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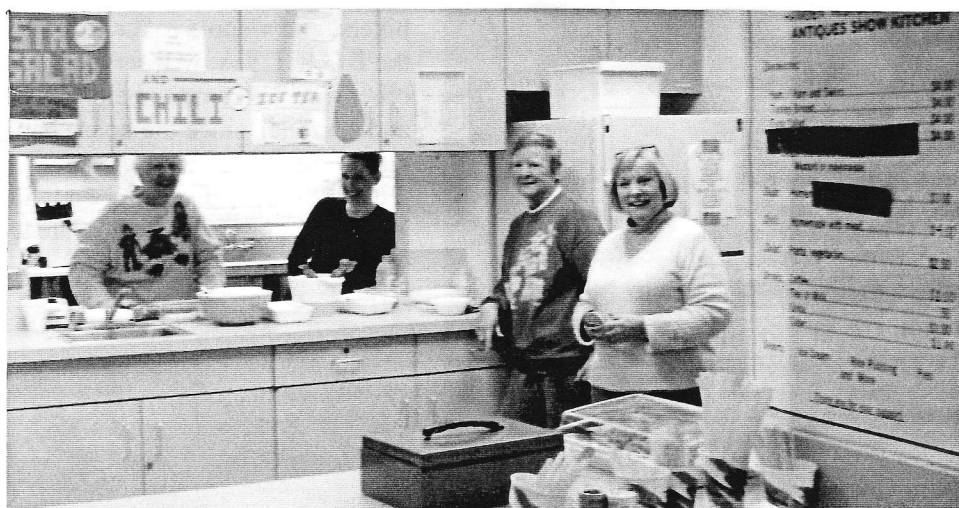


THE HAMDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER WINTER EDITION 2011

THE BIG SHOW! The banner at the corner of Dixwell and Whitney Avenues advertised the Giant Valley Antiques Show. This 49th annual show, held at the Miller Library and Cultural Center, is a benefit for our Society. Therefore, we pray for good weather to entice eager antique buyers. We also hope for hungry visitors as well, since we offer a varied menu for lunch and snacks.

The stage was set; the opening was smooth with a large number of potential shoppers. The assembled Kitchen Staff braced for the first act and were not disappointed. Service was efficient and pleasant thanks to: Ken Minkema, Betsy Pattison, Linda and Roger Rovero, John and Marlene Carolla, and Kathy and Kim Casolino. Don Werner circulated among the antiques dealers providing them an opportunity to visit us for lunch. We closed shop when the lights dimmed at 5:00 pm to get ready for the next act.

With intermission over, the second act began with the help of: Eric Lehman, Amy Nawrocki, Nancy Faughnan, Craig Reynolds, Lois Casey, Louise Brundage, and with Don again lending support. Before the show ended, Bob Zoni arrived to lug and tote tables and assist the departing dealers. We had great support from the baking team of Barbara Doheny, Barbara Hogan, Lori Minkema, Betsy Pattison, Louise Brundage, and Betsy Gorman. We thank all contributors and donors, including Lorraine Velardi and helpers. The show returned a net profit of \$831 from the refreshment stand, and the gate donation from the GVAAD was \$2500.



A Very special **THANK YOU!** to Betsy and Al Gorman who have coordinated this fundraising event for the last twenty-nine years. Next year will be the 50th annual show sponsored by the Giant Valley Association of Antiques Dealers. We appreciate their continued support and look forward to seeing you at the Really Big Show!

The above list does not do justice to the Board members who wear more than one hat serving on many committees, making our Society an active and responsible community organization. Help us, help Hamden.

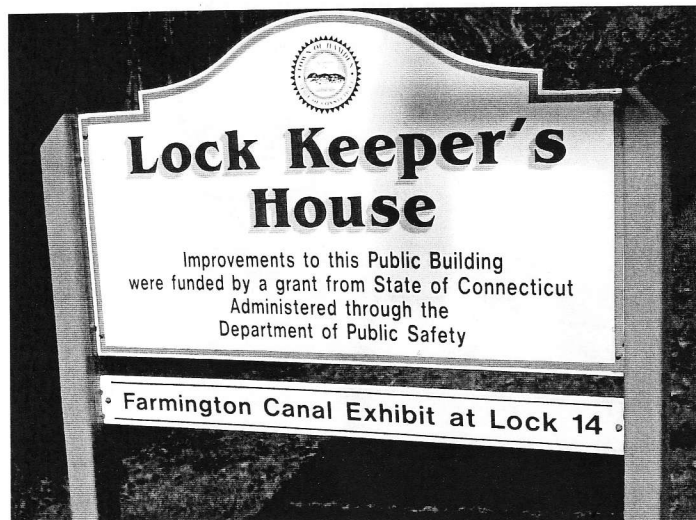
LOCK # 14 MUSEUM NOVEMBER OPENING

The Lockkeeper's House at 3908 Whitney Avenue sits adjacent to the Farmington Canal Linear Trail. Built c.1828, it housed the lockkeeper who collected tolls and operated the locks for barges traveling on the canal. The house, through the efforts of the Town of Hamden, has been rehabilitated and will serve as a police substation, rest stop for trail users, a meeting space, and exhibit area for a canal museum.



On November 18, 2010, a dedication was held at the site. The new canal exhibit was unveiled before a gathering of public officials, the press, town commissioners and staff, Society members, and invited guests. A reception was hosted by the Society and the Mayor's office.

The canal history exhibit is a cooperative project of the Farmington Canal Rails-to-Trails Association and our Society. Many of the displayed photographs illustrate the canal's construction, finances, operation, and maps its 83 mile journey from New Haven to Northampton, MA. We greatly appreciate the work of Norman Thetford, Executive Director of the F.C.R.T.T.A. for his leadership, time, and vision. The Association was among the early supporters who worked to preserve this house from public sale and save the canal's past. Many of the photos on display came from the Society's archives to the Hamden History Library and were chosen with the help of Joe Pepe and our historian, Ken Minkema. We hope to expand the exhibit to include artifacts, models and items representing the railroad which replaced the canal in the 1840's.



The canal museum at Lock #14 will be open on weekends beginning in the Spring for visitors. The Lockkeeper's House is a public building with an exterior water fountain, bathroom for trail walkers, bikers, and visitors to the exhibit. Volunteers from the F.C.R.T.T.A. will serve as docents, although others are welcome to help. Hours will be flexible and seasonal, since the house has heat and air-conditioning. Please contact Al Gorman, 203-288-0017, if you have any items to donate to the canal museum which relate to the Farmington Canal or the railroad.

Photos by J. Carolla

In October, our Society lost a good friend and Board member, Stella Johnson, who served as our liaison to the Giant Valley Association of Antique Dealers. Besides the Hamden Historical Society, she was active with the New Haven Colony Historical Society and other groups.

Milestones

With all of the snow we've had recently, we won't be seeing the subjects of this article—roadside milestones--until the spring thaw. Milestones were early distance markers, street signs of sorts, that were set up along roads so that travelers on foot, horseback, or in carriages would know how far they had to travel to reach the local courthouse. Several of these still survive in Hamden, but you have to keep a sharp lookout to notice them—when they're not buried under several feet of snow--especially at the speeds we travel nowadays.

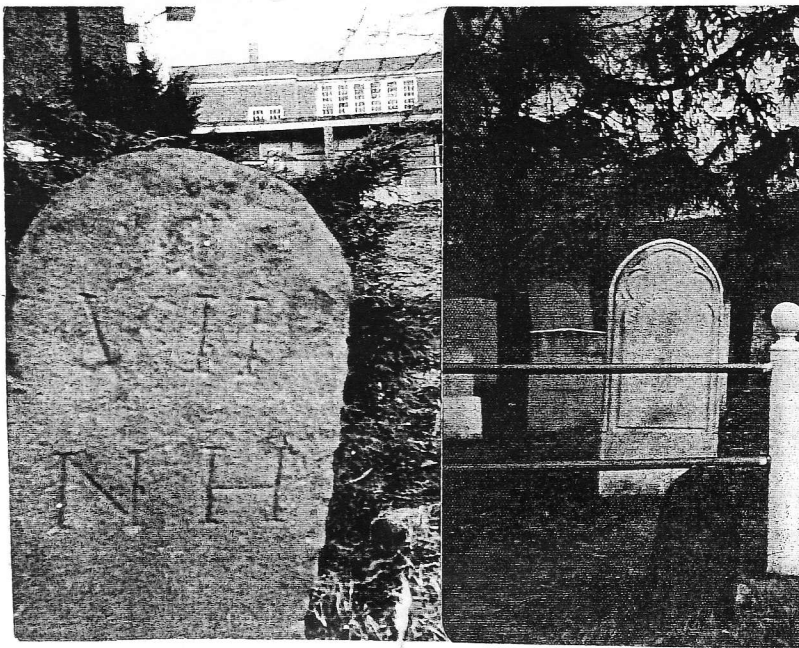
In 1767, the Connecticut General Court (predecessor of the General Assembly) mandated the erection of milestones. These stones were to be "at least two feet high," and erected "by the Selectmen of the towns near the side of the common traveling roads and on the Post roads in every County marking the distance to the County town," in our case, New Haven (of which the lands that would compose Hamden were still a part at the time).

Decades went by with typical--that is, minimal--Connecticut compliance. It wasn't until the late 18th and early 19th century, with the development of the toll road and stagecoach companies that the mile markers became important for calculating travel costs. "Turnpikes" were owned and maintained (at least in theory) by companies, who then charged individuals who used the road. Between 1792 and 1840 more than a hundred such turnpike companies were chartered, providing the basis for improved traffic and communication within and between the states. Whitney Avenue was the Cheshire Turnpike back in the day; its directness to the markets of New Haven made it an important artery for farmers and artisans to bring their produce, livestock and wares into town, and tolls were levied according to the amount of material they were transporting. Incidentally, Shepard Avenue was once known as the "Shunpike," because it was developed by locals as a no-cost alternative—though more hilly and so more strenuous to maneuver—to taking the Cheshire Pike.

Several mile markers, made of sandstone with a roman numeral and the initials "N.H." carved into them, still sit in or near their original locations along Whitney Avenue. For example, measuring from the New Haven Green (where the old courthouse stood), the third mile marker is in front of the Whitneyville Church; the fourth mile marker is at the corner of Elihu Street; the seventh mile marker is in front of what once was the old Mt. Carmel Library building (now owned by Quinnipiac University); and the ninth mile marker is in front of the Mt. Carmel cemetery.

Besides shunpikes, another, more serious threat to the turnpike monopoly was, of course, canals. The Farmington Canal, begun in the 1820s, was as much a challenge to river traffic as it was to toll roads. More viable, and faster, alternatives later emerged, such as the railroad, which largely put an end to local turnpikes—though some of us still remember when there were tolls on highways.

We often talk of reaching "milestones" in our lives—college, marriage, first home, first child, and so forth. This figure of speech, however, has its origins in those etched pillars of sandstone that mark the old roads, marking the miles as we journey. ----- Ken Minkema



NEWSLETTER

THE HAMDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. BOX 5512, HAMDEN, CONNECTICUT 06511

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**LOCK #14 MUSEUM
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Photos by J.Carolla