

THE HAMDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER SUMMER EDITION 2012

Dear Members:

The most important ingredient of a successful historical society is its volunteers. Those are the special people who enjoy helping, giving a little extra, and/or willing to donate some time because they recognize the critical role their society plays in the community. Maintaining, operating, and managing the Dickerman House, the cider mill barn, and the grounds is our Society's ongoing responsibility. Our volunteers are indispensable in this task.

Getting the house ready for public viewing is an annual event; the house's interior is swept, dusted, and polished while the bushes outside are trimmed, weeds are cut, and minor repairs are made. We thank the 2012 crew of: John Carolla, Al Gorman, Eric Lehman, Bill (woodsman) Doheny, Amy Nawrocki, Kim Casolino, Barbara Hogan, and Betsy (photographer) Gorman.

It is with these volunteers, as well as the Spring Glen Garden Club members who generously maintain the herb/flower gardens, John Carolla who manages the house/grounds on a year round basis, and Bob Zoni who is our "go to" carpenter. They volunteer to preserve the J.D. House as a special cultural asset in Hamden.



Exhibiting and explaining the story of the Dickerman House and its late 18th century family is the task of the Society's educational docent team of Lois Casey and Nancy Faughnan. They opened the House in April and May for Hamden third graders. This last Spring over 160 students from Dunbar Hill, West Woods, and Bear Path schools visited along with twenty-one adults.

PLEASE JOIN US

On Thursday, September 20th at 7 PM for our Fall program with author, essayists, poet, photographer, and former Deputy Commissioner, CT Department of Environmental Protection David Leff. He will discuss his new book **Hidden in Plain Sight**. How common place things such as old milestones, diners, ghost towns, and neglected graveyards can enrich our lives. At the Social Hall, Miller Cultural Library Complex, 2901 Dixwell Avenue. Enter at the rear. Refreshments will be served. Bring a friend.

Saving the Past

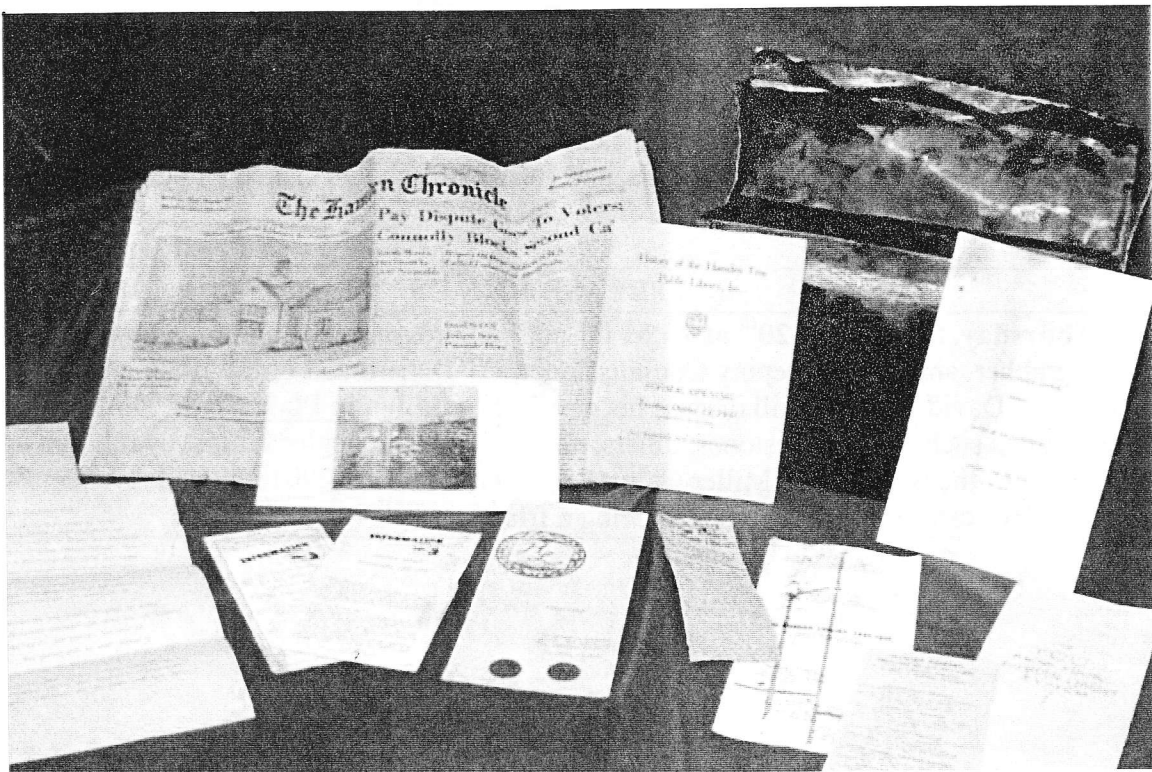
When Mary Miller died in 1924, she left \$100,000 to the Town of Hamden for the establishment of a library in the center of town in memory of her husband, Willis E. Miller a prominent businessman; however, her daughters had life use of the money.

After their deaths, the Miller Memorial Library was constructed on Dixwell Avenue in 1951. It continued as Hamden's main library until 1980 when the present library opened across the street; from that date until May of 2012, it served as the Hamden Police Department's HQ. The photo at right shows public works employees opening the copper box found in the cornerstone.



The contents are displayed below and will be exhibited in the Miller Library. They include: The Hamden Chronicle of that week, June 21, 1951, two pennies, library information, a copy of the dedication program, and speeches given that day, June 29, 1951, and a photo of the older Centerville Library's reading room taken in 1921. Also included was a history of the Thimble Club, which was a group of ladies who established a lending library about 1900. Their efforts would lay the groundwork for Hamden's free public library.

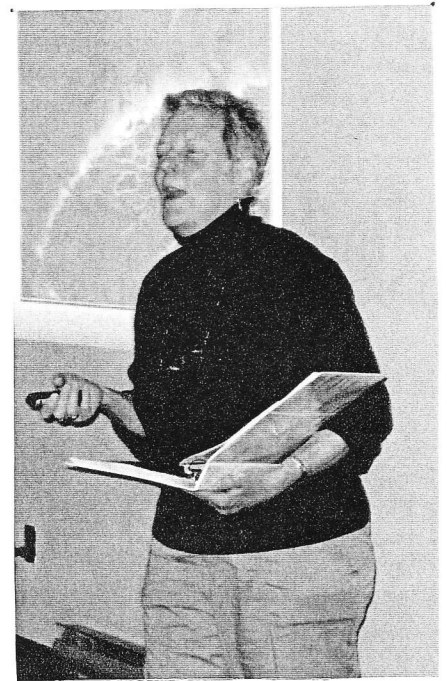
The Society was able to save a number of other artifacts, e.g. the weathervane and the building's inscribed frieze. The building is going to be demolished along with its neighbor, the annex (built in 1952), to make space for a parking facility which will be used by the nearby new Hamden Police Station and restored Memorial Town Hall.



WHAT'S HAPPENED

JULIE HULTEN gave a presentation in May on "The Resort Era on Sleeping Giant." There were over seventy attendees! All were delighted by Julie's photos, narration, and insights about the "houses" and cabins that existed atop the Sleeping Giant in the late 1800's through 1939. Hope you were able to attend this program and enjoyed the refreshments as well.

Donations by Ron Gagliardi to the Society's History Library included a framed "Award of Merit" given to Alfred Dickerman (1808-1887) in 1822. Thank you.



On Earth Day in April, our Society was represented by Eric Lehman (center) and Al Gorman (right) at an informational table at Hamden's Earth Day celebration at the Middle School.

A donation was received from Walter Harris of a marvelous antique child's armchair for the Dickerman House. This unique ladder-back, maple chair is a welcome addition to the house's kitchen area. It is given in memory of Mr. Harris's grandparents, Helen and Benjamin Malcolm Harris. Mr. B.M. Harris was an original Board member of the Society.

The Hamden Historic Properties Commission has published a brochure titled: Whitneyville Historical Walking Tour. It highlights the historic buildings and sites of the Whitneyville area. Designed for walkers, the tour covers a little over a mile of fairly flat terrain from the Eli Whitney Museum to the Whitneyville Congregational Church and back on Lake Road. Brochures are available at the Dickerman House, Eli Whitney Museum, Libraries, the Town Clerk's office, and at Whitneyville locations.

WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN

The annual Antique Show on November 17th and 18th put on by the Giant Valley Association of Antiques Dealers to benefit our Society. Please plan to attend. This is our only fund-raiser and it's fun.

NEWSLETTER

THE HAMDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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The original Miller Memorial Library, later the Hamden Police Department, demolished 2012.