



The Bethel Ark

The quarterly newsletter of the Bethel Historical Society

History...Without it you don't exist!



Vol. 2

Fall 2013 - Bethel, CT

Issue 3 (7)

Just Added to the Museum - A Trowbridge Marker

An Absolutely Unique Piece of Bethel History Given to the Museum to Protect and Display

Earlier this summer, Mr. and Mrs. Walter Gill of Brookfield, formerly of 9 Tremont in Bethel, donated a bronze grave marker to the Bethel Historical Society. This marker once stood on the grave of Civil War Surgeon, William H. Trowbridge, buried in the Trowbridge Family plot, lots 56 and 57, in Center Cemetery.

How did the Gills come to possess this marker? In the 1950s, Mr. Gill was digging a foundation for an addition on his home located at 9 Tremont. He unearthed this marker under two feet of soil. The Gills attempted to locate any Trowbridge family member that may want the marker but were unsuccessful. For the next 58-60 years the Gills protected the marker.

It is believed that once the Federal Government provided stones for its soldiers, this bronze marker was removed from the grave and simply discarded.

Thank you to Mr. & Mrs. Gill for this donation.

William H. Trowbridge was born in Danbury (Bethel), CT, Feb. 2, 1822. His parents both came of good old English stock, his father, James H. Trowbridge, dating back through six generations direct to Thomas, whose three sons, Thomas, James, and William, came to America in 1654, and his mother, Mary (Banks) Trowbridge, reaching through the Hoyt family back to England also.

When William H. was two years old his parents moved to Stamford, where his father engaged in the manufacture of hats, which he followed until the death of his wife, when he returned to that portion of Danbury now called Bethel. William received his early education in district and private schools, and even in childhood developed a fondness for medicine, but kept his preference secret, feeling that his parents were not in such a financial condition as to properly help him in pursuit of his studies. When about seventeen he desired to engage as teacher in a district school, but, yielding to his parents' wishes, he entered as apprentice to a tailor in Bethel, then Danbury, and served faithfully until he was twenty-two years old, preferring always, however, the cutting of clothes to sewing them up. During these years his books were not forgotten, but through his labors and the attraction of youthful society, with its rides and parties, the idea of surgery was ever before him, and while here an accident brought this proclivity



Buried in the ground, dug up, and then sitting in the yard for 60 years, this zinc grave marker has been given to the Bethel Historical Society for safekeeping and preservation for future generations.

into prominence. An old man, in an attempt at self-destruction, cut his throat, and, in a village like Bethel, everybody knew of it and thronged to see, among the number was William, then eighteen years old. The physician was, on his arrival, engaged in dressing the gaping wound in the old man's throat, with the aid of such help as could be obtained from the inexperienced and faint-hearted crowd. William was at once drawn, instinctively, to patient and physician. Seeing his interest, the doctor said, "Young man, you are not pale; take hold of this and help me, and let these chicken-hearts go away." The youth did such good service, holding the lips of the wound, handling dressings, etc., so well, that the physician, Dr. Hanford Bennett, said, "Boy, you'll be a surgeon some day, and no one can help it."

Finishing (prematurely) his trade, William went to Stamford, married Miss Sylvia Peck, and soon moved to Orange Co., NY, and after two years spent in that state returned to Stamford and engaged as a teacher in the district school, where his early school days were spent. He succeeded, gained reputation, and soon taught higher grades of school, all of the time studying medicine diligently from 5 a.m. till school-time, summer and winter, and

laboring with all his might in the school-room to provide for his family and attend medical lectures. Teaching and studying alternately, he attended one course at Yale, two courses at New York College of Physicians and Surgeons, and graduated at Yale Medical College. After spending one year in the office with Dr. George Lewis, in New York,



The decorative figure that adorns the flip side of the zinc grave marker now in the collection.

The Bethel Lark

is published by

The Bethel Historical Society
40 Main St Bethel CT 06801
info@bethelhistoricalsociety.com
facebook.com/bethelhistoricalsociety

Executive Board

Patricia A. Rist.....President
Lillian Emmons.....1st Vice President
Mary Ferri.....2nd Vice President
Jeffrey Pagelson.....Treasurer
Kitty Grant.....Secretary

Board of Directors

Gary Boughton....Krista Fiorini....
Marc Moorash....David L. Rist....
Molly Rollison....Rob Sauber

Past President

Mary Allen Gaffney



Town Historian

Patrick T. Wild

Founded in the 1950's

The Bethel Historical Society is an independent, non-profit organization made up of a group of people dedicated to preserving Bethel's history through acquisitions and conservation of property, artifacts and stories. The Society is dedicated to the education of the people of Bethel and surrounding communities.

Monthly programs are presented on varied historical subjects. Also offered are programs geared toward the education of children such as monthly historical craft classes, Walking Tours of Bethel and a Child's Victorian Christmas Tea.



The Bethel Lark

Text Editor.....Marc Moorash
Photo Editor.....Ava Dawn Heydt
Design by.....Seraphemera Books
(www.seraphemera.org)

The Bethel Lark is always looking for contributions on historical tales and travels within the sphere of Bethel CT and her surrounds.

Printed by The R.E. Lawlor Printing Co.
203-748-4144 http://www.relawlor.net

The President's Perspective



Dear Members and Future Members,

Summer has now drawn to a close and we are moving forward into the fall season with new programming. Watch for the updates on our website, Danbury News-Times, Bethel Patch and Bethel Bulletin.

During the summer, the Society had varied programming along with opening the museum on weekends. It was delightful to have so many new faces come through the museum door. Soon, we will pack up the Masonic Temple time capsule contents, so please take an opportunity to stop by and view the 101 year-old materials from the First Congregational Church that were stored in the cornerstone of the Masonic Temple in 1912.

Summer brought, once again, a very successful Colonial Kids Camp held on the Plumtrees Schoolhouse property. The event included a day in the life of students attending classes in a one-room schoolhouse where they practiced reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic, and yes, wearing a dunce cap or a sign if one talked or laughed too much. Needless to say, it was an enlightening experience for the children. Thank you to the Plumtrees School Association for allowing us the use of the schoolhouse.

Thank you to Mary Ferri and Ava Dawn Heydt for the great hands-on crafts such as making pickles, creating a hand-sewn journal, making drying bags for herbs and sunflower seeds. Thank you to Lynn and John Holbrook of Holbrook Farm for donating the lovely sunflowers for this craft. Children had an opportunity to write with a quill pen and ink made from black walnuts. Corn-husk dolls were made some of which were made, by the boys, in the shape of super heroes. Thank you to our junior intern, Sophie Sauber, for her assistance throughout the week. Parents feedback was

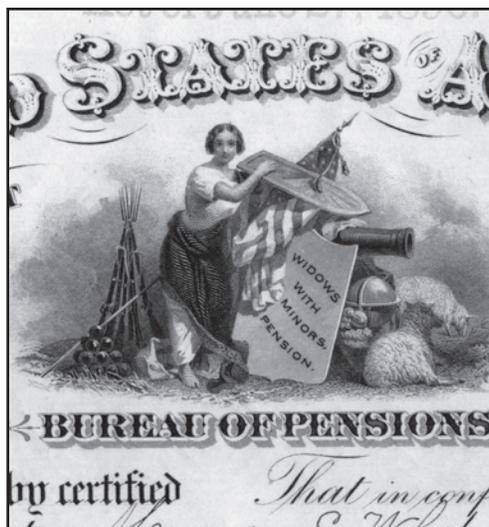
glowing such as "Please have this every year, my children enjoy it so much", "My children got up on Saturday morning prepared to go to camp and were totally saddened that camp ended the day before", to comments from the children, "This is the best camp ever; I'm coming here forever," "I'm coming here until I'm 21." It is a very active five half days where they are engaged in crafts, learning, team playing, playing with antique wooden toys with stilts and hoop rolling being very popular. This year very colorful homemade hula hoops were added and were very, very popular and fostered great creativity. Thank you Ava and Heather Walter. Of course, snacks and drinks are always popular.

I want to take this opportunity to once again address memberships. If you have been a member in the past and have not sent a check in this year for your 2013 membership, I hope you will consider doing so. We rely heavily on membership dues to host our events, print and mail our newsletters and cover costs to maintain the Meeting House. Please review the membership form on our website and see the newly added categories. Our membership runs a calendar year from January through December.

In the past the Society received Town monies but has not for several years now. Maintaining the Meeting House is very costly which reduces our available cash as it was used for painting, carpentry work and replacing flashing at a total cost of \$22,000 in 2012. In the immediate future, you will see announcements regarding a capital campaign to completely finish the restoration of the Meeting House. In the meantime, we need the support of membership dues.

Finally, support our sponsors – American Pride and our newest sponsor – Whitlock's Restaurant. Please let them know you're thankful they are helping keep Bethel history alive.

Until Next Time,
Patricia Rist
President



From the Archives: Detail of pension letter of Bethel Civil War soldier Addison Whitlock

Our New Members!

Jane Bickford
Alan & B. J. Liberty
Douglas O'Rourke
Marilyn Bullock
Joyce Cook
Susan Foster
Meredith Hettler
Alicia Nilson
Deanna & Joe Mossa
Heidi Paris

Thank you one and all for both your new & continued support.

P.T. Barnum Visits for His 203rd Birthday Party!

Hands Out Yellow Birch Roses and Tells Stories of His Grand Adventures



A group of participants in our 2nd Annual Crazy Hat Contest - adults and kids alike arrived in all sorts of wonderful chapeaus, in honor of the man whose top hat is such a part of his fame.



photos by BethelBulletin.com

Ever the debonair showman, Bethel's Favorite Son posed for many a photograph.

One Week at a Colonial Kids Summer Camp

Games, Crafts, Clothing, Pickles, Black Walnut Ink, Old School Days, the List Goes On and On



Learning letters from a replica hornbook, in a class that ranged from young to teen, is how a regular day would have happened during the years of the Plumtrees schoolhouse.



A little too much talking in class would get a student the chatterbox sign.



photos by Ava Dawn Heydt

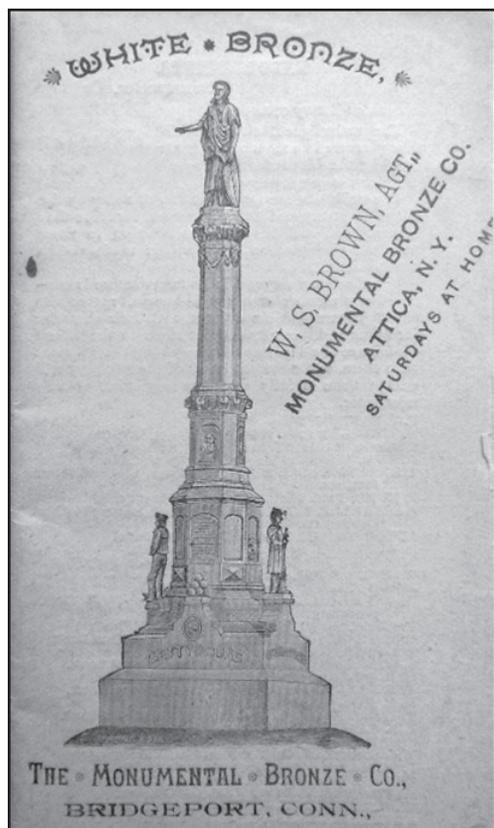
A great thank you is due to the Plumtrees School Association for allowing the campers to spend a day learning what it would have been like in a classroom of long ago.



Reciting arithmetic tables in front of the teacher could be a harrowing experience!

William H. Trowbridge and Bronze Markers

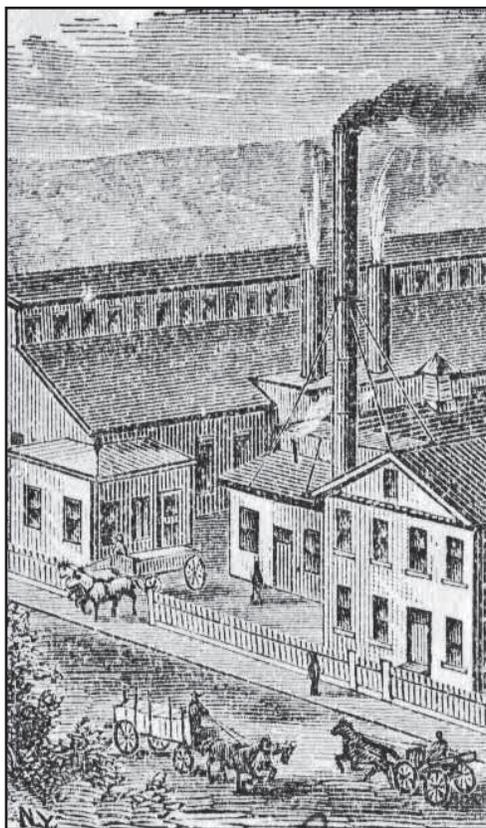
Hailed by Genealogists and Researchers Because Writing Survives Long After Stone Wears Away



The grave markers were sold by travelling salesmen throughout the country.

he opened an office in Stamford, were, excepting his army life, he has enjoyed a thriving practice. In the late war of the Rebellion, Dr. Trowbridge was first engaged as surgeon of the Twenty-third Regiment Connecticut Volunteers. To this work he was impelled by a sense of duty, and left a lucrative and fast increasing practice solely to go. His regiment proceeded to New Orleans with Gen. Banks, and on arriving there Dr. Trowbridge sought the medical director of that department, and told him he came there for work, and if he was needed anywhere he would be on hand. As a result, during his stay in the department there was not a battle fought in which he was not called upon to give service. After the battle of La Fouché Crossing he was called, without assistance, to attend to more than two hundred wounded Confederate prisoners. Their injuries ranged from flesh wounds to broken skulls and shattered limbs. He commenced his work at four o'clock Sunday afternoon, and worked incessantly, without sitting down to eat, or sleeping, until Tuesday at midnight. The day thereafter he was left in the rebels hands with the wounded, but kept in the same place and service. This captivity lasted six weeks. Soon after he accompanied his regiment to Connecticut, and with it was mustered out of service on expiration of term of enlistment.

He was soon selected as surgeon of board of enrollment in the Fourth District of Connecticut, and placed on duty at Bridgeport. He attended so well to the duties that he held that position till the close of the war, when he was again honorably



An engraving image of The Monumental Bronze Company in Bridgeport Connecticut.

discharged, and returned to his home in Stamford.

He resumed his professional practice and from that time has been identified with the town, his practice and reputation for skill increasing yearly. Four of his children have attained maturity. The oldest, a teacher, is married and father of four children, yet Dr. Trowbridge remains young, and alert and active. His talents are those of solidity rather than brilliancy. He is not blatant, not freely expressive of his knowledge, but well posted in his profession. He is not a boaster, and despises one as much as an intriguer or trickster, and is always on good terms with his brethren. He especially excels in surgery and midwifery. In both his skill is from natural aptitude. His army experience has largely aided his skill as a surgeon, while that of midwifery has grown upon him, through the exceptionally large practice given him by his gentleness and kindness of manner, aided by an untiring patience and a coolness that never flurries to hinder his success or make nervous his patient. In this department he stands at the head of his profession in this section. For many years he has numbered more than one hundred obstetric cases per annum, having in one year one hundred and forty-four, out of a total, in the town, of three hundred and fifty-one."

SOURCE: Hurd, D. Hamilton. History of Fairfield County, Connecticut. Philadelphia: J.W. Lewis & Co. (1881).



A marker whose sides could be removed and the inside used as hidden storage...

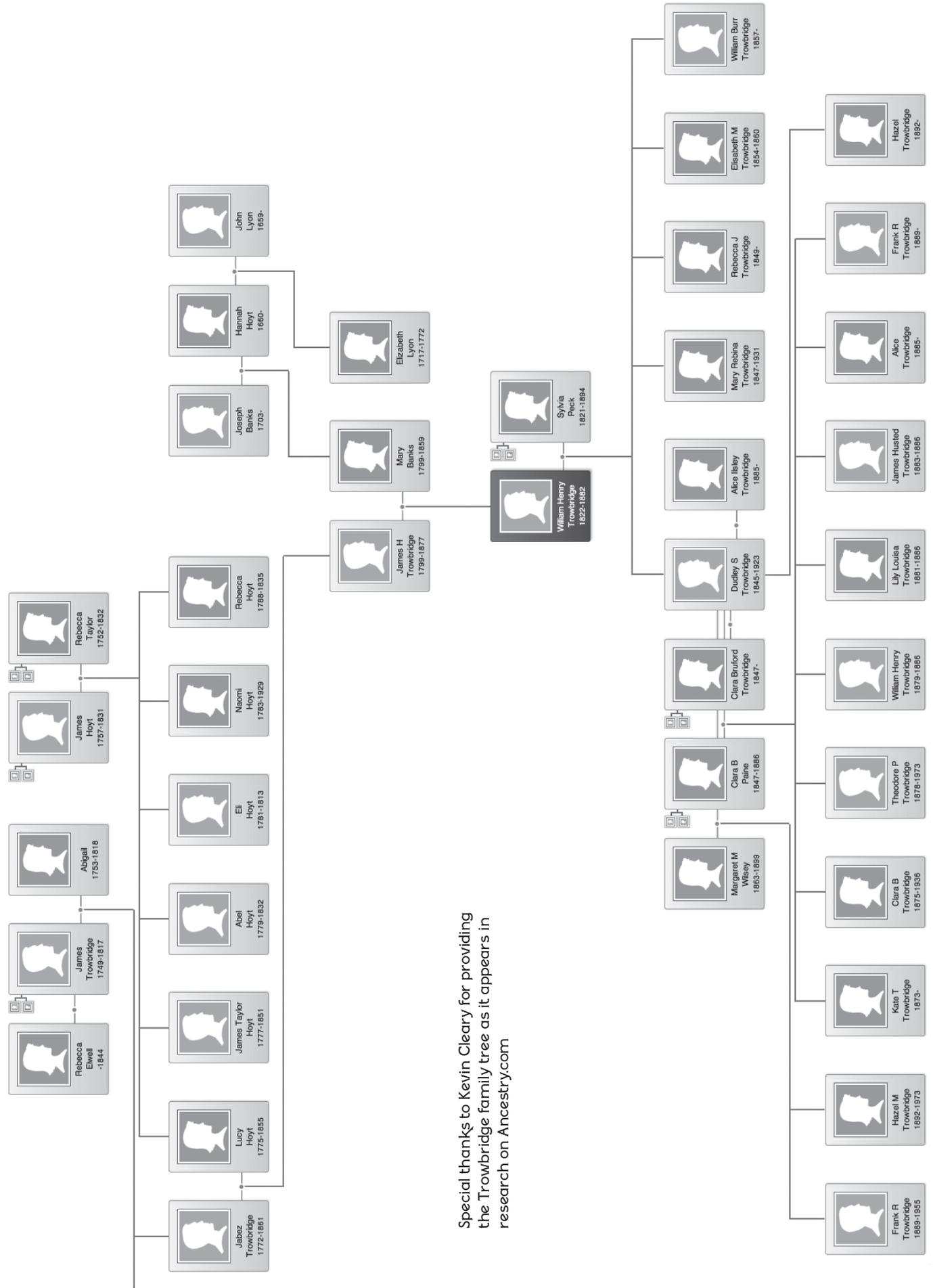
White Bronze Grave Markers

If you've ever walked into an old cemetery and wondered why one or two particular stones happened to have weathered the ages far better than any of the other markers, it may be because those particular monuments aren't stone at all - but a "White Bronze" marker as created by the Bridgeport Monument Company. Of course, even then, the description is a misnomer as the pieces are made of one hundred percent zinc.

The creation of these monuments dates back to 1873 when an M.A. Richardson figured out a method to manufacture them. Partnering with a C.J. Willard, but short on the necessary means to start a company, the rights were sold to a William Walter Evans, and then to Wilson, Parsons and Company of Bridgeport, Connecticut. Needing a name to fit the product, they founded the Monumental Bronze Company in 1879. Located at the corner of Hallett and Barnum Streets until 1892, the success of the business required greater output and an eventual move to a larger space at Howard and Cherry Streets (see image above).

The pieces were sold only by traveling salesmen, who would arrive only with a catalog (see image above) and no samples. It is said that one knows that an area had a particularly good salesman if there are more than two or three white bronze markers in a given cemetery. This method of not having a showroom allowed the company to lower its costs - although may also explain why

A Glimpse at Branches of the William H. Trowbridge Family Tree



Special thanks to Kevin Cleary for providing the Trowbridge family tree as it appears in research on Ancestry.com

A Little History of Bethel - A Unique Holiday Treasure

Blank Journals That Are Also Full of Numerous Photographs from the Archives

The Bethel Historical Society in conjunction with Bethel bookmakers Seraphemera Books, announces a collection of handmade Bethel-themed journals that will be available starting in October.

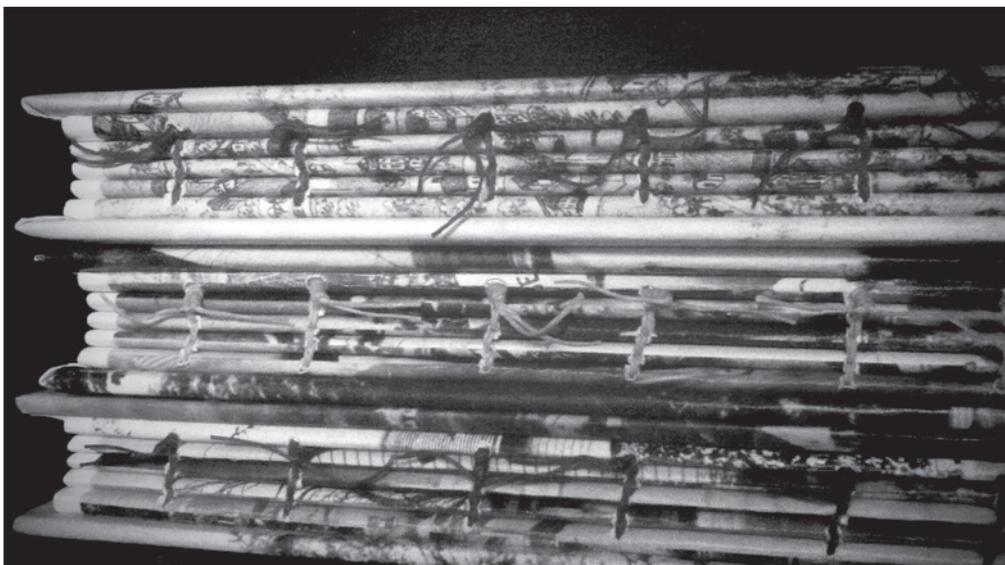
There will be six different journals with the themes:

1. The Barnum of Barnums
2. The O.H. Bailey 1879 Map
3. Hatters Amongst Us
4. Railroading Through Bethel
5. Buildings 'Round Town
6. The People We Knew

The journals measure approximately six inches wide by nine inches tall and contain 200 pages of high-quality linen paper. Each book is hand-stitched and created by Seraphemera Books. Each journal has twelve full color or black and white images from the archives of the Bethel Historical Society - images that span the entire history of Bethel and beyond. Many of these images are either unpublished elsewhere or not readily available outside of research facilities.

About the name of the journals being "A Little History of Bethel" (from inside the books):

The act of recording stories is one of our oldest traditions. Even before language and paper, paintings on cave walls recounted events, recorded dates, expressed dreams.



And so, within "a little history of Bethel" not only do the photographs throughout give us a glimpse of the past, but they entwine with the present - the words we write - that minute by minute, year by year, lifetime by lifetime, become a part of history - recounted, recorded, expressed - as well.

Here, in blank pages, we leave traces and faces for those who come after us to read about,

to learn from, to remember. When we remember, our stories continue to grow and never become just a part of the past. This journal is a hope for our tales to walk with us every day so they might last forever.

Come see the debut of the journals on October 5th from 10am til 5pm at the Artisans and Vendors Fair at 40 Main Street, in Bethel (see schedule page 7).

Whitlocks Restaurant

'Cherish Family, Friends & Traditions'

\$7 Sandwich Specials

***8 oz Burger with Choice of Swiss, Mozzarella, Cheddar or American Cheese

***Hot Chicken Sandwich * Chicken Parmigiana * Grilled Chicken Sandwich * Fish Sandwich with American Cheese * Cajun Chicken Sandwich

***Choice of FF, Onion Rings, or Small Salad included

\$10 Dinner Specials

***Fish & Chips with FF & Cole Slaw * Grilled Pork Chops with Potatoes & Vegetable * Chicken Parmigiana with Linguini * Chicken Marsala with Potato and Vegetable * Chicken Fingers with FF & Cole Slaw * Chicken Cordon Bleu with Potato & Vegetable

***Salad and Bread included

Lunch: 11:30am - 2:30pm

Dinner: 4:00pm - 9:00pm

Early Bird: 5:00pm - 7:00pm

273 GREENWOOD AVE, BETHEL, CT

(203) 791-2707

<http://www.whitlocksrestaurant.com>

AMERICAN PRIDE LLC

Patriotic Items
House Flags and Gifts
Lamp Shades
Lamp & Fixture Repairs

Store Hours

Tuesday-Thursday 9:30a.m. - 5:30p.m.

Friday 9:30a.m. - 5:00p.m.

Saturday 9:30a.m. - 4:00p.m.

Closed Sundays & Mondays

273 Greenwood Avenue

Bethel, CT 06801

(203) 792-5300

www.americanpridellc.com

White Zinc

A Little More About Markers

the markers, with the great benefits of being less expensive (according to surviving brochures the least expensive piece would cost only \$2.00 - a fraction of the price of a granite stone) and with a promise to last longer - never became extremely popular.

Bill Plack describes the process for a customer. "After the customer chose the overall design, the monument was cast in Bridgeport and then shipped to the customer's locale. Wax models were created, then these were used to make plaster molds for casting the zinc. A monument might be made of two or four separate panels fused together, depending on shape. All were hollow inside. Smaller inscription plates containing the individual's name, dates, or other information were bolted on separately with screws."

According to Kevin Ladd, the manufacturing went something along these lines, "After the markers sections were cast and assembled, they were sandblasted to roughen the surface, then treated with a metal finishing process called "steam bluing" which consists of covering the surface with a thin film of linseed oil, then hitting the surface with steam under a minimum pressure of 50 pounds per square inch."

There were two basic types of markers - a simple slab such as the Trowbridge marker (which could have interchangeable images on the back - this one has a soldier, but catalogs show everything from wreaths, to angels, to harps, to anchors for sailors) or larger markers that were hollow on the inside. There is many an urban legend that these hollow pillar markers were used during prohibition, to hide stashes of contraband as the information panels could be removed with a special screwdriver, leaving access to the inside of the monument.

Overall, the research into these monuments has barely begun - but it is one that is sure to grow in interest as older markers become illegible, while these blueish-grey beauties continue to withstand the elements and time. One wonders if the craftspeople of their day realized that they were, for each of these cast, leaving behind a time capsule for all of us historians and genealogists so many years later.

Sources for this article include:

-- Rotundo, Barbara. Monumental Bronze: A Representative American Company. In Cemeteries and Gravemarkers: Voices of American Culture, ed. R.E. Meyer. Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1989

-- White Bronze Cemetery Monuments by Frank J. Leskovitz
<http://gombessa.tripod.com/scienceleadstheaway/id8.html>

-- Monumental Bronze Company by Bill Plack
<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~artt/benton/whitebronze.htm>

-- White Bronze Grave Markers By Kevin Ladd
<http://www.sfasu.edu/heritagecenter/4687.asp>

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Saturday September 14th, 2013

2:00pm - 4:00pm

Open Museum

Come visit the Bethel Museum at 40 Main St. Admission is free!



Sunday September 15th, 2013

2:00pm - 4:00pm

The Architectural Stylings of Bethel

Local architect and historian Hugh Goodman will select a number of the most identifiable and interesting homes and buildings throughout Bethel and speak about the design, creation, and history behind the varied architecture that enlivens our daily lives in Bethel.

Hugh will also discuss how he researches and reports on old homes and how he can work with you to learn more about your own castle.



Saturday October 5th, 2013

10:00am - 5:00pm

Artisans and Vendor Fair

Get a jump on your holiday shopping with a wonderful assortment of artisans and craftspeople coming to show their wonderful creations. Food vendors as well. Free admission.



Saturday October 19th, 2013

2:00pm - 4:00pm

Open Museum

Come visit the Bethel Museum at 40 Main St. Admission is free!

Friday October 25th, 2013

6:30pm

Ghost Tour

Our family-friendly candlelight ghost tour through the streets of Bethel, by local storyteller, Marty Bishop. Enchanting and chilling tales featuring a combination of local legends, history, & superstition.

Reservations: Patricia Rist 203 743-5893 by October 20th

\$10 / \$8 BHS mem. / Kids 5-12 \$5



Sunday October 27th, 2013

Tricks & Treats from

Halloweens Past

2:00pm - 4:00pm

We invite children young and old to experience games, crafts, tricks & treats from Halloweens of past eras. Come dressed and dazzling in costume!

\$7 / \$5 BHS member



Saturday November 16th, 2013

Saturday December 7th, 2013

2:00pm - 4:00pm

Open Museum

Come visit the Bethel Museum at 40 Main St. Admission is free!



Saturday December 14th, 2013

Children's Victorian Tea

11:00am - 12:30pm

\$12 / \$10 BHS member

The yearly Christmas Party and craft extravaganza.



In need of a lovely venue with a full kitchen, to hold an event or party? The 2nd Meeting House can be rented for an afternoon or evening! Contact Marc at 203 794 1050

On the Inside...

Page 1 - [Trowbridge Marker](#)

Page 2 - [President's News](#)

Page 3 - [Barnum Birthday 203](#)

Page 4 - [Kids Summer Camp](#)

Page 5 - [Zinc Gravemarkers](#)

Page 6 - [Trowbridge Family](#)

Page 6 - [Bethel Journals](#)

Page 6 - [Sponsors](#)

Page 7 - [Events Calendar](#)

Page 8 - [You Are Here!](#)



The Bethel Historical Society is happy to announce a most unique and intriguing gift for the writer, journal-keeper, photographer, scrapbooker in your Bethel life. See page 6.

Barnum celebrates his 203rd in cake and chapeau style! (photo by Chris Conway)



-- The Bethel Historical Society Museum will be open the following dates and times:
Open from 2:00pm - 4:00pm on Saturday October 19th, November 16th, December 7th
-- We're Now on Facebook! Like us at - facebook.com/bethelhistoricalsociety

NONPROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
DANBURY, CT 06810
PERMIT NO. 3021

Bethel Historical Society
P.O. Box 1776
Bethel CT 06801

