

THE HAMDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER
SUMMER EDITION 2009

*The Hamden Historical Society and the Town of Hamden lost a remarkable friend and supporter this June. **Martha Becker** joined our Society in 1965; she served as a board member and the Society's historian. Among her many and varied accomplishments was the co-authorship of Hamden: Our Architectural Heritage. Martha was appointed Hamden's Municipal Historian in 1986 and through her research became Hamden's major asset for local information, ranging from genealogies and personalities, to structures and sites.*

Martha had a true devotion to her community's heritage. Possessing skill, knowledge and interest, she contributed at such a high level that she left to us a high standard for service to Hamden. She gave respect and attention to one and all, and did so with gentle humility and grace.

Dear Members,

The Society's annual meeting in May was attended by fifty people who were treated to a visual journey of the Mill River from its origin in Cheshire to its destination at New Haven Harbor. By way of her film, "The Mill River: Water and Wildlife," the noted naturalist, photographer, and educator, **Flo McBride**, led the hour long expedition.

Along the river's path, we viewed the abounding nature and wildlife with pauses at Munson's Dam and the Tide gates near Willow Street in New Haven. Also, the audience viewed the 2007 flooding at the Eli Whitney Museum and a bird walk with the sights, sounds, and changes of the four seasons along a path between the dam and the foot bridge at Lake Whitney. Lively discussion followed. Our thanks to Flo for sharing her video, knowledge, and enthusiasm with us.

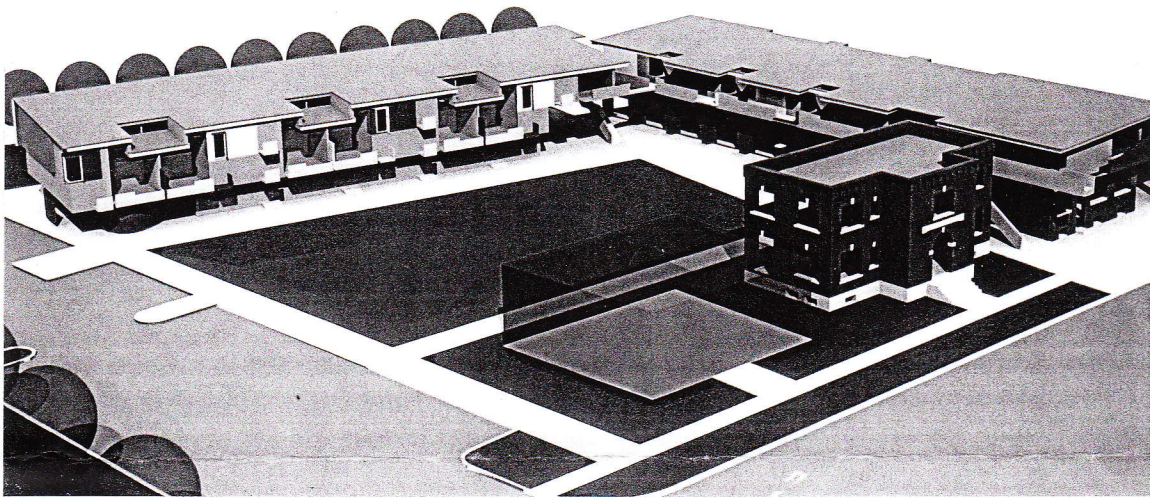
Nominations chairman, Bill Doheny, presented the following slate of officers who were reelected by the members: President Al Gorman, Vice-president Ken Minkema, Secretary Barbara Hogan, and Treasurer Joe Pepe. Refreshments followed hosted by Barbara, Stella, and Betsy.

Membership/Dues/Gifts

Great appreciation is extended to our members who responded with their renewal forms and supporting dues in a timely manner. A special "**Thank you**" to the members, including some life members, who sent an extra donation for the Society's work.

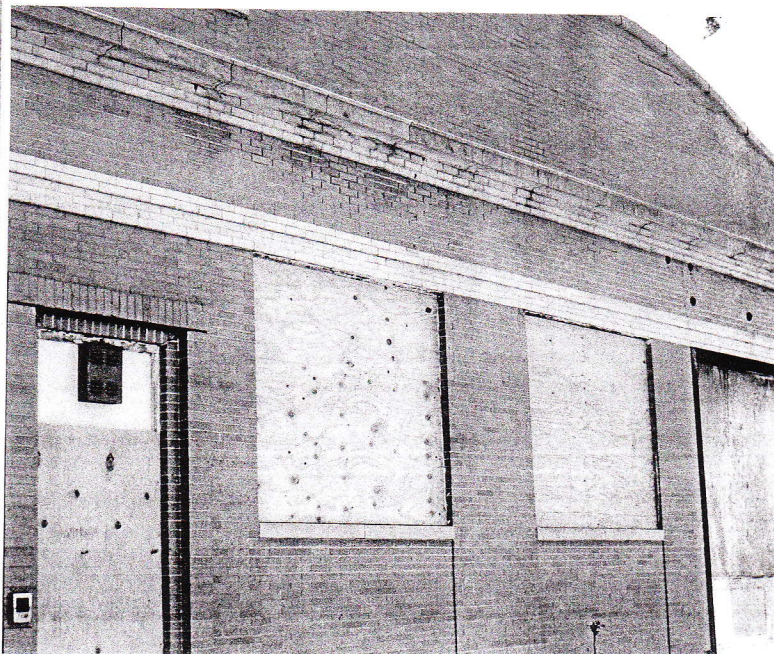
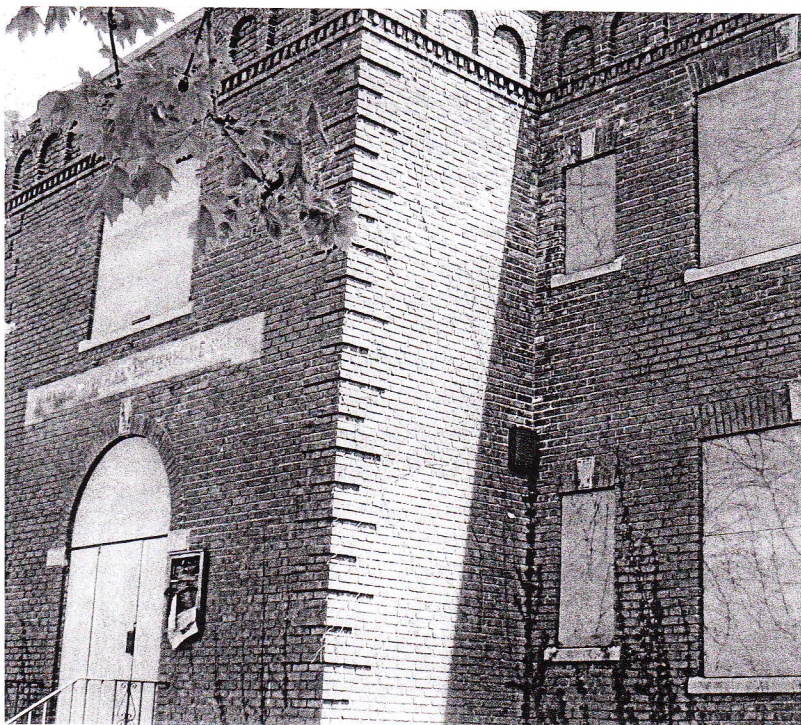
HIGHWOOD SQUARE: Preservation and Renewal

Pictured below is an architect's proposed development for 943-953 Dixwell Avenue, Hamden. It includes twenty-seven affordable resident houses for artists, art studios, display space, and some commercial enterprises; the developer, Neighbor Works New Horizons, incorporates a restoration of the historic Allen Johnson Wholesale Drug Co. and a reuse of its neighbor, the former National Biscuit Co. These buildings were part of Hamden's factory development between the World Wars. With adaptive reuse, the structures will be saved and continue to serve the community. Both buildings have been nominated for the State register of Historic Places.



Allen's Perfumes/Johnson Products was built c 1926; the factory portion was demolished in 2003, but the office remains. It presented a formal appearance somewhat Romanesque with a round-arched entry and a corbelled cornice.

National Biscuit, later Top Products, was built c 1930 with a facade of orange brick and decorated with a lintel, brick frieze, and corbel brick and cornice. The bakery reflected the decline of home-baking and the rise of consumer foods.



Cobwebs, Saws, and Shovels

The Jonathan Dickerman II house was treated to a cleaning and sprucing in preparation of our summer weekend openings in July and August. Our work crew straightened the hitching post and sign posts, trimmed and felled trees, cut back forsythia, raked and spread wood chips, and raised the rear stone step while adding another step for easier house entry. The interior was cleaned and vacuumed, and the summer curtains re-hung. Thanks to our volunteer members who are pictured below, L to R: Barbara Hogan, Al Gorman, Bill Doheny, Bob Zoni, Kim Cassolino, Craig Reynolds, and (actually working) John Carolla. Photo by Betsy Gorman.



Jonathan Dickerman House Museum – Notes

The Society's J.D.H. museum was built in 1792. It was the home of Jonathan and his wife, Miriam Bradley who had seven children, two sons and five daughters. With ninety acres of land, Jonathan grew feed for livestock and maintained apple orchards.

Originally located across Mt. Carmel Avenue on state park property, the house passed from the Dickerman family in 1835. After a series of owners, J. Edward Heaton gave it to the new Sleeping Giant Park in 1924. Since 1936, the house has been maintained and opened to the public by the Society, but did not own it. The Society acquired ownership of the house in 1961 when it was moved to its present site on land obtained from the Water Company because the State wished to straighten and widen the street.

The Dickerman House reflects the farming lifestyle of a family in the late 18th century. Come and enjoy.

Antique Show: Save the date! November 14th and 15th

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Visit the Jonathan Dickerman House;
you never know who you may meet.