

### MORE ABOUT JOHN HAMPDEN:

*Thanks to Vera Morrison*

The Society and its Library are indebted to Town Clerk, Vera Morrison who recently presented to its President our restored copy of the *Tryal of John Hampden, Esq; in the Great Case of Ship-Money, between His Majefty K. Charles I and that Gentleman*, 1640. Through special CT funds for historic document preservation, Vera had a conservation laboratory clean and deacidify the pages, reinforce brittle pages with specially coated paper, place them within Mylar and put the loose leaf pages into a leather covered binder. As well, the History Library was given a copy on 35 mm film. Our thanks to Vera Morrison for having a keen interest in Hamden history. By serving the future she is preserving the past.

#### HAMDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY LIBRARY

Location: Miller Memorial Library  
2901 Dixwell Avenue  
Third Floor

Hours: Tuesday 10:00-12:00  
Thursday 1:00-4:00

Archivist: **Joe Pepe**  
Volunteer Catalogue Specialists:  
**Ginnie Dowd**  
**Kathy Jefts**  
**Phyllis Pepe**

Internet Address: [hhs@hamdenlibrary.org](mailto:hhs@hamdenlibrary.org)  
Appointments possible: call 281-6426  
Or email: [jpepe01@snet.net](mailto:jpepe01@snet.net)

The Hamden History Room has a separate Board of directors who meet biannually or when needed. Funding for our part-time archivist derives from a Mount Carmel Library Association grant (Bradley Fund) administered by the Community Foundation.

The annual ritual of Spring cleaning at the Dickerman House continues **Saturday, June 15th from 9:00-12:00**. Lend a hand to dust, wash some windows, hang the new curtains, vacuum or polish; as you might imagine, many more hands will lighten the work. On the same day, the outside crew will be tackling a host of dirty jobs; fun jobs, but no stonewall building this year. Help us shine for our public opening on June 30th. Rain date June 22<sup>nd</sup>.

## Another Opening . . .

The J. D. House will be open for the summer months to the public free of charge from 1:00-4:00 on Saturdays and Sundays. We need volunteer docents, so please call Lois Casey at 248-6030 to select an afternoon.

## “Light My Fire”

This is what Jonathan Dickerman could now say about the fireplaces in his house. It has been a long time goal of the Society to restore the J.D. House fireplaces and oven to working order; this would include uncapping the chimney as well as inside and outside restorative work. As of this April, the restoration project has been completed and Jonathan's home has working and **SAFE** fireplaces. The project was undertaken with a matching grant administered by the Connecticut Historic Commission. The total cost was just under \$25,000 and it was on budget. The project was undertaken to save the deteriorating chimney, thereby maintaining structural support of the beams and adding authenticity to our “Old Red House”. In the autumn, we hope to schedule a members' social with the hearths providing light and warmth.

# ***NEWSLETTER***

**THE HAMDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

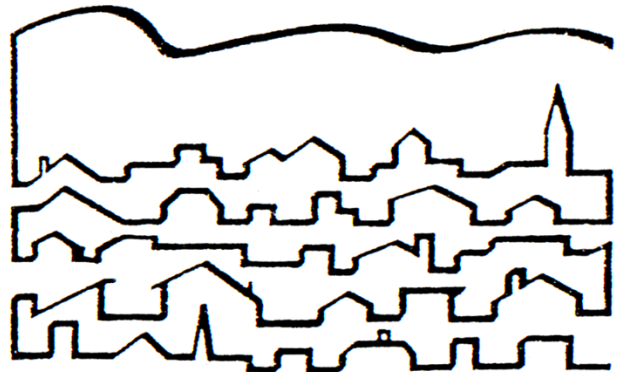
**P.O. BOX 5512 HAMDEN, CONNECTICUT 06518**

## **THIRD EDITION AVAILABLE**

The Hamden Historical Society has reprinted *HAMDEN: OUR ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE*; the 208 page publication has over 150 photographs by Leland Robinson. This edition notes some of our architectural losses and records those listed on the National Registry of Historic Places.

Copies may be purchased in the Town Clerk's office, in the Hamden History Library within the Miller Library (Tues. 10-12 or Thurs. 1-4), and at the Eli Whitney Museum or by calling 288-0017. The requested donation is \$20; this money supports the activities of your Society.

## **HAMDEN** OUR ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE



Martha May Becker

Nancy Davis Sachse