

HARWINTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2020

Mail: PO Box 84, Harwinton, CT 06791

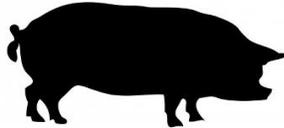
email: harwhistsoc@gmail.com

The Barn Corner

A Challenge: Storing and Preserving Food for Winter

By David Ryan

One of the most formidable problems faced by the American pioneers was preservation of food, especially meat. The most widely used preservation methods were salting, pickling, smoking and drying. To store fresh meat for a short time the colonists relied on the coolness of the well or the earth-floor cellar to reduce spoilage.



Early accounts of how difficult it winter are well-known. From the the Indians giving the Pilgrims

history students learn of the struggles the English faced when trying to maintain a foothold in North America. Conditions improved as the colonists learned to adapt and survive.

once was to obtain enough food for the "starving time" in John Smith's Virginia to corn in Plymouth, Mass. American

Meats, vegetables, and fruits were all important in early American diets. Some methods of food preservation are well-known today, but some interesting things may have escaped notice. Preserving meat was one of the biggest problems early American pioneers faced.

Early Americans usually preserved, or cured, meats by salting. However, some meats were simply kept cold in basements or allowed to freeze when stored in outside buildings during winter. Meats were sometimes pickled, dried or smoked. If wealthy enough to have servants (or slaves) to help, the household's meat could be "potted" for preservation. The meat could be cooked, then put in a pot and covered with fat. The bladder of a pig, sheep, or ox was moistened, stretched over the top of the pot and tied down. As the bladder dried, it shrank, making a tight seal, thus preserving (or "potting") the meat.

Meat could also be cured in a smokehouse. Settlers learned that smoking with oak, hickory, and maple each added a special flavor to the meat as it cured. Hooks were driven into the supporting beams in the cellar and used to hang meats along with some fruits and vegetables. The early floors were dirt, which kept the cellars damp and cool.

Use of Ice

Prior to the invention of the refrigerator, ice was often used to keep food cold. Cut from ponds and brooks in winter, blocks of ice were stored under sawdust in "ice houses." In the historical society's barn are some examples of large saws that were used for cutting and shaping winter ice into squares.

See [The Iceman](#), page 4

OFFICERS – 2020-2021

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

DIRECTORS

Term Ends 2020

Michael Orefice
Everett Lyons

Term Ends 2021

Carol Kearns
David Ryan

Term Ends 2022

Bruce Burnett
Martha Lecko

**IMMEDIATE PAST
PRESIDENT**

Vacancy

CURATOR

Bonnie Andrews
with assistance from
Mary English & Corinne Curtis

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
PO Box 84
Harwinton, CT 06791

LIST OF UPCOMING PROGRAMS

2020

Mary Lincoln, From Birth to Death with Civil War
Re-enactor Carol Deleppo:
Sunday, February 9 at 2 p.m.
Harwinton Town Hall **

The Year Without a Summer – presented by
Harwinton Historian Roger Plaskett:
Sunday, March 8 at 2 p.m.
Harwinton Congregational Church

***19th Amendment: A Tale of Suffrage, Sacrifice,
and Success*** - Mariann Millard (Mariann
presented the well-received “First Ladies” program
in 2019):
Sunday, April 5 at 2 p.m.
Harwinton Town Hall

The Crate: Reliving the Holocaust - Author
Debbie Levison.
Sunday, May 3, at 6:30 p.m.
Harwinton Public Library

New England’s Other Witch Hunt with State
Historian Walter Woodward
Sunday, October 18 at 2 p.m.
Harwinton Town Hall

***First Ladies: High Tea & High Notions –
Champions of Social Causes*** with Mariann
Millard (First Ladies presenter)
Sunday, November 15 at 2 p.m.
Harwinton Town Hall

** Please note change in location to town hall

Please forward your program comments and
suggestions to harwhistsoc@gmail.com

Mary Lincoln, from Birth to Death

Sunday, February 9, 2020 @ 2:00 p.m. (snow date 2/16 @2)
Harwinton Town Hall Assembly Room

Mary Todd Lincoln

Born 1818

Died 1882

**First Lady of the United States
1861 - 1865**



Mary Todd Lincoln, the wife of the 16th President of the United States, ranks among the most controversial women in American history. Join us as Carol Deleppo, a Civil War enthusiast, portrays Mary Todd Lincoln . . . accent, hoop skirts, and all! We will journey through Mary's troubled, and often misunderstood life.

High-strung and mercurial, at times Mary was thought to exercise poor judgment and often seemed to offend those around her. On the other hand, Mary is also remembered as well educated, intelligent, unusually assertive for a woman of her time, a huge support to Abe's political career, and a loving mother. Ten years after her husband's assassination, their only living child had her declared insane and admitted to a sanitarium for a time. Join us as Carol portrays the triumphant and devastating aspects of Mary Todd Lincoln's life.

The program is free and open to the public

The Iceman, Continued from page 1

Some families had an ice box in their homes. On a regular basis, an “iceman” would deliver blocks of ice to the houses. The iceman’s rounds were frequent enough to keep food from spoiling. Refrigerators for home use were not invented until 1913. When the iceman made a delivery to a paying customer, he would use tongs to carry the block of ice to the family’s ice box.

To keep milk and butter from spoiling, some people suspended it from their dug wells.

When I was quite young, my aunt and grandmother brought me to the old family homestead located at the intersection of two dirt roads in Rhode Island. We brought food with us and I was told to take the food to the dirt floor cellar and set it on the wooden step about half-way down the stairs. This was how the food was kept cool when my grandmother lived there.

Apple Paring Party

Apples could be stored for the winter in several ways. Some were put in a large barrel in a cool room in the house. My father said that the rule was that you would look for the apples with bruises on them and eat those first, since "a rotten apple would spoil the whole barrel." My father resented this rule, as he rarely enjoyed eating a whole apple.

In some towns an "apple paring party" was a big social event. Barrels full of apples were pared with sharp knives. Some of the apples were threaded with linen string and hung on the kitchen walls or over the rafters in the attic to dry. Many were made into apple sauce. Some apple sauce was sweet, but sauce made from crab apples was sour. Quince (an apple-like fruit) and molasses could be used for sweetening the sour apples. When done, the apple sauce was stored in barrels in the cellar. If it was scooped out and a bit frozen, children it considered a special treat. Apple butter was also made from pared apples boiled down with cider.

Apple cider was an important beverage because early colonists believed water was unsafe to drink. When circumstances forced them to drink water, they found that it agreed with them, and their health improved. Water then became a more widespread beverage in New England. Milk was drunk often but was less available in the cold winter. Cider diluted with water was used instead. Children liked to eat bread that was soaked in this mixture.

Cheese could be plentiful in winter, but it required a lot of care. To watch it go from putting the milk on the fire and progressing through all of the other steps until the final product emerged was very time-consuming. Many fruits lasted into winter by being preserved by spices. Fruits could be candied or made into marmalade. Marmalade is preserves made with citrus - using the whole fruit, along with the rind. Vegetables, especially root crops like turnips, onions, and corn. stored well in the cellar. Cucumbers had to be pickled, and cabbage was made into sauerkraut.

With a little knowledge and a lot of hard work, many out-of-season foods were able to be enjoyed during the winter months.

HARWINTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER – February 2020

From the President's Desk:

The Board of Directors first meeting of 2020 is scheduled February 27 at 3 p.m. at the Skinner House off Bentley Drive. The agenda will focus on establishing a budget and beginning to plan for activities in 2020.

The board meets on the last Thursday of each month and members are always welcome to attend. All members of the Historical Society receive copies of the board's approved minutes which describe in more detail actions taken by the society's directors and officers.

Please volunteer to help with at least one event this year – work a shift at the fair, bake for the fair, contribute refreshments for one program this year. There is a place at the bottom of the membership form where you can sign up or send a message to harwhistsoc@gmail.com

Note: we are still seeking a person (or persons) to replace Elaine Sederquist as secretary of the Board of Directors. Contact an officer or director if interested.

Bonnie Andrews, president

----- Detach and Return -----

2020 HARWINTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name of Member (s) _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Email: _____

Providing an email address will help reduce the cost of postage

Please check if a Life Member (no dues required) _____

Amount included (**\$15 per membership**): New ____ Renewal ____

**Make checks payable to the Harwinton Historical Society
PLEASE RETURN BY FEBRUARY 15, 2020 TO:**

**HARWINTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
PO BOX 84, Harwinton, CT 06791**

I would be willing to help _____

What's New? A New Flag

The Historical Society has purchased a new, and slightly larger, American flag for the flagpole along Route 118 in front of the Post Office. Bill Buys Sr., a member of the Harwinton Volunteer Fire Department, raises and lowers the flag as prescribed by flag etiquette.



Looking Back in Harwinton History

Twenty-five years ago

On February 6, 1995 a fire gutted the historic 205-year-old Valley View Lodge on South Road. At that time the three-story wood-frame landmark belonged to the state Department of Environmental Protection. The building had been abandoned since 1981. It was once owned by the Roraback family and was used for retreats by the Connecticut Republican Party. J. Henry Roraback, founder of the Connecticut Light and Power Company (CL&P), was a prominent Republican who often held gatherings at the lodge. President Calvin Coolidge visited the lodge in 1932. The cause of the fire was arson.

Ten years ago

The town of Harwinton closed on a 65-acre tract of land on South Road owed by the Carros family. The purchase price was \$800,000 which would be paid over four years. The land was to be maintained as open space.

A BIT OF TRIVIA:

8 pounds of salt were needed to cure 100 pounds of meat. Also needed: sugar or syrup, salt peter and 4 gallons of water. All ingredients were boiled until thoroughly mixed, then cooled. Large cuts of meat such as hams were placed on the bottom, then shoulders, bacon and smaller cuts on top. After 5 days, the brine was poured off, the meat was rotated, and the brine poured back on. The process was repeated on the 10th and 18th day. There may have been a need to make more brine. The meat was allowed to cure for 4 days for each pound of ham or pork shoulder. Three days were needed for bacon and small pieces. When the meat was removed it should be soaked for half an hour in water before being placed in the smoke house.

- *Information taken from a cookbook owned by the Historical Society*