



Visiting Windsor, 1852

Connie Thomas, Administrative Assistant

We had a visitor in our library last summer who alerted us to a collection of letters on the Web at www.Griffingweb.com. The letters were written by James S. Griffing and his betrothed, Augusta Goodrich. They grew up within a mile of each other near Owego, NY, and the letters cover the period from 1841 to 1882. The great thing about these letters is that James traveled extensively in our country and wrote detailed descriptions to his fiancée. Windsor is very fortunate to have been visited by this young man.

James graduated from Wesleyan University in nearby Middletown, CT, in 1852. During the 1852 spring break, he visited the 64-year-old son of his mother's aunt, Dr. William S. Pierson, Windsor's respected physician. Dr. Pierson's house still stands at 115 Palisado Avenue (Rt. 159). The following is his description of that visit:

May 12, 1852

[Dear Augusta]

It is too bad that I left my portfolio at Middletown as there are a good many things that I wished to write this vacation. And now you are ready to ask, "Why do you so soon write?"

"What can you have to say that I should care the least about hearing?" Well to these interrogatories, I can give no very good answer, only [that] I like to converse with you.

James had visited Augustus' uncle in Hartford and goes on to describe his journey north to Windsor:

You know what a most delightful day followed me away from your [Uncle's] house [in Hartford]. Yet it added very much to the pleasure of my journey here. The country was all new to me



Nancy Sargeant Pierson, 1789 - 1863. WHS Collections



William Seward Pierson, 1788 - 1860. WHS Collections

above Hartford and presented a somewhat different phase from what I anticipated. I expected, as everywhere in Connecticut to see stone fences and boulders, scraggly white oaks, and blackberry swamps. But these seemed to have all given way to some fine rolling meadows or thrifty timbered land. Windsor, instead of being [a] small huddle of houses surrounding a tavern, grocery, and variety store, is a long row of farm houses stretching for miles along a delightful valley, having all the neighbors within speaking distance of each other. I found my Uncle's people at home enjoying a good degree of health. I think he has improved much since I [last] saw him. His son-in-law was at his house that day upon a visit. He is not pastor over the church here as I supposed, but at Windsor Locks five miles above here. I am very much pleased with the whole family. They appeared quite glad to see me and have been making it as much like home to me as possible. They live in a large white house on land that was formerly embraced in the old "palezade plot" parcel of quite a large tract that in an early day was surrounded by a deep ditch upon which the early settlers would gather themselves at night to prevent molestation from any enemy. Some remains of the ditch are still visible. It is not very far from here that the first house by the whites was erected in the state. I have not been upon the ground, but we have been talking about [going there]. But it is raining so hard today, we shall be obliged to postpone for awhile. Yesterday I visited the old cemetery and was often, very often, reminded of primitive times. Several of the inscriptions were so rudely executed in coarse granite that I could not decipher them. Some, however, I will give verbatim:

Here under lyeth the body of Henry Wolcot
Sometimes a maiestrate of this jurisdiction
Who dyed ye 30th day of May, anni salvis 1665

WINDSOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Two charming, old New England homes
Hands-On-History Learning Center
Four exhibit galleries
Research library

Open Tuesday through Saturday
10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Closed major holidays

NEWSLETTER STAFF

Editorial Advisor
Christine Ermenc

Managing Editor
Connie Thomas

Copy Editor
Kathy Martindale

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Nancy Clark, *President*
Elaine Brophy
Ruth Budlong
Tim Curtis
Peter Deresienski
Ben Dowe
Carolyn Doyle
Pat Fahy-Essenfeld
Beverly Garvan
Mark Griffin
Vera Lavery
Ernie Mattei
Barry Loucks
Karen Parsons
Jane Pelton
Carol Ann Stephenson
John Stone
Jim Trocchi
Sterling Viets

STAFF

Christine Ermenc, *Director*
Amber Degn, *Curator*
Connie Thomas, *Administrative Assistant*

96 Palisado Avenue (Rt. 159)
Windsor, CT 06095

860/688-3813 fax 860/687-1633
email: windsor@ntplx.net

Director's Message

Good news! We met the challenge from our anonymous donor and can engage a long-range planning facilitator. Prioritizing our many needs in tough times will demand all the brainpower we can muster, and I have confidence that the consultant we choose will unleash our creativity and lead us to consensus.



Christine Ermenc

Thanks to all of you who complete our "Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats" form. Those of you living far from Windsor rate the newsletter as our most important strength, followed by our library. Many of you joined because of genealogical interests and Windsor ancestors, and you are concerned about maximizing access to our library records. You would like to see more emphasis on the 17th century and Windsor founders in our newsletter. Please help us by sharing what you uncover in your pursuit of Windsor's 17th century history. We're happy to publish related work of scholars and researchers. We will start covering public programs in our newsletter so that distant members can benefit. You would also like us to establish a web site and think more creatively about how to meet your long-distance needs. Some of you mentioned the expense in caring for historic houses and the need to raise serious money and build a strong endowment.

Those of you living close by also rate our museum and library collections highest followed by programs and events, exhibits, our museum complex, staff, volunteers and newsletter in that order. You'd like to see better publicity, more programs and exhibits and more staff to make all of this possible. Several of you mentioned the challenges of dealing with change, and a lot of you mentioned funding as a challenge.

We certainly have our work cut out for us but are bolstered by your loyalty. We welcome your honest opinions and suggestions always.

PAID CURATORIAL INTERNSHIP

Do you know a college or graduate student interested in museum work?

The intern will participate in all aspects of museum operations and will work closely with the Curator primarily on collections management. We seek applicants who are college juniors, seniors, graduate students or recent graduates of history, museum studies, American studies or related programs. The internship carries a \$2,000 stipend and is 35-hours a week for eight weeks or equivalent. Applicants should send a letter of interest, resume, writing sample and one letter of recommendation by March 30 to Amber Degn at the Windsor Historical Society.

Visiting Windsor, 1852, continued from page one

Here lyeth the body of the Hon. Roger Wolcot
Some times a governor of the colonies.
Died May 17 aged 89. Died 1767.

But the most interesting of all is the following. And if you will have solved the meaning of the poetry against my return, I shall be glad. It is said to be the oldest monument in the [grave]yard and perhaps in the state.

Here under lyeth Ephraim Huit
Sometimes teacher to ye church of Windsor
Who dyed September 4th 1644
Who when hee lived wee drew our vitall breath
Who when hee dyed his dying was our death
Who was ye stay of state ye churches staff
Alas the times forbid an epitaph

The printing was a little better executed than mine, [but] perhaps not executed so speedily. I noticed that one of Uncle Pierson's ancestors, [Abraham Pierson] was the first President of Yale college when the building was located at Killingworth.

Have been very busy ever since I came until the rain has compelled me to keep still ...[Uncle Pierson's] daughters, two of them, are at home [and] are excessively fond of flowers and have a fine variety of them. One of their lemon bushes, I noticed, had on it a fine lemon almost ready to be made into lemonade. I [also] notice they [have] a fine bunch of those double fragrant violets of which we were speaking and I shall solicit some roots and bring [them to] you when I come if I think of it. The old Gentleman thinks much of his family and seems very fond of visiting with them in anything that will tend to divert the mind, furnish recreation, and cheerily push along life's fast fleeting hours. Yet I should be far better pleased to see his attention occupied with weightier matters and eagerly seeking after pleasures more durable. You would have smiled to see with what interest he would enter last evening into the game of the Pivoli and rolling the [dice] over the battle ground of the American revolution. And don't you think I allowed myself to be drawn into the games. However, I could see at least one benefit, it tended to quicken one's mathematical

powers. But you know its easy to work up an excuse for almost any foolish waste of time. I will tell you about the family personally when I see you and consequently will not attempt a description.

An afflicting death occurred here yesterday at a neighbors on the opposite side of the street named Bolles, formerly a member of Rev. Dr. Turnbull's church at Hartford. One week ago, he was the very picture of health and busily employed in laboring for the comfort of his family, his happy beloved family. He was honest and industrious and possessed but little more of earthly goods than his daily earnings furnished. As they naturally would, his family loved him dearly. Especially the choice of his heart, who bent over him with all that deep anxiety that no other earthly being could, who seemed to forget entirely the mortality of her own woman's nature and sleeplessly endeavored to comfort his aching, inquiring bosom and soothe his burning, fevered brow. Yet she found that the arm of flesh was [useless] in endeavoring to arrest disease when the appointed time had come. Yesterday at eleven, he peacefully fell asleep leaving five blooming children

and a beloved wife to weep his departure. Yet what has made it seem so strange to me is that one so healthy and placed over a charge, whose happiness and comfort seemed to demand his life, should be so soon taken from them. Whilst a poor unworthy being like myself are suffered to live whom the world could so easily miss without feeling the stroke, whose resting place might be easily made in a land of strangers and never be moistened by the tears of those so dear. Yet it should not be ours to attempt to fathom the unsearchable ways of Jehovah, but feel the assurance that



115 Palisado Avenue (Rt. 159). WHS Collections

he doeth all things well.

I am really ashamed to send this scrawl. I have been obliged to hold my pen at just such an angle to keep it from spattering. Let us know that no other than yourself will see it. I venture to do so. If there is anything you cannot interpret, I will try and explain when I come. Until which time, I remain,

Yours most sincerely,

James

This letter is printed with permission from the Kansas State Historical Society.

Upcoming Events at WHS

March 8, 18 and April 12 events are held at WHS. Cost: \$3/adults; \$1/students; free to members.

Saturday, March 8, 2 p.m. Lecture: "Above All, Avoid Cities": America's Exodus To The Suburbs
Architect, town planner and Hartford Courant architecture critic, Patrick Pinnell, will explore how post-war home magazines and advice books written by architects helped start the country down the road (literally) to our current "burlands" condition.

Monday, March 10, 9-3 p.m. Workshop: Passing Away in the Past: Exploring Cultural Aspects of Death in New England Come to the annual Greater Hartford Association of Historic Houses/Museums workshop at the Keeney Memorial Cultural Center, 200 Main St., Wethersfield, CT. Bring your lunch and beverages will be provided. Free. Snow date: 3/17/03.

Tuesday, March 18, 7:30 p.m. Lecture: Ivoryton and Africa
Don Malcarne will explore the industrial growth of the village of Ivoryton in Essex, CT, which was the center of the ivory industry in the U.S. He will discuss the social and economic impact of this industry not only in Connecticut but in Africa as well.

Saturday, April 4, 6:30 p.m. Auction: Chamber of Commerce auction to benefit WHS at Bradley Sheraton Hotel, Bradley International Airport. Tickets are available from WHS or Windsor Chamber of Commerce, 860/688-5165. Cost: \$25/ticket.

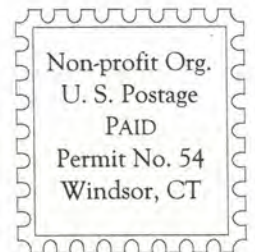
Saturday, April 12, 2 p.m. Lecture: Seeing It Now: Television in the 1950's
Film scholar Jon Vogels will look at the early days of TV when this new medium found its way into virtually every middle-class home. Vogels will explore how television transformed the country, what Americans were watching, and how television became an ideological battleground.

★ We want to thank all of you for your donations to our year-end appeal enabling us to create a long-range plan: ★

- ★ M/M W. Alford, Sr.; A. Allen; M/M Ernest Allen; M. Anderson; C. Anderson; P. August; J. Barber; M. Barrows; M/M W. Bennett; L. Bissell; M/M A. Boehm; C. Brayfield; M/M H. Bruhn; M/M B. Budlong; M/M J. Burke; D. Butler; F. Carmon III; M/M R. Clark; D. Cox; D. Cummings; M/M B. Daley; M/M P. Deresienski; ★ A. Dibble; M/M W. Dombkowski; M/M E. Dowe, Jr.; C. Doyle; M/M W. Eckert, Jr.; M/M E. Eggleston; E. Faaborg; M/M N. Famiglietti; J. Fay; T. Gagnon; M. ★ Giffin; D. Gillette; M/M W. Hosley; M/M P. Essenfeld; R. Fahrback; M/M T. Fitzgerald; S. Foote; J. Frelick; C. Gee; A. Goldfarb; M/M B. Goodale; R. Grant; P. ★ Green, II; R. Hale; J. Hall; W. Hann; B. Harrison; J. Hawran; R. Hogan; L. Hoover; G. Hosford; M/M G. Grossman; M/M W. Harris; A. Hayden; S. Holdaway; R. ★ Hyman; O. Johnson; C. Jones; W. Keisch; C. Krupa; C. Larson; A. Lasser; V. Lavery; D. Lavery; D. Lemon; M/M A. Loomis; M/M V. Loomis; M/M B. Loucks; S. ★ Luciuk; E. Lukstas; L. Macomber; E. Malmfeldt; M/M R. Martindale; J. Matta; J. McCarthy; M/M H. McLean; L. Merwin; W. Mills; P. Mocks; J. Mongeon Jr.; J. ★ Moore, Jr.; J. Moses; S. O'Brien; D. Orloske; J. Oswald; H. Otte; E. Parker; L. Parker; K. Parsons; L. Paslaski; D. Phelps; R. Phillips; M/M M. Rabbett; T. Reinsch; D. ★ Roberts; L. Rockwell; C. Russell; M/M R. Silliman; J. Silliman; E. & M. Singer; R. Smith; M/M J. Snelgrove; A. Spooner; F. Stone; K. Sturgis; P. Taylor; W. Thorn- ★ ton; E. Tonucci; M/M R. Tracz; J. Trocchi; C. VanDorn; W. Vibert; M/M A. Viner; E. Wenker; A. Williams; D. Winchell; L. Winer; L. Wing; and C. Zeiner. ★
- *****

Windsor Historical Society

96 Palisado Avenue, Windsor, Connecticut 06095



The Society will be closed on Saturday, March 22.