



THE HAMDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER FALL EDITION 2004

The Board of Directors and especially our Treasurer wish to thank all of our members who have continued their membership in the Society and sent their dues in a timely fashion. Without your sustained support, just meeting the obligations for the Dickerman House would be difficult. Also, our appreciation is extended to those members who were able to include an extra donation.

You could not miss the announcements, coverage and articles in the newspapers this summer since the publication of *Images of America: Hamden*. This photo journal of life in Hamden, largely drawn from our archives, was the collaborative effort of Ken Minkema, Al Gorman, Joe Pepe, Martha Becker, our library's researchers, and various contributors. It is a book, which we are proud to have been able to produce. Arcadia Press ran about 1400 copies and made it available in a number of area locations from which the Society will get a royalty. Books purchased directly through the Society at the Hamden History Room at Miller Library, the Town Clerk's Office, the Dickerman House, or by contacting 288-0017 result in a greater profit for the Society. As a gauge to its success, the publisher has informed us that there will be a second printing. We will have the second edition available at the Antique Show in November.

This summer Barne's & Noble Booksellers in North Haven hosted a discussion and book signing featuring Ken and Al on the evening of August twelfth. There were about forty people in attendance many of whom purchased the new book. The lively, informative discussion period was generously sprinkled with compliments for the Society's efforts in saving old structures throughout the years.

Society members and members of the Spring Glen Garden Club, as well as the public, were invited to a wine and cheese party at the Jonathan Dickerman House in early August to meet the authors. Many books were purchased and signed with personal messages. The very warm day brought about forty-five people to the cooling atmosphere of the old house where old friends were able to meet new ones.



GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Mistakes can happen. In the preparation of the Society's publication, *Images of America: Hamden*, the date for the moving of Grace Episcopal Church was reported to be 1929 (p. 128). The correct year was 1966. Many of you can remember the church's former setting across Dixwell Avenue on the north side, but this was not the first home for Grace Episcopal Church. As Hamden's oldest meeting house, it had its roots in Mt. Carmel.

After 1786 when Hamden was established as a separate town from New Haven, an Episcopal Society was formed in March of 1790. Their first meeting for worship was held at the home of Stephen Pardee in Hamden, who agreed to the use of his house for two shillings. Construction began in 1795 on a church building located on the eastern side of Whitney Avenue in Mt. Carmel, across from where the future Mt. Carmel railroad station would be built. In January 1796, the Society began meeting in the 44 feet long by 34 wide, still not completed building.

By 1818, the Society decided to open membership to all of Hamden and thus, a new church was needed in the center of the town. It is believed that the design of the new church was done by David Hoadley whose architectural work included the United Church meeting house in New Haven. The old meeting house was sold to Charles Van Haun, who began building the new 48 by 36 foot church in the spring of 1819. The new church was dedicated by the Right Reverend Thomas C. Brownell, bishop of Connecticut, on October 4, 1821. *The History of Grace Church* quotes the "Churchman's Magazine" of December 1821 as stating, "the edifice is a chaste and commodious building, highly creditable to the zeal and liberality of the parish.

The church's debt was not settled until 1827, and it wasn't until 1833 that a church bell was installed in the tower. The Reverend Charles W. Everest (*Images* p. 104) became rector in 1843, and he began a renovation project partially funded by a legacy of \$500 from Mrs. Mercy Bassett. Wanting to expand by a few feet the rear vestry room, the Reverend Everest discovered that the church did not own the land upon which the church stood. The land's former owner, Uriah Foote, permitted the church to be built, but neglected to give a deed for the land. The church bought the extra land for the vestry room, obtained a deed, and properly recorded it.

As the existing bell tower was decayed, a new steeple was needed; Henry Austin of New Haven donated the necessary drawings, and Horace Tuttle of Fair Haven was hired to do the work. Besides the steeple and vestry room, the exterior was resingled and painted, and extensive interior remodeling was undertaken as well. All work was completed by the church's reopening in February 1848.

Over time other modifications were done, including a cellar dug and a furnace installed in 1870, the windows were replaced in 1884, and a newer furnace replaced the first in 1886 at a cost of \$189. In a 1915 windstorm, the ninety-foot steeple was destroyed and because rebuilding was too costly at the time, the less expensive present belfry was constructed in 1921.

The church, an excellent example of Federal design, was moved to the opposite side of Dixwell Avenue to provide a parking lot for Memorial Town Hall in 1966.

LOIS REPORTS

Springtime school visits to the J.D. House brought 154 students, plus parents and teachers. They represented four Hamden elementary schools, which had the opportunity to tour, learn, and enjoy the Dickerman House. Our great appreciation to Lois and her assistants, Helen Spenser and Joyce Gilbert, for leading the tours and volunteering to open the house for the eight educational sessions.

The J. D. House was open to the public on seventeen days this summer with guests numbering over 180. Our thanks to the volunteer summer docents: Stella Johnson, Charles Kortsep, Virginia and Werner Zukunpt, Marlene and John Carolla, Joyce Gilbert, Barbara Hogan, Kim Casolina, Pam and Chris Rendeiro, Al and Betsy Gorman, Lois Casey, Ken Minkama and our new docents, Lorraine Velardi, Fran Griffin, and Connie Griggs. Some of you get a gold star for double duty.

Our museum house never fails to please its visitors who are delighted to view the structure, furnishings, outbuildings, and gardens. These elements of late 18th century living can trip our imagination to wonder about the challenges to the Dickerman family's lifestyle and certainly serve as counter points to today's living conditions.

We thank Lois Casey for her time, her training sessions, and her leadership in helping the J. D. House come to life for its guests during the summer.

SPRING CLEANING

Society members gathered in June to clean and refresh the J. D. House for its summer public opening. Just as in any house cobwebs needed to be swept, new curtains hung, and rugs vacuumed. Outside the shrubs were trimmed, the Cider Mill Barn's roof was washed, and a driveway entry post was replaced. Our thanks to the volunteers for these efforts and especially to our Property Manager, Joe Pepe for checking the house daily and watering the gardens as needed. A special note of appreciation for the Spring Glen garden Club who maintain, replant, weed, and feed the herbs garden Spring through Fall.

Getting ready for the Ritz: Lois Casey, Barbara Hogan, Virginia Zukunft, and Betsy Gorman (missing from photo)



Without top hats and tails: Al Gorman, Joe Pepe, Bob Zoni, and Bill Doheny

NEWSLETTER

THE HAMDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. BOX 5512, HAMDEN, CONNECTICUT 06518

SAVE THE DATE! PUT IT ON YOUR CALENDAR! PLAN TO ATTEND

Annual Giant Valley Association of Antiques Dealers Show

November 13 and 14: Doors open at 10:00 and 11:00 AM

At The Miller Cultural Complex

Dixwell Avenue, Hamden

Volunteers will be needed to collect entrance fees at the entrance and to help staff in the kitchen. Call 288-0017. This is our only fund raiser and we ask for your support. This will be the 43rd year of the show that the Giant Valley Association of Antique Dealers arranges for the benefit of our Society. See you there.