



The Bethel Lark

The quarterly newsletter of the Bethel Historical Society

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



Vol. 3

Fall 2014 - Bethel, CT

Issue 3 (II)

The Meeting House Past, the Meeting House Future



Stories of Our Historic Building, Giving Thanks For Those Who Have Helped Her Survive

You drive by and might not even realize that it was once a church. Turned sideways on the narrow lot, she tends to get overlooked either due to traffic or texting or because the First Congregational Church on the corner catches the eye. But our beloved 1842 Second Meeting House, standing where once Frederick and Charles Shepard had a hat factory, on a lot once owned by Zadoc Judd, has a history that dates back to the early days of the village of Bethel, and contains moments which include tornadoes, fires, bank robberies, dance halls, the town jail, barber shops, Bethel's first lending library and so much more...as would be expected from a building that has been the Heart of Bethel for over 170 years.

For all of this time, and for the quarter century that the Bethel Historical Society has called it home (along with the Bethel CT VFW Post 935) nobody has undertaken an extensive and exhaustive study into the history of the building...until now.

Yes, dear readers, it is finally time to unearth and restore the tales and lineage to this delightful structure. And while one expects certain types of knowledge to percolate up from the ground and walls, sometimes the expectations are tempered...yet in our instance, the excitement in what we found, the connections made, the movie-script happenings...can only lead to even more enthusiasm for the future.

On September 15th, BHS Director Marc Moorash (that would be your storyteller now, dedicated readers...how odd to speak of one's self as doing a thing, on a date, and then having to speak of it as if it were not me, but actually was me!) gave an hour long update, full of newspaper articles and photographs, Judds and Seeleys, with more than a chuckle, or gasp or three, audible as moments in time were revealed.

What, then, dear reader, could this building possibly have to do with tornadoes and fires? Well, this is fairly tame, insofar as the 1842 Second Meeting House was built when the First Meeting House burned down. Of course, what makes this more interesting than any old fire, is that in the Old Burying Ground, if you look in the front section and notice the big square space where there are no graves, you'll be interested to learn that there sat Bethel's first pump-house - a mere forty feet from the building which burned down.

As for a tornado, well it was but twenty two years after the Second Meeting House was built that a storm rode its way up Main Street, and under the guise of a twister, knocked the steeple into the building and sent the spire crashing to the floor continued on page 5...



A photograph of Darius and Eleanor Sutton - part of the group of founding members of the Bethel Historical Society, long time members, and through their generosity and their estate, are honored patrons of helping us preserve and renovate the 1842 Second Meeting House for future generations to utilize and enjoy. As thanks, one of the two meeting rooms has been dedicated in their memory. To see a photograph of the plaque, please turn to page five. Or better, come see it in person at any of our upcoming events. Photo courtesy of Joan Carlson.

The Bethel Lark

is published by

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Founded in 1960

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.

The President's Perspective



Dear Members and Friends,

I, first, want to acknowledge the hard work of our Board of Directors for a successful tribute to the Stony Hill Inn, our P.T. Barnum Crazy Hat Contest, our very successful Tag Sale, our annual Colonial Kids Camp, a presentation of the history of the 1842 Second Meeting House accompanied by the dedication of plaques to Theresa Leo and Eleanor and Darius Sutton. I want to thank Lynn and John Holbrook for sponsoring our Day at the Farm and the Plumtrees Schoolhouse Association for the use of the school in order to provide children with a day in the life of students attending a one-room schoolhouse. All events were well attended which reinforces to us that our organization is a valued asset to Bethel residents. Also to be noted is that our attendance at our Museum Open days has steadily increased.

The Historical Society is working on two on-going projects. We are capturing the history of Bethel's Fire Departments through photographs and film which will involve talking with and filming

Bethel's firefighters. We are also talking with and filming Bethel's WWII Veterans. If you are or if a family member or friend is a WWII Veteran, we would love to talk to you or them. Just call 203 743-5893 and we will get in touch and schedule a time to meet.

I also want to thank our returning members and our new members for their support of the Bethel Historical Society. We will enter a new Membership cycle in January 2015 and if you have not paid your 2014 dues and if you do so by 15-Dec-2014, your dues payment will be applied to 2015. As a non-profit we rely on the support of our membership to continue preserving and sharing Bethel's rich history. Remember, we are a 501c3 so take this opportunity to renew your membership before 2014 runs out.

Please visit our website bethelhistoricalsociety.com to view past newsletters, updates on upcoming events, our store and more.

Until next time,

Patricia Rist
President

Welcome New Members! Linda Cook, Barbara Holton, Mary Menti, Denise Shost, Edith Jaccarino, Thomas Hurgin, & Base Technologies

A Grand Thank You for the Recent Donations to the Collection...
Mary Spain...
...her father's 1923 Bethel High School baseball uniform
Marnie Warner and Martha Bakkila...
...1913 Bethel High School Graduation memorabilia which is the most complete packet of information we have received to date.



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

Love is in the Walls - The Rest of the Story

Finding and Meeting the Descendants of the Lovers and Letter-Writers Hiram and Florence

Harken back two issues ago, to when we first met Hiram and Floss, the writers of the love letters found in the walls of a Bethel home. We were left, still, with many questions, including how, when one lived in Danbury, the other in Poughkeepsie, did they meet. To try and find out, we went searching for any living relatives.

When researching, one hopes for an unusual name. In Florence's case, Coutant would be easy to search, except there was also the spelling/variation Cotant. Taylor, like Smith, leads to many names and many difficulties in pinpointing the proper branch of the tree. How then, to track down any descendants?

In our case, it was easy to determine that Hiram and Floss had a son, a Hiram Jr. From there we found his marriage to Mildred Hunter. References to a home at 66 Grassy Plain in Bethel, gave us the good possibility that we were on the correct track. And after much searching, we were given two names of grandchildren - David Taylor and Marcia Taylor.

From there, the trail went very cold until finding a newspaper article with reference to a David P. and Laura T. Taylor, but who knew if these were the correct people? When researching however, sometimes it is a single letter that makes all the difference in the world.

For then, following the Laura T. Taylor lead, we found an obituary for a Norbert Tarala... with a sister Laura Taylor and another sister in Bethel CT! So, putting all of the modern internet researching aside, the final step took good 'ol simple-gumshoe techniques of "Hey does anybody know this person, who might be related to the person who is married to the grandson of our letter writers?"

And sure enough, word got back around and but a few days later an email landed stating that yes, we had found the correct David Taylor, who later that week would meet us, along with Laura, to tell stories, let us get copies of the photographs you've seen in these articles, and view the love letters of the couple who, in David's words "raised him until he was five." Alas, however, the story of Hiram & Floss meeting, was not to be found.

Even in his death, though, we find something endearing and enduring in our tale. In researching, the "Application for Headstone or Marker" documentation came up. This was the application for a grave marker for a member of the military. There, at the very top, Hiram is listed as having been discharged on February 28th, 1919. Here's the moment of the Reading Comprehension test that was always dreaded in Elementary School - do you recall when they were married...don't look...don't look...okay go find it in part one of our tale...yes, they were married on March 4th, 1919. Discharged, on a train and as an eagle headed home, and married they were - wasting no time or space. They had been apart long enough. Just nod and smile, nod and smile.



Clifford Taylor, Hiram's Father. Born May 2nd 1862, died August 26th 1933. His first wife, Arvilla, would live just long enough to see Hiram and Florence married.

Still don't know why these letters were in the walls...nor how they met. And maybe, this entire story is a call out in the hopes that maybe, just maybe, we will one day find the key as to how these two lovebirds met, and how he got to Poughkeepsie...and lasted throughout the time apart so as to speak to us, ninety five years down the road...

Regardless, this is the story of Hiram Sturdevant Taylor (January 30th 1893 - March 22 1953) and Florence Cotant (August 27th 1897 - March 4th 1961). And it is a story, beautiful.

Maybe it was hiding, maybe it was all an accident. Maybe, after Hiram passed away, dear Florence, having lived nearly two decades here, wanted some token, some icon, some altarpiece of their love to remain. This writer would like to think that's how it happened - not for the sake of the story - but because it would mean such a moment occurred, in the history of our little town...and the story found its way through the woodwork, after so many years - not as fate or destiny - but as all the great stories go...they finally find their way home no matter what...and maybe, just maybe, those things are all one and the same.

article by Marc Moorash

State of Connecticut.

By direction of an act of the Legislature of Connecticut, approved February 7th, 1917, I am required to procure certain information relative to the above address of the State. I therefore call upon you to answer the following questions.

MARCUS H. HOLCOMB, Governor.

TOWN or CITY Meriden, Conn. DATE Feb. 29 '17

FULL NAME Clifford Taylor

POST OFFICE ADDRESS 211 Windsor Street

1. What is your present Trade, Occupation or Profession? Retired from U.S. Army

2. Have you experience in any other Trade, Occupation or Profession? No

3. What is your Age? 24 Height? 5 ft 2 Weight? 160 lbs

4. Are you Married? Single? or Widowed? Single

5. How many persons are dependent on you for support? None

6. Are you a citizen of the United States? Yes

7. If not a citizen of the United States have you taken out your last papers? No

8. If not a citizen of the United States, what is your nationality? None

9. Have you ever done any Military or Naval Service in this or any other Country? None

Where? None How Long? None What Branch? None Rank? None

10. Have you any serious physical disability? No If so, name it. None

11. Can you do any of the following: Ride a horse? No Handle a team? Yes Drive an automobile? Yes
 Ride a motorcycle? Yes Understand telegraphy? No Operate a wireless? No Any experience with a steam engine? No Any experience with electrical machinery? None Handle a boat, power or sail? No
 Any experience in single coastwise navigation? None Any experience with High Speed Motor Gunboats? No
 Engines? Yes Are you a good swimmer? No

I hereby certify that I have personally interviewed the above mentioned person and that the answers to the questions enumerated are as he gave them to me.

R. P. PRICE
Military Census Agent.

The 1917 Military Census form (falter arches and all) for Hiram Sturdevant Taylor.

Some Kids Go To Sleepaway Camp...Pshaw To That

For BHS Kids, We Take One Glorious Week To Go A-Time Travelin' Back to the Colonial Days



All hatted up with an eye on Militia Day, the campers took part in an authentic foot drill and handily sent the Redcoats back over the hills. Luther Holcomb would be proud!



The handmade instrument of choice were drums, as decorated and played by a youthful and enthusiastic drum corps...echoing the ghosts of Bethel past given our drumming history!



Teamwork was the way to decipher secret codes in the Minuteman scavenger hunt.



Basket-weaving led to safe places in which to hold the chicken eggs gathered from a coop.

Now that leaves are aswirl in the apple crisp air, and pumpkin lights and school books replace evening sparklers, and watermelon this summer past still glows on in the memory of the lucky children who attended this year's Bethel Historical Society Colonial Kids' Camp. When asked what they did over the summer, these children (aged 3-13), returning to friends and classes had a lot to tell, and show, thanks to the full week camp program designed by the ever-creative Mary Ferri, and her team of pedagogist historians Kitty Grant, Ava Heydt, and dear junior assistant Sophie Sauber.

As in past years our young time travelers were immersed in in history come alive as they explored crafts and lessons once lived by the children of yesteryear. The week began with games and stories of Bethel historical figures from the 1700's, keeping the lawn next to The Plumtrees School House cast about with smiling faces as youngsters dashed after wooden hoops, tottered on stilts and played with a host of other toys of olde. Favorites this year were nine men's morris, puddle jumper whirligigs, and marbles. Toys of the day were handmade, and with a great sense of accomplishment the children crafted yarn dolls, punched framed tin motifs, and wove baskets to collect eggs from a chicken coop.

In real colonial life not all the lessons learned were fun and games, though you wouldn't know it to see our group of explorers at Colonial Kids' Camp as they fell happily into ranks for a foot-drill (complete with wooden muskets), and deciphered secret codes for a Minuteman scavenger hunt, during Militia Day. There were drums to make, Redcoat soldiers to color, and a beanbag toss that left the Rebels joyous to be victorious young Americans.

The day of our trip to Holbrook Farm is a perennial favorite. Happy as clean scrubbed farm children these explorers greatly enjoyed discovering the ways of the land as they pulled from above and beneath the soil a wealth of swiss chard, tomatoes, purple potatoes, carrots, and onions, to combine in a delicious stone soup—served with hot homemade rolls, love, and cookies thanks to the amazing Holbrook family and the farmers at Holbrook farm. There were also eggs and seeds to gather, and chores to be done, but the day ended in play as the kids ran about the great lawn of the farmhouse.

Also filling their days these modern scholars of another age filed in and took their seats at the peal of the Plumtrees School bell. Within the single room of wood and blackboard walls, Mistress Mary Ferri taught her spirited pupils their lessons from horn books, as they stood for a spelling bee, and the recitation of math facts. Earlier in the day, the children made hand-bound books, and used homemade black walnut ink and hand cut quills to practice letter writing. Never was school or camp such fun!

article by Ava Dawn Heydt
photos by Ava Dawn Heydt

Always More Than Just a Place to Hold Meetings

This Entire Newsletter, Filled With the History of the Meeting House, Would Be But A Glimpse

below. Yet, while the building was fairly new, the growing congregation chose to build again, rather than repair. But, being true yankees, and letting no structure go to waste, in stepped William A. Judd (postmaster, shop owner, wealthy Bethelite) and the building, so moved down the road, was lifted up onto a brick first floor (to where the Post Office then moved) and Judd's Hall was born.

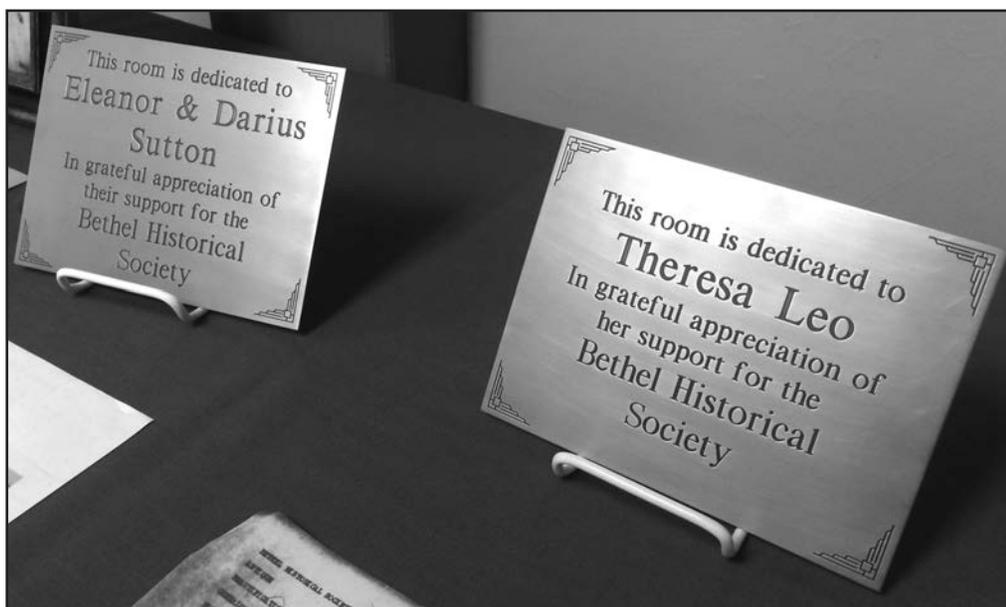
However, Judd's Hall was not to live long as by 1868, William A. Judd went bankrupt...due to a scandal with the First National Bank involving he and prominent hatter Nathan Seeley. This wouldn't be so eye-catching (although it is sordid - Judd covering checks for Seeley for which he did not have the funds so that Seeley could go to the Pahquioque Bank in Danbury and get loans...all this but a couple of years after Seeley had the contract for hats for the Union soldiers...to which there's a story of his contacting President Lincoln and saving Bethel from bankruptcy...ears and interest piqued yet?) had Judd not also been the cashier when the Hatters Bank was robbed in 1858 (See The Bethel Lark Issue 2 & 3 for the wonderful article by Town Historian Patrick Tierney Wild on this very thievery).

But at that we will say "To be continued" or "Come see the show" or maybe even better yet... read the book (to one day be written) for in these remaining paragraphs we must gratuitously give gratitude to Theresa Leo and Eleanor & Darius Sutton - to whom, on this day, the two meeting rooms of the building were dedicated in thanks to their contributions during their days in Bethel as members of the Bethel Historical Society, and also for what they contributed after their days had passed. For without the money bequeathed by Theresa Leo, the building of which we speak, would likely not be standing as it was that money which allowed, in 1989, for the roof and ceiling of The Great Hall to be secured and the space which houses The Bethel Museum and Archives to be restored.

As for Eleanor and Darius Sutton, part of the group of founding members of the Bethel Historical Society back in 1960, says Historical Society President Pat Rist, "Now with the kindness and generosity of the Eleanor and Darius Sutton Estate, the Society will begin the next steps of working with an architect to phase the work on finishing the building as well as completing State Grant Requests for Matching funds."

The least we could do, in honor and memory, was to place their names upon the walls, and in some tangible manner make their lives and history truly, physically, connected with this building they have helped keep alive. With family members present, and the future to look forward to, we offer up the Eleanor and Darius Sutton Room and the Theresa Leo Room and continue searching for the stories that have yet to be uncovered, and look toward all of the possible stories to come, as we renovate the rest of the 1842 Second Meeting House for use of the Bethel community and beyond.

article by Marc Moorash
More photos on page 6...



The plaques that will be mounted at the entryways of the two meeting rooms and become a link that tangibly connects our benefactors to the history and the future of the building.



Items of Meeting House history that were on display during the presentation included numerous images of Hatters Bank currency, Sanborn maps of early 1900s Bethel, and a model.

Of Any Manufacture,
At Prices as
Reasonable as Any Place
in the World.

Also New Line of
Neckwear, Notions, Stationery, etc.

Don't Forget the CIRCULATING LIBRARY.

An Advert for George R Martin's shop on the ground floor, October 1884 - Lending Library!

Oscar's Hotel.

Oscar Hibbard's Hotel, under the town hall isn't high toned in any of its appointments, but it's a mighty high priced boarding house. It caters only to the transient trade. Its bill of fare is coarse and its beds are uncomfortable. It has no respectable patrons, its guests being mostly law breakers, jaw breakers, horse thieves, drunken men, etc. In fact, a bad character is a requisite qualification for admission to the hospitality of Oscar's Hotel. The prices are out of all proportion to the accom-

From John Rodemeyer Jr.'s publication The Yellow Spasm...Oscar's Hotel a.k.a. Bethel Jail

A Few More Images From the Building Archives

Glimpses Of the Many Benefactors and Happenings That Have Kept the Building Standing

Lewis E. Goodsell, who has guided the Society during the past year, was reelected as President. Mary-Gert McCollam retired from the Vice Presidency and the by-laws were changed to provide for a second Vice President. Joseph W. Tarrant is to be one of the new Vice Presidents. Joe, as he is referred to by friends, is a teacher in the Bethel School System and active in Veteran affairs. Another Vice President is yet to be chosen. Eleanor Sutton, who has done such an excellent job as Membership Chairman was asked to fill the role of a second Vice President, but declined.

Even The Bethel Lark has a lineage and ancestry...from a Bethel Historical Society newsletter in 1976, Eleanor Sutton continues her work as the Chair of Membership...it was under her guidance and energy that the group first flourished with an active membership in the 1960s and 1970s.

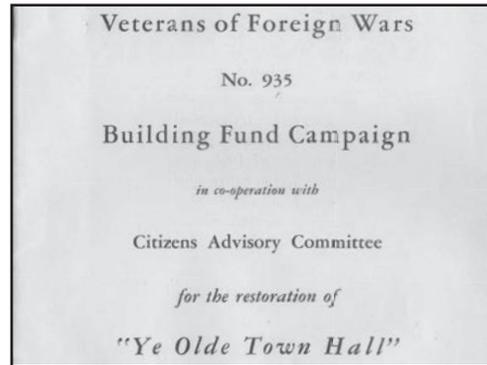
boulder, not rounded by a million years of glacial rolling, but still with sharp edges and a pointed apex, as if it might have been tossed around no more than a few thousand years. On that summit one could stand in the breeze and survey the surrounding foothills of the Berkshires. There was a sense of isolation here, of protection from the tearing clamor of the outside world. I stood on that high rock a long time that first day, thinking and hoping. . . . It was amazing how much ground-space there could be in four acres. And the area seemed even larger when I set out later to cut the grass and weeds with a scythe.

We called on neighboring farmers to inquire about the history of this little homestead. Old Mr. Hickok, who lived down the road, said: "There hain't no better garden ground and no better well-water in these parts." After climbing to the lookout rock again and feasting our eyes further on the whole prospect, we returned to Bethel, and went to the town clerk's office to look up the deed. That being clear, we paid Mr. Platt a few dollars to bind the bargain and said we'd bring the family up in a week and take possession.

Art Young gets the deed to his property from the Bethel Town Clerk...on Main Street, 1904.



A blackboard with notes (pun intended) from the Bethel Drum Corps still survives...



From the cover of the 1947 VFW pamphlet to raise funds for renovating the building.



In 1893, classes were held in the Second Meeting House (then the Town Hall) due to school overcrowding. Some town issues never change...

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Please mark your calendar
for April 18th 2015,
To display your quilts at our
first quilt exhibit program.

Also, don't miss the
opportunity to talk with:
* Mary Julliet-Paonessa,
a quilt Textile Conservator
* Sue Reich,
an AQS Certified Appraiser.

Come and meet these two
experts who will discuss
your quilt's historic
importance, value,
and preservation
recommendations.

This program will have
associated fees

Exhibit entrance only fee - \$5.00.
Quilt appraisal fee - \$15.00.

12:00 Noon – 4:00 PM

For more information:
info@bethelhistoricalsociety.com

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Sunday October 19th, 2014
The Bethel Museum -
Open Museum
2:00pm - 4:00pm
All Ages - Free Admission



Friday October 24th, 2014
Ghost Tour
6:30pm

The annual Bethel Historical Society Ghost Tour with storyteller extraordinaire Marty Bishop...and afterwards, hot cider and snacks in the Eleanor and Darius Sutton room. Tour about an hour. Meets at the 1842 Second Meeting House Reservations requested by calling Pat Rist: (203) 743 5893 \$12 non members, \$10 members, \$6 children 5 - 12...



Saturday November 15th, 2014
The Bethel Museum -

Open Museum
2:00pm - 4:00pm
All Ages - Free Admission
Last Open Museum for 2014
Last opportunity to see the
Stony Hill Inn exhibit!



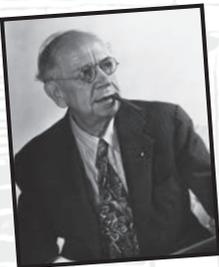
Saturday December 13th, 2014
10:30am - 12:30pm

Childrens' Christmas
Victorian Tea Party
\$12 / \$10 BHS member
The yearly Christmas Party
and craft extravaganza.
(For Ages 4 and Up)
Bring along your favorite doll or
stuffed animal and your friends...
Dress up in your holiday finest and
spend a morning of tea & snacks &
hot chocolate & stories & crafts.
Reservations Required by
December 10th
by calling: Mary Ferri
203 730 2726

THE ART YOUNG GALLERY

The first exhibition,
since 1939, of Art Young's
illustrations & life...

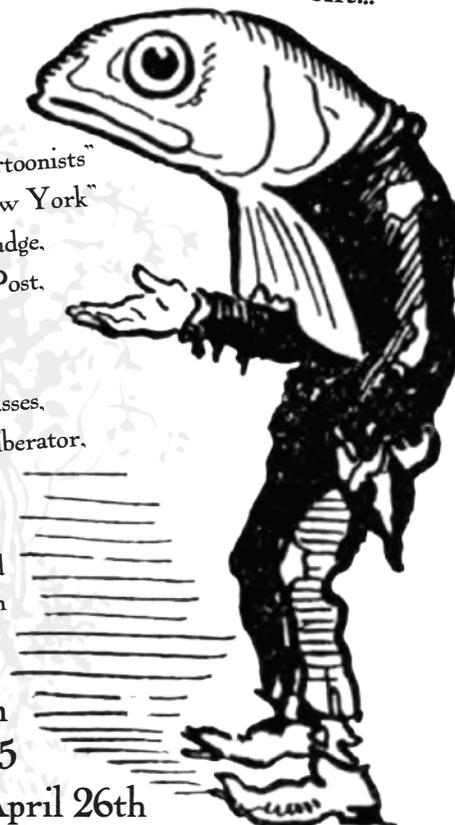
- The "Dean of American Cartoonists"
- Bethel's "Ambassador to New York"
- Illustrator for...Puck, Judge,
The Saturday Evening Post,
Life, The Nation,
The New Yorker,
Metropolitan, The Masses,
The New Masses, The Liberator,
and so forth!



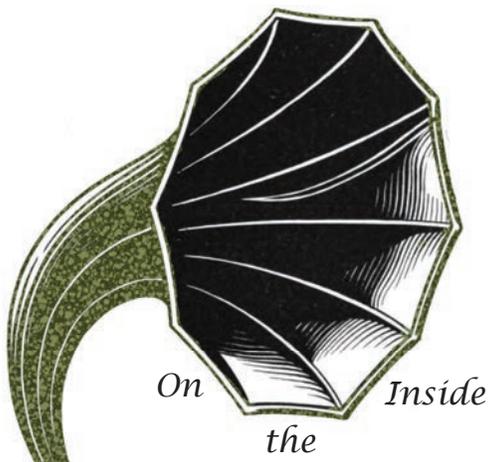
Original artwork, books, newspaper articles,
business letters and personal correspondence and
a show worthy of bringing Art Young's vision
and name back to the masses

Opening Shindig @ 7pm
Friday March 27th, 2015
Exhibition Up... March 28th - April 26th

at 40 Main Street in Bethel a.k.a The Bethel Museum



Our debut
event...



Ye Olde Towne Hall (Page 1)



Sum-Sum-Summer Camp... (Page 4)



REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after April 28, 1877 and on or before February 16, 1897)		
SERIAL NUMBER	1. NAME (First)	ORDER NUMBER
U 1203	Hiram Sturdevant Taylor	
2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (First)		
38 1/2 Greenwood Ave. Bethel Fairfield Conn.		
[THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE GIVEN ON THE LINE ABOVE WILL DETERMINE LOCAL BOARD JURISDICTION; LINE 2 OF REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE WILL BE IDENTICAL]		
3. MAILING ADDRESS		
same		
[Mailing address of other than place indicated on line 2. If same insert word same]		
4. TELEPHONE	5. AGE IN YEARS	6. PLACE OF BIRTH
2555	49	Danbury
DATE OF BIRTH		
Danbury January 30, 1897 Conn.		
7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS		
Mrs. Florence C. Taylor 38 1/2 Greenwood Ave., Bethel		
8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS		
Lee Hat Company, Danbury Co.		
9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS		
Sæltor Rock Rd. and Lee Mac Ave., Danbury Fairf. Conn.		
I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.		
10. SIGNATURE	11. SIGNATURE	
Hiram Taylor	Hiram Taylor	

Love in the Walls - Part 2 (Page 3)



Upcoming Events (Page 7 - Calendar)



--The Bethel Museum will have its last two openings of the year on Sunday October 19th and Saturday November 15th from 2-4pm...admission is free, all ages welcome --We're Now on Facebook! Like us at - facebook.com/bethelhistoricalsociety

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