

HARWINTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2019

Mail: PO Box 84, Harwinton, CT 06791

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Curiosity About Harwinton Rock Formations Continues

Was it a Native American Ceremonial Site?

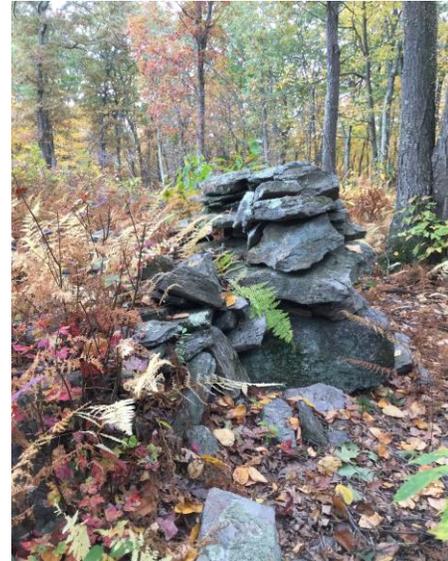
By Bruce Burnett

HARWINTON - On October 16, members of the Greater Naugatuck Valley History Consortium toured the natural and man-made rock formations on Bob DeFosses' property on Rocky Road East. Members of the Harwinton Historical Society included Dane and Carol Deleppo and Bruce Burnett.

DeFosses has done extensive research on the unusual rock formations, some of which are often referred to as cairns, and has concluded that his property was a Native American ceremonial site as late as the 17th century. Among the many experts in the field of archaeology who have confirmed this theory are former Connecticut State Archaeologist Dr. Nicholas F. Bellantoni, researchers and authors James and Mary Gage, Director of Research and Collections for the Institute for American Indian Studies Lucianne Lavin, Ph.D., and Archaeological Research Assistant for The Mohegan Tribe Elaine Thomas.

The DeFosses property lies at the headwaters of the Pequabuck River, which flows into the Farmington River where it turns north in Farmington. On the high ground above this intersection was the major Tunxis Indian village.

DeFosses's research into Native American beliefs suggests that the high point on his property could have been a place where native people would have gathered for ceremonies and rituals. It is a place where the world below rises to meet the world above. In this space, where the two worlds meet, the spirits of both worlds could be communicated with.



The DeFosses property lies at the headwaters of the Pequabuck River ... On the high ground above this intersection was the major Tunxis Indian village.

A serpentine outcropping of quartz augmented by man-made formations aligns in a northeast-southwest direction, an orientation which is also important in Native American origin mythology.

DeFosses hypothesizes that the three rounded tiered structures on the west slope could have been sweat lodges used in ritual practices. The experts who have visited the property several times have suggested that a large boulder or outcropping augmented with a cairn may have represented a turtle. Turtles were powerful spirit animals that could move between the underworld and the surface.

See Curiosity on page 5

OFFICERS – 2019

President: Bonnie Andrews
Vice President: Nancy Lyons
Secretary: Elaine Sederquist
Treasurer: Harry Schuh

DIRECTORS

Term Ends 2019

Bruce Burnett
Shirley Gay

Term Ends 2020

Michael Orefice
Everett Lyons

Term Ends 2021

Carol Kearns
David Ryan

**IMMEDIATE PAST
PRESIDENT
Vacancy**

CURATOR

Bonnie Andrews

BUILDING SUPERVISOR

Dennis Andrews

OTHERS

(non-board positions)

HISTORIAN

Roger Plaskett

AUDITOR

Marilyn Mitchell

LEGAL COUNSEL

Patrick Wall

Email:

harwhistsoc@gmail.com

Harwinton Historical Society

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Harwinton, CT 06791

860-482-7978

LIST OF UPCOMING PROGRAMS

2019

***The American St. Nick* - Peter Lion:**

Sunday, November 3 @2- Harwinton Public Library, 80 Bentley Drive. Books will be available for purchase.

Bus Trip to the Knights of Columbus Museum, New Haven CT – Crèches of Europe & 24 decorated trees

\$7.50 fee for transit bus. Museum admission with guided tour is free

Wednesday, Dec. 11 @ 12:30- Departure from Harwinton Library Overflow Lot.

** Reserve your seat on the bus now by mailing a check made out to the Harwinton Historical Society to PO Box 84, Harwinton, CT 06791. **THERE ARE 11 SEATS LEFT.** Remaining reservations will be on a “first come, first served” basis.

2020

***Mary Lincoln, From Birth to Death* - Carol Deleppo:**

Sunday, February 9 at 2 p.m. - Location TBA

***The Year Without a Summer* - Roger Plaskett, Harwinton Historian:**

Sunday, March 8 at 2 p.m. Harwinton Congregational Church

***19th Amendment* - Mariann Millard (First Ladies presenter!):**

Sunday, April 5 at 2- Location TBA

***Reliving the Holocaust: “The Crate: A story of war, a murder and justice”* with author Debbie Levison. Co-sponsored by the Historical Society and the Harwinton Public Library.**

Sunday, May 3, at 6:30 p.m.
Harwinton Public Library, 80 Bentley Drive

**Forward your program suggestions to
harwhistsoc@gmail.com**

Ev Lyons Fills Vacancy on Historical Society Board of Directors

Dr. V. Everett Lyons recently was appointed as a director of the Historical Society to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Candace Jones Pacholski.

“Ev” majored in history and English at Central Connecticut State University before beginning his teaching career. After receiving his MA and doctoral degrees, he entered school administration, eventually serving 25 years as principal of Bristol Eastern High School. He recently moved to Harwinton from Bristol and is married to Nancy Shanley Lyons.

Ev has a strong interest in non-profit community activities, serving several such organizations while a resident of Bristol, and currently is the District 23B Governor for Lions Clubs International (Litchfield and Hartford counties). In addition to his interest and involvement in the Harwinton Historical Society, Ev has been active with the Harwinton Congregational Church.

“SPIRITS” RETURN TO SOUTH CEMETERY

See photos of this year’s cast on page 6

The weather cooperated to help make the 2019 “Spirits of Harwinton” cemetery tour on October 11th a success. Those joining the tour stopped first at Town Hall to obtain a free ticket for the bus ride to South Cemetery. Early in the evening, Boy Scouts from local Troop 55 had marked a path through the cemetery with small, battery operated luminaries.

On the bus, visitors were greeted by town leader Cyprian Webster (Roger Plaskett). At the cemetery, Gate Keeper Rev. Joshua Williams (portrayed by Tom Turick) gave a brief introduction to the tour. The group then continued into the cemetery with stops at grave sites to hear a brief accounting of the lives of nine other Harwinton residents. Unlike past years, not all of the “spirits” were people buried in South Cemetery. However, all had once lived in Harwinton and had made significant contributions to the town.

The 175 people who joined this year’s tour encountered people from Harwinton’s history such as merchant and publisher Theodore Hungerford, railroad magnate Collis P. Huntington; physician Andrew Abernethy; patriot and Tory antagonist Captain John Wilson; the town’s first centenarian, Belinda Bartholomew; early clock maker Augustus Alfred, Civil War soldiers Henry Richardson and Lt. John O’Brian, business man Truman Kellogg. At the end of the 45-minute tour, the visitors boarded the bus for the short trip back to town hall. In the main conference room, there were refreshments and more information about this year’s “spirits.”

The evening was organized by Town Historian Roger Plaskett with support from the Harwinton Historical Society and Hungerford Memorial Museum. Assistance was provided by the Harwinton Fire Police and All-Star Transportation. Town employees supported advance preparations for the event.

Successful Harwinton Fair weekend!

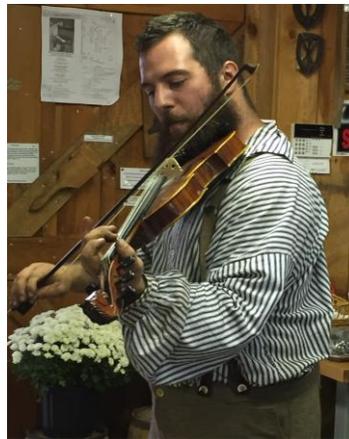
The Historical Society was once again part of the Americana display at the South end of the Harwinton Fairgrounds during the 2019 Harwinton Fair. The display included the Country Store, Blacksmith Shop and Shingle Mill.

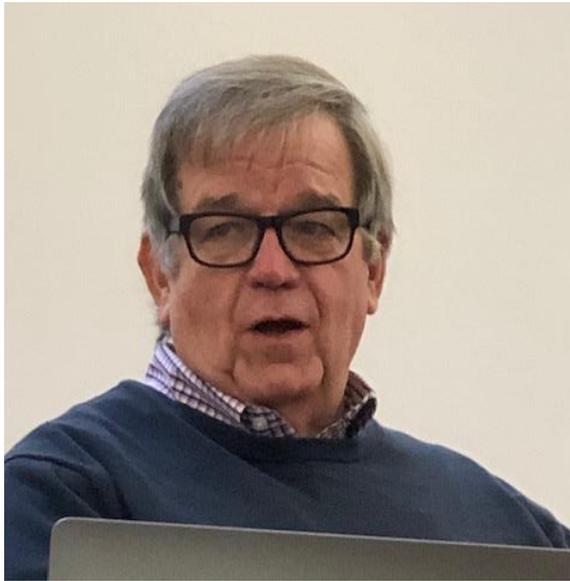
Many thanks to those who helped to make the weekend a success. The Take a Chance event organized by Marti Lecko and Nancy Shanley Lyons drew a large amount of interest and about 1400 participants. Please help to support the following area businesses that participated this year: Bell Electric, Brushstrokes Pottery and Paint, Coach Mel's Health and Fitness for Life, Countryside Pizza, Deeply Rooted Farms, Edison Grill, Fairview Farm Golf Course, Harwinton Pizza, Hayward Farm, A Healing Trail Wellness Center, and Pizza II, KidsPlay Children's Museum, Liquor Lad, The Warner Theatre, Tony's Package Store.

Those who provided items for sale or who worked during the busy weekend added to the fair's success. Two special people stand out for their dedication this year: Peter Thierry baked over 1,000 old-fashioned ginger cookies based on his grandfather Raymond Bentley's family recipe. Potter Pam Chambers of Tanglewood Pottery in New Hartford is usually demonstrating her pottery-making skills all weekend. This year, however, Pam fell and broke her wrist early Saturday morning as she was preparing to head to the fairgrounds. After attending to her injury, Pam came to the fair where she managed to sell her wares "one-handed" on both Saturday and Sunday.

Wrapping up the fair was Joe Mancini who had spent the weekend demonstrating the workings of the old-time blacksmith shop. As he has done in the past, at the end of the day, Joe sat on the porch of the Country Store and played a few tunes on his fiddle. A nice, relaxing way to end a busy, productive weekend.

Blacksmith Joe Mancini plays his fiddle at the Country Store during the 2018 Harwinton Fair





Historian Loves Connecticut's Past

State Historian Walter Woodward, left, was the guest speaker at a recent program "*Trouble in the Land of Steady Habits: Constitution of 1818*," sponsored by the Historical Society's Program Committee at Town Hall.

Woodward's fifth book "Creating Connecticut" will be available in the spring and can be ordered in advance via his web site todayincthistory.com. Woodward calls it "the book written for people who love Connecticut history." Also available on the web site is a free subscription to his daily posts containing interesting facts from state history.

Curiosity About Large Number of Stone Structures, Continued from page 1

A seventeenth century account by Roger Williams, the founder of Rhode Island, provides interesting context for the problem of understanding the site. Williams described ceremonies of days or weeks in duration in which native people would go to high places during periods of drought to pray for rain. That might explain why a site that was a source of water would be chosen for ceremonial use.

The formations on the DeFosses property and at other sites including the Roraback property in Harwinton certainly speak to the possibility of the precolonial importance of our area. DeFosses is planning to sell the property and move to be nearer his daughter and her family. Meanwhile, he has been researching ways to protect the formations from future disturbance.

*** IMPORTANT NOTICE FOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERS ***

Election of officers and members of the board of directors whose terms expire this year, will be held during the regular monthly meeting on Nov. 21 at 3 p.m. in the Jason Skinner House at the Wintergreen Housing Complex. Additional nominations can be made from the floor during that meeting. All elected officials will begin their terms at the annual meeting in January.

Monthly meetings are usually held the last Thursday of each month at 3 p.m. at the Skinner House. However, the November meeting date was changed to avoid a conflict with Thanksgiving. The December meeting will be held Dec. 19 to avoid a conflict with Christmas. Historical Society meetings are open to all members.

The Annual Meeting of Harwinton Historical Society members will take place Sunday, January 26th at the Harwinton Senior Center on Weingart Road beginning at 1 p.m. This will be an opportunity to hear reports from officers and committees, ask questions, and discuss future plans for the Society. All members are encouraged to attend.



This composite of the actors and the cast of characters they portrayed at the 2019 “Spirits of Harwinton” Cemetery Tour was created by Roger Plaskett, Town Historian and organizer of the event.

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This past Spring, the Harwinton Historical Society responded to a “National Visitation Survey” from the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH). After collecting responses from more than 1,250 institutions across the nation, AASLH shared the results of that effort in AASLH’s inaugural *National Visitation Report*. **In short, AASLH found that visitation to historical organizations increased nearly 6 percent between 2013 and 2018.** The largest gains were reported by small history organizations (those with annual budgets of less than \$250,000). Visitation at the Harwinton Historical Society’s museum sites including the barn and one-room schoolhouse on Litchfield Road and at the Hungerford Memorial Museum’s building on Burlington Road, are by appointment except on special advertised occasions.