

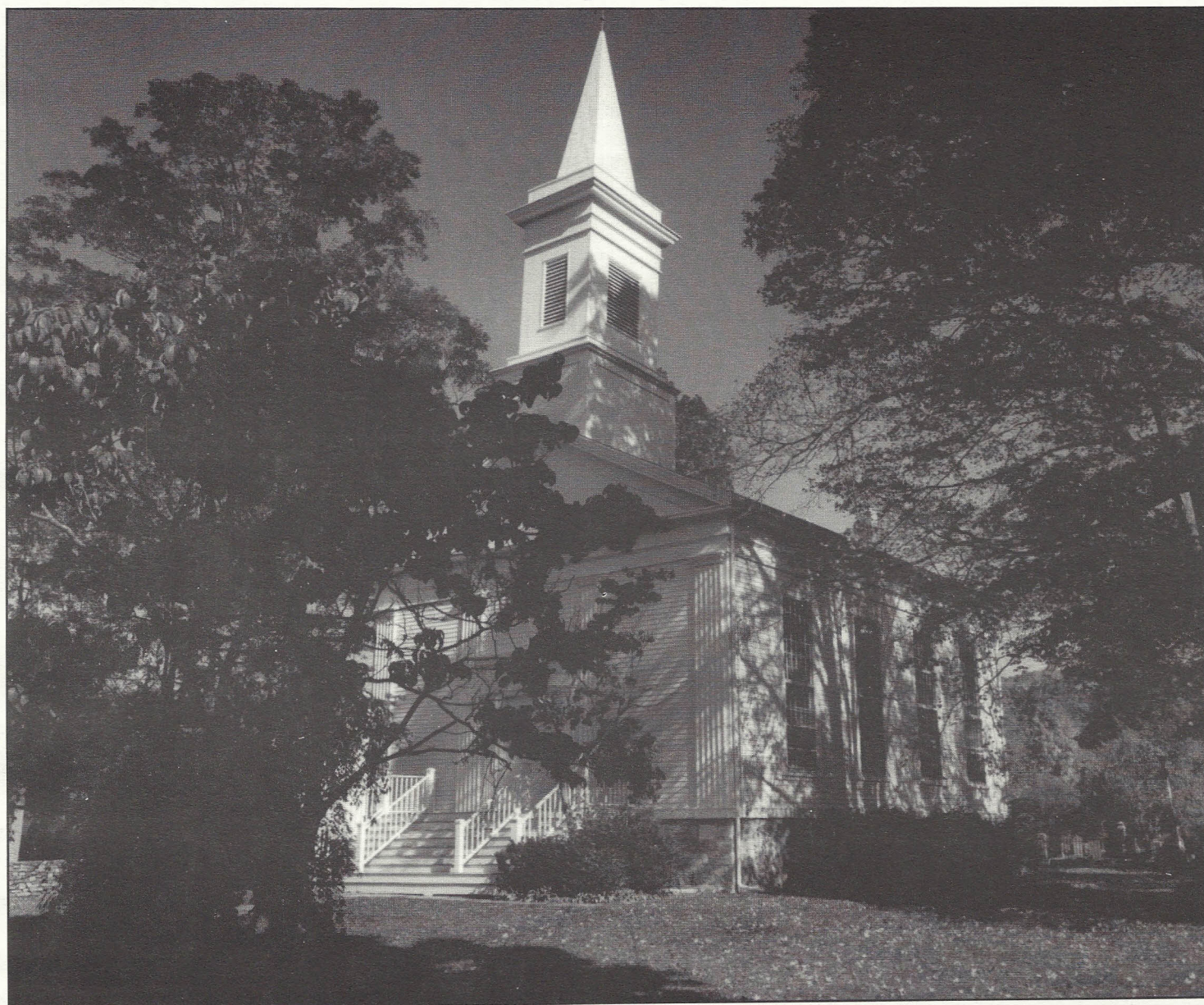
The Chronicle Quarterly

Weston Historical Society

Winter 1994

Volume 13, No. 3

Emmanuel Episcopal Church



Roger Core Photo

150 YEARS OLD EMMANUEL EPISCOPAL CHURCH

In 1995, the Emmanuel Episcopal Church on Lyons Plains will celebrate its 150th birthday. The Honorable George Guidera has been kind enough to pass on

considerable information to us and we will be running a series of articles chronicling the church's long, and sometimes, controversial history.

From the early 1600s this area of Fairfield, Easton, and Weston was over-seen by parishes,

with the church being the central focus. In the Fall of 1787 Weston became a town and in March of 1788, the parishes joined into one Episcopal Society with the central meeting place of Northfairfield (later to become Easton).
(continued page 2)

EMMANUEL EPISCOPAL CHURCH

(continued from front cover)

The history of the Church has been given to us in the form of a letter penned by Bradford Winston in Easton on January 14, 1846 to Charles Hawley Esq., in Stamford. The letter/history was in response to a suit brought by Hanford Nichols and Edmond O. Sturges, of Weston, who were contesting the Church Organization and the location of the new building.

Older members of the society wanted the Church to be located in Northfairfield, whereas, newer members, in particular Mr. Nichols, demanded the Church be close to Norfield Parish on a plain near his home. Financial considerations were given against the re-location. For example, the will of Adin Jackson gave \$200 to the Society in 1814 specifically

designated that the annual interest be used to pay the taxes of the poor and to support a Clergyman in Northfairfield. Monies from fairs which raised almost \$1,700 were hanging in the balance.

On the 18th of November, 1844 the following warning was put up for a Society's meeting, through the entreaties of Hanford Nichols.

"The members of the Episcopal Society in Weston are hereby notified and warned to meet at the Church in said Society on Saturday the 23rd day of November, 1844 at 2 o'clock afternoon for the purpose of deciding on a location for the building of a new Church in said Town and to make additions or alterations in the building Committee and do and transact such other business as may be

thought proper regarding the building of said Church."

The meeting was adjourned from the 23rd to the 30th of November at which time it was voted that a committee of 2 or more Clergymen be appointed to examine and fix upon a location where a new Church ought to be built for the benefit of the Episcopal Society in Weston. It was voted that the Reverend William C. Mead of Norwalk and Reverend Bull of Westport be the committee and to call in a third person if they could not agree. It was also voted that the meeting be adjourned to Saturday the 7th day of December to hear and decide upon the report. However, as the 7th was a very "stormy day", no report was made, and no one attended the meeting. Therefore, the meeting died.

ICE HOUSES

by Karin Giannitti

When we fill our glasses with ice cubes on hot summer days, and enjoy a dish of ice cream or a cold glass of milk, we seldom think of the marvelous invention - the refrigerator. The luxury of ice in the summer that we take so much for granted dates back to ice-stores built in Mesopotamia 4,000 years ago, and wine being chilled by snow from ancient Greeks. This luxury, however, was a rarity until the 17th century when primitive refrigeration became fashionable.

The British were the first to construct a building for ice storage. These houses consisted of massive semi-subterranean brick vaults built mostly by the rich. By the end of the 18th century, ice cream had become a well-known treat, and the quantity of ice needed gave rise to a demand for imported ice. The Americans who were already involved in the use of ice, became heavily involved in ice trading and put their stamp of ingenuity to ice storage at home. We moved from the massive buildings of the British to a simpler every-home-can-have-one, insulated sheds and boxes.

Ice harvesting was originally done by farmers using crude equipment such as axes and



Ice House of Mary Gjuresko

cross-cut hand saws. There were ice depots in some cities and towns supplied by the farmers, but transportation was woefully inadequate. Ice was generally sold to consumers as irregularly shaped fragments in bushel baskets. In rural areas, ice houses were owned by individual farmers or cooperatively by a few families living close together. More often than not, the house was located next to a stream or pond.

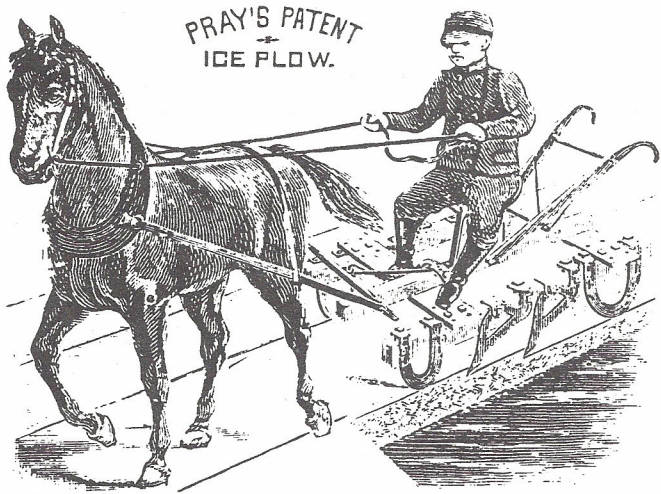
Commercial ice harvesting took place during the months of January, February and March. The thickness varied from six inches in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Southern New York State, up to 15"-30" thick in Maine.

The ice was cleaned if there was snow cover, and then planed if it was rough. Holes were drilled to determine the thickness and, once the best spot was selected, the field was marked off in squares using a narrow blade drawn by horses and steered by plow handles.

The ice cutter, or ice-plow was used next. The plow was designed to cut about two thirds the depth of the ice. The sheet of about twelve blocks would then be channeled from the field to the ice house. These sheets were either pulled by a team of horses, or poled along by an ice cutter using a "hook".

When the sheet arrived at the house, it would be separated and packed away in layers with cracks between the layers. This allowed for melting and prevented the cakes from freezing into one solid block. After the house was filled, the top of the ice was covered with straw, hay or sawdust. Melting still ranged from 25% - 50% during the summer. The whole process to fill a large house (25,000 tons) would require a minimum of one hundred men and ten to twelve horse teams. The harvest usually took fifteen to thirty days.

The early to mid 1800s saw the invention of the ice box - a wooden box, usually oak, approximately 25" x 40"; lined with zinc.



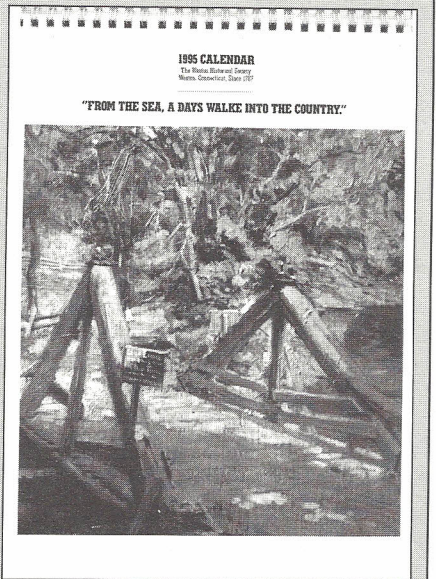
The top of the box lifted up and a large block of ice was placed inside. The inherent quality of cold air falling, kept articles cold in the box below, accessible through a door on the front.

Technology continued to grow and by the early 1900s the "Iceless Ice Box" was becoming the newest rage. A cooling element, purchased separately, was placed in the refrigerator and attached to an electric current. This would allow the refrigerator to maintain a constant cold temperature. In an article in the Westport Herald from February, 1924, these new coolers were declared, by the few who owned them, to be the "final word in household efficiency".

HISTORICAL SOCIETY PUBLISHES SECOND ANNUAL CALENDAR

The Weston Historical Society's 1995 calendar, entitled: "From the Sea, A Days Walke Into the Country", is now available at the Weston Public Library and Weston Pharmacy for a cost of \$10.00. The calendar can also be ordered by calling the Historical Society at 226-1804.

The calendars will again feature a variety of vintage photographs of Weston homes and residents. The text was written by Herb Day, Gary Samuelson and Judy Darby. Editing was done by



Jane Atkinson and design done by Roger Core. The photos were selected by the Board of Trustees of the Society and by Herb Day.

Order your calendars today while the supply lasts. They make great holiday gifts for family and friends.

Annabelle Remembers . . . 1928, The Fall

The leaves on the trees are turning their magnificent colors of red, orange, and yellow and last night we had our first frost. The local papers are just full of the new fashions.

Reads in Bridgeport has street dresses with double pleats and godets for only \$49.50. Crepe-de-Chine slips can be purchased from \$2.95 to \$4.95. The latest accessories for Fall are toned down from the garish styles of the Spring. Tinted pearls or good cream pearls in a single or double strand are a must. Wooden beads, in conjunction with silver and gold beads, and cut glass beads are all good. Kerchiefs are very popular this Fall, one side plain, the other with a print. Belts are a must for the fashion scene with the fur belt being the latest accessory. Plain gloves and simple hosiery complete the look. Men's Fall hats with narrow snap brims can be purchased for \$3.00 to \$5.00. Men's Fall suits can be purchased for \$35.00 right down in Norwalk at Rogers and Stevens.

On the social scene, Miss Mary E. Coley entertained at a dinner party on Tuesday Afternoon at the Westport Tavern. Her guests included Mr. & Mrs. Clinton Welch, Miss Esther Raymon and Mrs. Herbert Bates of Ridgefield.

James Daugherty will exhibit water colors, book illustrations and etchings at Sunwise Turn Bookshop, 53 East 44th St., New York City, from October 1-15.

Mrs. Alice Maruchess and her daughter have returned to New York City after spending the summer at Cobb's Mill. Mr. N.K. Morris of New York is spending some time at Cobb's Mill while he paints some surrounding scenery.

Wallace Arnold of Tolttec Camp has returned from a month's trip and Charles P. Morehouse is ill with a very bad cold. I hope he improves quickly.



“WOODIE” COWAN -

CARTOONIST AND FIRST SELECTMAN

With the advent of the Model A and the Railroad coming through Westport in the late 20's and early 30's, Weston became a quiet and peaceful retreat for many writers, musicians and artists who were tired of the hustle and bustle of New York City. One such person was Woodson Cowan, cartoonist.

Wood, or Woodie, as he was commonly called was born in Iowa in 1889. (His roots are memorialized in a book by Mr. Cowan entitled "Iowa Cracker Barrel") He went to Chicago to attend the Art Institute. Upon graduation, he combined his talents as a talented musician and a cartoonist, into a traveling vaudeville act appearing with such stars as Eddie Cantor and George Jessel. His desire to do newspaper work finally landed him a job with a Chicago newspaper. He was assigned to take a photograph of a woman in a sensational trial, but sketched her instead, thus becoming the newspaper's artist.

Mr. Cowan then traveled to New Orleans where he became a political cartoonist. He came to Washington where he created "Auto Bugs and Buggies", "Them were the Days", and "Vivian the Vamp". He moved to New York and took over "Our Boarding House" starring Major Hoopel created by Gene Ahern.

In 1928 Woodie and his wife, Francis, bought a 59 acre farm which he named "Belly - Acres". The house was a typical unadorned farm house with a large barn in which he later lived. The property was located on Godfrey Road West across from what is now Mountain View Drive.

As a resident of Weston, Mr. Cowan not only presided over "Major Hoopel", but he became involved in local politics. He served two terms in the Connecticut legislature, 1953-1957. One of his best known proposals in the State legislature was the "Birth & Girth" tax. Under his proposal, all Connecticut citizens over 21 would be taxed \$2.00 every birthday, with extra tax levied on those who were taller, or fatter, or had bigger feet because they used more space.

Mr. Cowan ran for First Selectman in Weston and won an upset election. He won the election on the issue of schools - whether they should be expounded adjacent to the Weston Center, or moved to River Road and placed on the Coley property which was for sale at the time. He served one term in this office.

Woodie Cowan was considered one of the "new breed" who came to Weston in search of tranquility from city life. Instead of passing through, he gave of himself to the community and helped to make Weston the town it is now.

Cartoons from Wood Cowan's
"Iowa Cracker Barrel".



"He snatched the knife blade and deflected it."



"A small, slender man whose narrow shoulders sloped sharply from a scawny neck."



"Eric held her tightly to him."



"Town Hero"



"Uncle Peach"



THE FITCH FAMILY OF 183 GOOD HILL ROAD

by James Daniel

(ed.note: Mr James Daniel has graciously allowed the Society to copy this early photograph of his house. The following article supplements a history of the house, commissioned by Mr. Daniel in 1991, which dated the house from about 1805.)

The characters in this photo were identified with absolute reliability by Raymond Fitch, from whom I borrowed the original picture and who was born in this house. From the left are: Frank Fitch, Ray's father and the son of Ebenezer; Bertha May Fitch, daughter of Ebenezer; Ebenezer Fitch, the patriarch who bought the farm; and Ebenezer's wife, Mary Amelia Smith Fitch.

The Fitches are buried at the foot of the Good Hill Road in the old Coley cemetery. Ebenezer descended from Thomas Fitch, the colonial governor, and John Fitch, the first Puritan parson in Norwalk.

I date this photo to shortly after 1884 when Ebenezer Fitch bought this farm. In his little yearly journal for 1883, he noted the first time he came to see the "Ward Nichols place" after Nichol's death some months earlier. On the Beers Atlas (1867) map of Weston this farm is designated Sunnyside which may be a reference to either Washington Irving's Sunnyside over in New York, or to the fact this is the sunny, west, side of Good Hill.

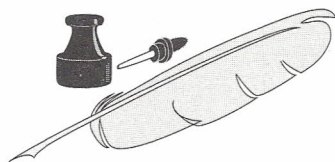
Note the twin Norway spruce framing the front steps of the porch. There was an avenue of these down to the road where there was a gate in a square picket fence with half a broken millstone between the gate posts to step down on to the road. The last survivor of this avenue of spruce succumbed to a lightening storm about 15 years ago when the tree was 84

feet high. Frank Fitch, however, had allowed wind sown seedlings in the adjacent field which are now that high, forming a superb grove. At the time of the photo almost all the virgin forests in Weston, except up around the reservoir, had been cut down for farming and fuel.

There are either sweet peas or morning glories, more likely the first, growing up short sticks at the corner of the house. At this time, Ebenezer had not yet planted the arbor of Concord grapes that helped hide the walk to the privy. I have twice rebuilt supports for this grape arbor. There is a simple fence of pointed palings just visible in the background. I rebuilt the fence forward from about where Ebenezer is sitting to create a formal enclosed English garden. I also have peonies from Amelia's Flower garden, and a tall iris with a small pale lilac flower. The last of the Fitch's apple trees died before I could take grafts, but Amelia's old lilacs, which have outlived the barns beside which they were planted, still get a brutal



The Fitch Family of 183 Good Hill Road



WRITERS WANTED

From the Assistant Editor;

It is with regret that I tell you that Kathy Failla, Editor of the Chronicle, has joined the work force full-time, as has Judy Darby, our genealogist and computer person. Both women have resigned their positions with the paper. Therefore, I will stay on as temporary editor, and Roger Core will continue as Art Director.

We are, once again, looking for not only an editor, but writers (full-time or on a one-shot basis), and someone who will type for us (preferably with a computer). We hope to continue to have four issues a year, and would appreciate any help that you can give us.

Please call me at 762-9208. Thank you. We wish Kathy and Judy good luck with their new jobs. We will surely miss them.

Karin Giannitti

The Chronicle Quarterly

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Karin Giannitti
Assistant Editor

Roger Core
Art Director, Photographer

Custom Printing & Graphics
Design and Production

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pruning. Other survivors include the wisteria-like flowering vine called Indian Potato, Jack-in-Pulpit, and Rhubarb which Ebenezer brought from his prior farm.

While Amelia Fitch tended her flowers, Ebenezer farmed, peddling his vegetables to Norwalk. He made charcoal in the winter from his own forest trees and delivered it by wagon to a factory in Norwalk.

One entry in Ebenezer's yearly journals records his visit to New York City to see the Brooklyn Bridge a week after it opened. Boat passage to Manhattan, admission to this bridge, meals in route, and lodging were totaled up meticulously. The sum came to twenty-seven cents.

Notice in the photo the piazza ran across the whole front of the house and hid the lovely Adam-style fanlight door. I believe it was removed across the front about 1930.

The shutters across the front of the house are the same ones you see in the photo. They are thick, virgin yellow pine, stout as oak, mortised and tenoned, and pegged. Much of the window glass is also original. In the parlor one pane has cut into it "A.J. Nichols" for Abbie Jane, the daughter of Ward Nichols, who probably used her engagement ring to scratch it in.



Allied Genealogy

By Judy M. Darby

It is not unusual in Fairfield County genealogies, to find a married couple having decent from a common ancestor. Families were incredibly large in some cases and few looked for spouses beyond their own neighbors. Ebenezer and Mary Amelia (Smith) Fitch have at least one common ancestor—Christopher Godfrey, 2nd. (Documentation available by request).

First Generation

CHRISTOPHER GODFREY (1657-1715), mar. Ann _____.

Children:

- 1+ i. Christopher, 2nd, 1686-1758
- ii. John, 1699-1745

Second Generation

1 CHRISTOPHER GODFREY, 2D, son Christopher, b. abt. 1685/6; bapt. 17 July 1698, d. 20 Aug. 1758; mar. 11 Feb. 1711, Marjorie Sturgis, dau. of John, b. abt. 1689, d. 4 Nov. 1759.

Children:

- +2 i. David, b. 20 Feb. 1713.
- ii. Stephen, b. 8 Sept. 1715
- iii. Sarah, b. abt. Mar. 1718, d. Westport, 12 June 1756; mar. 3 Feb. 1742, Gideon Morehouse.
- iv. Nathan, b. 25 Sept. 1719.
- +3 v. Eleazer, b. 15 Mar. 1721.
- vi. Isaac, b. 25 Dec. 1724.
- vii. Ebenezer, b. 27 June 1727.

Third Generation

2 DAVID GODFREY, son of Christopher, 2d, b. 20 Feb. 1713; mar. 24 June 1738, Mary Silliman, dau. of Daniel, b. abt. 1715

Children:

- i. Daniel, b. 30 Mar. 1739.
- ii. Ann, b. 16 May 1740; d. Westport, 30 Oct. 1816; mar. Weston, 7 June 1780, James Bennett.
- iii. David, b. 1 Sept. 1743, bpt. 30 Oct. 1743.
- +4 iv. Silliman, b. 1 May 1750, bpt. 3 June 1750.
- v. Mary, b. 24 Feb. 1752, bpt. 12 Apr. 1752; mar. 24 Jan. 1779, Squire Adams.
- vi. Jonathan, b. 23 Dec. 1754, bpt. 23 Jan. 1754.
- vii. Sarah, b. 12 Feb. 1757.
- viii. ?Mabel, mar. Westport, 26 Nov. 1778, Dennie Chapman, Jr.

3 ELEAZER GODFREY, son of

Christopher, 2d, b. 15 Mar. 1721; d. Weston, 1793; mar. 21 Jan. 1746/7, Rachel Bennett, dau. Deliverance, b. 11 Oct. 1729. His will of 1793 was proved 15 Feb. 1795.

Children:

- +5 i. Isaac, b. 27 Nov. 1747.
- ii. Moses, bpt. 10 June 1750; m. Esther Prince, dau. of Samuel.
- iii. child, twin of Moses, d. 28 Apr. 1750.
- iv. Christopher, bpt. 10 Feb. 1754.
- v. Elias, b. 11 July 1756; bpt. as Eleazer 31 Oct. 1756.
- vi. David, b. Mar. 1761
- vii. Rachel, bpt. 15 June 1765.

Fourth Generation

4 SILLIMAN GODFREY, son of David, b. 1 May 1750; d. Weston, 1 Mar. 1829; mar. (1st) Mary Goodsell, dau. of Rev. John, b. July 1751, d. 17 Apr. 1794; mar. (2d) 23 Aug. 1795, Mindwell Osborn, dau. of William, b. 18 Mar. 1754, d. Weston, 12 May 1826. Deacon, Norfield Cong. Ch.



*Ebenezer Fitch and wife
Mary Amelia Smith Fitch*

- i. Sarah, b. 17 Sept, bpt. 8 Dec. 1771; mar. 14 Nov. 1792, Burton Osborn.
- +6 ii. Ebenezer, b. 19 Aug. 1773, bpt. 10 Oct. 1773; d. 12 Feb. 1844; mar. 22 Jan. 1800, Eleanor Andrews, dau. of John Silliman Andrews, b. 11 Aug. 1777, d. 15 Nov. 1867
- iii. Ephraim, bpt 7 July 1776, d. young.
- iv. Ephraim Bradley, bpt 14 Oct. 1779, d. 26 Feb. 1829; m. 1st Mary Wakeman, dau. of Timothy, b. 11 Sept. 1782; mar. 2d Lydia _____.
- v. Silliman, bpt. 20 Jan. 1782, d. 23 Feb. 1859; mar. 1st Anna Andrews, b. 7 Oct. 1779, d. 28 Aug. 1848; mar. 2d Elizabeth Hyde Andrews, d. 1859.
- vi. Mary, bpt. 31 Oct. 1784; d. 1785.
- vii. Mary, bpt. 19 Mar. 1786; mar. Silliman Adams.
- viii. Arity, bpt. 4 Apr. 1790; mar. Munson Perry.
- ix. Joseph, b. abt. 1792; d. Weston, 14 Mar. 1849; mar. Sarah Sturgis, b. 31 Dec. 1792, d. 20 July 1883.

5 ISAAC GODFREY, son of Eleazer, b. 27 Nov. 1747, bpt. 29 Nov. 1747; d. Weston, 12 Feb. 1834; mar. 1st 8 Feb. 1778, Abigail Couch; dau. of Samuel, b. 10 June 1741; mar. 2d Hannah _____ who d. 7 Jan. 1831.

Children by first wife:

- +7 i. Rachel, b. 24 Mar. bpt. 20 June 1779
- ii. Abigail, b. 3 Aug., bpt. 31 Oct. 1784, d. 16 Jan. 1786

Fifth Generation

6 EBENEZER GODFREY, son of Silliman, b. 19 Aug. 1773, bpt. 10 Oct. 1773; d. 12 Feb. 1844; mar. 22 Jan. 1800, Eleanor Andrews, dau. of John Silliman Andrews, b. 11 Aug. 1777, d. 15 Nov. 1867. Children listed in his will dated 29 Dec. 1835, proved 6 Mar. 1844.

- i. Andrews B.
- ii. William O.
- iii. Daniel Silliman.

- iv. Edwin, bpt. 1818; m. Ann M _____.
- v. Rachel A., mar. 5 Jan. 1834, Joseph O. Sturgis.
- +8 vi. Eunice L., b abt. 1801, d. 20 Sept. 1839.
- iv. Daniel Silliman, b. 17 Mar. 1811, bpt Feb. 1813, d. 1813

7 LYMAN SMITH, son of Peter, b. 30 Sept. 1781; d. 1824; mar. 10 Jan. 1802, RACHEL GODFREY, dau. Isaac, b. 24 Mar., bpt. 20 June 1779.

Child:

- +9 i. Silas, b. abt 1803.
- ii. ?others.

Sixth Generation

8 HEZEKIAH FITCH, b. abt. 1798, d. Redding, 19 Dec. 1846; mar EUNICE L. GODFREY, dau. of Ebenezer, b. abt. 1801. Children of dau. Eunice listed in will of her Father Ebenezer Godfrey, proved 6 Mar. 1844.

- i. Mary A., b. abt. 1820, d. 15 July 1877, mar. Peter Smith.
- +10ii. Ebenezer, b. 15 Aug. 1838.
- iii. Ephraim.
- iv. John.
- v. Sally J.
- vi. Ann.
- vii. Ebenezer, b. abt. 1833, d. 6 Apr. 1840, ae 7.

9 SILAS SMITH, son of Lyman, b. abt. 1803; d. 9 July 1841; mar. 1st Eliza _____, d. 14 Jan. 1836; mar. 2d 4 July 1837, Sylvia Jane Hotchkiss, b. 24 Sept. 1884.

Child:

- 11+i. Mary Amelia, b. 7 Feb. 1841.

Seventh Generation

10 & 11 EBENEZER FITCH, son of Hezekiah, b. 15 Aug. 1838; d. Weston, 29 Mar. 1905; mar.9 Dec. 1860, MARY AMELIA SMITH, b. 7 Feb. 1841, d. Weston, 20 Aug. 1912.

Children baptized in Weston:

- i. Anna Elizabeth, bpt. 3 May 1868.
 - ii. Bertha May, bpt. 7 Jul. 1872
 - iii. Cora F. (twin), b. 14 Sept. 1874, d. 8 Aug. 1875.
 - iv. Carrie B. (twin) b. 14 Sept. 1874, d. 11 Aug. 1875.
 - v. Frank Chester, b. 19 Sept. 1880, d. 29 Jan. 1956, mar. May Veronica. State Representative.
- Child: Raymond Haines Fitch, b. 10 Feb. 1906, d. 1993, m. Elizabeth Usher Fairchild; others.



A



**WESTON
COUNTRY
CHRISTMAS**

The seventh annual Christmas gala at the Coley House will be held on December 10 and 11 from 12 noon until 5 p.m. Our preview party for members will be held Friday evening, December 9 from 6 - 9p.m.

The decorations will be provided by members of the Weston Garden Club, the Women's Club of Weston and the Historical Society. Refreshments will be served, and our boutique will be open.

Please watch for further details. For further information, or to volunteer, please call Rodie Thompson at 227-7917.

**LETTER
TO THE
EDITOR**



To the Editor:

Each monument at West Point has its own legend or myth. The bronze plates created by Laura Gardin Fraser are not without their own legend. It is rumored among the Corps of Cadets that giving Abraham Lincoln's head a rub or a squeeze will give you good luck on an upcoming exam.

Consequently Lincoln, the central figure of the three bronze plates is a different color bronze than the rest of the plate; perhaps the best description is polished.

Very truly yours,
Cadet Caroline Davis

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