



FYLER HOUSE

Windsor Historical Society News

VOL. III, No. 5

October 1985

CHRISTMAS MEETING, DECEMBER 5th, 8:00 P.M.

Geraldine Snelgrove will conduct a 'carol sing' consisting of traditional Christmas songs.

'Jerry' has performed in musicals in New York & Oklahoma, was a member of the Windsor Choral Club, sang with the Hartford Chorale and has been a member of Grace Episcopal Church choir for 35 years. She sings professionally at weddings and funerals and presently entertains at the piano at Kimberly Hall for "sing-a-longs" and special occasions in song and dance.



FLAVIA HOWE THRALL 1838-1910 CLAIRVOYANT PHYSICIAN

Flavia Howe Thrall was born in a small house which formerly stood along Poquonock Avenue just north of the Arbor On The Farmington apartment complex. She was educated in the District 7 Thrall School and The Young Ladies Institute run by Miss J. S. Williams.

In 1864 she married Edward Thrall and lived a short distance north of her birthplace in what came to be known as the Merwin homestead (her daughter married the late George J. Merwin). The house was razed in 1953 to make way for the Poquonock Ave. interchange on I-91.

During her lifetime she practiced healing and declared herself a Clairvoyant Physician. Her patients were rich and poor from far and wide and were described as adherents of every creed and belief. Her only contact with a patient was often merely a lock of hair which had arrived through the mail. Some of her prescriptions or recipes still survive.

The following story appeared in a Spiritualist Newspaper "Banner Of Light" on December 21, 1901 and is Mrs. Thrall's story in her own words.

Fifty years ago a little gathering of friends was at the home of Cyrus Howe one evening, ostensibly for a social call and general pleasant time. During the evening a Mr. Billings of Somerville, Connecticut, called at the house to stay overnight. He was introduced to the callers and thereupon asked Mr. Howe if the assembled folks might have a "sitting".

"Sitting", said Mr. Howe in amazement, "why of course we'll have

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FYLER HOUSE

President's Comments

In the near future an on-site assessment of the Fyler House and Wilson Museum will be carried out by a consultant supplied by The American Association of Museums. This survey is expected to provide input to assist us with our long term planning related to conservation of Windsor's cultural, historic and scientific heritages.

Since the organization of our Society in 1921 our goals have been identical with those listed above, and over the intervening span of almost sixty-five years our accomplishments have been such that we and all Windsor residents can feel very proud.

Our collection of artifacts is impressive. Somewhere between two and three thousand articles have been received over the period of the Society's existence. Most have been exhibited at one time or another and have been seen and enjoyed by our members and many visitors from all over the country.

The new Museum Committee chaired by Al Hooker is now undertaking a review of the condition of the items in the collection and will work with the Director to correct any deficiencies.

Besides the exhibition of our collections, the writing and publication of items relating to our cultural, historic and scientific heritages is an important aspect of any Historical Society. Our Director, Bob Silliman, is currently doing a fine job in writing the historical items which appear in our Newsletter. In this way he is carrying on the literary work of two other Society Presidents Daniel Howard and Lloyd Fowles.

George L. M. Christopher

FLAVIA HOWE THRALL, continued.....

a sitting, you don't expect to stand, do you?"

Hereupon the gentleman who made the suggestion explained that he referred to the sitting of the folks present in a circle about a table for spiritual manifestation. The gentleman seated himself at a table and called different ones to come and put their hands upon the table. There was no appreciable success of spiritual manifestations until your humble servant, then a little girl, was requested to place her hands upon the table, when to the astonishment of those present, the table rose immediately and was suspended in the air, returning to the floor whence it performed through my agency many peculiar antics familiar to people of later day Spiritualism. These were the initial manifestations of spiritual phenomena in Poquonock, Conn. This occurred about three years after the Rochester rappings that had made such a sensation.

From this start many became interested, circles being held at our home and elsewhere with enthusiastic regularity. Some of the early members were Mrs. Salmon Clark, whose spiritual nature seemed so fully developed as to accept all the liberal ideas developed by spiritual philosophy, her confidence and trust in spiritual knowledge, and goodness of soul are remembered by all who knew her. It was at her home the knowledge of my gift as a clairvoyant first came to me. Her baby was seriously ill at the time; I became entranced and prescribed for the child, to who she gave the medicine, and her recovery was remarkable. That first patient, now Mrs. Eliza Lamberton, is, and has been, Secretary of our Society for a number of years.

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FYLER HOUSE

Some of the early investigators were the Thrall family, Mrs. Warren Griswold, Mrs. A. P. Williams, Shelly Clark and family, Mrs. F. M. Brown of Windsor Locks, David Pinney and family, Dr. Chaffee, Joseph Whipple and family. One of his daughters, Mrs. Strickland, is still a member of our society. We continued our circles and investigations, the interest and attendance increasing until we decided to call lecturers to receive all the best advantages possible of the philosophy of Spiritualism. The first lecturer called was Warren Chase. Mr. Chase was a Congressman, and a lecturer of great ability. Following were several famous lecturers all able exponents of harmonial philosophy of those days.

After ten years of patient work in this good Cause, it was proposed by Cyrus Howe, my father, nearly 80 years of age, to form an organization to assist us spiritually and financially, for in unity there is strength. This proposal being favorably received, Dec. 5, 1861, he formulated the constitution and by-laws of the Spiritual Harmonial Society, of which, today, we are celebrating the fortieth Anniversary.

There were originally about sixty members, the majority of which have passed over to the other life, but are still interested in our work, and often cheer us by the communications which we receive in our circles.

In those days the occurrence of the Rochester Rappings had left a deep impression on us, because of their import. It became our custom to celebrate the anniversary of the phenomena regularly each year. March 31st being the day, from far and near assembled the friends of our Cause at some appointed home of a Spiritualist. No matter how inclement the weather, mud bespattered seekers of the truth laboriously

toiled through mud and slush to be on hand, as it were.

In the early days among the other lecturers we had Miss Nettie Coburn, who became Mrs. Nettie Coburn Maynard, and who was attached to President Lincoln and wife to capacity of medium. She worked and developed with us two years prior to going to Washington. Mrs. Maynard was the author of the work "Was Abraham Lincoln a Spiritualist"? Mrs. Maynard was one of our most remarkable mediums.

After nearly twenty years of true and earnest work the building of a hall seemed a necessity, as we had no place to hold our lectures, except the old Universalist Church (this was Poquonock's Second Meeting House which stood on the site of the chapel in front of Elm Grove Cemetery). To heat this comfortably for us one cold December night the young men across the river, a mile and a half away, brought wood in their arms to burn in the old box stove that stood in the center aisle, around which we clustered and kept our faces warm, while we listened to the words of inspiration from our speakers. I mention this fact to show the enthusiasm of our work in those days. We held our socials at the homes of different members. We continued our lectures, employing the best speakers obtainable.

By holding socials and fairs, and with gifts of money and work from those interested, we were able to build a hall (now the St. Casimir's Lithuanian Society building on West Street). In 1879 the hall was erected, which we now occupy. We now hold regular fortnightly socials for exchange of thought and progressive ideas and a general harmonial gathering.

In the early days we had much
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NEW MEMBERS

Ms. Dorothy E. Jensen
Mrs. Hazel B. Sigler
Mrs. Carl E. Steiner
Mrs. Marjorie I. Tuttle
Mrs. Margery S. Hepburn
Mr. & Mrs. Alexander J. Fraser
Mr. Ronald Williamson

FLAVIA HOWE THRALL, continued.....

opposition to encounter because of our strange belief, but we paid but little heed to it. I well remember people would talk with my father and endeavor to persuade him of his folly. But his advanced ideas concerning a future existence caused them to see the futility of their attacks, and they soon ceased. One of the most bitter assailants of free thought in this vicinity was deacon Roger Phelps, of Windsor. On one occasion he called upon Mr. Howe and a long debate followed upon capital punishment. When leaving the house Deacon Phelps exclaimed: "O! how I long for the good old days of Salem witchcraft. I would have Howe's girl hung to the nearest apple tree."

In return Mr. Howe characterized him as "another of the many old fossils he had to encounter."


The Windsor Historical Society, Inc.
96 Palisado Ave.
Windsor, Conn. 06095

Holidayfest

SPECIAL CHRISTMAS EXHIBIT

DECEMBER 6th, 7th & 8th

ADMISSION**.....\$2.00
(Children Free)

** $\frac{1}{2}$ price, or \$1.00, with brochure

REFRESHMENTS

MARGUERITE ELIZABETH MILLS

1903----1985

Miss Marguerite E. Mills, a Charter Member of the Society, died at a local convalescent home on September 20, 1985.



FYLER HOUSE AND WILSON MUSEUM

10 to 12 a.m. and 1 to 4 p.m.
Tuesday through Saturday

April 1 through November 30

Genealogical Research in Library
By Appointment

203-688-3813

President: George L. M. Christopher

Director: Robert T. Silliman