

Squire's Tavern Quarterly

Barkhamsted Historical Society Newsletter

web site - barkhamstedhistory.us

March 2024

Laurel Lodge Comes Back to Life

By Paul Hart

At the Barkhamsted Historical Society, we strive to preserve the history of the town. We took a small step toward doing just that by acquiring through donation the painting shown here at right. This oil on canvas work by Barkhamsted artist Vito Covelli was done probably in the mid-1920s. It was recently donated to the Barkhamsted Historical Society by Joe Lavieri.

The subject of this painting is the "Laurel Lodge" which in years past was located on what is now Route 44 behind the old toy store, a building now jointly occupied by Winsted Feed & Supply and Ken's Wine & Spirits. The building was a restaurant owned and operated by the Lavieri family.

But when you drive by this location on Route 44 now, where is the building? If you look in back of the current package/feed store, there is no old building to be found. That is because Laurel Lodge burned about 1925. It was replaced by another structure which stood at the same site for almost a century. And the reason there is no building on this site now is because the second structure, also operated for years as a

restaurant, was dismantled just a few years ago. So currently nothing is to be seen out in back.

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Image above: "Laurel Lodge" oil painting on canvas by Vito Covelli.

Where to Go to Church

By Mike Day

In our modern society, whether you go to church or not is a personal decision, one perhaps made on a week-by-week basis. It's a part of "freedom of religion" that is so much a part of American life that we seldom give it a thought. The early settlers of Barkhamsted had no such liberty: going to church was mandatory. The 1786 edition of the *Acts and Laws of the State of Connecticut in America* was very specific on this point: "...all and every person in this state shall, and are hereby required, on the Lord's Day, careful-

ly to apply themselves to duties of Religion and Piety, publicly and privately; and whatsoever person shall not duly attend the public worship on the Lord's Day in some congregation allowed by law ... shall for each such offence pay a fine of three shillings."

At every election until the 1840s, town officials called "Tithingmen" were chosen, part of whose job was to see that all their neighbors did in fact attend Sunday services.

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Laurel Lodge and the building that replaced it were both restaurants operated by the Lavieri family. Vito Covelli and his wife Claire often ate meals at these restaurants, and it is possible this painting was done in payment for some of the meals the Covellis enjoyed there.

As you may remember from past articles in this newsletter,



Photo above: the red arrow points to the building that replaced "Laurel Lodge" in the 1920s. This building shown here was for many years a restaurant. It was torn down about 2022.

the Covellis lived on a small farm on West Hill. During tough times in the Great Depression of the 1930's Vito was an active participant in the Federal Art Project. This program was part of Roosevelt's Works Progress Administration and put artists to work creating art that would be displayed in public buildings such as schools, hospitals and libraries in an attempt to bring art to the general population.

Vito painted 125 landscapes for the Federal Art Project, but his particular painting of "Laurel Lodge" was not one of them. Presumably, he painted this while the building still stood in the 1920s, before the Great Depression and before the Federal Art Project was launched. The painting is in poor shape, with dry, cracking paint and faded colors. The image shown in this article is a photo that has been "cleaned" digitally. The patch of blue sky and the somewhat vibrant laurel blossoms are unfortunately not as bright in the actual work of art. We hope to have a professional photo taken and altered in PhotoShop to bring this painting back to life.

This is a nice item to have in our collection: it is not only a painting by one of Barkhamsted's noted artists, it also provides a view of a historic building that is no longer present. We are very thankful to Joe Lavieri for donating this significant work to BHS. ☹

Clickety-clickety, click click clack

By Mike Day

Remember the old manual typewriter? The constant click click was the background sound of just about every office, and "typing" was the skill that could land anyone a decent job. At our one-room schoolhouse museum we have a couple of old typewriters that stand as examples of the types of equipment that would once have been standard school equipment.



Like all of our displays, children are welcome not only to touch, but to experience what school was like "in the old days." Children are encouraged to try typing their names on the old typewriter. Watching today's children learn to deal with an old typewriter is fascinating. The idea that you have

to put paper into the thing before you begin is new to most, and when beginning to type, their experience with modern computer keyboards definitely shows.

They can locate the appropriate keys, but when they touch them... nothing happens! A little instruction in the importance of giving each key a good strong "poke" solves the problem, and before long the novice typist has a sample to take home.

Our school typewriter is a 1923 Underwood, made in Hartford. After being pounded on for a hundred years it could certainly use a tune-up, but who these days knows how? The ribbon is shot and the secret of threading it has been lost to the ages. Do they even make typewriter ribbons anymore?

If anyone out there still has the skills to rejuvenate our old typewriter, their help would be most appreciated. With a bit of help, we'll be able to introduce yet another generation to the craft of "typing." ☹

...Continued from page 1 - Where to Go to Church...

For the early settlers on the frontier (and for many years Barkhamsted was “the frontier”) the unique geography of Barkhamsted made finding a church to attend a major challenge. It may be worth reminding newcomers to Barkhamsted that originally there were two branches of the Farmington River flowing through town. The west branch, known to the settlers as the West River, still flows through River-ton and Pleasant Valley. A large dam built in the 1930s on the east branch created “the Reservoir”.

In the 1760s and ‘70s when people were first coming to Barkhamsted, pious settlers might journey to the church in Hartland (established in 1768), Salmon Brook/Granby (established in 1741), Winchester (established in 1768), what is now Canton Center (established in 1750) or New Hartford (established in 1739). “Church” was, of course, understood to mean the Congregational Church. But which church were they required to attend, and perhaps more to the point, support with their taxes? To a surprising degree, the state legislature often got directly involved in local church affairs, including deciding which neighborhoods belonged to which church, and local residents were quick to request that intervention.

Getting to church was also a challenge for people in the eastern part of Winchester. The “long pond” was a barrier that cut off many from the center of their community, just as the west branch of the Farmington River separated the people in western part of Barkhamsted from the rest of this town.

In 1777 a petition was sent to the Connecticut General Assembly asking that the eastern part of Winchester and the part of Barkhamsted west of the west branch of the Farmington River be combined into a new “Ecclesiastical Society” (i.e.: church community). Permission was sought to build a church and to lay a property tax to support it. At the October 1778 session, the legislators agreed and the new

“Society” was established. Because the new society was partly Winchester and partly Barkhamsted, it was called “Winsted”.

But what about the Barkhamsted people who lived east of the west river? On May 6th of 1778 a group led by William Austin and Joseph Shepard met in Windsor and created a petition to the Legislature asking that the “*remaining part of the township of said Barkhamsted*” also be established as a distinct Ecclesiastical Society. They described the area as “*East of the West River so called which is the eastern boundary of the new made society called Winsted.*” They pointed out that the area contained about “*fifty families which are destitute of a preached gospel ... and other benefits which Christian families enjoy.*”

This was followed up by a letter from several citizens affirming that the petition had been voted on in “*a full meeting, not one dissenting voice.*” Soon thereafter, legislation was signed ordering that, “*...all the lands lying on the East side of the West River in said Barkhamstead, and the inhabitants living thereon, be and they are hereby constituted, one distinct Ecclesiastical Society*”

But that left the people in eastern Barkhamsted cut off from their church by the east branch of the Farmington River.

The legislation that created the Barkhamsted Ecclesiastical Society also granted permission for the society to

impose a tax on landowners in order to raise money to build the church.

While the local churchgoers might have been willing to pay, a large group of absentee landowners (the original proprietors) were not, and they were soon petitioning the legislature to oppose the tax.



Photo above: Barkhamsted Center meeting house, in disrepair. This is probably about 1865 when it was torn down.

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...Continued from page 3 - Where to Go to Church...

The matter went back and forth in the legislature for several years accomplishing little beyond depriving the new society of most of the funds needed to build their church. The residents quickly learned that having legal authorization is one thing; actually having a church is another. Money was hard to come by and while the locals were willing to offer labor and provide materials, people still had bills to pay. For example, taxes were owed to the State. In October of 1780, the Barkhamsted church again petitioned the legislature, this time asking that the town be exempted from paying state taxes. The petition pointed out that the town, "...has been very lately settled, the inhabitants very poor, the amount of their list but small and [they are] now at great expense endeavoring to build a meeting-house & settling a minister ...; The legislature agreed that Barkhamsted residents could be excused from paying any state taxes "for the present." It was unclear just how long "the present" would last.

Getting to church was still a concern for people on the east side. In April of 1783, a faction in the northeast corner led by Israel Jones, Jr. petitioned the General Assembly for permission to break away from the Barkhamsted church so they could attend the church in what is now East Hartland. In their petition they argued that they and their neighbors were, "situated at the North East corner of the Town of Barkhamstead and by reason of the great distance of the way which is also extremely rough and mountainous they cannot attend on public worship ... but with the greatest difficulty and inconvenience." They proposed that "a mile and half square at the said north east corner of Barkhamsted may be annexed to the First Society of Hartland."

Chopping off a section of an existing society was a serious issue. The General Assembly held hearings, asked for local input and invited speakers to address the Assembly. The church in East Hartland formally voted to accept the Barkhamsted people, while the Barkhamsted Church voted to oppose the separation. Nevertheless, the legislature granted permission, and the people of the northeast corner were allowed to go to church in Hartland.



Petitions and counter-petitions and legislative actions continued for several more years. But in time the notion of "freedom of religion" became more accepted and the State Legislature became less and less involved in local church affairs. Gradually the decision of where (and whether) to attend church became a matter of individual conscience rather than a government edict. ☒

A blast from the past...

"An amazing cold winter... Snow three feet deep, a number of people have frozen to death."

It appears that the winter of 1805 was tough. This is a March 10, 1805 entry from William Taylor's diary.

Taylor lived on a farm in Barkhamsted on what is now Goose Green Road not far from the Pleasant Valley firehouse. This should make us appreciate central heat, insulated houses and the fact that we don't have to go outside to feed and water the barn animals daily.



Historical Society News

Center School Drainage Fixed

For years the poor drainage at the Center Schoolhouse has caused water to back up into the basement. In January that problem was fixed with the installation of a new drainage pipe. BHS volunteer Tom Andersen (standing in photo at right) led this effort, spending months on seemingly endless paperwork requirements and overseeing the project.

Contractor Dennis Johnson finished the job just before the big snowstorm in early January. Keeping water out of the basement will help us preserve this historic building long into the future. We are thankful for a grant from the Douglas and Janet Roberts Fund of the Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation that provided the funding for this work.



Peoples Forest 100th Anniversary Celebration



Photo above: campers in Peoples Forest circa 1935.

We want to keep reminding you of the 100th anniversary celebration for Peoples State Forest on October 6, 2024. Our Historical Society is helping with the celebration and is making a \$500 donation to assist with expenses. You too can make a contribution at [GoFundMe.com](https://www.gofundme.com) -- just search for “100th anniversary of Peoples State Forest” on that site.

Also, if you are a photographer, know that a photo contest is underway now for photos of Peoples Forest (get more info at the FALPS website, [FALPS.org](https://www.falps.org)). There is a \$600 first-place prize for the top photo, and selected photos from the contest will be displayed at the celebration. Photos must depict subjects within Peoples Forest.

Paul Hart Appointed Town Historian

The town of Barkhamsted Selectmen have recently appointed Barkhamsted Historical Society Vice President Paul Hart as Barkhamsted town historian. The position of town historian was created in 1987 and involves working to acquire, prepare, record and report on historically significant events and people in town.

Paul said, “it is an honor to be appointed to the position of town historian and to follow in the footsteps of Doug Roberts, whose love of history has inspired us for so long.”



Photo above- Paul Hart sitting on the bench at Squire's Tavern which has the inscription “THANK YOU DOUG ROBERTS... YOUR LOVE OF HISTORY INSPIRES US STILL”.



Collection Corner - highlighting some historic items from our archives.

A Piece of Barkhamsted Postal History

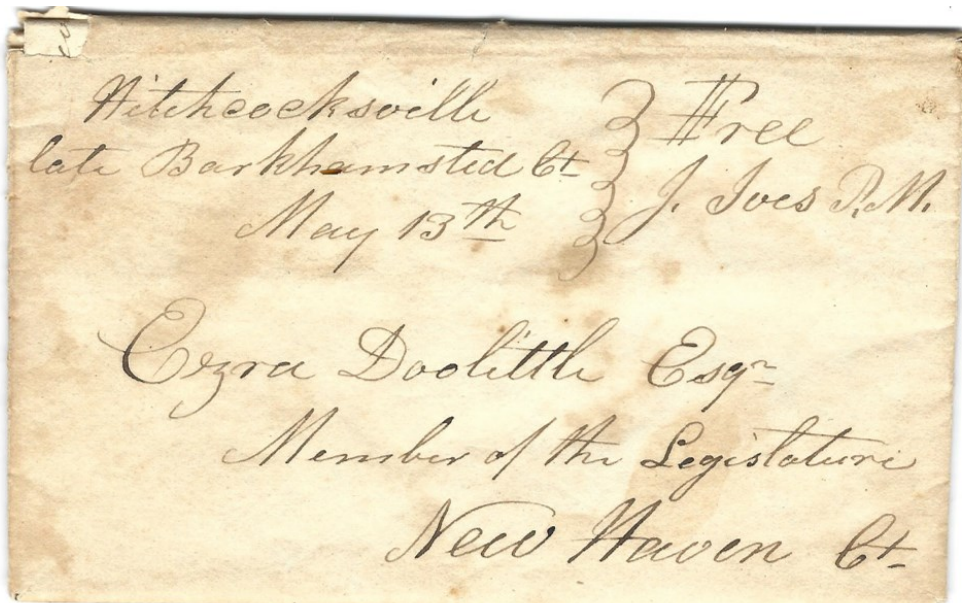


Image above: A portrait of Jesse Ives who served the postmaster of Hitchcocksville (now Riverton) from 1827 to 1835.

Image above: A “stampless cover” mailed to Ezra Doolittle in New Haven by J. Ives in Hitchcocksville. Year unknown, probably circa 1828. A “cover” is an item of mail sent through the postal system.

Shown above is an item in the Barkhamsted Historical Society collection: a stampless cover addressed to Ezra Doolittle, Esq., serving in the Connecticut State legislature in New Haven (back then the state capital alternated between Hartford and New Haven). Postage stamps were not used until 1847. Before that, such as with this letter, the amount of the postage would be handwritten on the letter. The cost of mailing the letter in those days was almost always paid by the recipient, NOT the sender.

Jesse Ives served as the Hitchcocksville (now Riverton) postmaster from 1827 to 1835. He operated the post office out of his inn, now known as the Riverton Inn. One of the benefits of being a postmaster was that you could send letters through the mail at no cost. On this letter, notice what is written in the upper right corner, in the area where now a stamp would appear: “Free J. Ives P.M.” Jesse paid no postage on this letter, citing his role as postmaster.

Another interesting thing about this piece is the notation at the upper left corner: “Hitchcocksville, late Barkhamsted,

Ct.” With Lambert Hitchcock’s chair factory producing thousands of chairs per year at this time, the village had become known as “Hitchcocksville” by 1828. However, the postal address there, of the first and for a number of years the only post office in town, was “Barkhamsted”. By 1827 there was a new post office at Barkhamsted Hollow. This may have precipitated the renaming of the post office in what we now know as Riverton to Hitchcocksville. Because the notation says “late Barkhamsted, Ct”, we are guessing this piece of mail was sent about the time of the post office name change in 1828.

Jesse’s privilege as postmaster of sending mail without cost was nothing to sneeze at. In this period, postage was very expensive. A one-page letter sent from Hitchcocksville to New Haven would have cost Jesse 10 cents in 1828. A day’s pay for a farm laborer was about \$1.00 at that time. So in today’s money, this letter to New Haven would cost about \$12.00. ☹

Historical Society Calendar



The Historical Society’s annual program series is set for 2024. These programs are all on the second Friday of the month in March, April, May and June and all programs are at the Senior Center. All are free and open to the public.

① **Friday, March 8 at 7:00 pm** - Barkhamsted anthropologist Yolanda Gorhisti discusses **“A Paleo Archaeological Look”** into how we know what our ancestors were eating based on taphonomic evidence. People often ask how anthropologists know how our ancestors in East Africa acquired their food. Were they hunters or scavengers? A discussion on the methods paleo anthropologists use to tell us what we know.

② **Friday, April 12 at 7:00 pm** – **“John Brown, His Tree, and the Barkhamsted Connection”**. John Brown, the noted 19th-century abolitionist, is usually associated with Torrington: he was born there in 1800 and is still very much a local hero. But John Brown also had a connection to Barkhamsted, one that may have been deeper and more emotional than is generally recognized. The connection of John Brown to Barkhamsted was common knowledge in 19th century Barkhamsted, but has gradually been forgotten. Mike Day will explore this largely forgotten aspect of Barkhamsted history.

③ **Friday, May 10 at 7:00 pm** – **“Barkhamsted Through the Eyes of a First Selectman”**. Recently retired Barkhamsted First Selectman Don Stein will give a talk on various aspects of his tenure as First Selectman. Don believes we are one of the best communities anywhere due to our natural beauty and great people. He will cover that by focusing on volunteer organizations, infrastructure improvements, town finances and folks involved in the community and what has changed or stayed the same.

④ **Friday, June 14, 2022 at 7:00 pm**– **“Mr. Connecticut”**- Since 2006, Steve Wood of West Hartford has been chronicling his visits to Connecticut's vast array of museums. What began as a lark to fill down time, Steve's hobby has turned into a comprehensive website about all things Connecticut. Hundreds and hundreds of museums, many of which you've never heard of, thousands of miles of trails, as well as breweries, waterfalls, and everything that would be of interest to anyone in Connecticut. From Barkhamsted to Salisbury to Greenwich to Sterling, Steve continues his quest to experience everything our little state has to offer - and then to write about it in an often humorous and engaging way. Hear how his project originated, how he's kept up with it, his family, and his favorite stories from his "quest." Maybe even try to stump him!

Barkhamsted Historical Society

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 Newsletter - Paul Hart

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 Cathy Connole 3 yrs
 Harriet Winchenbaugh 2 yrs

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Squire’s Tavern is located at 100 East River Road in Barkhamsted, one mile north of the Pleasant Valley bridge.

Squire’s Tavern is open to the public on
 Wednesdays 9:00 am to noon and
 Sundays 1:00 to 4:00 pm

Barkhamsted Historical Society Membership:
 Seniors \$12, Individuals \$15, Family \$25

Mail to Sharon Lynes, BHS Membership,
 P.O. Box 94, Pleasant Valley, CT 06063

The Barkhamsted Historical Society is dedicated to preserving Barkhamsted history, helping people connect with past traditions and inspiring appreciation for our heritage to enrich lives and strengthen community.

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