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# SIMSBURY FREE LIBRARY Quarterly

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## Bushy Hill Neighborhood House and Society A Community Club Run by Members from 1911 to 1955

At the turn of the twentieth century, the Bushy Hill district in the southwest corner of Simsbury was fairly isolated from other parts of town. That area of small farms and unpaved roads had one public building, the elementary school, but no post office, church or social gathering place like the Casino in the town center. When the Neighborhood House in the Weatogue district opened in 1906, the people of Bushy Hill took notice and by 1910 many were determined to have a Neighborhood House of their own. They expressed their intent in a brief handwritten statement,

### Constitution

We the undersigned desiring to unite ourselves, the better to cooperate and work together for the building up, advancing and maintaining the moral, social and financial condition of our neighborhood – unite in forming a society to be called the society of Bushy Hill and by the act of signing our names to this constitution become members of, and pledge ourselves to do what we can for the help and support of our society.<sup>1</sup>

At the first meeting of the Bushy Hill Neighborhood Society, on March 10, 1910, the members elected three officers: Merton K. Paine, president; George Case, vice president; Louis E. Bacon, secretary. The group also voted to accept a 100-foot-square building lot south of the Bushy Hill schoolhouse, a gift from Julius Hart Vining. The lot was on the road to Canton, just west of its intersection with the Bushy Hill to Avon road (now Route 167). Next they elected Mr. Vining, his nephew Adin W. Vining and Edward A. Crafts to be a committee "to look after lumber."<sup>2</sup> Eight days later the *Farmington Valley Herald* reported that the Bushy Hill Neighborhood Society had been organized and the members were "laying plans to get out lumber among themselves for a Neighborhood House, and are in hopes of seeing the building begun this summer."<sup>3</sup>

On April 1 the *Herald* reported "Several of Bushy Hill have their logs cut for the future Neighborhood house, and one or two have gotten so far as sawing." Apparently, members were felling their own trees and producing lumber themselves. A contemporary Simsbury directory mentions two sawmills in town, one of them a portable sawmill.<sup>4</sup>

The following week the paper reported on a Sunday School concert given in the Bushy Hill school, saying "we certainly can use a neighborhood house, as the schoolhouse was full to overflowing." About a month later, the paper commented, "The Bushy Hill Neighborhood house, while not growing fast to the eye, yet the sentiment is growing every day. Offers of assistance of both material and labor are coming from many sources. The society feels that they are certainly on the road to have a house of their own to meet in."<sup>5</sup>

In July the members voted to pay fifty cents for recording the deed for the land in the Simsbury Land Records and "to ask Mr. Ensign to help stake out the house."<sup>6</sup> They probably were referring to Simsbury architect Charles A. Ensign, who designed a number of local houses around this time. The members also sent Merton Paine and Julius Vining "to look at some doors and windows for sale at Mrs. Smiths in Weatogue [sic]." Just a month before, a historic house had been torn down in order to reroute the highway in Weatogue and eliminate three dangerous grade crossings used by the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad.<sup>7</sup> Whether or not the group decided to recycle these doors and windows into their building was not recorded.

An ice cream social given on the schoolhouse lawn was financially successful and local mason James Munigle laid the foundation for the Neighborhood House in September. Mr. Munigle donated his work.<sup>8</sup> In fact, erecting the building seems to have been a community project. The *Herald* noted, "With the help given by so many interested persons and a good carpenter, the work on the Bushy Hill Neighborhood House is progressing rapidly."<sup>9</sup>

The Society had just \$68.44 in their treasury at the beginning of 1911 (about \$1,756 in today's dollars), so they decided to go to the Neighborhood House in Weatogue and give an entertainment, followed by refreshments. It was declared a financial success.<sup>10</sup>

Five members of the Society were on hand the morning of June 12 when "Mr. Phelps the surveyor" staked the lot."<sup>11</sup> This would have been the civil engineer Jeffrey O. Phelps, 4<sup>th</sup>, who was the only surveyor in town at the time. Frustration was evident in the next newspaper item, "The finishing of the new society building has been slow this week on account of the rain, as the plastering could not dry."<sup>12</sup> But all was well by August 18 when the Bushy Hill Neighborhood Society published this notice,

Sunday, August 20 will be the opening day of the new neighborhood house at Bushy Hill. The public is invited to meet with us at three o'clock in the afternoon when reports, with speaking and singing, will make an interesting service.<sup>13</sup>

Just over a year later George Case, who was by then the society's treasurer, announced that the group had raised enough money to pay off all the bills incurred while erecting the building.<sup>14</sup>

During the seventeen years of Merton Paine's tenure as president, all costs of the society and its building were covered by fundraising events, rather than dues and fees. With a dearth of restaurants locally, the many suppers that the members gave always were well attended. Each fall there was a chicken pie supper. In November 1912, the *Herald* reported, "It was an ideal night for driving and people came from far and near, and quite 200 were fed and all went away satisfied that the women of Bushy Hill do know how to cook."<sup>15</sup> At the usual charge of twenty-five cents, they must have brought in about fifty dollars.

Oyster suppers were popular during the winter months. In January 1919, the *Herald's* Avon column reported that a number of people from that town had gone to the oyster supper in the Bushy Hill Neighborhood House. It added, "On account of the ice it was impossible to go by auto so a four horse team was secured and all report a fine supper and a good time."<sup>16</sup>

Summer brought ice cream socials. The *Hartford Courant* had this to say about a particularly successful event on the evening of July 26, 1916,

#### Southern Singers

The Neighborhood House at Bushy Hill was the scene of a pleasant gathering last Wednesday evening, when an entertainment and a sale of ice cream and cake was held. A large attendance was present and the entertainment was very pleasing especially the colored singers, who were from J. W. Alsop's tobacco farm in Avon. The young colored men on Mr. Alsop's place are mostly from the class that are working to pay their way through college, and one of the young men told of the work done in the colored schools in the South. Sherman W. Eddy of Avon also gave a talk about the western part of our country, and there were several recitations. The proceeds will be used for the work of the Neighborhood House.<sup>17</sup>

Box socials were typical of the period and the young people of the Society had one in 1914.<sup>18</sup> Each young woman prepared a meal for two which she placed in a box that she had decorated and the boxes were auctioned at the event. The young gentleman who bid the highest had the pleasure of the lady's company for the lunch or supper. Of course, the men were not supposed to know whose box they were bidding on.

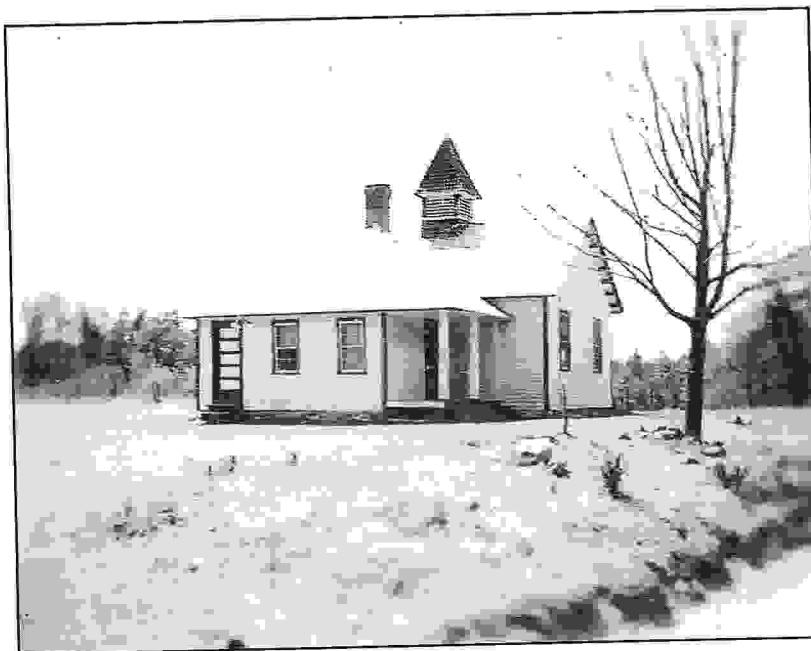
The Society also enlisted a number of speakers to address their community. The speakers included

The Bushy Hill Neighborhood House was built in 1911 by townspeople living within the boundaries of the Bushy Hill School district. They were inspired by the success of the Weatogue Neighborhood House, which had opened in 1906 in a donated house.

Julius H. Vining donated the lot on which the House was built. Much of the material and labor was also donated.

This undated photograph shows what seems to be an electric light beside the side door, so it probably was taken after 1927, when the structure was wired for electricity. Its cupola was removed in 1951.

The building is now the main part of a private residence at 15 Canton Road.



*Courtesy of the Simsbury Historical Society  
Photo donated by the Ellsworth family*

former state senator Alexander T. Pattison of Simsbury and the *Farmington Valley Herald* editor George A. Beers. A minister from New Haven who was giving talks on temperance in the area was another who came to speak.

Members could use the Neighborhood House for family functions, as Merton Paine and his wife Ella did for their 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary celebration. Several funerals took place there and when a group decided in 1923 to organize an association to care for the Curtiss Cemetery, commonly called the Bushy Hill cemetery, their meetings were held in the Neighborhood House.<sup>19</sup> And when the cemetery association needed to reorganize in 1951, the new group also met in the House.

For well over a decade at least one program a week was religious in nature, reflecting the non-denominational Protestant services held on Sunday evenings at the Weatogue Neighborhood House. For example, a Mr. Bartlett came from Canton on a Friday evening in February 1912 to conduct a "gospel and praise service."<sup>20</sup> When ministers from churches in nearby towns spoke, some of their parishioners usually came along and the Bushy Hill people got a chance to show off their building. Members also went as a group to other places. "The Bushy Hill Neighborhood Society enjoyed the sleigh-ride they took to Canton two weeks ago so much that they will go again this week and take in another social and supper given by the Ladies Aid for the Canton Baptist church," the *Herald* reported in February 1912.

As the years progressed sleigh rides became a thing of the past and religiously oriented programs eventually disappeared, too. The Society's first president, Merton Paine, actively supported the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor, generally called the C.E., a nondenominational evangelical organization. During his tenure in office, that group sometimes used the Bushy Hill Neighborhood House for their local rallies. However, many years later, in 1941, when a longtime member reported that a minister had offered to revive the practice of weekly religious services, it was decided to survey all the people in the district. In the minutes of the next meeting the secretary wrote, "The poll was definitely no."<sup>21</sup>

After seventeen years as head of the Bushy Hill Neighborhood Society, Merton K. Paine stepped down in June 1927, but continued to serve as a director. By this time the Weatogue Neighborhood House was

defunct and two new organizations had been established: the 1914 West Simsbury Community Club and the 1922 Community Club in the center of Simsbury. Neither of them had been modeled on the Weatogue organization as closely as the Bushy Hill society had been. Their function was almost purely social. Under the lead of its second president, Arthur W. Chandler, social events predominated in the Bushy Hill Neighborhood House, too.

Mr. Chandler, the proprietor of the Buckland Market on Ford Street in the center of Hartford, had bought a house in Bushy Hill hoping that a move to the country would improve his wife's health. They had not lived there long when Grace Chandler died in March 1914 of tuberculosis. By the time he was elected president of the Society in 1927, Arthur Chandler had married the former Maud E. Bechtel. His mother, Emma Chandler, lived with them and his brother George and his wife Ida also lived in Bushy Hill.

One of the Board of Directors' first steps under the new president was to sell the old organ and to ask for help in locating a piano. Antoinette Eno Wood immediately donated a player piano, which was a definite hit when it debuted at the next social.<sup>22</sup>

Many of the houses in the district were being wired for electricity in the fall of 1927, so to have the Neighborhood House wired, President Arthur Chandler pledged \$5 toward the project and then paid calls on townspeople known to be public spirited and generous. According to the Society minutes, Horace Belden gave \$25, Annie Ellsworth Schultz (Mrs. Emmitt Schultz) gave \$25, a Mr. McLean (most likely ex-Senator George P. McLean) gave \$20, and Deborah McCann gave \$5. With that fund, about \$1,106 in today's dollars, Mr. Chandler was able to have Hall Brothers, electrical contractors in town, wire the building, thus producing good light for evening events.<sup>23</sup>

Evening card parties began and they continued to be the staple program for more than two decades. In the beginning they were held every other week from fall through spring. The players, both men and women filled ten or eleven tables. Bridge was played, but the favorite game at first was setback. In some circles the game was called pitch or high low jack, but the Bushy Hill people always called it setback. The public was welcome and people came from surrounding areas, particularly Collinsville and Avon. The society charged each player a 10-cent fee, eventually raising the fee to 15 cents. Women members took turns being hostesses, who arranged for prizes, refreshments and entertainment.

In March 1928, the card playing was combined with a Poverty Social. The *Herald* reported on the front page,

The poverty social given at the Community House Wednesday evening, March 21. was a great success about sixty being present. Ten tables of setback being played. At 10 o'clock coffee, sandwiches and cake were served as only those Bushy Hill women can do it. Entertaining between changing tables in the card game, the Plude brothers of Avon in songs and monologue were excellent. Then came the Jolly Five Orchestra of Avon with the latest dance music and the party broke up at midnight. Both old and new dances were enjoyed by all. The costumes were surely comical and showed poverty in the extreme. A few came dressed up and were fined, but paid up with a smile.... All present pronounced it one grand time and the question, when are you going to have another.<sup>24</sup>

The man, woman, boy, and girl dressed in the most ragged outfit earned a prize. The Poverty Social was repeated in 1929, 1930 and 1932.

Perhaps the most ambitious fundraising program ever given by the Society was the 1928 minstrel show and dance that took place in the center of Simsbury in the Casino. The Society arranged to share profits on a fifty/fifty basis with the Casino and distributed flyers all around the state. They hired Avon's popular minstrel group and Hartford's Knickerbocker Orchestra. The event was to be held in May, but had to be postponed twice because of an epidemic of scarlet fever in Avon. When finally held in September it was a great success,

## Merton Kinsley Paine

Merton Kinsley Paine was the first president of the Bushy Hill Neighborhood Society. When it was formed in March 1910, he was thirty-nine years old and the owner of a farm on Bushy Hill Road. He and his wife Ella (French) Paine had moved to Simsbury about 1902 from Westfield, Massachusetts, where he had been a clerk in a grocery store. They had six living children between the ages of eighteen and five, including seven-year-old twin girls. Mr. Paine was a descendant on his mother's side of the Mayflower passenger Edward Fuller.<sup>1</sup>

According to census records and town directories, the Paines had a dairy farm and he also was a house carpenter and a grocer. He ran a small general store in the Bushy Hill district and had a regular route between Bushy Hill and Westfield that he traveled with his peddler's wagon, known to his family as his "tea cart." In addition to selling the goods he carried, he took orders and made deliveries.<sup>2</sup>

During the second Liberty Loan drive of World War I, Mr. Paine was on the committee to take subscriptions in the Bushy Hill district, the others being Ethel Walker, James Stocking, Arthur Chandler, and Malcom Marshall.<sup>3</sup> When the 1918 influenza pandemic was raging, Mr. Paine was in charge of reporting cases occurring in his district.<sup>4</sup>

Upon his death at the age of sixty-seven in 1937, the *Farmington Valley Herald* reported his passing on the front page, saying that he "was instrumental in the erection of what is now known as the Neighborhood House and was president of the Neighborhood House Society for a number of years. He conducted a Sunday School class for a period of time and was a leader of a boys' 4-H club, always taking an active part in the community doings."<sup>5</sup>



Courtesy of Beverly Marion (Paine) Martinoli

Merton and Ella Paine

1. William Hyslop Fuller, *Genealogy of Some Descendants of Edward Fuller of the Mayflower* (Palmer, Mass: C. B. Fiske, printer, 1908), 90. This book was accessed on Ancestry.com.
2. Mr. Paine's great granddaughter Ellen Paine provided the information about his peddler's route during two informal interviews in April 2016. The family treasures a photo of him with his cart pulled by two mules on West Street in Simsbury dated 1900-1910.
3. *Hartford Courant*, October 7, 1917, 6.
4. *Farmington Valley Herald*, October 24, 1918, 3.
5. *Farmington Valley Herald*, August 19, 1937, 1.

the *Herald* reporting that the attendance was all that the Casino could accommodate.

The Society under President Chandler began hosting various events to celebrate Valentine's Day, Halloween and Christmas. The first community Christmas festivity, held in 1927 just after the House was wired, featured a program by the schoolchildren and a tree that was lighted with electric bulbs.<sup>26</sup>

Programs by the Hartford County Farm Bureau began in the 1930s, as the country grappled with the Great Depression. The women in the district gathered in the Neighborhood House for classes and

demonstrations in chair caning, sewing, rug making, landscape gardening, food preparation, dressing fashionably at low cost, and so forth. They also made a few quilts that were sold or raffled at Neighborhood House events. At a meeting in 1936, the teacher brought along her moving picture machine and showed movies of her vacation trips.<sup>27</sup>

President Arthur Chandler died on September 16, 1940. In his will he left the Bushy Hill Neighborhood \$1,000 in trust with instructions that the interest on the money should be used for all that was necessary to have a "Community Christmas tree."<sup>28</sup> His widow, Maud Chandler, continued to be very active in the organization. The Christmas party in 1940, with an accordion player and movies for the children, drew a crowd of almost a hundred people.<sup>29</sup>

Harrison A. Hamm was elected the Society's third president in October 1940. One of the first acts of his administration was to form a committee to contact all the families in the vicinity to encourage them to join the Society.<sup>30</sup> By this time everyone's attention was focused on the war in Europe. The United States entered the war after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941 and many of Simsbury's young men and some young women went off to serve.

During World War II, the Neighborhood House was a convenient place for women to gather to sew for the Red Cross. At least one of these sewing sessions included a pot-luck lunch.<sup>31</sup> The House also became a *de facto* branch of the Simsbury Free Library after librarian Elna Hall saw that it was difficult for people to get to the library on Hopmeadow Street in that time of gas rationing. She sent over a collection of adult and juvenile books. Frances Hamm (Mrs. Harrison Hamm) and Alice Beck (Mrs. Frank Beck) volunteered to hold library hours from 2 to 4 p.m. on Wednesdays and Saturdays.<sup>32</sup>

In December 1945, Harrison Hamm stepped down as president and became a director. The Society elected Denis F. Farnell president for 1946, his single year in the office. His wife Katherine served as the chairman of the entertainment committee. More than eighty members and guests came in January for a pot-luck supper, followed by movies and a Dutch auction. That is one in which the auctioneer sets a high price on an article then lowers it until someone bids. Later in the year there was a penny auction, one in which the bidder has to pay a fee each time he bids.<sup>33</sup>

The group elected its first woman president for the year 1947, Marion Lee (Mrs. George Lee), who served until June 1948. She oversaw changes to the Society's by-laws and the usual card playing, holiday parties, a popular pot-luck supper and a fundraising fancy work sale.

Arthur Jones was president for two terms, ending in June 1950. A pot-luck supper during this period featured a Western movie and the 1949 business meeting minutes mention television for the first time. After the meeting, sixteen members "enjoyed television entertainment provided by Mr. Ralph Sisson of Avon."<sup>34</sup>

The dance held in December 1949 was a big hit with the members. "Bushy Hill House Really Jumping With Square Dance" was the headline in the *Herald*. "Friday evening was the occasion of one of the liveliest parties ever held at the Bushy Hill Neighborhood House when a real old fashioned square dance was held. The expert and untiring prompting by the popular caller, John Mansfield of Longmeadow, Mass, kept the tempo at full pitch all evening."<sup>35</sup> A piano and a fiddle provided the music. There was another square dance that winter and two more the next winter. June 1950 saw the first of a couple of strawberry festivals. It drew 125 people and cleared about \$50 for the treasury.<sup>36</sup>

John Gunther was president for the fiscal year ending in June 1951. In July 1950 he threw a Circus Party "with balloons, popcorn, ice cream and soda for children of all ages." He had a member of the organization Circus Fans of America show slides and movies of circus acts and the life of circus people behind the scenes.<sup>37</sup> The 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Society was noted in the minutes and repairs to the building done by

The Bushy Hill Neighborhood House and Society

Notes

1. Minutes of the Bushy Hill Neighborhood Society, 79. The minutes are handwritten in two bound notebooks with no page numbers. The page numbers provided here are from a copy made by the author who numbered the pages of the copy. It is available at the Simsbury Free Library.
2. Minutes, 1.
3. *Farmington Valley Herald*, March 8, 1910, 4.
4. *Hartford, Connecticut, Little Suburban Directory for the Towns of Canton, Granby, Rocky Hill and Simsbury* (Lynne, Mass. and Hartford, Conn.: Clark-Delano Company, 1913), 206, 220.
5. *Farmington Valley Herald*, April 8, 1910, 8; May 13, 1910, 3.
6. Minutes, 2. The deed is recorded in the Simsbury Land Records on page 224 of volume 57. It had been received by town clerk and registrar, George Pattison, on April 30, 1910.
7. See page four of the Fall 2014 Simsbury Free Library Quarterly for more information. Also, the *Farmington Valley Herald*, June 3, 1910, 3.
8. *Farmington Valley Herald*, September 16, 1910, 3; October 14, 1910, 3.
9. *Farmington Valley Herald*, March 3, 1911, 4.
10. *Hartford Courant*, March 11, 1911, 15; *Farmington Valley Herald*, March 17, 1911, 8.
11. Minutes, 3.
12. *Farmington Valley Herald*, June 16, 1911, 8.
13. *Farmington Valley Herald*, August 18, 1911, 8.
14. *Farmington Valley Herald*, October 18, 1912, 2.
15. *Farmington Valley Herald*, November 22, 1912, 1.
16. *Farmington Valley Herald*, January 9, 1919, 5.
17. *Hartford Courant*, July 30, 1916, 4.
18. *Farmington Valley Herald*, May 1, 1914.
19. *Farmington Valley Herald*, June 7, 1923, 1; June 14, 1923, 5.
20. *Farmington Valley Herald*, February 2, 1912, 5.
21. Minutes, 30.
22. Minutes, 7; *Farmington Valley Herald*, September 8, 1927, 8.
23. Minutes, 14.
24. *Farmington Valley Herald*, March 29, 1928, 1.
25. Minutes, 13.
26. Minutes, 13-14.
27. *Farmington Valley Herald*, April 9, 1936, 5.
28. Last Will & Testament of Arthur W. Chandler, Admitted to Probate October 4, 1940.
29. *Farmington Valley Herald*, December 27, 1940, 3.
30. Minutes, 25; *Farmington Valley Herald*, October 10, 2.
31. *Farmington Valley Herald*, October 29, 1942, 3.
32. *Farmington Valley Herald*, June 25, 1942, 3; October 29, 1942, 3.
33. *Farmington Valley Herald*, January 31, 1946, 3; April 11, 1946, 5.
34. Minutes, 50.
35. *Farmington Valley Herald*, December 1, 1949, 3.
36. Minutes, 53.
37. Minutes, 54.
38. Minutes, 65.
39. Minutes, 71.
40. Minutes, 74.
41. *Hartford Courant*, January 15, 1955, 6D; April 15, 1955, 28D; May 25, 1955, 12D; History of Trinity Church on the church website: [www.trinitytariffville.org/history.html](http://www.trinitytariffville.org/history.html)
42. *Hartford Courant*, February 20, 1956, 18D.
43. Simsbury Land Records, 115:186.
44. *Farmington Valley Herald*, December 15, 1955, 3.
45. *Hartford Courant*, May 15, 1956, 21D; May 13, 1958, 23D.
46. Simsbury Land Records, 179:528.



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volunteers were reported. Through the years the men had painted the building numerous times, as well as replaced broken windows and so forth.

Emil Burk filled the president's position until June 1952. During repairs of the building in his administration the cupola was removed from the roof. The Society also got a donation of ten chairs and a large coffee pot that had been in the long-ago Weatogue Neighborhood House.

Members enjoyed the usual socials, but President Burk and his board were concerned that support was waning. A special committee surveyed all the people in the district and reported at the annual meeting in June 1952 that "the residents within the borders of the Society were almost 100% in favor of keeping the Neighborhood House active, and that they were willing to pay dues each year whether they attended or not."<sup>38</sup> The committee recommended forming a Reception Committee that would welcome newcomers to the area and tell them about the Neighborhood House.

George J. Melrose Jr. served as president from June 1952 to October 1953. During his term in office he instituted an advisory Council whose members supported him in his efforts to raise money to equip the building with modern facilities. It had no plumbing or central heating, having always relied on a wood stove for heat. The Society minutes record, "It was agreed that, unless water and heat were put in, it would be difficult to formulate any sort of program."<sup>39</sup>

As soon as she assumed the presidency in October 1953, Ellen Faivre (Mrs. Maurice Faivre) began a finance drive. Dues were collected and the usual card parties, suppers and sales went on, but at the business meeting on July 12, 1955 the twelve members of the Bushy Hill Neighborhood Society that were present, citing lack of interest, voted to sell the Neighborhood House and disband.<sup>40</sup>

At this time St. Alban's Episcopal Mission was holding Sunday services in the Ethel Walker School chapel with the intention of establishing a second Episcopal parish in Simsbury. The first was the parish organized in 1848 in Tariffville that built the 1872 Trinity Episcopal Church.<sup>41</sup> The Mission succeeded in forming a parish and building St. Alban's Episcopal Church at 197 Bushy Hill Road on a four-acre lot donated by Ethel Walker (by then Mrs. E. Terry Smith) and the Ethel Walker School Corporation.<sup>42</sup> The church was completed and dedicated in September 1957.

While the Mission was planning and raising the money to build the church, it bought the Bushy Hill Neighborhood House, closing the sale for \$650 on April 20, 1956.<sup>43</sup> Two months later this item appeared in the *Herald*, "On Sunday afternoon at 3 p.m. children of the Sunday School will hold their first annual Christmas Party in the St. Alban's Neighborhood House."<sup>44</sup> However, functions like this were held in the new parish hall once the church was completed. Russell P. Sweet, who served on the executive committee for St. Alban's Mission, said in a recent telephone interview that Rev. Robert B. Wardrop, the first pastor of the church, lived in the Neighborhood House for a few years until he married and the church provided him with a larger house.

The last act of the Bushy Hill Neighborhood Society was to donate half the money in its treasury to the Curtiss Cemetery Association, which maintains the burial ground commonly known as Bushy Hill Cemetery, and half to the Bushy Hill Fire Station, which had completed building its first firehouse in 1953. The fire department used the \$350 that it received to buy a generator and to set up an emergency center in the firehouse with a gas stove and refrigerator.<sup>45</sup> St. Alban's parish sold the former Neighborhood House at 15 Canton Road to a private buyer in 1969.<sup>46</sup> Through many subsequent owners it has remained a residence, one whose walls have an interesting story to tell.

By Mary Jane Springman



*Soldier Engraver Forger:  
Richard Brunton's Life on the Fringe in America's New Republic*

Richard Brunton, subject of this richly illustrated history, was trained in England as an engraver, but came to America as a British grenadier to fight during the Revolutionary War. He deserted and stayed here, supporting himself by engraving on paper and on metal. Many of his works are now in the collections of august institutions like the National Archives, Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and Colonial Williamsburg. The Simsbury Historical Society has four of Brunton's silver medallions, one of which is pictured on page 62 of the book.

Brunton is especially known locally for his large engraving of New-Gate Prison, c. 1799, that shows what the prisoners did there while he was incarcerated for counterfeiting silver coins.

On **Wednesday, May 18, at 6:30 p.m.** in the library, author **Deborah Child** will give an illustrated and engaging talk about her book. Free to members, \$5 for non-members. Refreshments will be served.

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*In Appreciation*

The Simsbury Free Library is indebted to Gay Mulligan for providing a copy of the minutes of the Bushy Hill Neighborhood Society. Without her help, this issue's article would not have been possible.

Our thanks to Ellen Paine, who shared her family's research and memories of her great grandfather, Merton K. Paine, and to Russell Sweet, who provided information about St. Alban's Episcopal Mission.

We are also grateful to Donn O'Brien of Wickenburg, Arizona, who came to the library in 2014 and who is related to the Society's second president, Arthur W. Chandler, for a copy of his will.

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