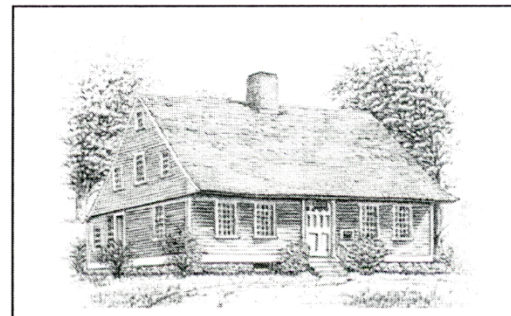


THE HAMDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



Winter 2020 - Spring 2021

Hope for the Future

With the number of Covid cases easing across the country, and with vaccination in full swing, we are all looking forward in the hopes that someday soon we will be able to resume at least some aspects of our normal lives. That includes those involved in and who support the Hamden Historical Society. Our activities have been curtailed, our History Room is still shut down, the annual autumn antique show at Miller Library is on hold, the Jonathan Dickerman House and Talmadge Cider Mill are closed. Granted, the Dickerman House and Cider Mill have been closed to the public since the infamous tornado of 2018 had its way with the area around the Sleeping Giant, but the pandemic slowed progress on the repairs.

Even so, we are getting things done. Our board now zooms online; our intrepid archivist, Kathy Lindbeck, assists people via email; our webmaster and municipal historian, Dave Johnson, continues to update the offerings on our website; and our dedicated restorationist, Bob Zoni, has completed the reconstruction of the Cider Mill and is approaching the final phase of repairs to the Dickerman House. Also, our friends at the state level have been very understanding of the plight of local civic organizations, and innovative in finding new opportunities for funding. We owe a deep debt of gratitude to these individuals and to all of those who have contributed to the ongoing thriving of the Society during these difficult times, whether through their labors or through their donations.

Our hope for the Society is that it will come out of this time of trial with renewed purpose. We want to have our website serve as an expanding resource for our users and members. We need to increase the hours of operation of our History Room. And, thanks to a series of grants from the State Historic Preservation Office, the Dickerman House will be sensitively improved with the aim that it becomes a year-round, community-wide venue for tours, events, exhibits, and other activities.

Please do what you can to support this vision (you can now give via Paypal on our website!). And here's to a prosperous and productive 2021.

Once upon a time in Hamden ... a German *Biergarten* by Julie Hulten

Lost in time - only a few may recollect family stories about the old-time beer gardens that once enlivened the New Haven scene.*

The German community, made up of emigres fleeing political turmoil at home, flourished during the second half of the 19th century. Once settled, they began to make themselves more at home. By the late 1860's numerous societies, lodges, churches, and newspapers had formed, bringing a sense of familiarity. These provided a means to interact in familiar ways. They also offered aid in times of trouble. On weekends, they gathered in parks and created 'gardens,' where they could enjoy the remembered food, music, and activities of "home."

These gardens were established outside city limits as New Haveners disapproved of noisy festivities, especially on Sunday. One of these gardens, Schuetzen Park, was the roomiest and most popular spot ... with its shady grove, covered dance pavilion, and long tables under the skies. Located off State Street on Welton, the Park covered approximately 15.6 acres.

Here, on summer Sundays, folks did not just socialize and share memories. They sang, played music, danced, engaged in sport, reveled in familiar foods, and they drank substantially of Rhine wine and lager-style beer – a German exclusive in the area.

The New Haven Street Railway Company and the Fair Haven and Westville Railroad Company trolley lines terminated at the Park and made travel easy. A 1907 report stated that over 7,000 people per day were carried on the Schuetzen Park route.

Then times changed. By the late 19-teens, the older generation was passing, and their offspring were less interested in keeping "the old ways." Prejudice engendered by World War I prompted many in the German American community to think less about their heritage and more about being "American." In 1917, the malarial swamp between Schuetzen Park and the railroad was reported as a health hazard. The passage of the National Prohibition Act (1919-1920) sealed the fate of this once popular and vibrant establishment.

Subsequent inhabitants of the property were the United Smelting and Aluminum Company (1918-1924), Botwinik Brothers (1925-), the Meyer's Company (-2002), and today, Porce-Len Specrail, Inc.

As the German's say, *Es war einmal...* Once upon a time ... Still, on a quiet summer's evening, one might catch the strains of an Oompah Band and lusty singing. That movement just out of the corner of the eye might be a group staying late for one more song, linking arms, and swaying back and forth; *schaukeln* just like "back home."

* Other such nearby establishments included Frank Hugo's *Elysium* on the corner of Grand and Franklin Street, *The Lokal* of Herr Doerschuck at 985 State Street, Kittler's Eagle Grove in Hamden, Lion Park, run by the *Loewen Brauerei*, (Lion Brewery) in Allingtown, and Basserman's Rock Brewery at the base of East Rock.

NOTE: A fuller version of this article with references can be found on the Hamden Historical Society webpage.



Coming in June 2021

Book Talk with Howard Sherman, the author of *Another Day's Begun: Thornton Wilder's Our Town in the 21st Century*.

Join the conversation about Hamden's own, Thornton Wilder.

"Howard Sherman's book, *Another Day's Begun*, explores the impact of acting in Thornton Wilder's timeless play, *Our Town*. Interviewing a hundred actors, amateur to professional, Mr. Sherman records how the dramatic creating of Grover's Corner influenced these performers lives. No matter the location of the production, whether in a prison auditorium or a Broadway stage, the actors who brought the characters to life, had their lives profoundly changed in the process. These reminiscences are a great example of how the use of public history records personal moments of cultural transformation."

Melissa Canham-Clyne, Director of the Hamden Public Library

[Exact date to be announced--consult Hamden Public Library website]



Photos of Dickerman House
& Talmadge Cider Mill
(by Dave Johnson)

For more
photos, see
HHS website\



A Hamden History Minute

Dr. Daniel Hurd

In the 1870s, Arch Street, in the Highwood section of town, was the home and practice of Dr. Daniel Hurd, an African-American healer. A former slave from Virginia, Hurd used traditional methods and ingredients to treat a variety of illnesses and conditions, from sore throat to rheumatism to croup. He welcomed patients to his office and also made house calls. During their centuries in slavery, African-Americans, both men and women, blended African healing techniques with Native remedies and European medicine to treat their fellow slaves; as time went on, they also included free blacks and white people among their clients. Because the temperance movement was in full swing after the Civil War, Hurd assured his patients that he did not use alcohol in his prescriptions.

For more information, and on how to become a member, go to www.hamdenhistoricalsociety.com

Newsletter
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