



# The Bethel Lark

The quarterly newsletter of the Bethel Historical Society

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



Vol. 2

Spring 2013 - Bethel, CT

Issue 1 (5)

## Nothing Warms the Winter Like a Victorian Tea Party



**The Annual Holiday Event Keeps Growing More Grand and Getting Better Each Year**

When you have glue and pinecones and glitter, you know there's a wonderful event forthcoming, but add cakes and cookies of all sorts of colors and shapes and sizes, brownies and treats and all sorts of prizes, and top it off with hot chocolate in the prettiest most decorative cups you've ever seen...well then you've obviously wandered into the annual Children's Victorian Tea Party that is a staple of Bethel's holiday cheer each year.

Whether it was listening to a rousing rendition of Frosty the Snowman (read by our enthusiastic and well-dressed Mary Ferri), drinking a frosty cup of punch (which was kept cold by the ever so cool Santa shaped ice sculpture) or having the opportunity to stand up and tell everybody about your companion for the day (which for many were dolls, but we also saw a fair showing of stuffed and furry - a noticeable increase from last year's event when American Girl dolls outnumbered all other visitors by a large margin), there was no shortage of joy to be had by the red tablecloths and glowing candles. All this, while the vintage Christmas Carols rang out in the background - inducing the occasional dance, hop, skip, spin, excited twirl, and bouncejumpshopleapsqueal.

What stands out bright in the mind of this writer, was to watch when craft time arrived and the children emerged from the room of stories and cakes, into the numerous stations of different projects into which they dove. If the summertime consists of swimming in pools full of the most crystal clear blue water, then maybe the other side of the calendar ought be defined by wading into creeks and streams filled up to knees and elbows with glitters of astonishing blues, greens, silvers,



The ever-so-popular Victorian Tea was attended by over forty guests, dressed for holiday celebrations, with stuffed companion bests in their arms, with hot chocolate dreams by day.

golds, reds, and more. For here, in this space it seems as if the air itself sparkles and brings forth a type of light that re-imagines oxygen as sparkle and other such exaggerated descriptions. However it does seem possible that this year glitter came in a close second favorite only to the bottomless kettles of hot chocolate.

All this being said of the fun and sweets, what stands out most of all were all of the friends,

some who had not seen each other since the previous tea, some who see each other week in and week out, and the hugs and wishes for goodness and happiness in the upcoming holidays and year that went from child to child as the day wore down and parents, smiling, arrived to bring their singing and dancing children back home.

article & photograph by Marc Moorash

**We're looking for vendors for...**

The 2013 Bethel 2nd Meeting House

## Artisans & Vendors Festival

**"A Celebration of Neat Stuff!!!"**

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**Saturday October 5th, 2013 10:00am until 4:00pm**

**at the beautiful 1842 2nd Meeting House, 40 Main St. Bethel CT**

For more information please contact:

Pat Rist ([info@bethelhistoricalsociety.com](mailto:info@bethelhistoricalsociety.com) or 203-743-5893) Marc Moorash ([aclebrationofneatstuff@gmail.com](mailto:aclebrationofneatstuff@gmail.com) or 832-515-9539)

# The Bethel Lark

is published by

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

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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  
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(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.

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# The President's Perspective



Dear Members and Future Members,

We are now into Spring and with that brings a New Membership Form that will provide membership discounts based on the level of Membership you have

chosen. I want to thank those who have continued to renew their annual memberships and reach out to those whose membership has expired. We have moved to a calendar year Membership. Please look at the address label on this Newsletter. If the year 2013 appears on the address label your Membership is due for this year.

Like all non-profits we, too, need your membership commitment to accomplish greater things and are pleased to present the following that continue to present Bethel's history:

- Antique Appraisal Day
- Museum Open Days

- Railroading Through Bethel – Shepaug Railroad
- Rededication of the Challenger Plaque
- Center Cemetery Tour
- Barnum Crazy Hat Contest
- Colonial Kids Camp
- Presentation on Bethel Architectural Styling
- Craft/Vendor Day
- Annual Ghost Walk
- Doll Presentation – local doll collector
- Children's Victorian Christmas Tea

Please renew your Membership today and give consideration to renewing at a higher level that provides Membership discounts. I am available to answer any questions you may have. Send your request to info@bethelhistoricalsociety.com.

Sincerely,

Patricia A. Rist  
President



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 Lillian Emmons at 203-748-6112.

# Colonial Life Through the Eyes of Laura Ingalls Wilder

**The Ever Exciting Annual Afternoon of Butter-Making, Storytelling, Dancing and More**



We all learned that it used to take a bit more work to make a tasty sweet drink of lemonade than to simply walk into the store, find the right aisle, and pay a couple of dollars.

Everyone has a favorite story which colors certain of the days of their childhood. For some, swashbuckling adventure crosses swords with playdate pals on the high seas of the imagination, for others, schoolyard mysteries await the hard boiled gumshoe, sneakers around the schoolyard and up the stairs into the back closet cyphers of shoebox family histories, and secret, clueful, maps of backyard intrigues left to be unraveled before come too soon supper times. Thus, imagination cultivating adventures, playing off of stories inspired (as one might imagine) by the long winters here in New England beget a certain flavor of petite pioneer that recognizes kid kindred souls in the timeless works of Laura Ingalls Wilder.

As young aptly dressed time-travelers then congregated on February 2nd in the decorated halls of a pioneer re-envisioned Second Meeting House, Mary Ferri assisted by Pat, Kitty and Peggy led The Bethel Historical Society's 4th annual Laura Ingalls Wilder day celebration. The rooms veritably vibrated as excited pink cheeked youngsters sat upon handmade quilts taking in story time-tales of worlds long passed and the toils and joys of early American settlers as told through the immortal lens of Mrs. Wilder. Once so inspired, the assembled eagerly shelled dried corn both as a means of saving the rich golden kernels to feed to their outdoor animal friends, and yielding up the cob, as bones, body, and face for corn dollies soon to don hand sewn dress, crafted with immense pride by these proficient frontier children. One repeat pioneer claimed to have several handmade dolls of differing composition all made by her exceedingly capable hands at various BHS events. It was striking to this reporter to witness the immense pride and sense of general competence felt by these little children as they realized what they could accomplish with a little instruction, and whatever materials happen to be on hand.

Afterwards, this reporter took great delight in the simultaneous spectacles gleaned dashing tween rooms to witness the rolling and pressing of lemons as entertainment and industry towards the delicious and fragrant end of mixing up "party lemonade" the "old-fashioned way", as the other half of these calico clad characters hopped and danced to lively music while churning butter in palm sized pots. Never were there happier faces when given the "chore" of dancing butter into being. Never were there more lemony snickers and giggles than those heard in The Second Meeting House's kitchen as twelve boys and girls each with a lemon in hand pounded, and rolled it until the center came to a softness pulling away from the rind, and small fingers were guided to halve the glowing yellow fruits, and then juice them explosively over old-fashioned ceramic juicers, collecting the brilliant liquid sunshine in a large vessel to await its measure of boiled sugar in water and ice.

Appetites enhanced by their exertions, everyone took tasty pleasure in the prairie perfection of homemade corn cakes and now punch bowl chilled lemony libations. After refreshments, but before our forty young friends departed for the modern age, the lure of bygone reels bade them to kick up their heels and try their hands, and toes, at square dancing. Mirth, and laughter, and a whirling wildness ensued, here in the much beloved halls of the Second Meeting House, it was easy to let the walls fade away, hearing only the sounds of feet, and cavorting joy, and the whimsy and charm of history's grandiose violin. Whirling away, it was easy to be transported by literary, if not necessarily literal, magic to another set of Winters in Wisconsin, in the log cabin days of Laura Ingalls Wilder.

article by Ava Dawn Heydt  
photos by Robert Sauber



An exciting and jolly round and round of Colonial dancing once everybody had their lemonade.



The first step to making dolls was to remove all of the niblets from the cob. Second step was feed the corn to the squirrels.



Storytime is a very cozy time when everybody nestles on handmade Colonial quilts.

# A Plate, A Traveling Pastor, and a Stamp - Part 1

## Why is it That This Plate is Marked as Being Created in Bethel...and Other Places?

The discovery of history comes in many places.

Some months back while standing out in the falling evening on a night when winter was obviously arriving with a full team of sleigh dogs mushing forward, I listened to a story of childhood. Chris told me of running through the woods with friends, stumbling down the hills near the high school, and winding up in front of the now-visible-from-Plumtrees train bridge that reminds Bethel of the ghosts of the Shepaug. From this, he has spent the past thirty years intrigued by the history of the railroad in this town.

For others it can be a plaque on the side of a building, an old postcard found in an antique store, an heirloom whose story doesn't quite fit together from the different tales told by three different relatives.

All it takes is a moment, an object, and a story that needs finishing...is revealed.

The search, while certainly not constant (for one does need to eat) will often spark up in an instant of downtime, and thus the eyes start gazing toward the past. But while it is easy to focus on the Victorian era - with its top hats and old homes, Barnum and fountains...it is just as easy to forget that history is all the decades past and that there are as many tales lost from twenty, thirty, fifty years ago as there are from the centuries.

And so, after a whim of typing "Bethel CT" into an eBay search field (ah history, might you call me, this time, an armchair historian?) something from a much more recent time period caught the eye and circled the attention.

The item is a plate, from the 1950s, that shows two children saying grace before a meal. Painted above their bowed heads reads, "Our Father, we thank thee for this food. God bless us and all Thy hungry Children everywhere. Amen."

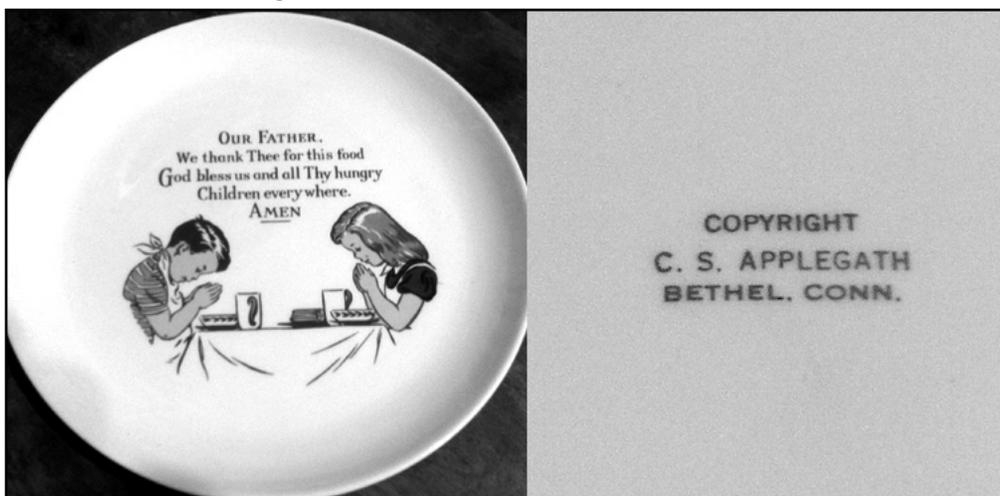
It is the back, however, which is where the connection and the intrigue and mystery begins. For the back reads "Copyright C.S. Applegath Bethel, Conn."

As this was a digital excursion into my research, the first step was to search for other plates of the same type. Entering "C. S. Applegath plate", into a search engine, brought up a few more of these plates, but with a fascinating variation - the town on the back was different! One variation read "Ashtabula, Ohio". Another was marked "Collingwood Ontario". What, then, was the connection to Bethel? Who, then, was C.S. Applegath, traveling the countryside and spreading his prayer plates?

Turns out C.S. Applegath was a pastor who made many stops during his years. The first two questions about his procession are, "When was the plate made?" and "When in his travels was he in Bethel?"

The way to do this, then, is to gather any and all references to the Reverend, and begin to create a timeline.

The earliest reference we find comes from



Front and back of a children's grace plate that was created by the Reverend C.S. Applegath. It is an interesting journey as to why this plate is labeled as Bethel, Conn.

A Brief History of Trinity United Church Chapleau, Ontario. We read, "A pipe organ was installed in 1919 in memory of members of the congregation who gave their lives during World War I. This organ was dedicated at a service on May 1, 1919. Rev. C. S. Applegath led the service of dedication and unveiling of a memorial plaque."

In 1923, he had moved on to Hamilton, Ontario. The June 7th, 1923 issue of The Record News tells us, "...and addresses were delivered by... Rev. C. S. Applegath of Hamilton."

By 1935 or 1936, the Reverend has made his way to Connecticut and we believe that we're getting closer to our story's heart. In the April 6th, 1938 issue of The Meriden Daily Journal, we read, "Rev. Charles S. Applegath, who has been pastor of First Methodist for the past three years..."

When one is researching history, one of the most difficult parts of the process is to not leap to too many conclusions. Being factual is always important of course, but at what juncture does one stop researching because they believe they have all of the connections made? In this instance, the

curveball was thrown early in the process as while one would reasonably expect that it would be directly after his time in Meriden that the Reverend wound up in Bethel, or at least remained close to the area...that expectation, turned out to be entirely incorrect.

We first learn of his next travels from another account in the Meriden Daily Journal, dated May 31st 1938, "...an informal farewell party at the parsonage for Rev. and Mrs. Charles S. Applegath and family who leave tomorrow for Indiana PA."

And by 1949, we find he's even farther away, now in Ashland, Ohio when the Mansfield News-Journal states, "Rev. C.S. Applegath of the Ashland Methodist church, conducted the (marriage) service."

Farther and farther West he goes, and we know that he passes away in 1958 so his time is short...when does he create his plate and when can we find him coming back to Bethel?

To be continued next Lark...

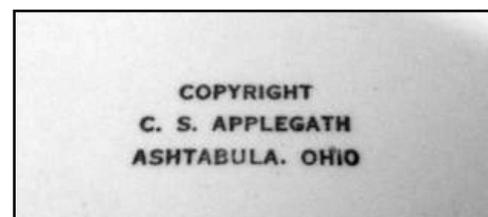
article and images by Marc Moorash



This is a card that dates the Rev. Applegath at a congregation in Meriden, CT in 1938.



Here's a version of the plate that is copyright Canada, but still shows its USA origin.



Here's another version of the plate that lists Ashtabula Ohio as the origin.

# Still Figuring Out the Magic of the Orange Drink

## Veterans Holding Corporation Holds the Annual Fundraiser for the 2nd Meeting House

Oh dear readers, do you recall in these very pages, unfathomably now one year ago, when this gentle writer wandered into his first Veterans Holding Corporation St. Patrick's Day Corned Beef and Cabbage Dinner and afterwards, transfixed and bemused by the Mysterious Orange Drink (for it is its own creature and deserves to be capitalized so as to emphasize its very nature) rambled poetically (for we have not yet reached the echelon to have waxed such) over seeking the recipe, yet finding it a closely guarded secret even with the pile of pineapple juice cans not-so-hidden nearby?

Well, yet again, we have just passed that time of year when the Mysterious Orange Drink is placed upon each table, in pitchers of sizes great and small, thin and squat, handled and not, and find themselves at a consistently empty state - how very confident of a drink which seems to clash with all of the green decor everywhere around the space (and no, the walls of the hall were not painted green just for this event, although to paint the walls each holiday would make for quite the pizzazz).

However, if we mention only the fizzy-sweet-colorfuls of the night, we'd not leave the reader with a mouth-salivating tease of corned beef and cabbage and potatoes and carrots just so, (or for all the vegetarians and vegans out there maybe there's a quorned beef and cabbage to lure you out as well in the future?) Add along the dessert table that knows no equal for miles and top that off with coffee graciously donated by Redding Roasters (which is our way of saying a grand thank you for all the java - especially from this writer whose feet were the last out the door, in the role of keeper of the house - and maybe one day you'll get a tale from these fingertips that speaks of the meditative quality of the slow mop at the end of the night... which could turn into a tale of the ghosts of the 2nd Meeting House...but that's for another time to determine whether this is legend, lore, or otherwise truth...) and you've an event you ought not miss.

Yet, what I couldn't help but notice is this - and here is where we will attempt to wax-paper poetic - the feeling of a certain having-been-here-before feeling to the night. Though, this feeling didn't come from the tangibles but in the flickers of memory that placed the very same people here this night, in the very same seats last year...and a celebration of another year, another night with each other, another gathering of old friends and family and friends who have become family. There's a camaraderie on this night, of which this writer's limited days-so-far in Bethel does not yet fully understand (although he is attempting to urge the calendar to cheat here or there and add to the vintage - for let us not wish away days we'll one day wish to have back in our hands). In that, may this event blossom for many more years, and may those same faces find these same seats for a long time to come and may these words convince those new, to join us.

article & photographs by Marc Moorash



A sampling of some of the curiosities that were available to win, all for but the giving of a small donation to the Veterans Holding Corporation and the preservation of 40 Main Street.



Diners look on as numbers are called and prizes are won during the ongoing raffles.



Underneath the metal covers a meal that, if you missed, you missed out!

### THANK YOU LOCAL BUSINESSES!!!

*We would be remiss to not thank all of the absolutely amazing local businesses who, year in and year out, have donated prizes for our event. We cannot do this without you and we hope that the loyal and dedicated readers of The Bethel Lark will recognize your kindness by giving the same in return by visiting and supporting your fine establishments.*

- Escape Salon & Spa
- Belardinelli Tire
- UK Gourmet
- Union Savings Bank
- Redding Roasters
- Silver Touch

- Newtown Savings Bank
- True Value Hardware of Bethel
- Peachwave Frozen Yogurt of Bethel
- Stony Hill Wines and Spirits
- Wine World
- A New Beginning Salon and Spa
- Tom's Paint & Wallpaper
- Armando's Restaurant
- O'Neils Sandwich and Coffee Bar
- Rizzuto's Restaurant and Bar
- La Fortuna Restaurant
- Whitlocks Restaurant
- Plain Jane's Restaurant
- Wah Lah restaurant
- Salz Pizza
- Famous Pizza
- Putnam House Restaurant and Tap Room

# Something to Cheer About...But What Was the Event?

**The Location & Era is Easy to Determine...Not Only Because of the Absence of a Three-Point Line**

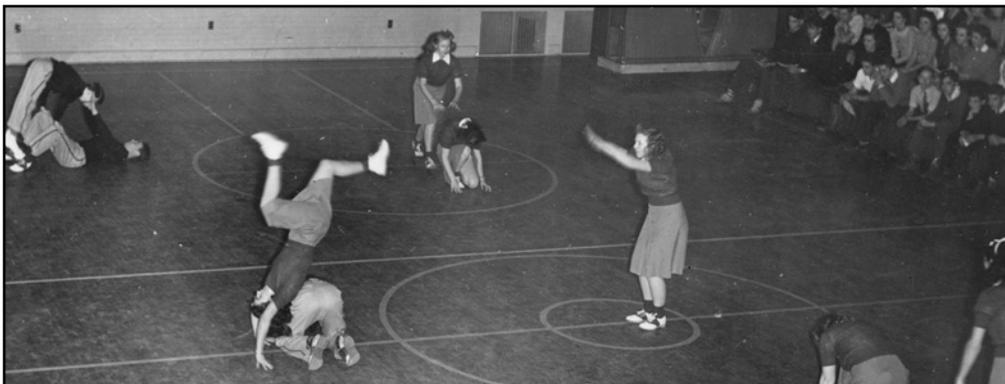
One of the two photos has a subtle architectural feature that would allow any avid annual book-buyer to recognize and know the location (How's that for a roundabout and mis-direction based clue that once figured out ought draw a smile from the face?).

Even without the visual clue, the location can probably be discerned by the event at hand. Yet, my goodness even not knowing any story, these photos are a sports historian's dream as hasn't the look of a basketball court changed over fifty or sixty years?

But...at what specific event would these photos have been taken? All of the performers are dressed the same, but there's no identification anywhere...no school colors to be seen...

In the photo archives of the Historical Society, are a number of cheerleading photographs from this event - all of the photos are unlabeled other than a handwritten title, all the participants are unnamed.

So, do you know the names of anybody in these photos? Could you surmise the event? Want to make up the story behind these photos and spin a yarn for all to hear? Send your notes and tales to [info@bethelhistoricalsociety.com](mailto:info@bethelhistoricalsociety.com) and we'll print the most interesting of the bunch in an upcoming issue of The Bethel Lark.



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# Down Falls the Old Town Hall

**Regardless of Heated Opinion it Was Still of Bethel's History**



First the machines roll in, then the fence goes up, and then the demolition begins. In this case, watched over by a painted cat who adorned the building in its incarnation as the Bethel Teen Center.

Built in 1961, and eventually used as the Bethel Teen Center until the discovery of asbestos forced a move and a shutdown of the property, the building had sat empty since 2007.

Of the three main buildings in Bethel which had been torn down in the past year (including the 1912 Masonic Temple on Greenwood Avenue, and the 1850's house on the Eaton property), this was by far the newest, yet most contentious.

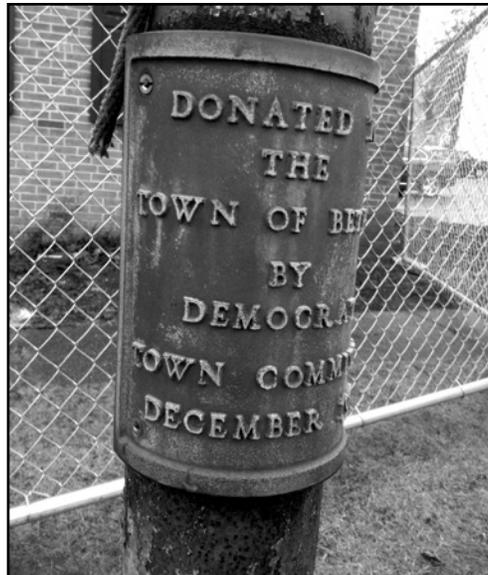
The footprint will be replaced by a parking lot, which will bring sixteen additional parking spaces to the library.



A final view of the Old Town Hall building from the parking lot which will eventually cover its footprint.

Maybe the irony being that this building-turned-parking-lot is actually a harbinger of progression. As the saying goes, "When is a parking lot not just a parking lot?" Well, in this instance, when it allows for the completion of the extra rooms in a town's library.

Now, how many towns can say that they are, in a digital age, expanding the space and resources available to their population, through the services provided by a library? The answer is not many - and can one really argue with greater and easier access to resources of education?



A plaque that adorned the flagpole that stood guard just outside the front doors of the building.

## Calendar of Upcoming Events

Sunday May 5th, 2013

### Why the Shepaug is Not Really the Shepaug

2:00pm - 4:00pm

Local History Buff and Railroad researcher extraordinaire Christopher Lewis presents an amazing look at the Bethel to Hawleyville Railroad and its relation to the Shepaug Railroad companies of the late 1800s and early 1900s. In addition the Danbury Railroad Museum will be on hand with numerous artifacts and items to view.

This is a free event.



Sunday May 19th, 2013

### Re-Dedication of Challenger Plaque at Municipal Center

Time TBA

Sometimes history isn't hundreds of years old, but is just around the calendrical corner and lost under foot. On this day we will re-dedicate the monument that was given to the Challenger astronauts who died in 1986. What monument you ask? Exactly! Join us at the Municipal Center to learn a great tale of lost Bethel history. Free.



Saturday June 8th, 2013

### Center Cemetery Tour/ CT Open House Day

2:00pm - 4:00pm

Join us for a walking tour through Bethel's historic Center Cemetery - home of Civil War soldiers, some of Bethel's founding families, and all sorts of characters and color from Bethel's past. This event is in conjunction with CT Open House Day - a statewide celebration of CT Culture. \$2



Friday July 5th, 2013

### Barnum's Birthday & Crazy Hat Contest

5:00pm

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A tasty Santa Claus slid down the chimney and landed in the punch bowl during the annual Children's Victorian Tea Party which was attended by over forty children.



Corncob dolls made by the children who attended the Laura Ingalls Wilder event in February.



**-- The Bethel Historical Society Museum will be open the following dates and times:  
Sat. April 13th 1:00 - 3:00pm, Sat. May 4th 2:00 - 4:00pm, Sat. June 8th 1:00 - 5:00pm  
-- We're Now on Facebook! Like us at - facebook.com/bethelhistoricalsociety**

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