



A Great Wind Through Windsor, 1938

Connie Thomas, Administrative Assistant



Damage left by 1938 Hurricane.
WHS Collections.



Broad Street on September 22, 1938. Dillon's Market on right and 208 Broad Street on left minus its roof. WHS Collections.

It came unexpectedly while people were picking apples, preparing dinner, coming home from school, and tending Windsor's tobacco crop. September 21st marks the 70th anniversary of the Great Hurricane of 1938 that struck Windsor and New England for two hours late on a Wednesday afternoon. The science of hurricane prediction was still in its infancy and New England was caught by surprise. Though only one person died in Windsor as a result of the storm, local newspapers described how others found themselves in critical situations. Thirty-six year old Bertha Dumais of Wilson Avenue died of a heart attack during a discussion with her sixteen-year-old daughter while ten tobacco workers were marooned in a blown-down tobacco shed in the North Meadows. One of the men swam half a mile through flood waters, secured a boat, and returned to rescue his fellow workers.

Windsor resident Richard Anderson (1914-2000) wrote in a memoir that "the landscape had taken on an unnatural color, and it was ominously quiet. There was no birdsong." The wind arrived first and then the rain, blowing it so hard it seeped under the window sashes and ran down the dining and living room walls at 225 Palisado Avenue. An elm crashed into the ell at the back

of the house "with a sickening thud" and "crushed it flat." Thereafter, family meals were cooked in a makeshift fireplace. Town wide the electricity was out for days and telephone service was discontinued, forcing Windsor back to a time when candles were a fact of life.

Town Green

In the days preceding the hurricane, 11.47 inches of rain saturated the ground. When the 80 to 100 mph winds arrived, they quickly dismembered the town green of its elms, maples, and beloved Christmas tree. In all, twenty trees fell down on the green blocking travel on Windsor's main thoroughfare. Fortunately, the Windsor Club quickly organized a committee to raise funds and purchase 25 mid-size elms and maples to restore order to one of New England's more picturesque centers.

The Tobacco Crop

The tobacco fields had been harvested and the fragrant leaves were hanging in the sheds to dry before going to market when the winds started. Sheds were picked up by the winds and smashed to the ground destroying the tender leaves inside. If charcoal burners had been set up to hasten drying the leaves, the collapsed sheds caught

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WINDSOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Our Mission

The Windsor Historical Society aims to inspire public awareness and appreciation of the diverse peoples, places, and events that contribute to Windsor's evolving history. We preserve and interpret Windsor's historical record through active collecting, research, exhibitions, programs, and communications in the belief that an understanding of history can provide individuals and communities with connections to the past, a sense of belonging in the present, and responsibility for the future.

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Director's Message

Christine Ermenc, Executive Director



By the time you receive this newsletter, Windsor's 375th birthday festivities will be in full swing. My husband and I recently visited another city celebrating a landmark birthday: Quebec City, founded 400 years ago by Samuel de Champlain. Quebec (from the Algonquin word "kebec" meaning "where the river narrows") is situated on a high rocky bluff overlooking the Saint Lawrence River. In earlier centuries, control of this strategic spot was central to the control of Canada.

A Quebec City vacation is like a trip to Old World France. Picturesque cathedrals and multi-storied stone-walled dwellings with window boxes dripping flowers delight the eye. French is the language heard on the streets, punctuated by the sound of horses' hooves and wheeled carriages on cobblestoned roadways. The old part of the city is surrounded by fortified walls with narrow arched portals and protective cannons still pointing outward towards the river. Just outside one of the entrance gates stands a statue to Francois-Xavier Garneau, historian. When visiting new places, we expect to see statues of founders, war heroes, and political leaders, so Historian Garneau's statue intrigued us. What was his story?

In 1809, when Francois-Xavier Garneau was born into humble circumstances, Quebec (known then as Lower Canada) had been part of a British colony for fifty years, ever since Great Britain's General Wolfe defeated French General Montcalm on the Plains of Abraham just outside the city. English was the language heard in the halls of government, trade, and finance although French-speaking citizens were in the majority.

Recognized as a brilliant child, Garneau hoped to attend the Seminary of Quebec but was not accepted because his parents did not have the funds to send him, and he had no desire to become a priest. Instead he apprenticed with an aged and widely read clerk whose family had been active in government when Quebec had belonged to the French. Young Garneau soaked up knowledge from his patron's library, learned several languages in the process, and became a notary himself. He spent the early 1830's in England and France. Supporting himself as a clerk, he visited museums and library collections and listened to parliamentary debates. Returning to Quebec in 1833, Garneau immersed himself in poetry, politics, and the French nationalist movement. This movement exploded into outright rebellion during 1837 and 1838. The rebellions were soon crushed but animosity between French and English continued to smolder. The Earl of Durham was asked to investigate grievances and prepare a report. Durham concluded that problems stemmed from "two nations warring in the bosom of a single state." He recommended assimilating French

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fire. Firefighters couldn't reach the sheds because all roads were obstructed with downed trees. At Thrall's Plantation in Poquonock, Frazier Carithers, 44, and James Quagliaroli were pinned in a collapsed shed for several hours before they could be rescued and driven to Hartford Hospital. The ride took two hours due to road obstructions while on a normal day it would have taken twenty minutes. The storm devastated families who were solely dependent on their tobacco crop. Recently an 80 year old woman described her family's sad experience: the winds destroyed their shed full of tobacco the sale of which would have paid their mortgage and bought food and shoes for eight children. With the loss of the crop, they were forced to declare bankruptcy, lost their home and livelihood, and their father suffered a nervous breakdown.

The Cancellations

Surprisingly, only the Poquonock, Griffin, and Deerfield schools closed. The Roger Wolcott School had trees fall against it and window glass blown out. Wednesday was the first day of school for the Loomis Institute which found itself surrounded by water by the end of the day and transformed into "the Island." The storm blew down the tents and "toppled the ferris wheel leaving it a mass of twisted iron girders" at the much-anticipated VFW carnival on Windsor Avenue. The Windsor Historical Society had its annual meeting on the town's founding date: September 26. Five days after the hurricane, the Society's members found themselves moving from one location to another until they could seat themselves at Judge Alfred Old's home on Stony Hill. Baseball games, harvest suppers, bridge and tea parties—all cancelled.

And Then the Floods Came

After the wind and rain, the Connecticut and Farmington Rivers, already swollen with the week's rainfall, rose alarmingly. By Friday night the Connecticut crested at 35.1 feet, and for four days the river was impassable on any bridge. Streets already blocked with fallen trees were soon covered with swift-moving brown flood water, filling cellars and flushing out rabbits and rats struggling for higher ground. Vegetable market gardens in the low-lying village of Wilson were washed down the Connecticut

River. Cellars in Wilson were filled to the first floor displacing 25 families. Four families in Windsor center were flooded out and eight more in Poquonock. The local Red Cross chapter started a Flood Relief Fund for displaced Windsor citizens, and town hall became hurricane headquarters.

Trains and Trolleys

When the Farmington River receded, it left a seven-foot breach in the train roadbed between the Windsor center depot and the Farmington River railroad bridge. A crew worked on it for two days without relief shoveling railroad carloads of trap rock into the hole. Trolleys, which require electricity to run, were temporarily discontinued and replaced with buses. Many citizens found they preferred bus travel and began advocating for more commuter buses to Hartford, the discontinuation of trolleys and wider, safer roadways.

On a Positive Note

This 1938 hurricane and the 1936 flood were miseries that added to the nation's economic troubles known as the Great Depression. Earlier in the decade President Franklin Roosevelt had put thousands of jobless Americans to work with his WPA program as well as young men in the Civilian Conservation Corps. Now many of these workers were paid wages by the town and private citizens to clean cellars, clear away downed trees, and reset sidewalks. The Blizzard of 1888 visited Windsor 50 years before and the Flood of 1936 two years previous both, of which aligned our town government's preparations for large-scale disasters. Though this Storm Of The Century hit with a mighty blast, Windsor's citizens quickly responded to the community's needs, and set wrongs to rights again.



The steeple of Grace Church on Broad Street Green. WHS Collections.

Putting the Pieces Together: The Rediscovery of the Katherine Barker Drake Photographic Collection

Erin Stevic, Curator of Collections

“Aha!” moments occur in research when a combination of luck and hard work causes fragments of information to fall into place, answering one or a series of questions. I recently experienced such a moment, and it led to the identification of the photographer of several hundred historic photographs in the Society’s collections.

It all began with the 1915 photograph of an unidentified woman posed next to her camera. Her image is one of over 400 glass-plate negatives in a photographic collection containing images of historic Windsor houses and unknown portraits. I found the unidentified collection in the Society’s darkroom when I began re-housing glass-plate negatives into archival envelopes. I subsequently discovered that some of the negatives matched prints of historic Windsor houses found in the Society’s library. Prints from the negatives were also found in several privately-owned collections. Neither the negatives nor the prints revealed information about the photographer, and the photographs left many unanswered questions. Who took the photographs? Was it the female photographer? Why were there so many photographs of Windsor houses?

I used the photograph of the woman and her camera to advertise the Society’s *Camera Crazy* photographic exhibition in early 2008. While I did not know the woman’s identity, she was the type of amateur photographer I highlighted in the show. I also hoped that a visitor might recognize the woman. I was in luck; a few weeks after the show opened, I received a call from Gerald E. and Mildred Rose Barker. They identified the photographer as Gerald’s great-aunt, Katherine Barker Drake. The Barkers also identified several other people photographed in the collection and generously gave the Society over fifty additional photographs taken by Mrs. Drake.

Once I knew Katherine’s name, I began to research whether she was the photographer of some of the other glass-plate negatives, especially those of the historic Windsor houses. I learned that Katherine was born in 1861 to Ellsworth and Sarah King Barker and spent a happy childhood at 335 Palisado Avenue in Windsor. She married Frederick Drake around 1885 and lived most of her married life at 44 Maple Avenue in Windsor Center. Katherine and Frederick had no children, but Katherine remained close to her two brothers. She spent her final years living with her nephew, Charles Barker, and died in 1956 at age 94.



Katherine Barker Drake with her camera, c. 1910. WHS Collections

Katherine was proud of her family’s deep Windsor roots, especially her father’s Ellsworth and Barker ancestors. She became an avid amateur genealogist and a devoted member of the Abigail Wolcott Ellsworth Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Her relatives recall that she spent many hours in the Connecticut State Library researching her family tree and Windsor history.

Katherine’s other passion was photography, and she enjoyed using photographs in conjunction with her historic research. She photographed over 100 historic Windsor buildings and used the images to illustrate lectures she gave on Windsor history. She presented her lecture and slideshow at the Society in 1923. She also compiled prints of her house photographs in a self-published collection, *Photographs and Epitomes of Old Houses, Historic Buildings, Gravestones, Places, and Objects of Interest in Windsor, Connecticut*, completed in 1933 for Windsor’s Tercentennial. The original collection remains with her family, but a photostat version is housed at the Connecticut State Library. The historic house prints in the Society’s collection are a portion of that larger work.

While the Society now knows more about Katherine Barker Drake and her photographs, many questions remain. Did she sell prints of her photographs or simply give them to family and friends? How many collections of historic house prints did she make? There are also over 100 unidentified portraits of adults and children in her negative collection. Who are these people, and are they connected to Windsor? When did she or someone else donate her negatives to the Society? Perhaps another “Aha!” moment will provide the answers.

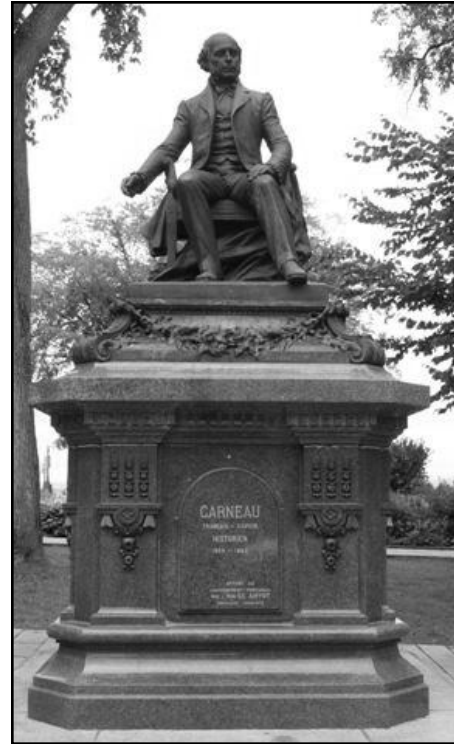
Selected images by Katherine are on view in the Society’s fall 2008 photo exhibition, *Faces of Windsor: 1840 to the Present*. If you know more about Katherine Barker Drake or her work, please contact the Society’s Librarian, Barbara Goodwin, at 860-688-3813, or Erin Stevic at estevic@windsorhistoricalsociety.org. The Society thanks Gerald E. and Mildred Rose Barker, Warren and Dorothy Ball, and Bruce MacClintic for donating prints, negatives, and other materials to the Society’s Katherine Barker Drake Collection.



Two girls with a croquet set, c. 1910. Photo attributed to Katherine Barker Drake. WHS Collections



John and Sarah Strong house, c. 1910. Photo by Katherine Barker Drake. WHS Collections



Francois-Xavier Garneau statue, Quebec City. Photo by William Hosley.

(Director’s Message, continued from page 2)

Canadians, whom he characterized as “a people with no literature and no history,” into a unified Canada where English culture would continue to dominate.

It was at this point that Garneau set himself the task of writing a multi-volume history of Canada. Volume I of Garneau’s *Histoire du Canada* was published in 1845 and Volume II in 1846. By 1852 when the second edition of *Histoire du Canada* was published in three volumes, Francois-Xavier Garneau was being hailed as “the national historian of Canada.”

Reserved, timid in nature, and largely self-educated, Garneau was driven to prove that French Canadians indeed had a history. Today, poetry, literature, language, art, architecture, cuisine, and culture in Quebec all proclaim that French history proudly. There are many complex influences behind the shift from British to French culture in the Province of Quebec, but the work of Historian Francois-Xavier Garneau was a significant impetus. A lesson for us today in Windsor is that historical consciousness and civic pride can make a profound difference in how we build our future. Enjoy the 375th celebrations but also go that extra step by absorbing more Windsor history.

Museum Educator News

Julia Baldini, WHS Educator

Visions of Windsor Summer Camp

For one week eight children and three staff from Windsor and surrounding towns participated in a history and art focused camp. This was the first year that the Society has run a summer camp and the outcome was a big success. Each child was supplied with a digital camera, sketch book, canvas pad and plenty of acrylic paint. Throughout the week, the children learned about colonial life, Native Americans, architecture, Palisado Cemetery, the Farmington River, nature, and monuments scattered throughout Windsor. The children took several field trips around town where they were given tasks to take pictures or sketch drawings of objects or scenes. They then recreated those on a canvas by using different painting techniques. They also had time to practice creative writing. Some of the children created poems while others wrote short stories about why they love living in Windsor. By the end of the week, the children settled on a theme, "Our Windsor", for an exhibition kiosk and selected which pictures, paintings and writing samples would be included. The children also learned how to write exhibition labels and wrote accompanying labels for their work. The exhibition kiosk will be put together by Society staff and will travel around to Windsor business and schools in 2009. Make sure you keep your eyes and ears open for this fascinating exhibit and for more information on next year's summer camp!

A special thanks goes out to many people who helped make this camp a success: Jody Badin, Chauntelle McLenithan, Bill Harris, Charlene Li, Linda Fellows and Charlene Buden. Without your guidance and help, this would not have been possible! Thank you.



*Children explored the different gravemarkers and their meaning in the Palisado Cemetery.
Photo by Julia Baldini.*

Summer Intern, Stephanie Maychek

My name is Stephanie Maychek and have been interning at the Windsor Historical Society for the past few months. My summer at the Society has been quite enjoyable. As a history major at the University of Connecticut, this was the perfect internship for me. It was also very lucky that I had always wanted to learn more about the area I live in and the Windsor Historical Society gave me that opportunity.

This summer I have read many books to become more familiar with the history of Windsor and its surrounding areas. I have also worked with Erin on some photographic collections and learned how much effort goes into cataloging and recording all of the artifacts that the Society is able to see and use. I was also able to work by myself and create two education programs intended for the Boy Scouts. I concentrated on two of their badges that seemed relevant to what the Society is trying to do in the community. I collected information, hands-on objects, and activities that I thought would make for a pleasant afternoon at the Society with their troop. I found this to be a challenging yet beneficial experience as my goal is to become a teacher in the next few years. Everyone here at the Windsor Historical Society has been very kind and helpful the entire summer, and I want to thank them for such a great time and for the chance to learn everything I did.



Children from the Windsor area participated in a week-long history and art camp. Photo by Jack Alberti.

The Old Yeast Man

Barbara Goodwin, Librarian

Do you remember the Fuller Brush Man? How about dancing in the back room of the Cozy Corner? Maybe you can describe the palpable excitement as your family awaited delivery of its first television set or the nervous tension as the Vietnam War draft lottery numbers were announced on the radio. Each of us has memories of a time or place gone by. By writing them down or recording them on tape, we can preserve some of these glimpses of the past and elicit a wry smile or a tear of recognition from a reader or listener in the future.

The Windsor Historical Society has been transcribing some of the older oral history interviews that it holds in its collections. Four of these transcripts are now completed and copies have been put on our library shelves. We also have a CD of the recordings and you can come in and listen to these stories in the narrator's own voice.

Charles F. Taylor's recollection of the Old Yeast Man is one of the interesting vignettes that has emerged from our oral history project. In 1962, Mr. Taylor recorded a few short memoirs from his childhood in the late 1880's. In one he tells of the regular route of the door-to-door salesman who sold liquid yeast for baking bread:

The driver, one Mr. William Allen, had a narrow, covered, one-horse cart similar to a rural mail wagon with sliding doors on each side. It was just about wide enough for one person to sit comfortable. This rig had glass in front with slots in the wood body below the glass for the reins to come through. Between Mr. Allen's knees and resting on the floor was a large wooden container much like a butter churn which contained the yeast. In the top of this container was a square hole cut. The cut piece held in place by leather hinges on one side served as a quickly opened cover. The householder or a child in the family came out and stood by the gate 'til the driver came along announced by a large dinner bell which he rang rigorously. The customer carried a

pitcher or a large mug usually in the bottom of which rattled around two copper pennies. The driver reached down, took the pitcher, dumped the pennies in a wooden box nailed to the inside of the vehicle, and dipping a long-handled ladle with a metal flat cup at the bottom into the liquid yeast gave the customer one ladle full for each two-cents worth.

Apparently Mr. Allen and other peddling "yeast men" obtained their yeast from the gin distilleries in and around East Windsor, CT. One of these, the Horace Barber Distillery in Warehouse Point, was founded by a Windsor family. It conducted a manufacturing and wholesale operation from the mid 1800's until about 1915.

Would you tell us about some of the memorable people or moments that have been part of your life in Windsor? Maybe there is an interesting story behind your move to Windsor or perhaps you have a unique perspective on an incident or movement that has changed life in the town of Windsor. The Windsor Historical Society would like to add more oral histories to its collections and is encouraging members of the community to participate. Please contact Julia Baldini at jbaldini@windsorhistoricalsociety.org or 860-688-3813 or if you are interested.

Volunteers

We are so grateful to the following volunteers:

Educators: Jay Davenport, Heather Renaud, and Dorothy Simon. **Front desk/administrative:** Bill Allen, Marsha Anderson, Betsey Blaisdell, Doris Butler, Barbara Byczkiewicz, Elaine Colli, Carolyn Doyle, Harry Freeman, Shirley Grossman, Betty Halberstadt, Bill Harris, Cora Lee Jones, Marnie Lydecker, Steve McGoldrick of Carmon Funeral Home, Jane Morris, Don Norton, Libby Parker, Margaret Quigley, Mary Ransom, Dorothy Simon, Jim Trocchi, Nancy von Hollen, Vivian Webster. **Grounds:** Bill Warner-Prouty, Windsor Garden Club. **Library and curatorial:** Elaine Brophy, Bev Garvan, Sara Hawran, Sandy McGraw, Susan Smoktunowicz. **Summer camp:** Jody Badin, Charlene Buden, Linda Fellows, Bill Harris, Charlene Li, and Chantelle McLenithan. **Special Events:** Ruth and Barry Budlong.

Upcoming Events at Windsor Historical Society

Unless noted otherwise, all events are held at the Society. Go to <http://windsorhistoricalsociety.org> for more programs or call 860/688-3813 to have an updated list mailed to you.

September 3, 10, 17, and 24 7 p.m. - 9 p.m.
LECTURES: *Making Family Memories, Exploring Your Family History series.* **Reservations** by Sept. 2. COST: \$50/series or \$15 per session.

Friday, September 12 5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.
EXHIBITION OPENING: *The Faces of Windsor - 1840 to the Present.* COST: Free.

Saturday, September 13 1 p.m. - 4 p.m.
ANTIQUES APPRAISAL DAY. COST: \$5 per item.

Tuesday, September 23 7 p.m.
SOCIETY'S ANNUAL MEETING W/STATE HISTORIAN: COST: \$6 adults; \$5 seniors and students; WHS members are free.

Sunday, September 28 3 p.m. - 4 p.m.
LECTURE: Frances Bissell and *History of English Cooking, 1633-Present.* COST: \$4/adults; \$3/seniors & students; WHS members are free.

Saturday/Sunday, October 4 and 5 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
RE-ENACTMENT: Colonial Days on Palisado Green. Free.

Thursday, October 16 7 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
LECTURE: John Demos, author of *The Enemy Within: Two Thousand Years of Witch Hunting in the Western World.* COST: \$6 adults; \$5 seniors and students; WHS members free.

Saturday, October 25 3 p.m. - 5 p.m.
MEMORY WALK: *Four Centuries Memory Walk in Palisado Cemetery.* **Reservations** by October 24. COST: \$10 adults, \$9 seniors and students, \$8 WHS members.

Saturday, November 1 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.
GENEALOGY ROAD SHOW: Individual consultations on pursuing family history. COST: Free.

Saturday, November 8 VICTORIAN TEA AND FASHION SHOW:
Lunch at 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. or Tea at 4 p.m.-5:30 p.m.
Reservations by November 7. COST: \$25; \$22.50 WHS or Windsor Women's Club members.

Friday, November 21 7 p.m. - 10 p.m.
PRE-HOLIDAY GOODS AND SERVICES AUCTION at Windsor Public Library. Tickets: \$20.

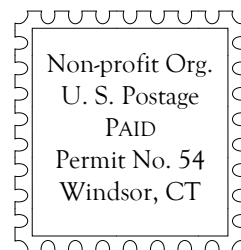
Saturday, November 29 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
SILHOUETTE PORTRAIT ARTIST: Advance **reservations** required by Nov. 28 for specific time slots. COST: starts at \$25.

Wednesday, Dec. 10 10 am, 11 am, 1 pm & 7 pm
MAGIC LANTERN SHOWS: *A Victorian Christmas with the Victorian Magic Lantern Theater.* COST: \$6 adults; \$5 seniors and students; \$4/WHS members.



**Windsor
Historical Society**

96 Palisado Avenue, Windsor, Connecticut 06095



SEE THE
SOCIETY'S
FLOAT IN THE
SEPT. 27
PARADE ON
THE BROAD
STREET GREEN