



THE HAMDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER AUTUMN EDITION 2012

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Dear Members:

MARK YOUR CALENDAR. The annual Giant Valley Antiques Dealers Show will open **November 17th** and continue on Sunday, the **18th**, at the Miller Cultural Complex on Dixwell Avenue. We need volunteers both days to help in the kitchen and as booth sitters. Also, we would appreciate donations of home baked goods. Contact us at 203-288-0017. This is our major and only fund-raiser. The GVAAD donate the gate to the Society. Bring a friend, look around, stay for lunch...enjoy!

SUMMER AT THE DICKERMAN HOUSE You always get to meet interesting people when you docent at the Jonathan Dickerman House. Of course, there were also many local area people who stopped by, as well as some from New York and Massachusetts. This summer we had two visitors from Ireland. We welcomed visitors from other historical societies, Yale faculty, and a number of children who wanted to show the house to their parents. We opened our doors on fifteen occasions this summer and conducted tours for over seventy guests.

Opening the doors for the summer visitors were our Docents: John and Marlene Carolla, Charles Kotsep, Lois Casey, Al Gorman, Eric Lehman and Amy Nowicki, Joe Pepe, Nancy Faughnan, Ken Minkema, Barbara Hogan, and Kathy Casolino. Thank you all.

CONGRATULATIONS The Hamden Plains United Methodist Church, located on the corner of Dixwell Avenue and Church Street, will celebrate its bicentennial this November. The church began with seven members meeting in a home on Circular Avenue. According to R. Hartley's book, they tolled the church's bells a hundred strokes in 1913 for their centennial.

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.



COME FLY WITH ME...

Just follow the signs which direct you to the Hamden Airport which was located in the Highville section of town. The airfield was bounded by Putnam and Dixwell Avenues, Morse Street, and the railroad tracks.



In the 1920's, Hamden, like neighboring West Haven and Bethany, joined America's fascination with the new age of powered flight. Elijah Williams bought what was at the time farmland, built a hangar, and opened an airfield in November, 1929. Williams was a New Haven businessman, inventor, and founder of the Excelsior Boiler Works located on South Front Street in Fair Haven. On Sundays, pilots would give aerial tours over the New Haven area in open cockpit planes, for a ticket price of two dollars. The airfield attracted eager would-be-pilots, stunt flyers, and hobbyists...making for a noisy air space over the neighborhood houses. Unfortunately, the Hamden Airport, as a commercial venture, had started at the beginning of the Great Depression. As popular as it was with air enthusiasts, it closed by 1933.



Traveling circuses used the airport site, as it was conveniently located next to the railroad tracks. Ringling and Barnum & Bailey stopped there annually before 1947. Elijah Williams died in 1967 at the age of ninety-one. Now, Hamden's Industrial Park occupies the former airport site.

THE DEEP TRAVELER

Along the top of West Rock Ridge, Baldwin Drive follows the ridge line from the West Rock Tunnel to West Shepard Avenue in Hamden and has been closed to traffic for many years. Built in the 1930's as a W.P.A. project, it could be considered a "ghost road" according to author David K. Leff.

At the Society's September meeting, Leff reminded the audience of near thirty eager listeners of the variety of landscapes and objects that can enrich our lives, create a sense of place, and prompt us to protect that heritage. Using his recent publication, Hidden in Plain Sight: A Deep Traveler Explores Connecticut, Leff defined "deep travel" as a method of observation, a concentrated and practical way of looking. Old Nike sites, ghost roads, and ghost towns (abandoned cellars, foundation walls, even streets which can be found beneath some of today's reservoirs) can link us to the past; these artifacts have a story to reveal to the "Deep Traveler."

When we travel to or vacation in a new locale, we tend to observe carefully in the spirit of discovery. Yet in our familiar neighborhood or community, we overlook things that can tell an interesting story about the area, if we take the time to observe and question. One of David Leff's slides was a roadside milestone. These and other markers have outlived their historic purpose of measuring space. In Hamden along Whitney Avenue, some still remain. Below is a list of the original locations; not all are still in place, but those that are serve as a test for the "Deep Traveler."

We thank David Leff for his insightful presentation, extend our appreciation to Betsy for the homemade refreshments, and are grateful to those who attended this event.

In Hamden, there were eight milestone markers on Whitney Avenue, which indicated the distance from the New Haven Town Hall.

Third Milestone: on the east side of Whitney Avenue between Whitneyville Congregational Church and its Parsonage House.

Fourth Milestone: on the northwest corner of Elihu Street and Whitney.

Fifth Milestone: on west side of Whitney Avenue just north of Skiff Street.

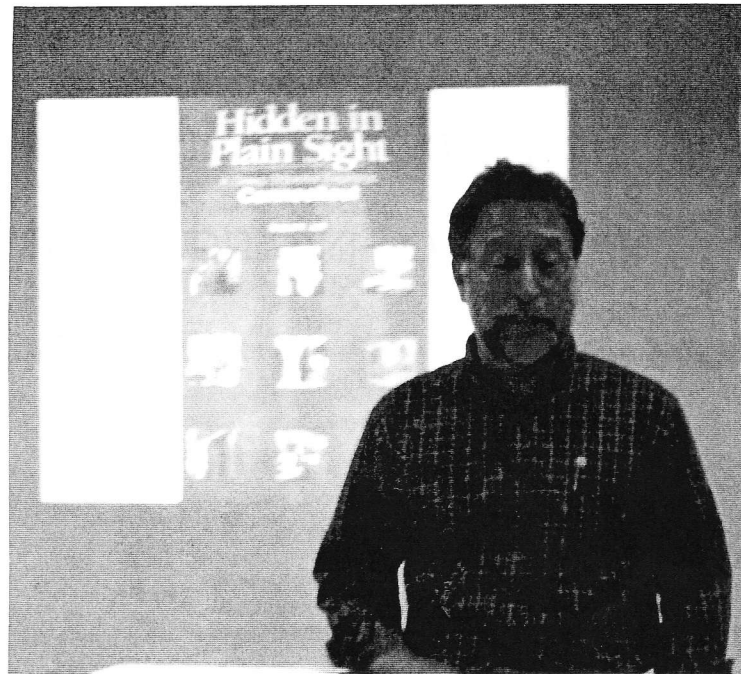
Sixth Milestone: at the intersection of Washington Avenue and Whitney.

Seventh Milestone: on the south front lawn of the new Irish Hunger Museum (QU).

Eighth Milestone: on the west side of Whitney Avenue in front of the Days Inn Motel.

Ninth Milestone: in front of Mount Carmel Cemetery on east side of Whitney.

Tenth Milestone: at 4256 Whitney Avenue on west side.



NEWSLETTER

THE HAMDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. 5512

HAMDEN, CONNECTICUT 06518

51ST ANNUAL GIANT VALLEY ANTIQUES SHOW

November 17th and 18th, 2012

Saturday 10 A.M. to 5 P.M.

Sunday 11 A.M. to 4 P.M.



MILLER LIBRARY - CULTURAL CENTER

2901 Dixwell Avenue Hamden, CT

Admission \$6.50 \$.50 Off Admission with this card (good for 2 people)

One Free Appraisal with Price of Admission Sunday 12-3 P.M.

Directions:

From I-91 North or South, take Exit 10 to end (Rte. 40/Mount Carmel Connector). At traffic light take a left onto Whitney Avenue and go six traffic lights. At the sixth light (Dixwell Avenue) take a right. The Miller Library-Cultural Center is a short distance on the left.

From Route 15 North take Exit 61 and from Route 15 South take Exit 62. Turn right onto Whitney Avenue and at the second traffic light (Dixwell Avenue) take a left. The Miller Library-Cultural Center is a short distance on the left.

A BENEFIT FOR THE HAMDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Sponsored by the Giant Valley Association of Antiques Dealers • www.GVAAD.org

The Antique Show is the Society's major fundraiser. Gate proceeds and kitchen sales go directly to support our Society. Bring this card for a reduced admission. Please plan to attend. Bring a friend. Stop by and enjoy lunch. Support the Society.