



Amity and Woodbridge Historical Society News

THE THOMAS DARLING HOUSE
1907 Litchfield Turnpike
Woodbridge, Connecticut

Spring
1989

Dear Members and Friends;

There have been some changes in the last year at the Amity and Woodbridge Historical Society, yet other activities remain the same. We now have new caretakers living at the house; Lisa and Orlando Rodriguez and their small son. Orlando is with the State Police which we feel adds to the security of the property. We had the house painted last year so it will look very nice for our annual Sunday afternoon Open Houses from 2 to 4, June through September.

The Antique Show will be held on Saturday, May 20th at "The Center" from 10 to 4. It has a history of being one of the nicer outdoor shows in the area. A red, white and blue quilt in the Honey Bee pattern is being made by members of the Society for a raffle at the Antique Show.

We welcome your interest in the Society and hope to broaden our circle of active members as well as financial supporters. Join with us to learn more about Bethany and Woodbridge, past and present.

...SPECIAL EXHIBIT ... PUBLICATION PARTY ...

Polly Schief
President

In conjunction with the publication of the biography, a selection of Darling memorabilia will be displayed at the Woodbridge Town Library during the month of April. The exhibit will feature some books from Darling's personal library, letters and journals as well as photographs and artifacts relating to his home and family.

To mark the publication of the Darling biography, the Historical Society will hold a book signing party on Sunday 23 April from 2 until 4 PM at the Darling House.....Come meet the author, share refreshments and see the house decked out for spring!

While many Bethany and Woodbridge residents have toured the spacious, gambrel roofed Darling home on Litchfield Turnpike, they may well feel they know little about the origin-owner. "A man of integrity and uprightness" was the wording chosen in 1789 by Yale President, Ezra Stiles to eulogize his friend and former college tutor, Thomas Darling. Two hundred years later, the Amity and Woodbridge Historical Society is pleased to publish a biography of this worthy local founding father.

Under the guidance of the late Katherine Nangle, the Society commissioned Andrew W. German to research and write the biography. Mr. German, who grew up in Woodbridge, is the Associate Editor of Publications at Mystic Seaport Museum.

Born in 1720 in Newport Rhode Island, Thomas Darling was raised in New Haven and attended Hopkins Grammar School and Yale College(1740). Benjamin Woodbridge, pastor of the First Church of Christ and later namesake of the town was a Yale classmate. After graduation Darling remained at Yale to earn a master's degree and was licenced to preach. Rather than pursuing a ministerial career, he became tutor to the Yale class of 1746 which included Ezra Stiles. Darling's popularity with the class is attested to by the intricately inscribed silver bowl with which they presented him. This lovely presentation piece is now on display at the Yale Art Gallery.

In the decades following his marriage in 1745 to Abigail Noyes, daughter of the Pastor of the First Church of Christ in New Haven, Darling was involved in many business and civic enterprises. His varied occupations included operating a ropewalk, keeping a shop in partnership with Nathan Whiting, serving as a justice of the peace, New Haven County Court Judge and trustee of Hopkins Grammar School. During this period Darling corresponded with Benjamin Franklin on a number of topics ranging from glassmaking to setting up the first printshop in New Haven. In 1754 Franklin ordered a printing press and equipment from London and had it shipped to Darling's shop. The first issue of The Connecticut Gazette, the state's first newspaper was probably printed there in April of 1755.

In 1774 Darling moved his family to the outskirts of New Haven to his newly built farmhouse. Here he retired from civic affairs until the end of the war with Britain. While his correspondence shows him to have been opposed to the war, he kept a broadside of the Declaration of Independence. Once the break with Britain was complete, Darling supported a strong national government and took time to write down a list of points in favor of the new Constitution.

While written with the general reader in mind, this book will be of equal value for scholars because of its wealth of previously unpublished material, detailed footnotes and bibliography. The biography is available at the Bethany and Woodbridge Town Halls, the Bethany Library, the Yale Coop and Whitlock's Book Barn. It may also be ordered from the Historical Society (\$20. + \$2. postage).

Amity and Woodbridge Historical Society

The Thomas Darling House
1907 Litchfield Turnpike
Woodbridge, CT 06525

POSTAL CUSTOMER

NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT 06525

OFFICERS

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Accessionist: Stuart Peck, Sr.
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Librarians Wilson Kimnach and Don Menzies would like to let everyone know what has been happening with the archives over the past few months. Actually, it has been over a year now since the town tax records were moved from the Town Clerk's office to the Historical Society. All existing records from 1786-1950 are now in the custody of the Society—a rather large mass of Woodbridge historical data!

Thomas Darling, Jr. left us a great deal of legal papers from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Included in this collection are literally hundreds of documents relating to the incorporation, building, and maintenance of the Straits Turnpike Company. Carefully folded, bundled and packed away around 1820-30, these papers are now being carefully unbundled, unfolded and placed in acid free folders and boxes.

RECENT DISCOVERY !! While poking around in a deep dark recess of the attic at the Darling House, Don came across an original, exquisitely detailed, full color map entitled "Woodbridge Cemetery and Surroundings" executed in 1892 by D. G. Mitchell (Pseud. Ik Marvel). The area contained in the map includes most of Woodbridge and shows existing buildings, roads, rivers and topography. Mitchell, whose house still stands in Westville, was a popular 19th century novelist and prominent New Haven public figure. What color may have been lacking in his books is more than made up for in this unique cartographic accomplishment!

In a general and perhaps somewhat unstructured way, we are trying to turn the books, prints, maps, photographs, and documents at the Darling House into a respectable "working" library. There will soon be a set of rules and regulations for the use of library materials.

The "two dimensional collections" at the Historical Society are both extensive and impressive. Come see what's been done and what needs to be done. Call either Don or Wilson to arrange for an appointment.

We invite the membership to become involved in the activities of the Society. There are many areas in which you might volunteer and share your time and talents to help the Society. Please mark the categories which interest you and return the form with your dues.

ANTIQUÉ FESTIVAL:

I would like to work for an hour at: _____ the entrance gate.
_____ the quilt table.
_____ the refreshment booth.
_____ the baked goods table.

I would like to bring baked goods for sale. _____

I have a collection of _____ that I would like to exhibit in the Darling House display room on a Sunday from 2 to 4.

I would like to be a guide at the Darling House _____ on a Sunday afternoon.
_____ for a special Open House.
_____ for a special group tour (adults).
_____ for a special group tour (students).

I would like to work on the raffle quilts. _____

I would be willing to bake for special events. _____

Name: _____ Phone Number _____