



THE JONATHAN DICKERMAN HOUSE

THE HAMDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
INCORPORATED

P. O. BOX 5512 – HAMDEN, CONNECTICUT 06518

ANNUAL APPEAL FOR RENEWAL  
2014

The Hamden Historical Society  
is a 501C3 not for profit organization

Dear Valued Member,

“Planning our past for the future.” With that thought in mind, I write to ask for your continued support as a member of the HAMDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY, Inc.

Your membership helps us open the historic Jonathan Dickerman House museum, the Hamden History Library, present an educational program for Hamden third graders, and continued town-wide preservation advocacy.

During the past year, the Society has sponsored a lecture with Eric Lehman based on his recent publication, Becoming Tom Thumb. Our Giant Valley Antique Show in November was a great success. The Dickerman House was opened for public viewing (Please consider volunteering as a docent on a Saturday or Sunday during the summer). The Society supported the Ivesville Historic District designation. It also continues to support preservation of the Maselli Barn, the Rectory School Barn, and the 1900's barn at Brooksvale Park. We await the release of our newest publication: Hamden Revisited, which will be released in June.

Of special note, our Archivist, Joe Pepe, after fourteen years of excellent work, has retired. He did research for so many library patrons and satisfied all. Joe will now work as a volunteer. Our new archivist, Beth Shutts, has a library degree, operates a family business, and brings experience from the Cheshire Library system. With Joe's help, it has been an easy transition. Contact [hhs@hamdenlibrary.org](mailto:hhs@hamdenlibrary.org) for hours of operation.

For those who have not renewed their membership in a year or more, please join us again. Complete and return the enclosed membership form by the end of June with your tax-deductible gift.

We look forward to seeing you at our wine & cheese book signing party the last Sunday in June, from 1 to 4 PM at the Dickerman House.

Thank you for your support,

Al Gorman, President

## Once Upon a time in Hamden...a German Biergarten

Written by visiting author: Julie Hulten

Lost in time, forgotten by most, only a few older folks recollect their parents or grandparents fondly reminiscing about the old-time beer gardens that once enlivened the New Haven area.

By the 1800's German-Americans had settled and set about making themselves at home. On summer weekends they gathered at local establishments like "Schuetzen Park, the old standby...the roomiest and most popular spot for large affairs with its shady grove, covered dance pavilion, and long tables under the skies." Here they sang, played music, engaged in sport and reveled in familiar food and drink.

In *History of Hamden* Rachel Hartley describes the spot as approximately 15.6 acres. An article in the *Hartford Courant* reported that "the park will consist of a 600 ft. shooting range, a picnic grove, and a dance pavilion. The entrance will be at the end of the State Street trolley line along Welton Street. In the December 1907, report of the New Haven Civic Improvement Commission it was stated that over 7,000 people per day were carried on the Schuetzen Park route.

*Schuetzen Verreine* (shooting clubs) from all over the area would hold competitions at Schuetzen Park with prizes and money awards given. *The Cornell Daily Sun* and *Yale Daily* report intercollegiate shooting matches taking place at the park at least during the years 1900-1902.

The park was also used for gymnastic events. *Turnvereine* (gymnastic clubs) from far and wide competed for cash and other prizes. There were calisthenics exercises, fencing, drill practice, pole vaulting, Indian clubs, and similar competitions.

And they danced! On August 27, 1881, the *New Haven Anzeiger* reported that "at the *Teutonia Maennerchor Pic-Nic* in Schuetzen Park the young people swung the dance-leg pretty actively despite the sultry weather while the older fellows...found deep satisfaction at the "spring" (beer keg).

By the late 19-teens, several factors led to the demise of Schuetzen Park. The older generation was passing and their offspring were less interested in keeping "the old ways." In 1917 the Connecticut Agricultural Station sought funds to drain a serious malarial breeding swamp between Schuetzen Park and the railroad just north of the New Haven town line. Already declining toward the end of the decade, it was most likely the passage of the National Prohibition Act (1919-1920) that sealed the fate of this once popular and vibrant establishment. The park buildings remained until the 1940's when Botwinik Brothers built on the property. Today 333 Welton Street is the home of Porcelen Specrail, Inc.

As the German's say *Es war einmal...* Once upon a time...Perhaps if you head down that way on a quiet summer's evening, you might catch the strains of an Oopah Band and lusty singing echoing forth. That movement just out of the corner of your eye just might be a group that is staying for one more nostalgic song, linking arms and swaying back and forth; *schaukeIn* just like "back home."



One of the important features in connection with happier era was the fact that the women folk were always invited to the gatherings in the wildwood and here is a typical family group posing for their picture after a jolly, carefree day at Schuetzen Park. And did the girls tilt a mean lid!

Above: One of the important features in connection with happier era was the fact that the women folk were always invited to the gatherings in the wildwood and here is a typical family group posing for their picture after a jolly, carefree day at Schuetzen Park. And did the girls tilt a mean lid!

#### Notes

\*Eldredge, H. Wentworth. *The New Haven German Community*. A Field and Historical Study of German-American Institutions and Group Life. Yale Ph.D. Dissertation, 1935. A Dissertation presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Yale University in Candidacy for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, 1935. [Note: all references to German language publications are from this dissertation.]

Author's Note: Special thanks to Frances Skelton at the Whitney Library, New Haven Museum, who found the 'treasure trove' and who continued to look long after I thought I'd found 'everything'. For the leads, newspaper references, and personal memories of Welton Street, I heartily thank the inimitable members of the Hamden: Mighty Metropolis Facebook page – networking at its best!

### SAVE THE DATE

#### OPEN HOUSE AND BOOK SIGNING AT THE JONATHAN DICKERMAN HOUSE

June 29, Sunday 1-4PM...Open to members and prospective members...Join us for autographs and refreshments. Be among the first to see our newest publication.

**NEWSLETTER**  
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At Hamden's Earth Day celebration:  
(L-R) Al Gorman, Eric Lehman, Amy  
Nawrocki, and Beth Shutts.

