

## Weston Remembers the Jazz Age and Artist John Held, Jr.

by Kathleen Saluk Fajila

Last March, Weston rediscovered part of its cultural heritage, when a mysterious stranger arrived in town with a wrought iron sign by artist John Held, Jr. The sign, which was missing for more than 20 years, had been found in a Bethel barn.

With its return to Town Hall the sign rekindled an interest in Held, the Jazz Age artist, who lived in Weston in the 1920s. No artist had a greater affect on shaping the image of the Twenties than Held, whose own frenetic life in Weston mirrored that era.

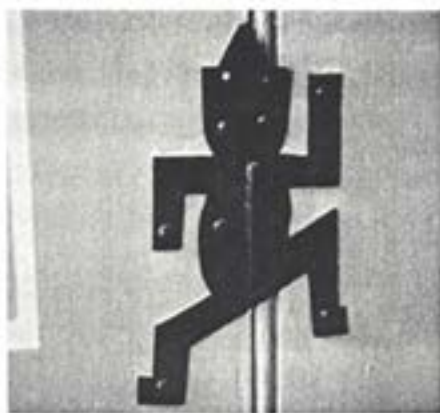
He moved to Weston in 1918, buying the first of two houses he owned here. As a celebrated artist with a lavish lifestyle, he entertained the literary and artistic colony that grew up in Weston and Westport. He illustrated covers for all the magazines of the age, including *The New Yorker*, started by his boyhood friend Harold Ross. He created the flapper, and set in motion a national craze.

From an old forge at his home at 96 North Ladder Hill Road, he fashioned wrought iron signs, hinges and weather vanes, which reflect his sense of humor and affection for country living. One of these signs was sold, or perhaps given, to Weston. It pictures an Indian hailing the rising sun. For many years, it hung at the center of town.

Its return was noted in a *New York Times* article that drew response from people around the country. James Daniel, curator of the art collection at Town Hall, said a Darien woman wrote

him, offering the town a Held weathervane, valued at \$5,000. The weathervane, which features a cow kicking over a bucket, was given to her family in 1925 by Held, who was a house guest.

In a special ceremony to be held later this year, Mr. Daniel said the donor will be invited to visit town hall, when the art work is installed in the meeting room. It will join Weston's rising sun sign and another Held work, a block print, acquired several years ago. "It is just wonderful that this 88-year-old woman decided to give the town this magnificent gift," Mr. Daniel said.



Jim Daniel holds the John Held, Jr. weathervane.



"THEY WANT TO FIX YOUR TIE"



John Held, Jr. (undated). Courtesy of Judy Held