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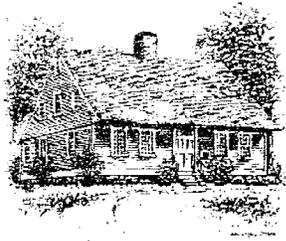
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THE HAMDEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER SPRING EDITION 2008

Dear Members,

ATTENTION! If you have not been contacted to help as a summer docent at the J.D. House, be aware. You may be called to serve. The house museum will be open for public viewing during July and August, 1:00 to 4:00 PM on Saturdays and Sundays. Ginny Zukunft is our Docent Coordinator. Please call her at 248-6018 to volunteer and schedule a date.

THANK YOU! To all the Society members who sent their dues, we offer our appreciation for your continued support. A special "thank you" is extended to the members who made an extra donation. Our membership is our most important resource.

PLAN AHEAD! The 47th annual Giant Valley Antiques Show will be held on November 15th and 16th. Save the dates.

*You are the key to
our success!*



HAMDEN NOTABLE

Willis E. Miller, 1840-1904, was a self-made man who worked himself from laborer to president of the Axel Works on the Mill River at the head of the Sleeping Giant. He and his wife Mary with their two daughters, Gertrude and Mabel, lived for a period of time in the Nathaniel Sherman house at 3250 Whitney Avenue which was dismantled in 1972. Later the family moved to New Haven, and from his house on Orange Street, Miller commuted by train to work in Mt. Carmel. At the time of his death, he was involved in or was a director of thirty-two various companies in the New Haven area.

When Mary Miller died in 1924, she left \$100,000 to the Town of Hamden for the establishment of a library in Centerville in memory of her husband; however, her daughters would have life use of the money. The last daughter, Gertrude, died in 1944, and by that time the bequest had shrunk to \$62,000. By 1948, the Miller Fund had grown to \$65,000.

The old Rectory School Cabin on Whitney Avenue (now the Sette & Bonadies Law firm) housed the Hamden Free Public Library from 1931 until February 7, 1951, when the new Miller Memorial Library opened at a cost of \$169,000.

The above list does not do justice to the Board members who wear more than one hat serving on many committees, making our Society an active and responsible community organization. Help us, help Hamden.

Profile: Salvatore de Maio

Recently, the New Haven Museum and Historical Society featured an exhibit entitled, *The Federal Art Project in New Haven: The Era, Art & Legacy*. As with initiatives, which provided work for the jobless during the Great Depression, the Federal Art Project of the Works Project Administration was a program established during Franklin Roosevelt's first term as president to employ artists. These artists created "public art," that is, murals, sculpture, and visual pieces in other media that were integrated into, or displayed at, civic buildings. Usually, the themes of such public art was patriotic, celebrating America's past, its legends, its ideals.

One artist whose work was shown in this exhibit was Salvatore De Maio, born in New Haven and later a Hamden resident. My family and I had the pleasure of being taken through the exhibit by Mr. DeMaio's daughter, Tish De Maio Lattanzi, who also generously shared materials for this article. Born in 1908, Salvatore was one of the thirteen children of Alphonse De Maio, a professional musician. Salvatore studied painting at Yale. To help him afford the costs, he played a cornet in jazz orchestras and in the Yale football band.

He came to international attention when he won the famed Prix de Rome in 1930. For the competition, which dates back to 1663 and is still held, he painted an interpretation of the descent of Christ from the cross, called "The Complete Sacrifice." Winning this prize gave Salvatore the opportunity to work in his own studio at the Academie de France in Rome for three years. While in Rome, he also met the king and queen of Italy when they visited an exhibition at the School of Fine Arts of the American Academy in Rome.

When he returned to America, he had exhibits in New York City and at the Yale Art Gallery. Thereafter, he exhibited his work and taught for many years. He was commissioned, under the Federal Art Project, to paint murals in buildings in the New Haven area. His work included the Children's Room of the New Haven Public Library (a retelling of Washington Irving's story of Rip Van Winkle), the lounge for the Governor's Foot Guard in the New Haven Armory, and Hamden High School still boasts his murals illustrating the history of the town.

His career was interrupted by World War II, in which he served as an officer in the Army Air Corps. After the war, he and his wife Clelia ("Claire") Clengo, whom he married in 1936, moved to Mt. Carmel and ran a popular restaurant called The Weathervane (the site, at 4137 Whitney Avenue, was next to the area now occupied by Nicolina's). Originally meant as a gathering place for artists and musicians, the Weathervane united De Maio's lifelong interests.

The Weathervane also provided a gallery for De Maio's work, including "The Complete Sacrifice." However, he loaned the painting to a church in Boston, where it stayed after De Maio died. Two years ago, his daughter called the church and found out it had closed. It seemed the painting was lost. She was directed to a church in New Jersey where the painting was discovered, cut out of its frame and rolled up, a little worse for wear. After

restoration, the painting is in its full glory, back in possession of the family, and ready to be exhibited.

Ken Minkema Ph.D.

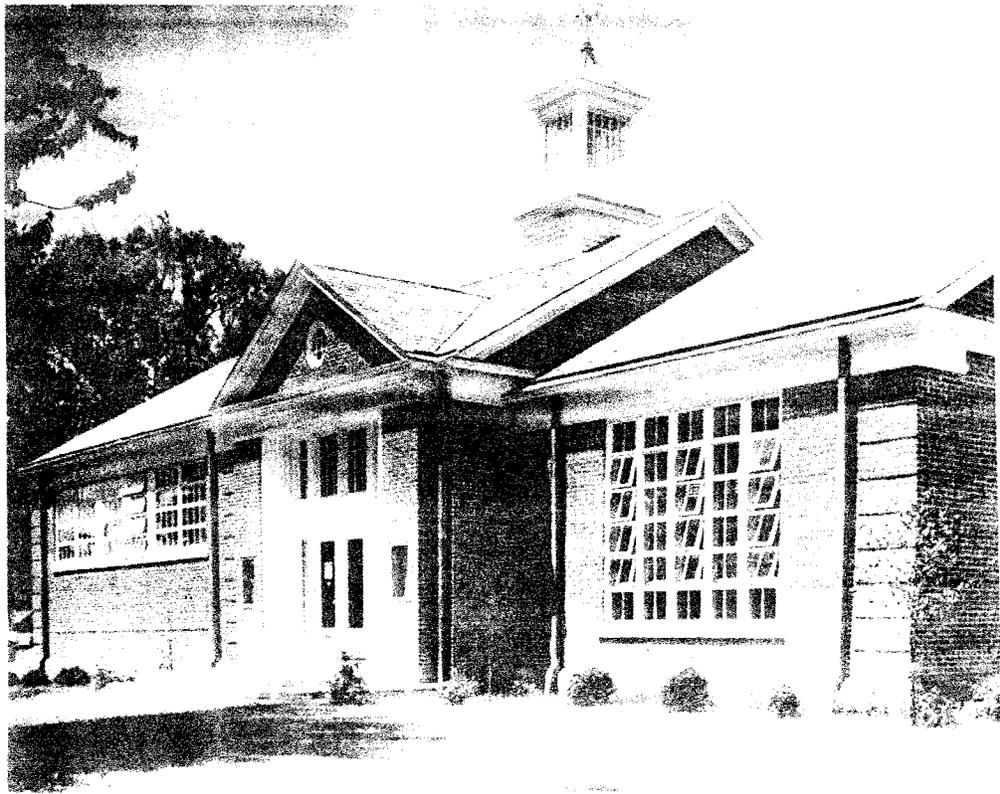


A Little J.D. House History

Jonathan Dickerman II built his house in 1792 for his bride, Miriam Bradlye. They had been married that same year by Rev. Nathaniel Sherman. Jonathan, a farmer, originally lived in a house on West Shepard Avenue. He was one of nineteen children born (1747) in his father's house nearby on what is now Whitney Avenue.

Originally, the house was located across the street on Sleeping Giant Park property. It had been a gift to the Park Association by John Edward Heaton in 1924. The family of Clinton Kately, the first custodian of the Park, was the last to actually live in it. Just after the Hamden Historical Society was formed in 1928, it joined with the Park Commission to repair, restore, and paint the house. Society records show that in April 1930, \$50 was appropriated to restore the interior. By the next month, two rooms were completed. In December, William Todd donated paper and decorating in the amount of \$56. Since the 1930's, the "old red house" has been open to the public during the summer. One special docent or hostess was Miss Caroline A. Dickerman, a great-granddaughter of the builder.

On the mantel in the kitchen area of the house, there has been an odd object with strips of leather attached. Its purpose has been a mystery until one of our clever docents did some research which suggests the object in question is a kind of a "martinet" defined as "a punitive device;" not the "stickler for rules." Derived from the French, *marteau*, the martinet is a short type of whip made of a wooden handle and a number of lashes of equal length. It was a traditional instrument of physical punishment used in France on children, often applied on their calves so they would not have to disrobe. In English, the term refers not to the whip but to the person who would use it, on who demands strict adherence to set rules. (Thanks Lorraine)



The original Miller Miller Memorial Library in Hamden