

**The Fyler House and Windsor's Town Hall:
an interview with Leland P. Wilson**

**recorded by
Hilliard Bryant**

INTERVIEWEE: Leland Pinney Wilson (1871 - 1959)
INTERVIEWER: Hilliard Bryant (1891 - 1953)
PLACE: Unknown
DATE: 1952
TRANSCRIBER: Connie Thomas on October 21, 2009
EDITOR: Barbara Goodwin on July 14, 2010

The Windsor Historical Society minutes of November 13, 1952 briefly mentioned the wire recording project Hilliard Bryant had begun. His goal was to obtain some of the town's history through interviews with the older residents. The first recording was with Mr. Leland P. Wilson, the second with Mr. Eleazer Pomeroy, and the third with Mr. Fred Morgan. The original wire recording was transferred to cassette tape in 1968 by Robert Silliman, Director of the Windsor Historical Society, and digitally reformatted in 2008. The brief interviews with Eleazer Pomeroy (1952.13.1) and Fred Morgan (2007.1.40) have also been transcribed.

BRYANT: This is Hilliard Bryant speaking. As you will notice, this is a very interesting discourse indeed by Mr. Leland P. Wilson of [213] Windsor Avenue, Wilton, Connecticut.

WILSON: ... the would-be purchaser, to get him to withdraw the Phoenix State Bank and Trust Company, who represented the estate, and the real estate broker, Albert H. House, we finally succeeded in purchasing the property [Fyler House at 96 Palisado Avenue] for \$5,700. I was chosen chairman of a committee to repair and restore and make the place livable. The property was run down and dilapidated. With two old men that I hired for a dollar a day for each, the work was begun. The old inside window shutters, original doors with latch and H and T hinges, and the small-pane windows were found stored away in the attic or [in] the old building later removed in [the] rear of the house. Seven thicknesses of wallpaper and linen cloth were removed from the side walls revealing the original paneling. Fireplaces, carpentry, and electric wiring was donated by interested Windsor people, and I was very fortunate in securing Miss Betsy Kob as our first hostess who supplemented the work with the Society's permission.

SILLIMAN: As a special note of interest here in September 1968: when the original tape was transferred to this cartridge, both the beginning and end of Mr. Wilson's history of the Fyler House was missing. Mr. Hilliard Bryant continues his interview with Mr. Wilson on town government.

BRYANT: Mr. Wilson, would you please tell us when the [first] Windsor Town Hall was built?

WILSON: I believe it was built in 1878, and prior to that time the different officials carried on their business in their own homes. I came across this when I was looking up the dates of the old houses that were built in Windsor; [I was] trying to find out the exact date that they were built. The assessors at a prior time were called "listers." Instead of coming together as a body of three and determining the [house] values, they each of them were designated a different part of the town and went from house to house listing the property. It was a long time before dwellings were assessed. In the first place it was the poll tax of all males over sixteen years of age and also a sort of a -- well you might call it today -- the origination of the income tax. In other words, there were twenty divisions of the vocation of the persons. The farmer and the minister were at the lowest [and

were] being assessed, I believe, five [English] pounds each. And the leading people that were doctors and lawyers at twenty [English] pounds each, and the others in between. And then the animals were listed at different prices. These lists are not complete. There are some years that are lapsed entirely where you can't find [records of] any part of the town. There's others where there's two or three missing. The only complete data is, I think, of the Town Clerk and the records of deeds are complete from the beginning. The supposition in my mind is that these individuals that kept their records either mislaid them or possibly the house burned, so that when the property of the town, the records of the town was moved in 1878 [to the Town Hall], [from] the houses that ... it was lost. These [existing records], up to a very recent time, were stored in barrels and boxes in the lower vault of the Town [Hall]. The court records all tied up with a piece of cloth inside of a *Connecticut Courant* [newspaper], each month separate. Some of them are very interesting; others are just about the same line of [cases] as they are today. While today it's automobile accidents and driving, in those days it was night walking and stealing, especially of horses. Night walking was anyone out after 9 o'clock at night when the curfew rang and [the person] was arrested by the constable. This included many times the boys even stealing grapes. In regard to the first taxation of houses, they were taxed as "smokes": smokes being fireplaces. And you'll find them listed as "one smoke," "two smokes," and so on. In one place, the Chaffee house, you will find [listed as] so many smokes and a half. This half smoke is a small fireplace in the corner room.

BRYANT: This is Hilliard Bryant speaking. As you will notice, this is a very interesting discourse indeed by Mr. Leland P. Wilson of Windsor Avenue, Wilson, Connecticut. It is my intention to visit people here in town who have been here a good many years who have information, interesting information, about the formation of certain societies. The Windsor Fire District and the Village Improvement Society and the Windsor Library Association. As time goes on, I hope to interview men who know a lot about this subject.

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