

The History of Poquonock:  
A Paper Recorded by  
Carrie Marshall Kendrick (1883 - 1963)  
on February 28, 1962

|              |                                       |
|--------------|---------------------------------------|
| INTERVIEWEE: | Carrie Kendrick                       |
| INTERVIEWER: | n/a                                   |
| PLACE:       | unknown                               |
| DATE:        | February 28, 1962                     |
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This recording was made by Mrs. Carrie Marshall Kendrick, February 28, 1962. Mrs. Kendrick was born in the Marshall property in Poquonock in 1883. Mrs. Kendrick is the eighth generation of her family to live on this property.

[Carrie reads the following from a paper:]

In 1649 three families in Windsor journeyed about three and three-fourths miles northwest and settled in the part of Poquonock now known as Elm Grove. We read that the place was a wilderness. Also, that Poquonock means "cleared land." The trees had been cleared in some places, and the fertile land was in cultivation. Edward Griswold settled on twenty-seven acres of land where J. Ford Ransom lives. John Bartlett to the south of the Elm Grove Cemetery, Thomas Holcomb built his house on the west side of Stony Brook north of the Old Burying Ground. His land went to the river as did that of Edward Griswold and John Bartlett. Thomas Holcomb's house stood, was two stories of square brick brought from England. A fireplace in every room. The windows were glass. The panes three by four inches set in lead. When the house was torn down in the 1650, the bricks were placed in a wall around the cemetery and the boys used to pull them out and make brick ovens to roast corn. John Bartlett left Poquonock, and there are no descendants here. Edward Griswold moved to Killingsworth and there are many descendants here and also many descendants of Thomas Holcomb.

Settlers recognized the fertile land and soon came. Samuel Phelps settled to the north of Thomas Holcomb and bought the John Bartlett place. Samuel Marshall settled on lands south of Thomas Holcomb. Here was the post office, the hotel, store, blacksmith shop and south of Edward Griswold's land on Stony Brook was first a paper mill then a silk mill, then a grist mill. Honorable Richard Niles patented a rag-cutting machine, and they were sold extensively [paper rustling]. There was a blacksmith shop and a shuttle mill on Day Hill Road.

02:48.7

The south dividing line of Poquonock and Windsor is the foot of Phelps Hill. Until 1956 a house built by Cornelius Phelps in 1704 was standing on that hill [Rt. 75 near 592 Poquonock Ave.]. In 1828, mills were built in the village three fourths of a mile north called Eels Harbor, so called because of the many eels caught there. Ships would come this far up the Farmington River. We read of fish fries when as many as two hundred people would gather for a picnic. Soon this section grew, and it became the center and it was called the Harbor, then Poquonock. The first settlement became residential and is known as the Elm Grove section. Mills were built in the new section and at Rainbow. Until 1791 the road was near the river. Gillette Griswold laid out the present Poquonock Avenue. His private account book and surveying records are in the Connecticut Historical Society, interesting reading. The river was forded at Tunxis Street. Another road ran west of Charles A. Huntington's and the river was forded at Rainbow near Stevens Mills. The road from the Grange Hall to the fire house was built by Daniel Buck, who lived on Prospect Hill Road, once called "Poverty Hill." He built a building near the old bridge for a railroad station. His plans for a railroad did not materialize, and the building was used as a stock house for the mills. The property of the Combustion Engineering Company was called "Oregon" because it was so far out. It was inhabited by Indians who sold their wares in [the] summer that they had made during the winter.

4:06.9

Sources of employment other than the mills and blacksmith shop have been ship building, shad fishing, a fish hatchery, cigar making, brick making, and tobacco raising.

Traveling summer shows came to Poquonock. A circus also a menagerie pitched its tent in the lot north of the Grange Hall. During the afternoon performance the elephant escaped into the orchard and began breaking the limbs of the apple trees. The audience escaped into the street. The animal was soon returned to the tent, and the audience also returned and set [sat out?] out the performance. Next morning the elephant refused to cross the old covered bridge and forded the river a short distance below the Tunxis Mill. When in midstream, he gave the man on his back a good shower bath much to the amusement of the inhabitants on both sides of the river. Tom Thumb with his four little black ponies and old-fashioned stage coach advertised as given to him by Queen Victoria with the coachmen and footmen in cocked hats, powdered wigs, and knee breeches made a great display from Grange Hall to Rainbow at noon with the result of a full house, afternoon and evening.

6:01.1

Buckley minstrels of Boston and Bryant minstrels of New York came to Poquonock. Lord's Grove was at the junction of Rainbow Road and Windsor Locks Road. Concerts were given in Franklin Hall and the town hall. Rainbow Park with boating was open until 1915.

Some of the prominent people were Oliver Phelps, John M. Niles, and Christine Ladd Franklin. We were better acquainted with our neighbors two generations ago as transportation facilities were not what they are today. We read in the minutes of a ladies' sewing society in 1935 that a vote of thanks was given to the woman who got them to the meetings when the mud was fathoms deep.

8:37.9

Joseph Holcomb ran a stage to Hartford daily and Harvey Dibble ran one from East Granby to Hartford. The trolleys came in 1895 and were discontinued in 1940. [papers rustling] The first post office was in Cicero Phelps' tavern which stood where the Grange Hall now is. This office was used as late as 1827. As more manufacturing came around the bridge, there was a need for a post office. The one at Cicero Phelps' tavern was given up and moved to the new center of Poquonock. Later on our post office was opened at Rainbow. This office was discontinued in 1916. A library was organized on January 14, 1928. It was a stock company, each share costing \$5. In 1949 the organization was dissolved, and the books were divided among the stock holders.

When the new prison was finished at Wethersfield, the prisoners who were at the Old Newgate Prison were walked from Newgate to Wethersfield and stopped at the Griswold house, now the pony farm on Poquonock Avenue. Each man was given a drink of water there. The prisoners were chained together.

10:16.9

About 1905 Mr. Allen, the yeast man, gave up coming to Poquonock. We remember his penny dipper and five-cent dipper and our little tin pail, and we can almost hear his bell ring now. Some earlier than that was the tin man with the ladders and brooms and his wares stacked high on his wooden wagon. A whipping post stood at the fork of the road between Prospect Hill Road and the Grange Hall. Poquonock has been spelled forty ways. Captain

10:46.5

Sylvanus Griswold, who built his house across from the Poquonock Community Church in 1790, was one of the wealthiest men in Hartford County.

For more about Poquonock, see *A History of Old Windsor* by Daniel Howard and the thesis, *The Religious Development of Poquonock and Rainbow* by Charlotte Phelps Kendrick. Stiles' *History of Ancient Windsor*, and Trumbull's *History of Hartford County*.

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