

# Kent Historical Society

Newsletter



Volume 5, Number 3

Kent, Connecticut

August 2004

## Farm Knowledge

*"A Complete Manual of Successful Farming Written by Recognized Authorities in All Parts of the Country; Based on Sound Principles and the Actual Experience of Real Farmers, In Four Volumes" ... "Prepared exclusively for Sears, Roebuck and Co, 1918"*

In 1918, this 4 volume encyclopedia must have represented the epitome of farm knowledge. The technological revolution that would eventually spell the doom of the small town farm was just beginning, and the agricultural world was full of optimism. A browser through the prose and pictures in the encyclopedia cannot help but develop strong admiration for the multi-tasked and multi-talented farmer, who by necessity had to be able to handle whatever obstacles arose in his path. Farming was, and is, a very complex occupation. Not a 9 to 5 job by any means, it required the constant attention of its practitioners. Farmers and their families may not have had extensive classroom educations, but there are probably few other life callings that demanded such extensive knowledge and wisdom. If space permitted here, we would reprint the entire impressive 4 volume set for our non-farming

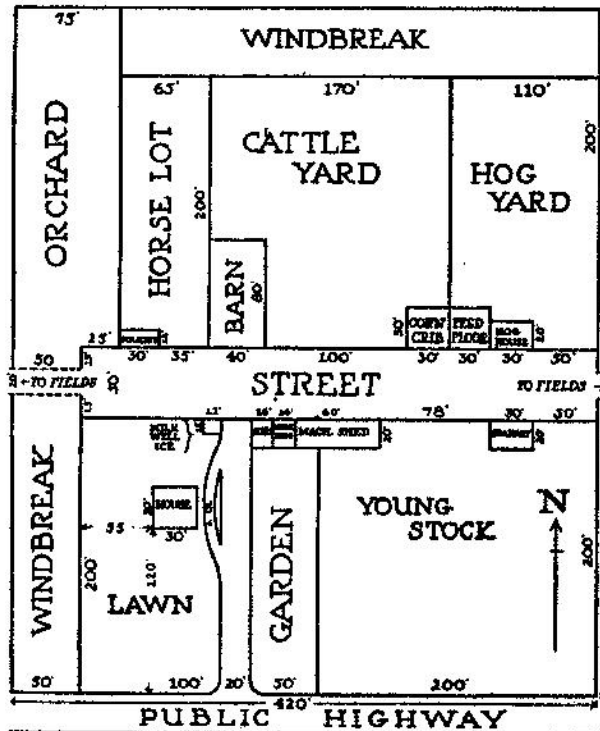


FIG. 10. A well-planned farmstead. Note location of machine shed near barn and on direct line of travel to field; that of workshop and combined milkhouse and icehouse between house and barn; that of the kitchen garden near the dwelling; and the close, convenient grouping of all the buildings.

members to see, but instead we will have to settle for a few choice excerpts. We hope you will enjoy the reading, and remember to honor this agricultural heritage in Kent.

The chapter in Volume 4 entitled The Farm Community has sections on The Church, The Library, The Schools, Agricultural Fairs, and National and Local Organizations. It begins *"The isolation of the city life is practically impossible in a farm section. Each family is too obviously a sharer in the community activities, too big a factor for good or*

*evil, too rich in its promise of neighborliness and cooperation, to remain unknown. Even though tastes may differ and social or political or religious affiliations fail to correspond, there is the common ground of community development upon which all can and must meet and join forces.... Let each individual take it upon himself or herself to be a little better citizen, a little kinder neighbor, a little heartier booster of the home town or county.....So will be born and flourish a community life that will serve and prosper, that will be a joy unto itself and a source of pride and strength and honor to the Nation."*

The next chapter is entitled "Science and the Farmer", and devotes many pages to the exten-

*(Continued on page 2)*

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**Farm Knowledge** (Continued from page 1)

sive knowledge of physics, astronomy, chemistry, biology and botany required for the successful farmer. *“Every human activity falls into one of the two great divisions; either it is a science or it is an art (an art being the personal interpretation and use of facts – it cannot be learnt from books but must be acquired by practice). . . . Farming clearly represents the combination of both science and art. Farmers have not always in the past been prompt either to recognize or welcome this fact. They have tended to set up a barrier between themselves – whom they like to think of as thoroughly ‘practical;’ - and the scientists – investigators and teachers – whom they view as theoretical, visionary and unbusinesslike. . . . The plan and purpose of **Farm Knowledge** is to awaken in the minds of a few more farmers the thought that they, too, deserve the name of scientists; to give them a new, more acute idea of the dignity and depth of their vocation.”* *“The most successful farmer is he who combines all that science, his own practical experience, and the work of other farmers have taught him, and then makes rules and develops methods to fit his own needs”. . . . “Among the qualities that a good farmer must possess, these three stand supreme: the will and power to work; the virtue of standing on one’s own feet; and the ability to accept gracefully whatever nature has to offer”.*

Another chapter deals with the farm home and family. By today’s standards, the introduction to this section would seem almost sappy, but in a true agricultural community, the sentiment expressed was close to the truth, and highly prized. *“No farm is a complete success until it has made not only a profitable business enterprise, but also a healthful, enjoyable place in which to live. Business and home life on the farm are one and inseparable. This makes farming different from every other business, and the farm home different from every other home in the world. Has any farm family ever realized all it has to be thankful for – in its opportunity to get the best and the most out of living without going beyond the boundaries of its home? There is hardly anything that gives greater satisfaction than living in a house amid surroundings that are bright and cheerful. All the members of every farmer’s family owe it to themselves to make the spot they live in as*

*beautiful as they can ”* The text goes on to describe in great Victorian detail how to plan the farm yard, decorate the interior of the house and nurture the inhabitants within, including the hired help. The caption under a delightful sketch of a good game of blind-man’s-bluff reads *“The farm family has both need and opportunity to provide its own recreations; games are invigorating sport for young and old”.*

The Farm Woman is *“not only the ‘food administrator’ of the farm – with all the responsibility that the supplying of fuel for hardworking and hard playing bodies involves – but also the guardian of clothes, the high priestess of the hearth and the living room; the living expression of the ‘first aid’ idea; often the regulator and timekeeper of all home activities and family plans; and ever the source of assistance, comfort and cheer for whatsoever member of the whole farm family needs help or advice. Sometimes, it is true, her ability and willingness to fill this many-sided office are not realized, taken advantage of, or appreciated. More often, however, everything she can give is sought, - but, oh, so little is given her where-with to make her tasks, even the ones she loves, easier!”.* This statement is accompanied by an illustration of a farm wife experiencing the joys of canning outdoors, and the promise that the looming new technology will make the life of the farm wife easier. That it did, for a time, but eventually the technology became the small farmer’s enemy, as giant machinery and megafarms, combined with rising taxes and other costs drove most of the small local farmer out of business. Although the landscape in Kent has been forever changed by this evolution of the agriculture industry, we have a few hard-working farmers left within the boundaries of our town. We are fortunate, and it is to them that we tip our hat in respect. Please join us in this endeavor by shopping locally whenever you can!

**Contact us:**

**[www.kenthistoricalsociety.org](http://www.kenthistoricalsociety.org)**

**[kenthistoricalsociety@juno.com](mailto:kenthistoricalsociety@juno.com)**

**860-927-4587**

# Focus on Farming



**The Dairy Area**

We have a special treat for you this summer at Seven Hearths! In the last few issues of the newsletter, I have been pestering you for contributions to our summer exhibit. Your response has been terrific! What treasures we have!

There are milk cans from many area farms, standing together as they would have on an old milk platform. Graceful grain cradles hang on the wall in the studio. Lethal looking ice saws are tucked in a corner. Milking machines and dairy scales represent some of the basic equipment used by our local farmers.

Agricultural tools, from the mundane to the obscure, are scattered throughout

the exhibit. The most obscure ones form the basis of our "What's It?" contest (see photo on page 4), in which prizes will be given to those knowledgeable folk able to recognize the 5 objects we have selected. The prizes for the contest have been donated by some of our local small farmers – Phoebe Cole, Vincent LaFontan, Phil & Diane Lang, and Mark & Sue Smallwood of Rainwater Farm – and will include fresh eggs, meats and vegetables, all grown right here in Kent! The winners and their guesses will be announced in our next newsletter.

The mundane tools can be just as fascinating. A collection of rusty old wrenches from the Naboring Farm looked uninteresting until we dumped them out of their box and looked at them individually. Common and functional as they may be, they still look like works of art, to some of us, at least.

In addition to the wide variety of tools and equipment, we have old reference books – How-To manuals, encyclopedias, catalogs, etc. The Kent Grange Quilt hangs on the wall over a collection of literature about this once popular and powerful organization. The Seven Hearths kitchen is set up as a bygone farm kitchen, complete with our new collection of old cookbooks. On the wall in the front hall is a map of Kent on which KHS President Fran Johnson has carefully located most of the old Kent farms, mills, blacksmith shops and other structures associated with farming, dating back to 1739. A visitor could spend an afternoon just looking at this map alone. On the opposite wall is a transcription of a diary kept in 1921 by Mr. E.H. Shove, in

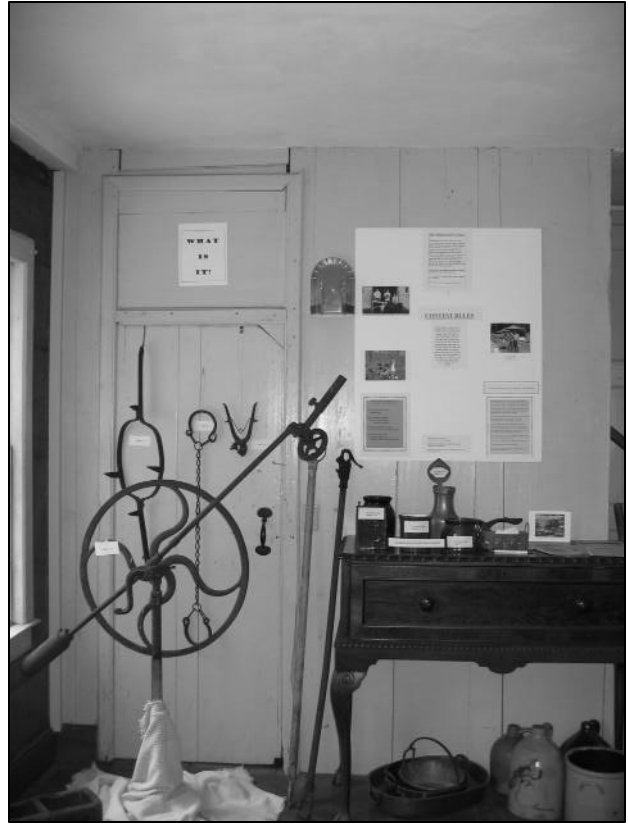


**Many of the tools used in crop production**

“Focus on Farming” continued



Ice Harvesting



The What's-It Contest - Do you know???

which he daily noted the various weather conditions, something which any good farmer worth his salt had to be an expert at predicting.

Of course, no KHS exhibit would be complete without a sampling of our famous photograph collection! We have on display pictures of Kent's old farmhouses, barns, cows, horses, oxen, tobacco fields, corn fields, ice cutting, hay gathering, wood chopping, as well as of the farmers who were at the center of all this activity.

In no particular order, our sincere thanks for their contributions for this exhibit go to: Bill & Charlotte Newton, Johnnie Lindberg, Sue Gawel, Fran Johnson, Susi Williams, Mary Grusauski, Dick & Charlotte Lindsey, Butch Soule, Marie Camp, Bill Tobin, Ky Anderson, Patty Braislin, Debby Devaux, Agnes Nowicki, Tom Page and Sue Howland. At the time this newsletter was being written, we were still expecting more donations from Sherm Greene, Nancy Wilsea and maybe a few others.

So, stop by and see this once in a lifetime tribute to Kent's hardworking farmers. And don't forget to enter the "What's It?" Contest while you're there!

The exhibit is open Saturdays and Sundays from 2 to 4:30 PM until the end of August. (We hope to keep it up until the beginning of school so that the school children may see it, so if your schedule for the rest of the summer is too packed, maybe we can sneak you in by appointment in September—but it will be too late to enter the contest!).

*The Second Annual Kent Husking Bee and Square Dance  
has been scheduled for Saturday, September 25, 2004.*

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS!!**





## Back Where It Belongs

Main Street, looking south from the Railroad Station, around 1940. Look closely near the base of the large tree, and you will find the Horse Trough in its original location. Many years ago, the trough was moved on to the lawn of the Library, under the crabapple tree, where it has served as a planter for flowers in the summer time. Last year, Art Seabury decided that it needed to be returned to its former spot, and after much negotiation, and with the help of Billy Gawel and Susie and Jimmy Rundall, he succeeded! It is back where it belongs, awaiting the next horse that moseys down Main Street.

This damaged photo is the only one we have of the horse trough in the old days. Do you have a better one that we could copy?????

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### The Bell at KCS

Kent Center School is looking for information about the old bell which was recently restored and mounted in special tower constructed by Mike VanValkenburg. Mike said he has heard that it was on old ship's bell, but would like to hear any other stories about the bell. If you know anything, you may contact the Kent Historical Society, or call Kent Center School at 927-3537.

### Donation of a Collection

A treasure trove of materials from the estate of Alice Chase Rosati has recently been donated to the KHS by Alice's daughter, Leigh Peet. The collection includes scrap books, newspaper clippings, magazine article and old postcards. We are looking forward to sharing bits and pieces of it with you. Thank you, Leigh!

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## Welcome New Members!

Carol Hoffman Matzke & Chris Miller

### *A Very Special Welcome to Our New Junior Members!!!*

Cameron Gilson, Cassandra Harris, Amanda Kitik, Olivia LaFontan, Jeremy Matson, Kimberly Rae Rux, Kayleigh Sewart and Elana Studer. These budding young historians are all students at Kent Center School who have participated in our KHS-KCS history programs. They are pioneer Junior Members of the Society, and will keep their free memberships as long as they are students at KCS They will receive 3 to 4 Junior Newsletters each year, and we hope to get them involved with the Society on many more levels as well. We are just delighted to have them with us.

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## Maiden Ladies in Kent, 1938

Mary Saga	Elizabeth Ray
Miss J H McVean	Mamie Ray
Mary McVean	Miss Goddard
Miss Helen Mills	Miss Helen Cook
Ann Chapin	Miss Keir
Miss Lulu Potthuffe	Miss Cross
Miss Edith Gilbert	Miss Ball
Christine Kinney	Fannie Edwards
Mary Bacon	Sylvia Edwards
Ruth Lane	Miss Payne
Constance Haxtun	Miss Spafford
Edith Haxtun	Marion Bull
Elizabeth Hopson	Elsie Carlson
Dorothy Hopson	Miss Clemmons
Ann Hopson	Grace Ingersol
Susan Kerr	Mattie St. John
Katherine Stone	Gladys Tallman
Miss Meigs	Cecelia Kinney
Josephine Evarts	Henrietta Bonwell

Found in a journal from the Watts/Berry family

## Don't Miss Our Annual Meeting!!!



ED KIRBY, noted geologist and local historian, will be our featured speaker. In addition to being the President of the Sharon Historical Society, and the author of *Echoes of Iron*,

an authoritative look at the history of the iron industry in the Northwest Hills, Ed is a well known authority on Butch Cassidy & The Sundance Kid. He will be talking about this favorite subject of his, and will tie it into our local lore.

Ed is a popular speaker nation-wide, and we are lucky to have found a spot on his busy calendar!

The meeting will be held on Sunday, October 17th at 3PM at the Swift House. If you have never heard Ed speak, you simply must be here, even if it is in the middle of the afternoon. If you have been to one of Ed's presentations, you'll know that he never does the same thing twice, so you won't want to miss this one either. See you then!

## KHS WISHLIST

4-drawer LEGAL size upright filing cabinet; display cases, large & small, for exhibits, cotton sheets to cover our treasures in the attic: a large fieldstone step for the kitchen door at Seven Hearths

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# Kent Falls at Kent Town Hall

One of the most beloved attractions in Kent is **Kent Falls State Park**, often the name which will trigger a spark of recognition in the eyes of anyone asking "Where exactly is Kent?". For almost 100 years, the park has welcomed countless visitors, who stand in awe at the base of the entrancing falls, or climb the path along the cataract, or simply spread their blankets on the lawn where they enjoy a peaceful picnic. Over the decades, this happy attention has taken its toll on the park. The wear and tear and the increased visitation have led the State of CT to embark on a restoration and enhancement program at the Park. The viewing area at the bottom will be enlarged and the path climbing up the hill will be made safer. The project is being handled by Balmori Associates of NYC, and bids have been sent out for the contract of the work.

To celebrate this attention to what some might consider to be Kent's Crown Jewel, the Historical Society is mounting an exhibit in the Kent Town Hall, featuring our old photographs and news stories detailing the life of the Park. We hope you will stop by to see it. If you have anything to add to it, please let us know! As you all know by now, we are always hungry for more historical *stuff!*

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## For Sale in our "Book Shop"

### **Kent Tales** **\$6.00 each**

*Iron Fever*  
*Barzillai Slosson's History of Kent*  
*Sherm Chase Remembers*  
*The Pratts of Macedonia*  
*Rufus Fuller & The South Kent Ore Bed*

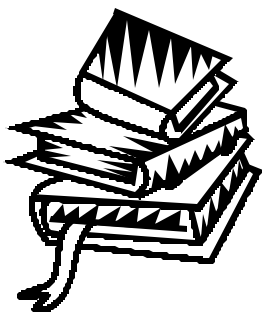
### **The Journal of John Adam** **\$40.00**

**New Life for Old Timber** **\$10.00**  
George Laurence Nelson's tale of his loving restoration of Seven Hearths

**A Register of Some of the Families that have lived in Kent 1739-1999** by Francelia Johnson **\$30.00**

**Artists of the Litchfield Hills** **\$32.00**  
Robert Austin's fascinating research into the rich history of artists in our area

**Greeting cards by G.L. Nelson** **\$6.00 per pack of 8**  
Selected lithographs from our collection



## Our Trusty Volunteers

**Seven Hearths:** Holly Adams, Marge Anderson, Joan & Dick Crews, Beth Dooley, Sue Edgerly, John Gleason, Mary Grusauski, Carol Hall, Fran Johnson, Dick & Charlotte Lindsey, Jeff Morgan, Dave Parker, Don & Mary Peters, Barbara Scott, Dawn Stone, Gail Tobin, Mike Vreeland, Susi Williams and Barbara Woodward.

**Swift House:** Ky Anderson, Jane Bancroft, Beth Dooley, Sue Edgerly, Mary Grusauski, Fran Johnson, Charlotte Lindsey and Dawn Stone

**Seven Hearths Gardens:** Hillary Durno & Mary Grusauski

*A very special thanks* goes to Lynne Hicks for designing this newsletter. I get many compliments about it and much of the credit goes to her!!!

Remember—we are now open on the first two Saturdays of each month, from 10 AM till noon. Please stop by!

# Kent Historical Society

PO Box 651, Kent, CT 06757

Est. 1954

## Officers

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Fridays 1 to 4 PM

at the Swift House

This newsletter is compiled by Marge McAvoy,  
designed by Lynne Hicks, South Kent,  
and sponsored by Moore & More Printing, Millerton, NY

**Answer to Kent Quiz** (What is the ghost town on East Mountain?): One hundred years ago, there was a small settlement of people on the mountain that straddles the NY/CT border between Dover and Kent. *East Mountain* is the Dover appellation for this area. The first settlers were Martin Preston and Hans Hufcut. Early inhabitants, including Soules, Chases and Kennedys, were farmers and colliers and came from both sides of the state line. One hardy resident, a Mrs. Thorpe, had 18 children, the last one born as she was returning on foot up the mountain from a visit to the valley. She wrapped the infant in her apron, and made it home safely!

*Please note: The ruins of the settlement on East Mountain are located on Private Property.*

**Next Quiz Question:** What happened to the old livery stable at the Kent Hotel by the RR tracks? Hint — members of the KVFD may know the answer.

## Kent Historical Society

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