



**DONATIONS AND VOLUNTEERS  
NEEDED FOR THE HOLIDAY  
OPEN HOUSE**

We hope that you can join us this year for our annual holiday open house on **Sunday, December 6th from 2-4 PM.** We will have music, and mulled cider, and many holiday treats. We are looking for volunteers to help us decorate the house. If you are interested in volunteering, please come to the Darling house any time from 9am-1pm on Saturday, December 6th. We are also seeking donations of baked goods and wreath's to sell and raffle at the open house. If you would like to make a donation you can drop it off on Saturday while we are decorating or on Sunday before the event. Thank you for your generous support!

**Amity & Woodbridge Historical Society, Inc.**  
1907 Litchfield Turnpike  
Woodbridge, CT 06525



www.woodbridgehistory.org

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# AMITY & WOODBRIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY JOURNAL

End of Year Newsletter

November 2015



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**Beecher Road Third Grade Fall Field Trip**

As the Beecher Road School third graders exit the school bus they are divided into groups with parents and volunteers. They are welcomed on the porch and are anxious to begin the tour. Some have been told by a school mate or a friend to look for a "Scary Lady" and a "Big Book" in the Darling House.

Broken out into groups, one group settles into the kitchen. There we compare newer cooking items to old. The children see an old waffle iron with iron handles to be held over a hearth, trying to handle its weight, some find it difficult. Also displayed is a Spider Pot and a Dutch Oven for baking. On a set table are sharp forks and slender knives. A hanging lantern provides a lesson in science.

Then all take turns churning cream into butter, learning this is a task given to young members of a family. Once the cream separates into buttermilk and butter, it will be served on crackers to all.

Outside other groups watch cider being made from apples with an old press set up near the barn. The cider will be a welcome taste on the porch. They tour the inside of the barn seeing gardening tools and hear the history of the barn. They have toured all of the rooms and seen portraits of early members. Gathering on the porch are flags displayed, then told the history of each flag, and questions are answered.

Carrying coloring books featuring drawings from items in the house, a postcard, and individual Calligraphy name cards in hand, they end their field trip to the Darling House. Submitted by Phyllis Frederico

## Local Lore – A True Legend

As we enjoy these glorious autumn days filled with red and gold and orange hued trees made brilliant by clear skies and crisp air, we probably think often of that favorite Connecticut fruit, the apple. In days past New England was filled with apple orchards. Nearly every farm had its version of this area which supplied a delicious staple during the long sparse winter. Woodbridge was no exception. Anecdotes about these orchards must abound and again, Woodbridge is no exception.

From 1949 to 1959, every two weeks, on Saturday mornings in Woodbridge, the young Jeynes boys, Richard and David, would collect for their paper routes. (this amounted to 86 cents in 1949, up to 92 cents in 1959). These Saturdays also inevitably yielded a story from ‘Uncle Eph Baldwin, still alive then, in his eighties.

This story was about Ephriam himself, who was born in 1869, 4 years after the Civil War. He was about 10 years old in 1879 and living with his family on their farm on Racebrook Road (the present day corner of Racebrook and Overhill Roads). His father had an apple orchard in the area of the southeast corner of Racebrook and Ansonia roads (until the 1960s known as Buttonball Corner) which was directly in the path of gypsies who would often travel that way from the Derby valley to New Haven. Unfortunately, for the Baldwins, the gypsies seemed to find the apples very tempting and every time they passed along Ansonia Road, they invariably would fill their sacs with these delicious fall treats thus robbing the Baldwins of their own winter supply and possibly even some income at market.

Finally, this affront was too much for young Ephriam and one night he decided to do something to assure a plentiful apple supply for the coming winter. The next morning he told his father that they didn’t have to worry about their winter apple supply. Why? Well young Ephriam had forced himself to stay awake until late into the night when, he crept down to the orchard where the gypsies were sleeping and quietly stole all the apples back!

Like many in town, Uncle Eph, as he was known to all in Woodbridge, was a farmer (one can still see his barn on Racebrook Road.) He married Alice Peck who had been brought up on Baldwin Road. Unfortunately, Alice died in 1896 in child-birth. She was 24 years old. Their son, Stanley, lived just six weeks after her.

Ephriam never married again. He had his love and she had passed away. In the 1930s he sold milk to the Racebrook neighbors including the Jeynes, Jube Baldwin, and Stuart Families. The cost was 5 cents a quart and the families walked to his farm to pick it up. Of course there were always the added extras when one had to go to Uncle Ephs for milk: such as small boys being allowed to mount the horses and cantered around the barn yard.

Eph was a true legend in the “Buttonball Corner” neighborhood. He passed away at 98 in 1967. Submitted by Rich Jeynes



Ephriam Baldwin - Taken in his yard - 1965 age 96

## Woodbridge Indian Baskets

The Amity & Woodbridge Historical Society is seeking information from any person or family who possibly inherited a Wepawaug Indian basket made by the members of the tribe who lived on the Deerfield Reservation in Derby and adjacent to Osbourne Lane in Woodbridge beginning about 1802. This was the Mack family: mother Eunice, son James, daughter Ruby. The death of Eunice was recorded in 1841 in the Woodbridge Congregational Church where her children were baptized in 1802, apparently under the name Mansfield. Originally, there were ten members in their group. They made simple wood splint baskets from ash or oak splints possibly dyed and usually without marks.

Please call Dr. Marvin Arons, Woodbridge Town Historian, at 203-389-5179.

## Our Collection of Quilts

The Amity & Woodbridge Historical Society has an extensive collection of antique textiles at the Thomas Darling House that are in need of additional preservation measures. Over the next few months, we plan to begin phase 1 of that process by working on our 22 quilts and coverlets. Many of them are exceptional examples of the early American art form done in a great variety of patterns, including a number of signature quilts. Some are original to the Darling family and all of them have all been passed down through Woodbridge families.

An expert in textile conservation, Karen Clark of Woodbridge, Senior Conservator at the Textile Conservation Workshop in South Salem, NY, visited the Darling House last month and demonstrated the proper techniques to conserve our quilts. She also, very generously, donated a number of supplies to help us get started.

We are now turning to you, our members and friends, to help us preserve these beautiful treasures either by donating time or making a monetary contribution. The preservation process involves lining the folds of the quilts with acid-free tissue, wrapping them in the tissue, and storing them in special acid-free boxes (after any dust is removed by a very gentle vacuuming with a protective screen). If you would like to help with this project and make a donation for one or more quilts, the cost of the supplies for each one is about \$50.

After completion of the quilt conservation phase, we will turn our attention to the collection of antique clothing. We are hoping to raise a total of \$1200 in contributions over time to cover the expenses for preserving both the quilts and the clothing. For more information on volunteering or donating, please e-mail [info@woodbridgehistory.org](mailto:info@woodbridgehistory.org).

### **THANKS TO ALL OF YOU...**

...for your continued support of the historical society, through your donations and attendance at our events throughout the year. 2015 brought many changes to the historical society and the Darling house: We started last winter by welcoming new caretakers and farmers to the house, we then added quarterly open houses with hearth cooking demonstrations as well as new displays of items from our collections. We have continued our work on cataloging our archives and have started a new initiative to preserve our large quilt collection. In addition, we have begun a sizeable capital project to restore the exterior of the Darling house and outbuildings. This is the largest and most expensive project we have undertaken, and are working together with the town, which owns the property and town resident Leland Torrence who has generously donated his time to advise on and oversee the project. This year we were able to remove the lead paint from the west and south sides of the house and repaint as well as restore the windows. This, however, was only phase I of an extensive and necessary project to preserve the Darling house. Together with the town, we applied for and were fortunate enough to receive a matching grant for \$7900 from the 1772 Foundation that was specifically earmarked for the window restoration portion of the work. Phase I of this multi-year project was paid for with the grant and funds set aside by the town for yearly maintenance, but we still had a shortfall of \$6880 that had to be covered by dipping into the reserve funds of the historical society for \$5880 and a generous donation we received for the project.

We hope you will consider renewing your membership before the end of the year so that we can continue to fulfill our mission (which was also updated this year as well-see our summer newsletter). We would also like to ask you to consider making an end of the year donation to help us cover the \$5880 overage we had in the first phase of our exterior restoration project. Stay tuned in 2016 as we will continue to keep you updated on the restoration not only of the exterior of the house, but also of the barns and other outbuildings.

We are excited to bring you new events and look forward to sharing our museum and collections with even more of you next year. We hope you can find time to come and enjoy the wonderful treasure that the Darling house provides for all of us. Have a wonderful holiday season!

Alexia Belperron, Amity and Woodbridge Historical Society President