



# THE WASHINGTON CHRONICLES

*a publication of the Gunn Historical Museum*



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## CURATOR'S CORNER

BY STEPHEN BARTKUS

The largest artifact in our collection is the historic building in which the Gunn Historical Museum resides. Built for Simeon Mitchell in 1781 on the Washington Green, and home to the museum since 1966 after June Willis bequeathed it to the Library, the museum building requires great care to ensure it is preserved for the future. We have been very busy in recent months making important upgrades to the building, approved by the Board of Trustees, totaling over \$130,000 and made possible by a bequest from Washington resident and beloved Gunn Museum volunteer, Ella Williams.

I am thrilled to report that we now have a fully climate controlled museum. The heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system has been replaced and expanded. Rooms on every floor of the museum are heated and cooled at a constant temperature. Long recommended by museum consultants and the dream of many museum staff over the years, the new HVAC system will better preserve the 15,000+ Washington artifacts in the museum's collection by eliminating harmful fluctuations and extremes in temperature and humidity throughout the year. A well-conditioned museum will also keep our many visitors, researchers, volunteers, and staff comfortable.

Other upgrades include a replacement of the museum's sewer line. A camera inspection showed that the vintage cast iron pipe, likely over 100 years old, buried deep beneath the basement floor, had significant cracks and holes. A generator will be installed to keep the museum fully functioning and the HVAC system operating without interruption during the many power outages we seem to experience here in Washington. We created a new furnace room to house the operational equipment of the new HVAC system in the basement crawlspace,

Newsletter edited by  
Lisa Breese, Operations Manager

allowing for the removal of the existing furnace room and ducts from the center of the large basement room, and thereby opening up that space. Safety upgrades to the museum have included installing a new security system, expanded fire detection with smoke and heat detectors in every room, and lighted emergency exit signs. A 1,000 gallon propane tank to fuel the new HVAC system was buried under the front lawn of the museum. In accordance with the U.S. Department of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Historic Properties, an archaeological excavation was conducted before the tank installation and many interesting artifacts were discovered from the past four centuries, informing us about the lives of those who called this place home before us.

## GIVE LOCAL FUNDRAISER

BY LISA BREESE

On April 24-25, Gunn Historical Museum participated in Give Local of Greater Waterbury and Litchfield Hills. Hosted by the Connecticut Community Foundation, Give Local united individuals, businesses and non-profit organizations across the region to reach one goal: To raise much-needed dollars for the community work of hundreds of local non-profit organizations.

We want to thank all of you for supporting Gunn Historical Museum by donating and sharing our posts and emails during Give Local 2018! We raised \$3,450. These funds will be used to subsidize:

- Free historical programs for local schools and the community
- Free special events such as the Annual Cemetery Tour
- Preservation of the Museum's 15,000 plus artifact collection
- Priority areas of the Museum such as care and restoration of the 1781 building

Cover photograph: The White sisters at the Lake Waramaug Country Club Beach c. 1920. Left to right: Esther (White) Nichols, Ruth (White) Putnam, and Adelaide White. Photograph courtesy of Joan Larned.

# MARBLEDALE PUDDLE

BY RAY UNDERWOOD

The Puddle of Marbledale, CT was a center piece for summer activities for many families in the Marbledale/New Preston area from approximately the mid to late 1950's to the late 1960's.

The Puddle was a pond of about 100 feet in diameter and 6 to 8 feet deep built at the intersection of two brook tributaries of the East Aspetuck River. These tributaries joined before they flowed into the river. The Puddle was constructed in the mid to late 1950's. At the time, the land it was built on was owned by Otto Born and Homer Underwood. Homer Underwood owned an excavation company that supplied the equipment for the dam construction and pond dredging. Many village families including those of Otto Born, Homer Underwood, Chet Lyon, Albert Swanson, Kelly Zinick, Harry Wright and Ralph Barley helped with the labor and construction.



*Kerry Underwood (Ray's younger brother) c.1965*

As in most stream fed ponds that have a dam, the Puddle silted in to a certain degree over a season. The wooden plank dam was removed each fall to let the water flow out. Every spring Homer Underwood and his sons, Ray, Brian and Kerry as they grew older; would help with the "cleaning of the silt" from the pond. This practice would be frowned upon today as the disturbance of the pond sediment would turn the East Aspetuck brown with silt. After cleaning the silt from the pond, the dam, which consisted of oak planks backed by plastic, would be reinstalled and the Puddle would begin to fill for another season.

Village kids would go to The Puddle during the summer as many of the "soccer moms" of those days would gather there with their kids. Church outings, informal softball games, barbecues and

other gatherings would take place featuring the Puddle as the main attraction. The Puddle being spring fed was known to bring on a mild case of hypothermia on even the warmest August day.

It was also home to fingerling brook trout that would come down from the tributary brooks. Beach sand from a sand bank a mile or so south on Rt. 202 (Rt. 25 at that time) was trucked in by Homer Underwood to create a beach on the western shore, which also had a diving board near the southern (deepest) end. The southern side of the pond had two concrete block wing walls stretching towards the west and east with a wooden plank dam in the middle. The dam was spanned by a wooden bridge type structure that led to a picnic area complete with a 55 gallon drum barbecue pit, picnic table and out house. The eastern shore was covered by grass that was mowed. It also had wild strawberries and a few blueberry bushes.

The largest gatherings of the season at the Puddle would take place on July 4 and Labor Day each year. At that time many of the village's families would gather for games, swimming, and picnic meals. The finale of the evenings would be a bon fire, sometimes as tall as 15 feet. The bon fire was usually built by Homer and later by his son Ray on the V-shaped shore at the Puddle's north. Soaked with an accelerant and lit from at a distance, the bon fire would ignite with a loud "woooooof"!! and then erupt as a spectacular conflagration that lit up the night sky.

Sadly only remnants of the Puddle exist today. The memories of that generation of kids who are now middle-aged adults, remind us of a simpler time and the innocence of growing up in small town USA.

## OUR FAVORITE ARTIFACTS

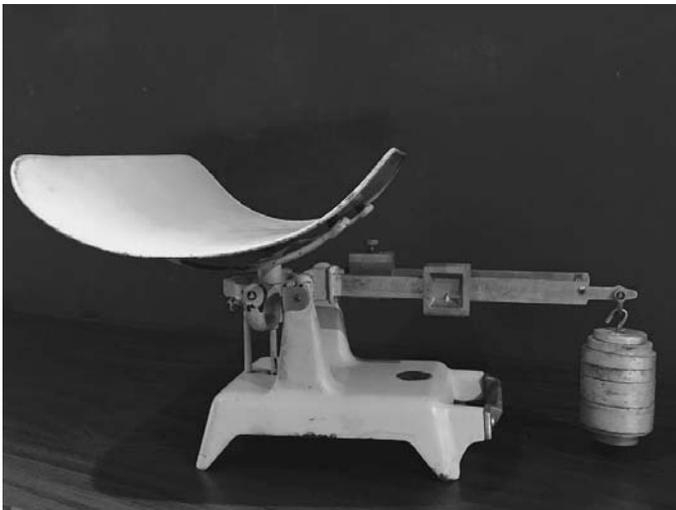


*"This is a doll that I played with in my childhood. My father's cousin, Ella Williams, gave it to me."*

*- Eileen Hearn, Gunn Museum Volunteer*

### **Composition Doll (2018.2.1)**

This doll belonged to Washington resident and Gunn Museum volunteer, Ella Williams. She recalled liking the doll in her childhood because "there was a little colored girl who went to school with me. Her name was Nettie, so I named my doll Nettie after her." - Ella Williams Oral History Interview 10/25/2001. Gift of Eileen Hearn.



*"This is a baby scale that was used by Dr. Frederic Wersebe. It is amazing to think of a scale that weighs a baby with weights instead of a lit up digital scale."*

*- Lisa Breese, Gunn Museum Operations Mgr.*

### **Baby Scale (2018.6.1)**

Dr. Frederic Wersebe, b. 1877, d. 1954 was Washington's town doctor for ~50 years. Most Washington children born during that time were likely weighed on this scale. Gift of Anne Low and Bruce Block.



*"Esther Peck (Gunn Museum Curator from 1955-1963) let me wear this helmet when I was a boy, when the museum was in the basement of the library."*

*- Dimitri Rimsky, Gunn Museum Volunteer*

### **German WWI Helmet - (W 037F)**

This is a black leather German pickelhaube helmet, (also called a spike helmet). The emblem represents the German state of Baden. It was used by infantry regiments 110 through 114, 142, 169, 170. Donor and source unknown.

## A WALK THROUGH NEW PRESTON IN THE 1960'S

(EXCERPT) WRITTEN BY W. DOUGLAS (DOUG) MCHAN JR.

The New Preston Branch of the Washington Supply Co. was a place I went often. I couldn't tell you the number of times I went there to have Harold Connerty or Albin Peterson get me a half pound of ten penny nails for the latest addition for the tree house I built, along with much help from Billy and Irving Wyant, and Chick and Bobby Pinney. The tree house had three rooms and a workshop under it. We used to buy "domes of silence", furniture feet, to be used as cheap cleats for our shoes.

The right side of the building was where the deliveries were made. We called it "the feed room". Yes, we did have farms back then! My father, Wes, who only had two jobs in his lifetime, made the deliveries from the store in Washington to New Preston. The rest of the store was filled with rows of shelves and tables full of anything you would need. To me, the best part was the boxes of model cars stacked in the right front window. I would study them all calculating which one to get next, with my thirty five cent allowance, earned from lawn mowing, and snow shoveling. Sometimes the chrome pieces would be taken or missing from the boxes. They would be marked "NG" (No Good), and moved to the office shelf. If I was lucky, Harold would give them to my Dad who would then give them to me.

The Washington Supply Company purchased the D. Burnham General Store in New Preston in 1944 and opened up the New Preston branch of the Washington Supply Company. It closed in 1973 and the building was vacant for three years until Leonard Nelson purchased it in May 1976. It had been in decline and was in disrepair along with other shops left vacant in the 1970s in New Preston. By 1977, he had created a thriving mini-shopping mall that included the following stores: The Village Upholstery Shop, The Clock Shoppe of Bill Mueller, Sports Traders, Cindy's Boutique, the barber shop of Norman Ericson, The Ice Cream Parlor, Nelson's own business and a real estate



*Washington Supply Co., New Preston, c. 1960's*

office of his wife Della. In 1983, Craig Nelson, Leonard's son, opened a store at the back of the building called the Village Barn. At the time there were a lot of Lake Waramaug tourists and the Village Barn contained a gift shop for them as well as a candy counter, Craig's antique business where he specialized in antique lighting and a local art gallery for a few years. The store closed in 2010.

When Craig Nelson was closing his store and moving items out, he took pictures of the floor in the left rear section of the building, where there was a row of different size holes. The Supply Co. kept the coils of rope in the basement to save room on the counters. The rope was threaded through these holes. Craig also found a two by ten foot Supply Co. sign in the basement, which he was kind enough to give to us. We have two yardsticks from the Supply Company. One is a John Deere. The other has a three digit phone number and on the back a "measurer" for dipping into an oil tank, as they sold home heating oil at that time. The Supply Company eventually sold that section to Hoffman Fuel Company. The porch on the left side of the building was put on after the Supply Co. was gone. Harold Peterson used to park his car in this alley.

To read the entire article, please visit this link:  
[http://bit.ly/GHM\\_Walk\\_New-Preston](http://bit.ly/GHM_Walk_New-Preston)

# WILLIAM CARL BADER

BY HELGA HERSHEY

William Carl Bader was a Washington native born and bred. Bill was born in 1929 and died in 2013. He was passionate about history and photography and he was equally passionate about trees. Bill was a prolific writer and an expert photographer. In 1966 he became a licensed, self-employed arborist. In 2004, the Washington Board of Selectman appointed him as Town Historian.

Bill's paternal grandfather, Carl Bader, arrived in New York from Alsace, Germany and was hired as a butcher in 1880 by Baker & Brinsmade to work in their market in Washington Depot. Bill's grandmother was Mary Pfefferle. His father, Carl Jr., continued to run Bader's Meat Market until 1955 when it was destroyed by the flood. His mother Bridie Butler was from Ireland. The Bader's were devout members of the Roman Catholic Church.

Bill's wife Denise, was a nurse-anesthesiologist at New Milford Hospital. They were married 22 years. Bill attended local Washington schools, received a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Bridgeport and did further studies in psychology, botany and archeology. He completed an internship at Nichols College in Massachusetts and became a full-time arborist. He was widely travelled in North America, Europe and the Middle East.

In 1988 Bill published his only book: "An American Village – The Light at the North End of the Tunnel" which is unfortunately out of print. In this book he concentrated on the flood of 1955, with its loss of buildings and lives, and the



*Billy Bader and duck, c. 1940*

coming of the railroad. He also traces the early history of Washington through rare pictures, many of them his own. He collected information through research, personal interviews and his own vivid memories. He was in his 20's at the time of the flood.

In his book Bill records the coming of the railroad in 1872. The train service lasted 75 years and changed this milk-producing, farming community. The train enabled the town to transport its products to market. The train service also brought in wealthy people from New York. In 1930 the passenger service ended and in 1948 the freight service ended. In his book Bill Bader wrote "I watched Washington Depot go from cow town to parlor town". A slow change had already begun

# WILLIAM CARL BADER

*CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6*

with wealthy families who relocated here slowly, buying up the farms and converting them to residences. He noted that these affluent residents kept the farms from being subdivided. Many of these residents subsequently became customers in Bill’s arbor business.

Bill Bader was a man of many passions. In his old battered hat and dusty Ford pickup, he could reel off a detailed history of the Gunn Museum or the saga of the railroad. He could just as easily give a cure for saving a roadside maple. Mary Harwood, a former curator of the Gunn Museum, observed “He simply loved life in all its forms.”

# VOLUNTEER THANK YOU!

We would like to thank our volunteers for all of their contributions of time, energy and talent.

David Babington  
Jane Boyer  
Annabella Bushra  
Gail Fernandez  
Eileen Hearn  
Susan Jackson  
Richard Kleinberg  
Paula Krinsky  
Doug McHan  
Robin McHan

Susie Payne  
Ann Quackenbos  
Dimitri Rimsky  
Madeline Revere  
Willie Smith  
Deborah Stevens  
John Turner  
Sally Woodrooffe  
Chris Zaima

## UPCOMING PROGRAMS

Tuesday, June 5, 2018, 6:30pm  
Gunn Library, Wykeham Room  
**Washington History Club**  
Topic: Fire Department and Carnival

Monday, June 18, 2018, 10am  
Washington Senior Center  
**Readings from the Archives**  
Topic: “A Walk Through New Preston in the 1960s” by Doug McHan, Jr.

Monday, Sept. 17, 2018, 10am  
Washington Senior Center  
**Washington History Club**  
Topic: TBA

Monday, October 1, 2018, 10am  
Washington Senior Center  
**Readings from the Archives**  
Topic: TBA

Tuesday, Nov. 20, 2018, 6:30pm  
Gunn Library, Wykeham Room  
**Washington History Club**  
Topic: TBA

## SAVE THE DATE

**11th Annual Cemetery Tour**  
Friday, October 26, 2018  
6:30 - 8:30pm

Take a candlelit tour through the Washington Green Cemetery and meet some of Washington’s unforgettable residents from the past! A community favorite – hundreds attend each year.

The rain date for the Cemetery Tour is Sunday, Oct. 28 from 6:30 to 8:30 pm. Admission is free, donations are welcome.

## CORRECTION TO FIREPLACE MASON ARTICLE

*ISSUE 5, SPRING 2017*

Eric Johnson was a stone mason who built the fireplace that resides in the Executive Director’s office of the Gunn Memorial Library. Anna Charlotte Johnson, his wife, emigrated to the United States in 1892 (not 1894). Eric and Anna moved from Washington in 1916, to live with Anna’s brother, Forman Carlson on his fruit and vegetable farm on King Street. In 1927 they moved into their home at 456 South Street, Bristol, Connecticut (not on King Street).

## Stay Up to Date!

Sign up for our monthly eNews.

Send your email address to  
[info@gunnhistoricalmuseum.org](mailto:info@gunnhistoricalmuseum.org)





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P.O. BOX 1419  
WASHINGTON, CT 06793

Located at 5 Wykeham Road  
on Washington Green  
Open Thursday, Friday, Saturday  
11am - 2pm

Free Admission

Research can be conducted by  
appointment.

For more information contact us at

860-868-7756

or

info@gunnhistoricalmuseum.org  
curator@gunnhistoricalmuseum.org

## BECOME A FRIEND!

If you are not a member of Friends of the  
Gunn Historical Museum, please join today.

Our newsletter is mailed out directly to  
members.

If you are a member, please note that our  
membership is annual and follows our fiscal  
year from July 1 - June 30.

*Membership envelope is inside.*

*We look forward to hearing from you!*

## VOLUNTEER all that's missing is YOU!

We need help with the following projects at the  
Gunn Historical Museum:

- Cemetery tour: Actors, Tour Guides, Set-up, Clean-up
  - Video and Audio Editing
  - Data entry of artifact information
  - Scanning photographs
- Graphic Design: Work on designs for exhibits,  
programs and text panels

Please contact Lisa Breese at:

860-868-7756 or info@gunnhistoricalmuseum.org

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