

Town of Coventry Connecticut
Commemorative Brochure

For the 300th Anniversary - 2012



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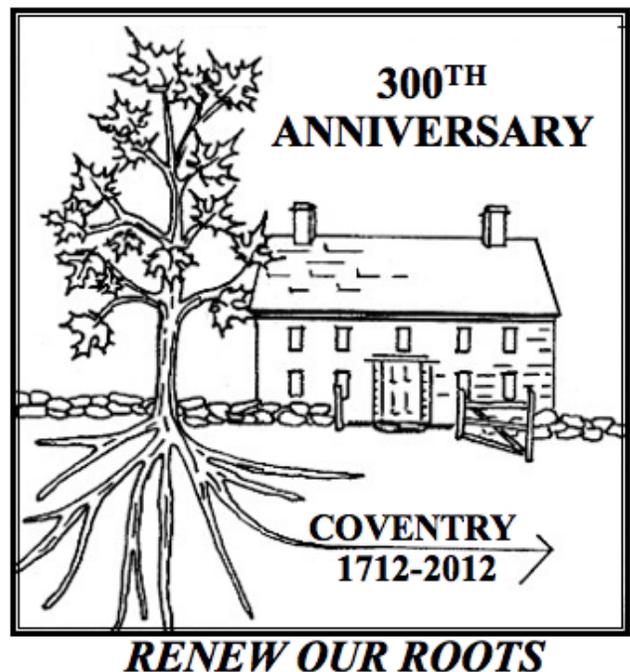
All the land later known as Coventry, Tolland and Hebron had been left by Joshua, son of Uncas, Sachem of the Mohegan Indians, by his will made in 1676, to various men of Hartford, Saybrook and Windsor. The will was considered highly irregular even though the legatees were among the most prominent men in the colony. The General Assembly finally allowed the will to be probated on the condition that the legatees act quickly to settle the lands. Disputes about title to the lands delayed matters for more than 35 years. Finally the legatees agreed to settle the claims. The Saybrook men took what was to be Hebron, the Windsor gentlemen took Tolland, and the group from Hartford accepted Coventry as their share. The General Assembly ratified the agreement to the "plantation" of Coventry in May 1706, designating fifteen Hartford area men as equal owners of the land. Since twelve of the original legatees had died since Joshua's will was made, and one had sold his right, a committee was appointed to arrange for the division of lands into lots.

The Committee completed their survey of the town bounds, "as near square as we can lay it". This six-mile square encompasses Coventry and part of Andover, and is bounded on the north by Tolland, the west by Bolton, the east by the Willimantic River and on the south by the east-west portion of South Street (between Pucker and Plains Roads). The "Mile and a Quarter" is a strip of land just south of the above described and is one and one-quarter miles in width (north-to-south), approx 2,400 acres. It was granted to the town by Peter Mason of New London in 1713/14 and the

The first road in town was South Street, then called "Long Street".

deed said there were already three settlers there- John Sprague, Thomas Davis and Josiah Loomis. The triangle below this and adjacent to the Hop and Willimantic Rivers, approx 1,500 acres, was deeded to the town in 1713/14 by Thomas and Dan Buckingham of Saybrook.

The original land allocation included 84 lots of 15-30 acres each. They were laid out on Ripley Hill bordered by Ripley Hill Road, Cooper Lane, Root Road and the lake; on both sides of South Street from Pucker Street to Daly Road; and on both sides of High Street from the lake extending about two-thirds of a mile southeast.



The town was incorporated on May 8th 1712 by the Connecticut General Assembly.

The first tax was levied in 1712 and used solely to pay for a minister and the church building. For the Revolutionary War the tax rate was 2.5% on the estate.

Lake Wangumbaug

Lake Wangumbaug in the Indian language means "lake of dew water" or "crooked lake". It is situated near the center of town geographically, and is evidently of volcanic formation. The surface area is about 370 acres and its maximum depth is about 40 feet. Its watershed is 2,125 acres. The shore line at ordinary stage of water is five miles in length. The natural outlet- the Mill Brook- was dammed in the 1700's then enlarged several times in the early 1800's. From the earliest application of the water to mechanical purposes (1716) it has afforded a uniform and constant a supply of water. The water power of this lake has at various times in the past been utilized at sixteen places along the Mill Brook's two and on-half mile course.

Lake Wangumbaug was the primary attraction for the first English settlers in the very early 1700's. Families from the Connecticut River valley settled here and incorporated the town in 1712. The first land allocations were farms of 15 to 30 acres near and adjacent to the lake. A number of farms were created on Ripley Hill with a view to the lake, and more were created along today's Cross and South Streets adjacent to the lake. The first grist mill (1716) was established on the Mill Brook where The Teleflex Corporation facility is today. The millers house (Thomas Porter) stood in front of the flea market on Lake Street. Properties surrounding the lake included about nine large farms which were active into the first part of the 1900's.

A pavilion was built on the lake around 1900 that sold ice cream and light fare in the

summer as well as having a dock for touring boats. With the advent of the trolley to Willimantic in 1909, another building was built for recreational purposes. Both stand today on Lake Street. As the automobile became more prevalent, the lake became an attraction for residents from Willimantic and Manchester as a place to spend weekends in the summer for fishing and relaxation. Many individuals saw the opportunity here, and either purchased many of the farms or divided their own farms into "lots" for sale to folks wishing to have a summer "place". Most of the original lots were 2,500 or 5,000 square feet with a right-of-way to a main road and to the lake. Lakeside "lots" were somewhat larger. Lots were sold with restrictions as to their development and waste removal, many would not allow the use of "intoxicating" beverages, and many had an annual fee (about four dollars) to be used for general maintenance of the area.



The first known recreational use of the lake properties was a cottage on the north island (off Standish Road) in the 1870's. There are deed records for Brigham Payne (1831-1911), owning the island. Brigham worked for a local cartridge manufacturer in the mid 1800's. He moved to Hartford and became a successful

businessman, then in his later years moved to Rockville, but was summering on the island in the 1880's and '90's. Following that, small cottages were built along today's Standish Road, Cheney Lane and Woodland Road around 1900 to 1909, when the number totaled about twenty-one. (That number would grow to 125 by 1924, and 160 by 1934.)



As families began to afford automobiles in the 1920's and as the effects of the Great Depression began to wither in the 1930's, people looked for recreational opportunities away from their primary homes. The first recreational cottages were built mostly by residents of Windham (on the southeast side of the lake) and Manchester (the northeast side). Ownership expanded to families from Connecticut, New York and New Jersey as the realty companies advertised and offered lots to a wider audience. The original uses included simple tents and camp fires for fishing weekends and expanded to small cottages with dug wells and rudimentary septic areas.

Beginning around 1910, and continuing for five decades, there was a virtual explosion of small lots for recreational development around the lake. The Lisicke Beach area was the old Clark farm until 1936 when it was sold to the Bevilles who ran a concession stand and rented

boats for many years. Later, in 1961, it was sold to the town. The Cheney Lane area was the old Root farm to 1867, then sold to the Ayer family. They began selling lots on the lake about 1900.

Waterfront Heights was the old Clark farm (northeast of Main Street) to 1936 then sold to Waterfront Realty and divided into 940 lots most 100 by 25 feet. Southwest of Main Street was the old Austin farm sold to Waterfront Realty in 1936 who divided the area into 507 lots. The old Clark house remains today overlooking the beach. The first cottage was built ca 1933.



Oak Grove was the old Austin farm to 1894 when a portion was purchased by the Ayers family and divided into 170 lots (northwest of Daly Road) and 230 lots (between the road and the lake). The first cottage appeared on the lake about 1900.

Bellevue was the Payne estate to 1868, and later sold to Daly, Rich and John Hand and divided into about 75 lots around 1930 when the first cottage was built.

Waterfront Park was the old Tibbets farm until 1876, then various owners to 1919 when it was sold to James Fitzgerald and then to Waterfront Realty in 1934 when it was divided into 380 lots (west of Daly Road) and 700 lots between the road and the lake. The old Tibbets house remains at the corner of South Street and Daly Road. The first cottages appeared ca 1920.

The Actors Colony was the Parker farm to 1868 and sold to the Beebes who maintained it to 1928 and then sold to the Hinkels who divided it into 806 lots of 100 x 25 feet. The first cottage was erected about 1926.

Gerald Park (and Avery Shores) was the Rose farm in 1868 and sold to George Avery in 1896 and then to James Fitzgerald in 1920 and divided into 350 lots. Mr. Fitzgerald developed a few of the lots and sold the rest to the Loesers and the Hinkels. The first cottage appeared here about 1912.

Lakewood Heights was the old Dimock estate until 1936 when it was sold to Katie Newcombe (wife of Harry, aka Hank Keene), and divided into about 235 lots mostly 60 by 120 feet, the first cottage appeared in 1948.

Lakeview Terrace was the old Babcock estate until 1936 when it was sold to the Beerworts and then to the Lakeview Terrace association when it was divided into 300+ lots mostly 100 by 50 feet. The old Babcock house remains today and was, for a time in the 1940's and 50's, the Coventry Day School. The first cottage was built about 1935.



Waterfront Manor was the old Dimock estate until 1936 when it was sold to Orcutt & Bissel and then to Waterfront Manor and divided into 725 lots. The first cottage appeared in

1930. The old Dimock house remains today on Cross Street.

Hillcrest was the old Manning estate that included the south island until 1906 when it was sold to the Lake Wangumbaug Land Association and divided into 215 lots mostly 65 by 130 feet. The first cottage was built ca 1914 though there were earlier homes on the lake.

Hemlock Point was originally the Root farm to 1850 and then to various owners to 1945 when it was sold to Hemlock Point realty and divided into 86 lots. The first cottage appeared in 1946.

The land encompassing the lake associations includes some 870 acres, mostly developed, and was at one time divided into a total of 5,740 small lots. Homes number about 1,180 today, with an additional 890 vacant lots, many only 2,500 square feet.



Lake Wangumbaug Threats

Wastewater, stormwater, sedimentation, and road runoff impacts have been quantified and indicate that Coventry Lake is a healthy ecosystem that has the characteristics of a high quality water resource with a moderate amount of dissolved nutrients. All physical, chemical, and biological evidence indicates that if Coventry Lake has an increase in spring phosphorus level, its resource quality will

decline. Restoration at that time would be costly, so preservation of the existing condition is desirable with preventative maintenance, primarily in the limitation or elimination of phosphorous from lawn fertilizers.

Other data shows that water clarity has decreased somewhat since 2000, and oxygen

loss has continued which could stimulate blue-green algae growth. Zooplankton (which consume algae) population has decreased somewhat, though not alarmingly. Algae abundance has increased over time, but the general condition of the lake remains stable with relatively low phosphorous and a good iron content.

Recent surveys have indicated small amounts of invasive species (curly pondweed and milfoil) in the lake which must be monitored closely. Steps to eliminate them are being considered and the public needs to be educated as to the source of these plants and their potential negative effects on the lake.

The first house in town was about 1706 by Samuel Birchard in the area of today's Gerald Park on the Lake.

The lake originally was about 2/3 the size it is today because there was no dam on the Mill Brook.

Veteran's Memorial Green

The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut record that William Pitkin, Joseph Talcott, William Whiting, Richard Lord and Nathaniel Rust were charged in 1711 with laying out the Town of Coventry and "settling a minister of the gospel." The land was part of the trust east of the Connecticut River granted by "Joshua, Indian Sachem." Coventry Green was part of the church lawn until a road was cut in front of the building.

The Green is dotted with trees and is surrounded by Colonial residences interspersed with wooded fields. Once a training ground, it was the assembly site of those going off to fight in the Colonial Wars, the American Revolution, the War of 1812 and the Civil War. A monument expresses the townspeople's gratitude for their sacrifice, particularly noting 21-year-old Coventry-born school teacher-spy Nathan Hale. The Friends of the Nathan Hale Memorial will be placing a life size bronze statue of Captain Hale on the Green to celebrate the 300th anniversary of his birthplace.

One of the first women to own and operate a factory in Connecticut was Sarah Bottum. She took over a silk mill (on Mason Street) at her husband's death in 1889 and operated it until 1901.

Joseph Talcott, first native governor of the colony of Connecticut (1724-1741) was one of the original land owners in Coventry. He received the land from his father John. Joseph resided in Hartford and sold his Coventry land to several people.



Veteran's Memorial Green

Through the efforts of Royal Rose, who lived just south of the green, the U.S. government in 1928 presented a commemorative cannon. An honor roll commemorates the men and women of Coventry who served in World War II, while the Vietnam and Korean Memorials cite those who gave their lives in those conflicts. Nearby is the French Army Memorial erected "to pay tribute to the valor of General Rochambeau and the soldiers of his French army who fought for American independence."

The first town clerk's office was built in 1876 and is now the Visitors Center in the Village. Prior to that, all town records were kept in the town clerk's private home. Virtually all those records exist today.

The first ream of hand made paper in town was produced by in 1795 by Elijah House in his mill on the Skungamaug River near the Andover town line.

Memories of Coventry

Written by long time resident Arnold Carlson, April 2011

In 1939 at 15 years I saw a little Coventry history. In 1937 the town received the Seymour site markers for significant sites. The WPA State Library group copied old records in the Town Hall plus the Rochambeau troop graves at Coventry Lake. Hale homestead was still "Seymour private" until the 1945 will. Frank Krasnickas and Alan Olsen collected arrow heads and bullet casings. The Woodworth cider mill operated (Lake Street) as did the fish line factory (Monument Hill Road & Main Street). The National Silk Company (Mason St. and Armstrong Road) had many employees and the roller rink was a summer operation. Meyers store and Wellwoods store supplied the small population of the Village. The Wolfe Ice House cut ice blocks from the lake.

When Pratt & Whitney Aircraft began 24-hour production, many new employees came to Coventry for "Cottage" housing. Route 44 became a busy road. Some farms received electricity from CL&P. Rev. Robertson was active at the

First Church and wrote a history book. Dr. Higgins was busy with medical needs plus state and national help for "Dirt roads"!

The sounds of bugle calls at the Salvation Army Camp could be heard across the lake at Oak Grove. Today this is Patriots Park. The second Salvation Army camp site was never built in North Coventry when they moved to Ashford for a larger year-round facility. Today the Fox & Coon club maintains a facility for recreation. The Crosby Camp on Merrow Road operated a New York Fresh Air Camp for many years. This camp became the site for Coventry Hills sub-division and condo housing. The "old cape" was sold and restored. The Times Farm Fresh Air Camp with a road entrance from Andover provided camping for Hartford youths and today is also a year-round nature class.

Several farms became summer estates for out-of-town families. The Babcock farm on South

Street became Coventry Day School for many years with the lake land used for Lakeview Terrace subdivision. The Dimock estate on Cross Street became Waterfront Manor subdivision and today the Long View Farm is the Crossen horse ranch, restored to perfection. The Ripley House estate on Ripley Hill Road became the England farm and England subdivision today. Most summer estates are gone today.

Frank Krasnickas was born and lived on Route 31 and Sam Green Road on a large family farm that dates back to the 1700's. As a school boy he learned about the four companies in Coventry which manufactured cartridges for many guns. He was able to collect some and joined a collectors association. He later moved out of town and expanded his collection. He also helped other Coventry collectors. In 2006 he published a 420 page history of his information. He passed away in 2007 leaving his brother Victor at the homestead.

The most prominent Indian path in Coventry was called the "Olde Connecticut" path and was originally the only path leading from Massachusetts to Connecticut. It followed Route 44 from Bolton Notch to the intersection with Main Street. It then followed Main Street to Sam Green Road and then east to the present Route 44. It became the Boston Turnpike, when a company of the same name was incorporated in 1797.

The first town-funded bridge was located on today's Pucker Street and crossed the Hop River. It is still named Roses' Bridge as it was built on land deeded to the town by Daniel Rose. Other river crossings at the time either had no bridge or one that was built by private citizens.

The town's first tavern keeper was Nathaniel Rust who operated his tavern on the grounds of today's "Daniel Rust House" on Main Street. Jehiel Rose was licensed as a tavern keeper there in 1800. Another tavern was operated by William Gardner on Ripley Hill Road (east side) and dates from prior to the Revolutionary War. It serves as a B&B today.

The largest factory in town was the Mill Brook Woolen Company aka the Washington Mill. Its main building was about 200 by 30 feet, three stories and was located where the town garage used to be located. It produced cassimere cloth, a wool/cotton blend. It had up to 105 employees, 30 looms and its power was water (30 HP) and steam (36 HP). It burned in 1885 at a loss of \$100,000 and was not rebuilt.

Memories of Coventry

The following is taken from a paper written by Leonard Giglio about his life in Coventry.

Leonard came to Coventry at the age of twelve in 1919 to a farm on Bread & Milk Street. He went to school at the #10 school on Cedar Swamp Road. He remembers building a float and taking part in a milking contest winning second prize. The house had a party-line telephone. He boarded with John Kingsbury for a few years and made \$10 a month milking cows. The Kingsburys retailed their milk in Manchester and cut ice in the winter from the Ash Brook pond in the back of the property.

He recalls the building of the house which is now the funeral home on Route 44. It was built by a man named Pitkin in 1909 and sold to George Robertson from Hartford in 1911. The house later became a tourist home. The Pomeroy Tavern is mentioned (#1801 Boston Turnpike) owned by Dr. Isaac Fisk who was the last one in Coventry to raise tobacco. Across the street was the Loomis house which had a sawmill and lumber was cut year round. East of the Grange Hall was Clarence Fisk's blacksmith shop which was destroyed in the 1938 hurricane. A new building was built where Clarence shod horses and built wagons and wooden sleds. Eventually the building was remodeled for apartments. Arthur Vinton had a store and gasoline pump where Dimitri's restaurant now stands for many years.

At age 15, Leonard took over a milk route in Manchester, peddling with a horse and wagon, the route taking ten hours to complete. At age 16 he got a job in a knitting mill on Manchester Green and still delivered milk, and also helped his brother Phillip repair cars at Cooke's garage in Manchester. Soon after he was

employed at the Cheney mills, in the dressing mill on Pine Street. In 1926 his family purchased the Oliver farm on Cedar Swamp Extension. He wanted to start a gas station and general store, but that dream never materialized.

In the spring of 1928, the Cheney mills were losing work so Leonard took a job cutting wood for Bill McKinney on Cedar Swamp Road. He recalls betting some of his friends that he could cut five cords of wood in a day, and working from 7AM to 5PM, he won the bet. In the 1930's he lived on South Road in Bolton and he cut and sold wood, worked for the Town of Bolton and also for Harry England doing carpenter work. He also built stone walls and delivered milk. He rebuilt his house in 1934. He did most of his shopping at Bolton Notch where there was a railroad depot, a general store and a coal and grain business. A bridge was built over the tracks in 1917.

The 1938 hurricane destroyed every building on his property except his new house. All his apple trees and corn crop were destroyed. Bolton Lake flooded and cut a 100-foot wide path through his property. They had no electricity for three weeks.

During WWII it became hard to get help even at \$30 per month with room and board. He finally purchased a Case tractor in 1941 and his wife Alice would drive it. His farm was a dairy farm during the war. After the war they would clear more land and stones and stumps (a total of forty acres) to expand their farm. Their neighbors were selling land for building lots.

In 1957 he purchased an old house on Route 44 where his descendents live today. Early in 1958 he made plans to build a supermarket on Route 44A. It was named Allen's Market. The building houses Westons Auction today and is still in the Giglio family. He had to have the zone changed to "commercial" and faced a lot of opposition. A loan was approved in January of 1961. The building was finished later that year, and Leonard was suffering with breathing problems and was hospitalized for a time. The grocery business did not do well until May of 1962 when he was able to get S&H Green Stamps, then business almost tripled. When Meadow Brook Shopping Center opened in 1972, business fell. He increased the size of his building in 1974 and added a meat cutting and an ice cream section. (Butterball Turkeys were \$.69 a pound.)

The first Library in town was made possible by the legacy of Mrs. Sarah Hale in 1803, with a donation of \$3,333. Sarah was the wife of John Hale, a brother of Nathan. The principal use was for those wishing to study for the ministry. The library was operated by the First Congregational Church.

Coventry's medieval castle was built by E.L. Gardner prior to 1919 in Chester Mass. and was moved to Coventry and rebuilt between 1929 and 1938. Then it had its own water-powered 17 kilowatt generator which was helpful during the 1938 hurricane. It is located on South Street adjacent to the Skungamaug River.

South Coventry Village

Coventry was incorporated in 1712 and for nearly a century was a town of large scattered farms. South Coventry's "center" was on Lake Street where the church/meeting house, a school, the cemetery, the town clerk, a grist mill and a few small houses were located.

The original church, located on High Street across from the Town Green burned in 1897.



Lake Street house from the mid 1700's.

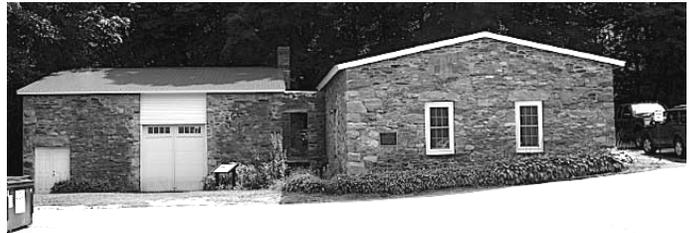
South Coventry Village, generally along Main Street and Depot Road, was created at the onset of the industrial revolution in the very early 1800's. The Mill Brook, running two and one-half miles from Lake Wangumbaug to the Willimantic River supported, over time, sixteen mill sites and many of the houses were built for mill owners and tenants for mill workers. The Village architecture ranges from early colonial through Victorian and includes Greek revival, Federal and Italianate.



Boynton Mill built in 1815

Four mill buildings remain including the 1815 Boynton Mill on Lake Street (produced wool carding machines, then Halladay's windmills, a grist

mill and an apple cider vinegar factory). The 1880's Tracy Mill on Main Street (produced recycled wool-shoddy), remnants of the Washington Mill ca 1880 on Bradbury Lane (building to the right of the chimney ca 1910, produced woolen cloth), and the Kenyon Mill on Armstrong Road (woolen cloth, and later various yarns).



Tracy Mill built about 1890



Kenyon Mill

The Village began substantial development around 1812 concurrent with the emergence of the mills along the Mill Brook. Virtually all the buildings now standing were built due to the demand for housing and services of the mills, and later due to the wealth created by those mills. The area of Main Street between Stonehouse Road and Snake Hill Road saw the first wave of development including Bradbury Lane, Woods Lane and School Street. Wall Street followed in the 1860's and Prospect Street in the 1890's.



#113 Lake St. built about 1772



#1129 Main St. built 1840- mill tenement



#1218 Main St. Hotel built 1822

Depot Road- Development began on Depot Road about 1830 with a large mill on the brook making woolen cloth. The dam and pond remain, but the mill burned in the 1880's. There was a revival of mill activity in the early 1900's, but that ended just after WWII. The train station was built in 1850 and train service was very helpful to all the local mills as

In March of 1910 the Rockville-Willimantic Lighting Company added street lights to Main Street in the Village, 25 of them, from Armstrong Road to the Lake. Several residences and the public library were already wired and new wiring was placed on Wall and Prospect Streets and other short streets.

The first automobile in town, a Stanley Steamer, was purchased by William Reeves, a foreman at the silk mill on Mason Street in October of 1903. The same month a Locomobile, produced in Bridgeport, was purchased by George Phillips, a druggist on the corner of Main and Mason Streets. John Champlin bought a Cadillac in June 1904. He lived on Main Street in the Village.

it brought in material and coal and shipped out manufactured goods. Passenger service was ongoing through the mid 1900's. All the buildings on Depot Road except the two at the corner of Main Street were built as a result of the mills (residences, tenement and a store).



#143 Depot Rd. ca 1844, mill owner



Depot Rd. Train Station built about 1850

The first patent granted to a Coventry resident was to John Boynton in 1811 for a wool carding machine which he produced at his mill on Lake Street.

The first water-powered mill was a grist mill erected in 1716 and located at the corner of Main Street and Monument Hill Road. It has been in continuous commercial operation since then- possibly a state record.

The first water company was formed in 1899. It was called the South Coventry Water Supply Company and served many locations in the village by an underground piping system, gravity-fed, from the Lake.

Jesse Root

Jesse Root, the son of Ebenezer and Sarah Strong of Northampton was born 28 December 1736 in Coventry and died there 29 March 1822. He attended college at Newark and Princeton from 1752 to 1756. The curriculum was designed to prepare students for the ministry. He then came home and began his study of theology with the Rev. Lockwood of Andover Society. In March of 1757 he was licensed to preach and, for a time, filled the pulpit at the First Society Church near the lake.

He married Mary Banks in Newark, New Jersey in 1758 and brought her to South Coventry. He gradually decided that law would be his career rather than the ministry. He received a masters degree from Yale College in 1766 and was admitted to the bar of Windham County (Tolland County was not organized until 20 years later) and practiced as the first and only lawyer in Coventry. Business was slow, but he supplemented his income by shop-keeping and inn-keeping at his home. He was elected as lieutenant of the local militia in 1763. In 1767 he moved his family to Hartford where

there were more opportunities for a young lawyer while keeping his farm and house in Coventry. His legal practice grew and he set up an office on Main Street in Hartford, one block north of the Court House, and became very well-known for his legal skills. Jesse was part of a group in Hartford that prepared a plan, and raised money, to take the British held Fort Ticonderoga on Lake Champlain. Geo. Washington wrote, from New York, to Jesse Root to raise money for nine regiments of militia which he did successfully.

He was commissioned a captain in the Continental Army and was ordered to raise a company of able-bodied men. He led that troop on foot through western Connecticut to the upper Hudson valley in January of 1777. Later at age 40, he was named Lieutenant Colonel. He remained with the Connecticut forces in New Jersey and Pennsylvania for a time, then returned to Hartford. In October he was named to serve under the Articles of Confederation at the Continental Congress in Philadelphia where he served until 1783. He stayed in Coventry practicing law and representing the town in the

General Assembly. He purchased land in Hartford in 1784. He was one of the founders of the Hartford County Bar Association and was appointed State's Attorney in 1785, and in 1789 was appointed to be one of four judges of the Connecticut Superior Court, where he became chief justice in 1796 and remained as such until he resigned in 1807. Jesse moved back to Coventry in 1790 which entailed frequent 20-mile trips to Hartford, but he wanted to be with his family.

During the War of 1812, the older men in Coventry, exempt from military service, organized a company under Colonel Jesse Root. He continued to serve his community until his death. He is buried in Nathan Hale Cemetery.



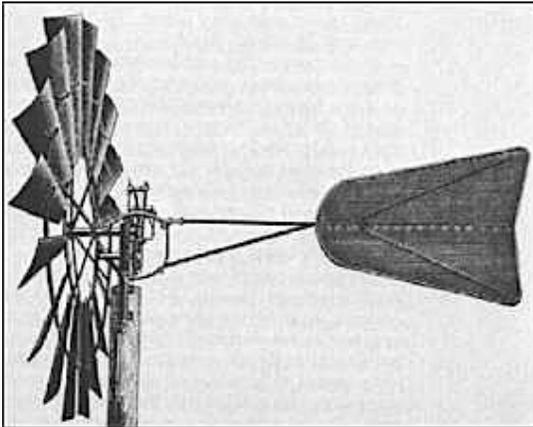
The Jesse Root house on Main Street, one of the oldest houses in Coventry.

Famous vaudevillian, country-western singer and WTIC radio personality, Hank Keene (aka Harry Newcombe) lived in Coventry on South Street from 1936 to the late 1950's. He developed Lakewood Heights.

The first article of clothing produced for commercial sale in Coventry was "brown shirting" made by the Coventry Manufacturing Company on Woods Lane in 1818 and sold by the Daniel Buck Company in Hartford.

Daniel Halladay

Daniel was born in Marlboro Vermont, November 24, 1826. He apprenticed himself at the age of nineteen as a machinist and continued as a journeyman for six years. During this time he was foreman in the American Machine Works at Springfield and the machine works of Seth Adams and Company in South Boston. He had charge of the construction of the caloric engine invented by John Ericsson. During the World's Fair in London in 1851, the caloric engine was part of the exhibit there in the Crystal Palace with Mr. Halladay supervising its erection and exhibition there.



Returning to the U.S., Halladay became a partner in a machine concern in Ellington Conn. for a short time and then he moved to South Coventry, Conn., where he engaged in the manufacture of machinery under the name of the Halladay Wind Mill Company, from 1855 to 1863. The greater part of the machines made were of his own design. He accomplished what “the world of mechanics have sought in vain for centuries.” He put in operation a windmill with “self-furling” sails. The initial mill supported a wheel of four paddle-shaped wooden blades. A rigid rear vane always kept the wheel facing the wind. In light winds, the main blades faced the wind at an angle to derive the greatest power. As the wind velocities increased, a centrifugal governor changed the pitch of the blades to control their speed, all automatically with no human assistance. In 1863 the company moved to Batavia, Illinois to be closer to its customers and the business grew rapidly. Mr. Halladay eventually retired and moved to California and sold the company for a handsome figure.

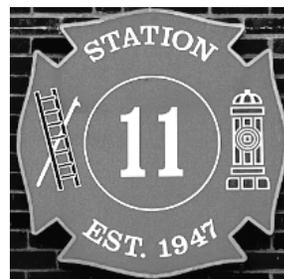
The first mass-produced metallic cartridge (ammunition) in the country was produced by Messrs. Crittendon and Tibbals at their factory on Lake Street during the Civil War.



Coventry's wind turbine

Volunteer Fire Departments

Founded as a private corporation in 1936, The Coventry Volunteer Fire Association was originally the only fire department in town. The original fire station was located at 1216 Main Street just across from the Bidwell Tavern. The first chief was Arthur Woodward. This was the home of the department for 64 years until May of 2000 when the new station located across the street from the Coventry Town Hall was officially dedicated. There is also a substation located on the corner of South and Judd road.



The North Coventry Fire Department, established in 1947, provides primary fire protection to the northern portion of Town and rescue services to the entire Town. The first chief was Arthur Vinton. The department has two stations. The main station, a new building (2012) that replaced the original built in 1950 is located at the corner of Main Street and Wrights Mill Road and a substation is located on Merrow Road at Laidlaw Park. The duties of the North Coventry Fire Department are not limited to fire suppression. They also include emergency medical services, HAZMAT operations, technical rescue, vehicle extrication, ice rescue and mutual aid to surrounding departments.

From the Town Manager

Coventry will celebrate its 300th anniversary in May 2012. The land was known to the Indians as “Wongumbaug” or crooked pond from the shape of the large body of water within the present town limits. It was set off in 1706 to be divided by deed holders from the legatees of Joshua, the third son of the Mohegan sachem, Uncas. The original town layout is a town-planning classic. The area was settled in 1709, named in 1711 from the city of Coventry in England, and incorporated the following year. The land was fairly barren with trees and brush burned off to promote grazing land.

We are proud of our history and our role in helping grow our nation with a long line of service to others and country. One such example is our native son, the martyred patriot Captain Nathan Hale (Yale College 1773), whose immortal last words on the British gallows were: “I only regret that I have but one live to lose for my country.” Jeremiah Ripley, Continental Commissary, had a military provisioning depot at his homestead on Ripley Hill during the Revolutionary War for pork, cider and gunpowder. The town was an important stop-over on the great Hartford-Boston turnpike road opened in 1798, and starting point of the Windham Turnpike to Norwich (1820).

The town’s population grew to about 2,100 residents in 336 families by 1790 and remained relatively constant until after WWII when suburban housing development exploded. Today’s residents number almost 13,000. The town was “divided” into three societies connected to the early congregational churches.

The First society, centered in the village was created in 1712, the Second, north society, on the Boston Turnpike was established in 1740, and the third, or Andover society started in 1747. The early people of Coventry were dairy and vegetable farmers, preachers, early scholars of Yale and Harvard, doctors, legislators, judges, mill workers, shopkeepers and patent holders. Here were the homes of Joseph Meacham, pastor; John Potwine, silversmith; Daniel Burnap, clockmaker; Joseph Badger, miniaturist-portraitist; Jesse Root, jurist; Lorenzo Dow, revivalist preacher; John Turner, glass merchant, John Boynton, manufacturer and philanthropist; Henry Mason, cartridge maker and Henry Farnum Dimock, lawyer and gentleman farmer.

Early leaders included Jesse Root (1736-1822), who was a delegate to the Continental Congress, 1778-1783, chief justice of Connecticut, 1796-1807, a member of the Hartford County Bar and who, in 1818, opened the Constitutional Convention. In the 1880s, the South Coventry Library Association was formed by a \$500 matching gift to the town for a library. An old, small building was purchased in 1894 and served the town until the Booth and Dimock Memorial Library was dedicated in 1913. Franklin Delano Roosevelt was the attorney for the transaction. The Library was enlarged in 1989.

From the beginning of the industrial revolution until the 1930’s Coventry’s waterways supported one of the highest concentrations of mills in New England. Thirty-six mill sites have been identified with the majority located on the Mill Brook

which flows two and one-half miles from Lake Wangumbaug to the Willimantic River. Sixteen mill sites were located here and, over time, they produced 58 varieties of products mostly cotton, wool, silk thread and fabrics paper, woolen hats, cartridges, wagons, paper boxes, etc. Surrounding the brook is South Coventry Village, an authentic 19th-century village with the majority of the present buildings built before 1900.

Coventry Village was the hub of activity from 1810 to the 1940’s. The mills there employed up to 400 people at their peak just after the Civil War. Industry and commerce were augmented by the New London, Willimantic and Palmer Railroad which was completed in 1850 and included a station on today’s Depot Road. Several businessmen/inventors provided the spark for industry in town.

John Boynton patented a textile carding machine in 1811 and built a mill on Lake Street to build those machines. Daniel Halladay produced the first self-governing windmill in Coventry in the 1850’s. Addison Kingsbury invented several machines for making paper boxes and operated a mill on Mason Street from 1868 through the Great Depression. James Morgan built a silk factory on Mason Street and employed many women who made thread and silk fringe. The wealth created by the mills contributed to the varied architecture of the village with many homes, originally constructed by mill owners and very stylish, remaining today. Mulberry trees were grown to feed silkworms.

Coventry Lake, aka Lake Wangumbaug is a natural, spring-fed body of water covering about 400 acres. It was a hunting and fishing resource in pre-Colonial times, and, as the town was settled, became the site of several early farms. It was a powerful water source for the industrial period in the 19th century. And finally, in the early 1900s, its beauty and recreational powers drew vacationers, cottage residents and even an Actor's Colony of mostly vaudevillians who summered and retired there. It has been a recreational venue ever since.

Celebrations would be held at Lakeside Park (now Lakeview Restaurant area), with rides, boat trips and dances at the pavilion. A trolley to the lake from Willimantic was constructed in 1906 and provided transportation to Willimantic and Norwich for visitors and residents alike for nearly two decades. A casino was built on the site and, in the 1930s and '40s, large crowds would enjoy the big band tunes of Sammy Kaye and Jimmy Dorsey.

Vaudevillians Bill and Mabel Loeser bought land, in the 1920's, on which they sold lots and built rental cottages. As the word spread, more and more entertainers came to Coventry Lake such as George Hinkle, James Fitzgerald and Hank Keene from the big cities to vacation and settle and develop lots on the southeast shore. A trio of showmen staged a Gay Nineties act as an annual fundraiser to develop the roads in the area.

At the time the first school was built, in 1728, two military companies were formed. They trained across from the home of Jeremiah Ripley, a continental commissary who kept a military provisioning depot on Ripley Hill,

and also at the training ground near the lake.

More than 116 men rallied in Coventry to answer the Lexington Alarm. Local graves show the sacrifices made in the French and Indian War, War of 1812, and those afterward. In his return march from Yorktown in 1782, Count de Rochambeau recorded that he spent the night at Kimball's Tavern in Coventry. Washington recorded a similar entry when he "breakfasted at one Brigham's in Coventry," a site that later served the Underground Railroad.

Coventry businesses often supported the war effort. Deacon Richard Hale, the father of the young war hero, banned his family from using wool from their farm, saving it to make into blankets and clothing for the Revolutionary troops.

A munitions shop run by Crittendon & Tibbals produced millions of percussion caps for the Civil War and were one of the first in the country to produce metallic cartridge ammunition. The Burkamp Mill made parachute cords for the soldiers until it burned down in 1942.

Stories of slavery crop up in town history. In the Jesse Root Homestead, on Route 31 near Ripley Hill Road, slave quarters are located in the basement and, according to legend, one of the slaves is buried beneath the floor. Jesse Root, a town leader and state court justice, reported owning three slaves in the 1790 census. Some rough woolen goods from the mills were believed to have clothed slaves.

Coventry is a place that honors its war dead, with monuments to those who fought in World War II, Korea and Vietnam,

and to French soldiers who fought under Rochambeau, died of smallpox and are buried in Coventry.

In 2008, a statewide memorial was dedicated on Veterans Memorial Green, the original training ground, to the 612 Vietnam War dead from the state. The dedication culminated the efforts of one Coventry woman, Jean Risley, who was inspired by local schoolchildren and their project to compile stories of the veterans into a book. Risley's brother was one of the 612.

The decade of the 1960's was significant for the town. Officials and prominent residents succeeded in building the high school in 1961 which meant students did not have to travel to Willimantic or Manchester. The present Town Hall building was dedicated in 1964. Coventry has had a Council/Manager form of government since 1967 when the selectmen of both parties decided a professional manager was needed to handle upcoming development pressures. Allen's Market on Route 44 and Coventry Corners on Main Street were built in 1961 which significantly increased retail space in town.

Since its industrial heyday, commercial growth in Coventry has been slow. Many citizens hold fast to its rural and historic bearing, a mission incorporated in town planning documents. A turning point in town development may have been the early 1970s, when DevCo, the Greater Hartford Community Development Corp. formulated a plan to build 6,000 housing units to serve a town of 20,000 within the existing town. Devco began buying rights to develop farmland north of Route 44. The public organized protests, slogans ("Keep

the Cows in Coventry”), songs and fundraisers. A 1974 newspaper poll showed 92 percent of Coventry citizens were opposed to the idea. Financial supporters from Chase Bank withdrew their money and the project fell through.

Entrepreneurial successes echo the rural mission. The Coventry Farmers Market, held Sundays on the grounds of the Nathan Hale Homestead, is considered one of the biggest in the state, based on crowd sizes and the number of local vendors. A Coventry dairy farmer and a consortium of others in eastern Connecticut made headlines in 2005 when they marketed their milk, available in grocery stores

under the label “The Farmer’s Cow.”

Adelma Grenier Simmons (1903-1996) developed herbal gardening into a popular hobby, showcasing her Caprilands farm on Silver Street. By the 1950s, hundreds attended her lectures, read her books and dined at her farmhouse restaurant, where meals included unique herbal tastings and edible flowers. The Coventry Historical Society, formed in 1952, owns several properties with the Strong-Porter House being their research center, and they hold several community events each year.

Two volunteer fire departments serve the town as

does a police department, distinctive for its full-time local staff, a departure from most rural towns that are protected by state troopers or local constables. Coventry High School, Capt. Nathan Hale Middle School, George H. Robertson Intermediate School and Coventry Grammar School serve the students.

As we celebrate 300 years, we reflect and are grateful to those who preceded us. As we look to the future we know that Coventry will be a good place to live and to raise the next generation of children that will become part of our wonderful community.

John Elsesser
Town Manager

Businesses

The longest continuously operating commercial site in Coventry is located on the corner of Monument Hill Road and Main Street. It started as a grist mill in March of 1716. The grist mill continued operation until the mid 1800’s and shared space with a cotton batting and shoddy mill for a time. In 1880 the site was purchased by Thomas Wood who made silk fish line there until 1961 when it was sold to the Sutures Company who made medical sutures on the same machines used to make silk fish line. The site has been owned by several medical companies, the latest is Teleflex who make plastic sutures and for part of their processing, use the same machines that Thomas Wood installed in the shop in the 1890’s.

The longest continuously operating retail site is the Coventry Arts & Antiques on Main Street adjacent to the library. The store was built adjacent to an existing house in 1845 by Walter Loomis. Mr. Loomis owned the store until the 1860’s. It changed hands several times until 1901 when it was purchased by William Wellwood. The site is now generally referred to as the “Wellwood” store. The Wellwoods operated the store until 1963

and it has had several owners since then. It was originally a “general” store, becoming a grocery store in the 1900’s, an antique shop in the 1970’s and 1980’s and a country store since then.

The Bidwell Tavern on Main Street was originally part of the adjacent Bidwell Hotel from the early 1800’s. The current tavern was established in 1964 when the town sold the building, previously used as town hall and its widely known for its food and historic nature.

The longest existing retail/service business in the Welles Real Estate Agency on Main Street. The Business was started by Ruth Welles as an Insurance/real estate agency in 1932.

The currently existing commercial business with the longest continuous operation is the National Ribbon Company on Main Street in the Village. They make “Lady Fair” wrist corsage bracelets and are one of the few companies still doing so. The company was moved here from Long Island in the 1960’s

Early Articles in the *Connecticut Courant*: 1764-1769

Classified Ad 1 -- No Title

The Connecticut Courant (1764-1774); Dec 3, 1764;
ProQuest Historical Newspapers Hartford Courant (1764
pg. 3

FOUND, about three Weeks since, near Doct. Timothy Kimball's, in Coventry, a small Bundle, containing two Notes of Hand, dated Woodbury, December 23d, 1762, both in Favour of Joseph Lamb, and some other Papers of little or no Value. Enquire of the Printer hereof.

The first college graduate in Coventry was Reverend Joseph Meacham, first minister in Coventry in 1712. He graduated at Harvard in 1683.

(Dr. Kimball lived on Boston Turnpike across from the now Peracchio farm)

Article 3 -- No Title

The Connecticut Courant (1764-1774); Dec 24, 1764;
ProQuest Historical Newspapers Hartford Courant (1764 - 1922)
pg. 3

HARTFORD, December 24.
We hear from Coventry, that last Monday, Mr. Samuel Kendrick, (Son of Mr. Nathaniel Kendrick) a very promising Youth, about Seventeen, fell through the Ice, as he was Scating on a Pond, and was drowned; his Brother, had like to have shared the same Fate, in endeavouring to save him.

227 men volunteered from Coventry to serve in the Revolutionary War: fourteen gave their lives in that service.

Front Page 4 -- No Title

The Connecticut Courant (1764-1774); Dec 1, 1766;
ProQuest Historical Newspapers Hartford Courant (1764 - 1922)
pg. 1

COVENTRY. (First Society) Nov. 18.
Last Sunday, was dedicated in this Place, an elegant Meeting-House. A Discourse was delivered upon the Occasion, by the Rev. Mr. HUNTINGTON, from GEN. xxviii. 17. The whole attended with all becoming Tokens of joyful Solemnity.

Ethan Allen's father, Joseph, bought his first house in Coventry, then moved (ca 1736) to Litchfield where Ethan was born.

Article 6 -- No Title

The Connecticut Courant (1764-1774); Jul 17, 1769;
ProQuest Historical Newspapers Hartford Courant (1764 - 1922)
pg. 3

HARTFORD, July 17
Last Monday night the large & well accomplished Iron-Works in Coventry formerly belonging to Mr. Habakuk Turner, was intirely consumed by fire.—

(Mr. Turner's works was located behind the old firehouse on Main Street in the village)

Coventry Historical Society

The Coventry Historical Society, formed in October of 1952, is a non-profit group dedicated to discovering, collecting and preserving whatever pertains to the history of the Town of Coventry and promoting historical research in all its aspects and making available to the members of the Society and to the public, the results of this research. The Society provides local schools with materials and resources to tell children the story of Coventry's rich history and its place in the history of our great nation. General membership meetings of the Coventry Historical Society are held in conjunction with special events several times a year. Go to www.ctcoventryhistoricalsociety.org for specific information. The Society's newsletter, The Signpost, is sent to members as well as other local historical societies and interested organizations.



STRONG-PORTER MUSEUM Strong-Porter Museum (2382 South Street) - circa 1730, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and serves as the Historical Society's Museum. Several rooms of the house, as well as

several outbuildings, including a carpenter shop, carriage sheds, and barn are open to the public. Of special interest is the 19th century privy, recently returned to its original location and accurately restored. The Great Barn Foundation, located at the back of the property was uncovered in 2002. The barn originally stood two-stories high, with livestock housed on the upper, ground level floor that was accessed by ramps at either end of the barn, and equipment and other farming implements being housed on the lower level.



BRICK SCHOOL MUSEUM Brick Schoolhouse - built 1823-25, is located on Merrow Road. This school is the center of study and research on what school was like in the early 20th century up through present day schools. The Society's Education Director, Ginney Dilk, has been working diligently to collect oral histories from people who attended school in the one-room schoolhouses in Coventry, and they will be available for public viewing.

**Home of
Nathan Hale
Ancient
Fifes & Drums**
Practice Sundays 6:30-8:30
860-742-4257

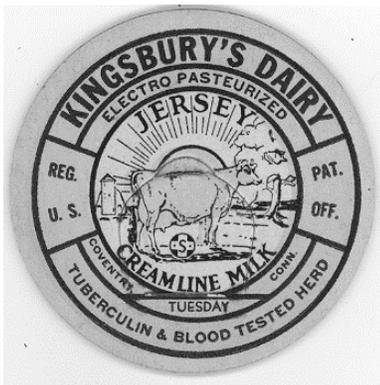
MUSEUM
**STRONG-PORTER
HOUSE**
c. 1730
COVENTRY HISTORICAL
SOCIETY, INC.

**NATHAN
HALE
HOMESTEAD**

Connecticut Landmarks
History Moving Forward
2299 South Street

Farming

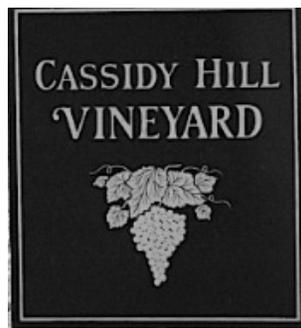
There are about 3,300 acres of land in Coventry classified as farm land. About 40% of that is wooded and most of the rest is actively farmed. There are also many small “farms” on residential property where residents raise chickens, alpacas, goats, llamas and others. Coventry zoning regulations have specific areas designated as “Commercial Agriculture” and allow limited farming and raising of animals on residential land. In 2011 the Coventry Agriculture Committee was formed with the expressed goal of establishing a “right to farm” ordinance and to provide education and assistance to those currently engaged in all types of farming and also those wishing to start a farm.



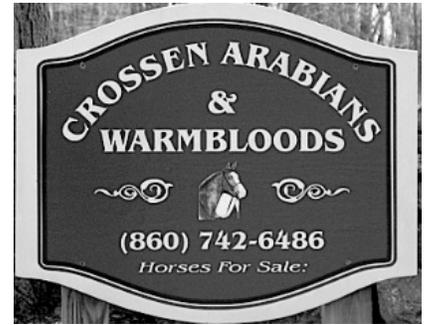
Early residents first settled on what grasslands they found for their cattle and began chopping down trees (for timber and cooking and heating) and removing rocks to plant crops. Oxen were the prevalent work animals. Much of the land in Coventry had been burned frequently by the Indians to provide clear paths for their arrows and to keep down the flies. It was said that when the settlers arrived, an ox cart could be driven over most of the land in Coventry with only saplings to drive through. Residents allocated their property for the following purposes: a small portion for the

homestead and barn and vegetable garden, pasture for grazing livestock, grain fields and a wood lot.

Indian corn was the preferred first crop as the field required no plowing, hoeing or manure. Ashes from cleared land provided some fertilization. One man could plant one acre per day. Within each hill of corn was often planted squash or bean seeds. Squash grew among the corn and beans climbed the stalks. After the first few years, wheat or oats, vegetables, herbs, leeks, melon, gourds, radishes, cabbage, peas and asparagus could be planted. Rye was used to make beer and oats were used for animal feed. Swine and cattle dominated the livestock; little horse breeding was done locally. No fowl were raised as wild turkey, duck and chickens were plentiful. Sheep were not practical at first due to the prevalence of wolves.



Until the late 1700's, folks were generally subsistence farmers, consuming pea or bean porridge or broth from boiled salt meat mixed with meal and sometimes hasty pudding (flour or oatmeal in seasoned or sweetened water or milk and quickly cooked) and milk. The common bread was made from Indian cornmeal or rye flour. Early farmer's tools included the plow, hoe, pitchfork, shovel and cart made of wood though sometimes a blacksmith would plate them with strips of sheet iron.



Early deeds and historical records mention several orchards in the North Society. Ebenezer Stiles and Gad Hunt owned farms of at least 100 acres on Broadway just west of the Skungamaug, which held thriving apple orchards in 1740's and for some time later. Nathaniel Root's (Boston Turnpike and North River Road) property contained an orchard in 1809. There were hundreds of acres of apple orchards in town in the 1700's and 1800's. Most all were cultivated by local farmers using seeds from Massachusetts and Rhode Island farms whose seeds originated in England in the 1600's. Apple cider provided the most prevalent source of liquid refreshment for more than 100 years.



During the Revolutionary War, Coventry farms provided food and blankets to soldiers and provisioned the army with large amounts of hogs and cider. Jeremiah Ripley (Ripley Hill Road) was a provisioning agent for the army. Cider was not the sweet cider of nowadays, but a fermented alcoholic beverage.

By the 1780's the soil was nearly exhausted, as crop rotation and fertilization were not used extensively. Farmers began migrating to upper New England and then to the midwest where land was inexpensive and more fertile. The remaining farmers began to concentrate more on a livestock based (meat and dairy) enterprise rather than crop based, and learned to employ crop rotation and the use of fertilizers.



Thomas Porter's (South Street) account book from 1787-1812 provides a glimpse of the activity on a typical large farm. Wood, vinegar, turnips, potatoes, pork, veal, cheese, butter, tallow, apples, quinces, corn, oats, hay, rye, beans, and a variety of cloth including shirting, white linen, and silk are indicated in the account book. Often rented were oxen and horses; labors included dressing flax and cradling rye. Thomas bought rum, tea, and earthenware. Hired by Thomas, possibly for textile production, were two women, who apparently labored in exchange for cash, snuff, shoes, rum, and other items.

Silk making flourished in the area in the early 1800's and between 1800 and 1834 there were a number of "silk orchards" - mulberry trees - which were a good environment for silkworms. Two notable orchards were Dimmick's between Main and High Streets and Bacon's near Springdale Avenue.

Up to 1870 about 40% of the land in the area was cleared for farming. By 1860 that percentage reached 70% as a peak and has fallen continuously since then.

The 1850 Federal Census of Agriculture indicates Coventry held: 214 farms containing 15,636 acres of improved land and 5,196 acres of unimproved land totaling nearly 90% of all the land in town. The largest farms were Fred Manning- 200 acres (Cross Street), John Woodward- 220 acres (Merrow Road and Goose Lane) and Eleazer Pomeroy- 190 acres (Boston Turnpike). Over 24,000 bushels of corn oats and rye were produced that year. The farms held 224 horses, 600 milk cows, 404 oxen, 909 other cattle, 2,440 sheep and 495 swine. Farm products included Irish potatoes, Indian corn, rye, oats, buckwheat, clover, and honey.



Nathan Potter owned a farm in southern Coventry in 1893 near the Willmantic River. It contained 140 acres of which 60 were tillable. His herd of Jersey cows numbered thirty, of which twenty-two were giving milk. Thirty pounds of butter were churned each day using an endless chain run by a 150-pound St. Bernard dog. 250 quarts of sweet creamery milk were also produced daily. The butter was sold for thirty cents a pound and the milk for 2-1/2 cents a quart. The products are well packaged and always contain a little more than the advertised weight. The daily revenue of \$15 provided a relatively prosperous living.

Towards the end of the century, while many farmers were striving for efficiency to compete with farms in the middle of the country, a new type of farmstead appeared in Connecticut: the gentleman's farm. While fancy barns had been a hallmark of economic success since early in the history of the state, these barns were something new. Men who had made fortunes in areas unrelated to farming began to acquire farms as symbols of their wealth. The barns on these properties were part of giant complexes that combined the luxury of a weekend retreat with the grit of a working farm. Of course, the grit was kept out of sight and the farms were as likely to produce prize animals as saleable crops. Some examples of these "gentlemen farms" include the Babcock/Prince place on South Street (later the Coventry Day School), the Hale homestead owned by the Petersens of New York City, and several farms in the South/Cross Street area owned by Henry Dimock, born in Coventry, but now a prominent New York City lawyer.



Surveys in 1930 reveal that Coventry held 210 farms with ~16,200 acres dedicated to farming or woodlots. Dairy farming was still substantial, but chicken breeding had become popular too. Relative to 1850, the number of farms was about the same, but the acreage used had dropped about 20%, and livestock was more prevalent now than crops. Chicken farms appeared in Coventry in the 1930's and

continued through the 1950's. Some of the owners included; Miller, Haven, Lipsky, Sepowitz, Popples, and Zimmerman. Most were breeders. It is estimated that there were over a million chickens in Tolland County in the 1930's. A chicken by-products plant operated on Hop River Road for a short time in the '50's but was closed due to health concerns.



The Edmondsons came to Coventry in 1932. The McKinneys taught them to raise chickens, cows, and to start a garden. The

Melody Farm on South Street has been in the Welles and Brainard family since 1916. For over 40 years in the mid-1900's it was a full service dairy farm.

Hytone Farm's history began in Coventry in 1944 when Giovanni Peracchio purchased the land to grow fruits and vegetables with his son, Tony. A few cows were raised to milk during the winter months, so year-round income could be ensured. In 1960, when Giovanni retired, Tony purchased the farm and shifted the farm to dairy cows, as demand for New England vegetables changed. Tony's two sons, Bill and Tom, grew up doing chores and learning how to operate the family farm. As the herd of Holsteins grew, more land was acquired to

grow crops to feed the animals.

Now the farm at the top of the hill in Coventry has the fourth generation of Peracchios working the land. Bill, Tom, and now Bill's son, Greg, work together to produce quality milk on the family farm. They raise all their own Holstein cows for the farm and currently have 165 young stock. Crops grown for the animals consist of 220 areas of corn for silage and 130 acres of grass for silage. Hytone Farm has received many Distinguished Farming awards through the years. They recently formed a consortium and produce the "Farmer's Cow" brand of fresh, local, hormone free milk.

Sharing a Few Memories of Growing Up in Coventry

By Elizabeth (Betty) Pollansky Gonci

I was born in Bridgeport, Connecticut on May 11, 1917. I can't believe it...at this age, being asked to write about how it was growing up in Coventry. I am the oldest of nine children born to Michael and Julianne Varga Pollansky. Both parents were born in Hungary, coming to the United States in the early 1900's. Around 1918 they purchased a farm on Cassidy Hill Road in Coventry. The farmhouse was very old, built around 1750. The homestead had a barn, an ice house, a blacksmith shop next to the house, a smoke house for preserving meat and an out-house (toilet) hidden in the back of the blacksmith shop. Father bought large quantities of flour, sugar, coffee beans (ground with a coffee grinder), salt and pepper. Such items were bought in bulk because the country store was miles away. To get to the store, one had to walk or use a horse and wagon. Going to the store took most of the day and along the way, there were few houses and you did not typically see anyone along the way. A Mr. Clough owned the country store in the center of Tolland.

The old house was cold with no insulation. The cellar had a dirt floor with bins for potatoes and apples. The cellar had shelves to hold jars of canned vegetables and jellies. There was a box of sand to hold carrots and parsnips for winter keeping. The farm had a large apple orchard but included pears

and even a plum tree. Currant bushes were located along the walk way as a hedge. My parents kept a large garden. We had cows for milk, butter, and cottage cheese. We had a butter churn to make the butter. The farm had chickens for eggs and these were regularly harvested for meals. Mother always made a pot of chicken soup or roasted a chicken when company was expected. The farm also had pigs. One or two pigs were butchered for use during the winter. Naturally, we used all the parts of the pig in some way. Mother made sausage and bacon and prepared her own lard. Some of the meat was seasoned in the smoke house. I helped to can most of the garden vegetables. Typically, we canned hundreds of jars. We canned pickles, relishes, tomatoes, juices, stewed tomatoes, string beans, and applesauce. We would slice some apples and air dry these for treats in the winter.

Mother would bake all our breads. Typically eight loaves would just fill the oven. Sometimes she would make one or two loaves with raisins and cinnamon. When this happened, we would be close by the stove waiting for the baking to end. Mother is remembered for so many preparations of food. Her pie crusts were ever so flakey, using the lard. When she made pies, she typically made half a dozen. Certainly if she made only one pie, within a couple of minutes there would be only crumbs left.

With the large garden, we had beautiful big watermelons for treats during haying time. We had large hubbard squash that mother would bake for us when we came home from school. These large squashes had such hard shells that mother would need an axe to get to the contents. The garden had all types of vegetables. For extra income, dad planted a large field of cucumbers for sale to the Silverlane Pickling Company in East Hartford. The pickles were sorted by size and large bags (hundreds of pounds) of these pickles were sold. The main source of income was milk. Large cans of milk were sold. Each month, we received a check for the milk. My parents waited for these checks just as people wait for their social security checks today. In those days, there was no social security program.

I remember a peddler who regularly came from Willimantic. His name was Sheehan Haddad. He had a van-type vehicle and sold various types of clothing including cover-alls, footwear, underwear, and other items. I hated to launder the dungarees (now called jeans) because they were so stiff and strong. Mr. Haddad knew there was not much money for purchasing so, in return, he would receive vegetables from the farm. I also remember that Viking Bakery came with breads. Mother would buy a large, round loaf of rye bread that was still warm. This loaf was so large that she had to secure it under her arm to slice it. The bread tasted so good eaten with the homemade butter.

Flour and sugar came in white sacks. Mother would boil the emptied sacks to remove the labeling. She had a foot-operated Singer sewing machine. On stormy days, she made sheets, pillow cases, diapers, dish towels and bloomers for us girls with the sack material. She also did a lot of mending, often putting patches on top of patches, especially on the knees of the coveralls to extend their life. In addition, for a while, grain for the chickens came in bags with floral patterns. Mother made kitchen curtains, covers for the featherbeds, aprons, and other items from these grain bags. Aprons were very useful garments. Mother wore an apron all the time.

There were two bachelors (brothers) that lived in a shack up the road. Their names were George and Harris Andrews. George would drop by once in a while to visit. Father realized that he was a good woodsman. Father asked him to cut the wood for us; sometimes he did cut wood for a meal or a few dollars. We consumed a lot of wood because it

was our source of heat for the home and for cooking. When the children were quite young, without such help, father would have to cut this wood with mother working by his side. All this cutting was done manually. Our home had no electricity, therefore there was no radio. Also, there was no newspaper. We really did not see people very often. When strangers came to the house, we would hide under the bed.

It was one of my jobs to see that the lamp globes were washed and filled with oil. Laundry was done on a scrub board and of course the water was heated on the wood stove.

I remember walking to the little brick school with other children joining along the way. I did not start school until I was eight years of age because I wanted some company walking to school. I waited until my younger brother John turned six then we started school together. There was no kindergarten at any school. The distance was at least three miles and the road bed was dirt. It was often muddy and typically slippery in the winter. Mabel Walbridge was my first grade teacher. The family spoke Hungarian at home and I went to school not knowing any English. Ms. Walbridge taught me English sitting on the front stone steps of the school. My younger siblings had it a little easier as they learned basic English from me and my brother John. I remember Mr. Skelton who lived behind the school. He would start the fire in the stove at the school. There was a woodshed in the back of the school. On each side of the woodshed were the toilets, one for the boys and one for the girls. During the winter, some of the parents made a path to follow through the snow. There was no town snow plow. Sometimes we did not know where the road was when the snow was very deep. During and after those snow storms, there was no one else on the road except us kids going to and from school. All nine of us kids attended the little brick school from first to sixth grades. After going to this school, I remember walking to route 44 to get the bus to the Red School on route 44 for the 7th and 8th grades. If we missed the bus, we would have to walk home. We would bring vegetables and made a pot of vegetable soup in the winter for lunch. This was eaten with our homemade bread and jelly sandwich. We had our own metal cups and spoons. Someone would bring water from the outside well which had a hand-pump.

The Coventry Glass Company was formed in 1813 on the corner of Route 44 and North River Road. The War of 1812 created a market for glass formerly served by English manufacturers. Their products included medicine bottles, inkstands and commemorative flasks. The very first American portrait flask was produced here in 1824 to commemorate Lafayette's visit to the U.S. The company left town in 1845.

Coventry Regional Farmers Market

Since 2004, the Coventry Regional Farmers' Market's mission has been to provide a profitable market for growers of agricultural products and local food producers who sell those products directly to the consumer, and to build community support and awareness of the value of Connecticut agriculture. The Market is held June through October, Sunday from 11 am to 2 pm on the grounds of the Nathan Hale Homestead at 2299 South Street in Coventry, Connecticut. 2012 marks the eighth season, the fifth year at the Hale Homestead. The market draws 75,000 visitors annually and generates sales exceeding \$350,000 and is considered a "destination market" drawing nearly 50% of its patrons from beyond the local area. The market is run by a volunteer committee that operates under a registered 501(c)3 organization.



Each market is a themed celebration of some aspect of Connecticut agriculture such as the Beet-nic Bash, Seaside Social, and Fiber Twist. In its eight years of operation, the Coventry Regional Farmers' Market has grown to become one of New England's most acclaimed farmers' markets.

"Best of the Best" Connecticut Farmers' Market, May 2011, *Boston Magazine*.
"Best Farmers' Market in Connecticut" July-August 2011, *Yankee Magazine*.

The first postmaster in town was Silas Hibbard in 1802 and the office was located west of the Second Church. In 1820, Jeremiah Parrish of Cooper Lane was appointed the first postmaster of South Coventry.

"Connecticut's Favorite Farmers' Market" *American Farmland Trust*, August 2011.

"After traveling to over 50 markets while writing my book, *Markets of New England*, I can honestly say that the Coventry Regional Farmers' Market is easily one of the top five events in the region." - Christine Chitnis.

The income derived by participating farmers, food producers who purchase locally-grown ingredients, and handcraft artisans is extremely critical to their small, independent businesses.

The Coventry Regional Farmers Market has become one of CT's largest direct retail agricultural marketplaces. Over 50 "regular" vendors participate each Sunday, June through October, and about 175 guest vendors join the market one or more times throughout the season. In 20 market days last year, the CRFM did over half a million dollars of sales and was visited by over 75,000 people. Vendors report that sales at the Coventry Regional Farmers' Market range from 25% to 90% of their total farm income. Cato Corner Farm reports sales at the Coventry Regional



Farmers' Market in three hours has on several occasions this year exceeded ten hours of sales at New York City's Union Square Green Market, with Coventry also saving them 4 hours of drive time and about \$50 on the daily vendor fee. Additional benefits for vendors include the opportunity to generate wholesale accounts, sell CSA shares, promote on-farm sales, enjoy strong marketing efforts and frequent media attention, and spark new customer relationships. Specialty food producers at the Market are encouraged to source locally-grown ingredients and many purchase directly from farmers on market days, further increasing sales for farmers.

**SCHEDULE OF EVENTS (For updated information, see the town website
www.coventryct.org)**

MARCH 2012

Saturday, March 10th GIRL SCOUTS will hold an open house, with activities, at the high school cafeteria 1-4 PM, public is welcome.

Saturday, March 31st AMAZING RACE. See who knows the most about Coventry. Teams gather at Strong-Porter Museum, 2382 South St. at 1 PM.

MAY 2012

Sunday, May 6th FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH COLONIAL SERVICE. 10:30 AM All are invited.

Saturday May 18th 1-6PM, 19th & 20th 10AM-6PM FIBER ARTS FESTIVAL at the Hale Homestead, Sheep-to-Shawl competition.

Saturday & Sunday May 19th or 20th 300 YEARS of COVENTRY QUILTS. Outdoor display of 50-75 quilts. \$5 donation, Noon to 4 PM, Strong-Porter Museum 2382 South St. Sponsored by the Coventry Historical Society and the Tercentenary Committee.

Sunday, May 20th Antique Glass and Bottle Show at the Glass Museum, Route 44.

Monday, May 28th MEMORIAL DAY PARADE at 10 AM

JUNE 2012

Date to be determined, Dedication of the NATHAN HALE STATUE on the Town Green, Lake Street.

Thursday, June 14th, FLAG DAY, the Knights of Columbus will display and have information on all 27 versions of the US Flag from 3-8 PM at the Knights of Columbus Hall, 138 Snake Hill Road.

Sunday, June 17th SUNDAE ON A SUNDAY from 1-4 PM. Visit the Brick School (1019 Mellow Rd) for a delicious sundae. \$1.50/sundae, Dad's sundae is free. Sponsored by the Coventry Historical Society.

Saturday, June 30th CoventryFest at Patriots Park sponsored by the Knights of Columbus. Starts at 3 PM. Rain date July 1, 2012.

JULY 2012

Saturday & Sunday, July 28 & 29th HALE AT THE HOMESTEAD 11Am to 4PM. Saturday: encampment of Revolutionary War soldiers, artisans and camp followers. Sunday: musical muster and parade at noon. Sponsored by the Nathan Hale Ancient Fife & Drums and the Nathan Hale Homestead.

AUGUST 2012

Saturday August 5th REMINISCE DAY at the Brick School 1-4PM. Visit with one-room school alumni.

Friday August 24th 7-11PM ROARING '20s Dance, Patriots Park Lodge, Live band & refreshments. Donation. Sponsored by the Coventry Senior Center.

SEPTEMBER 2012

Saturday, Sept. 8th Jubilee Day of Play! Join Parks & Recreation as we celebrate Coventry's 300th Anniversary with a day of celebrations! Celebrations will all be held at Patriots Park. The Coventry Boy Scouts will also be on hand with their Pinewood Derby track! 9AM – 8PM.

Saturday, Sept. 22nd GALA BALL at Georgina's, 275 Boston Tnpke, Bolton. (Black tie optional) Social hour 6-7 PM (cash bar), Dinner 7:00PM followed by music and dancing. Advance tickets required: \$45/person. Contact Joyce Bonney at 860-742-0332 or jcbonney@sbcglobal.net. Sponsored by the Anniversary Committee.

Saturday, Sept. 29th SCARECROW CONTEST setup on the Green by First Niagara Bank, corner of Rts 31 & 44. Time: TBD. Sponsored by the Coventry Recreation Dept.

Saturday, Sept. 29th 300th ANNIVERSARY PARADE. 10 AM. GHS School to Bradbury Lane. Rain Date Sept. 30, 2PM. Sponsored by the Coventry 300th Anniversary Parade Committee.

Sept. 30th Deadline for Coventry PHOTO CONTEST Entries; see website for information.

OCTOBER 2012

Sunday, Oct 7th, HALLOWEEN PARTY AT BRICK SCHOOL (Mellow Road) for children 8 and under. Games, stories, crafts, food. Costumes optional. Reservations preferred 860-742-9656, \$2/child. Sponsored by the Coventry Historical Society.

Saturday, Oct 6th, TEA & FASHION SHOW at Patriots Park Lodge. 11AM. Tea & pastries served w/fashion show to follow. Price: \$20. To purchase tickets contact: Bev Rice at (860) 742-5508 or email gotwobrrice@att.net or Joyce Bonney at 860-742-0332 or jcbonney@sbcglobal.net. Sponsored by the 300th Anniversary Committee.

Saturday, Oct 13th SCARECROW CONTEST winner announced, Time: TBD.

Wednesday, Oct 31st Memorabilia due for the time capsule burial. Capt. Nathan Hale School students. Capsule to be opened 2037.

NOVEMBER 2012

Saturday, Nov 30 Adult Photo Contest results at Cassidy Hill Winery, Time: TBD.

DECEMBER 2012

Sunday, Dec 2nd Christmas in the Village. Kids Photo Contest results announced 1PM.

Tercentenary Committee Members:

300th Anniversary

Committee:
Andrea Ader
Joyce Bonney
Ginney Dilk
Bill Jobbagy
Beverly Rice

Parade Committee:

Tim Ackert
Lori Goodin
Carla Kennedy
Joan Lewis
Mark Palmer
Wendy Rubin
Carl Schaefer
Laura Stone

More Interesting Town Facts

- Austin Dunham, born in Coventry in 1834, was the first president of the Hartford Electric Light Company in 1882.
- Eighteen roads on the southwest side of the lake, in Actors Colony, were named for famous actors (i.e. Gable, Lombard, etc.).
- In 1790 (first Federal Census) the population of Coventry was 336 families, 2,104 total residents.
- On the various waterways of Coventry there remain seven original man-made dams for water powered mills that still exist today and still retain their original ponds. The largest is over 100 feet long and 14 feet high. There are also 14 others dams that have been breached but significant evidence remains in view today.
- The first church (Congregational) was founded in 1712 and the "meeting house" was built soon after on High Street across from the Town Green. The building burned in 1897. The Second Congregational Church was first built in 1744, about four years after the Second Society was formed.
- The first dam built on the Willimantic River in the town of Willimantic was erected for a saw mill in 1727 by Daniel Badger, a resident of Coventry.
- The first electric elevator in town was installed in the Kenyon Mill ca 1901.
- The first ice cream "factory" in town was operated by John Champlin in the Village about 1903.
- Ulysses S. Grant's grandfather, Noah, lived on Grant Hill Road from 1750 to 1787.
- The first public library in Coventry was formed by the South Coventry Library Association in 1880 and books were loaned on a small yearly payment. The library was made free around 1913. It was originally located in a small building on the lawn of the present Booth & Dimock Memorial Library which was dedicated in 1913.
- The first recorded hurricane in Coventry was September 1797. It damaged houses and orchards primarily on Parker Bridge Road, and on the Boston Turnpike just west of the Second Church.
- The town's first school house was built in 1728 adjacent to the first church on today's High Street across from the Town Green. It was 18 by 20 feet in size. The salary for the schoolmaster for the winter quarter was eleven pounds.
- The first telephones (five of them) were installed in the Village in the summer of 1882. Wires were strung tree-to-tree to an exchange in Willimantic.
- The first train depot was built in 1850 by the New London, Willimantic and Palmer Rail Company. It still stands today on Depot Road.
- The first trolley (from Willimantic to Lake Street) began operation on August 18, 1909 by the Connecticut Company. The trolley ceased operating in November of 1926.
- The oldest gravestone in town is that of Peter Buell who died November 1715 at age 16. It is located in the Nathan Hale Cemetery.

**TERCENTENARY COMMITTEE
TOWN OF COVENTRY
1712 MAIN STREET
COVENTRY, CT 06238**

**PRSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
STORRS, CT
PERMIT NO. 106**

**POSTAL PATRON
COVENTRY, CT 06238**

This brochure is dedicated to all the Coventry residents who volunteer their time and resources for their community

American Legion Post 52
Board of Assessment Appeals
Board of Education
Booth & Dimock Memorial Library
Boy Scouts, Troop 57 & 65
Building Code Board of Appeals
Cemetery Commission
Conservation Commission
Conservation Corps Coordinating Committee
Coventry Farmers Market
Coventry Garden Club
Coventry Glass Museum
Coventry Grange
Coventry Historical Society
Coventry Soccer Inc.
Coventry Vision
Coventry Volunteer Fire Association
Coventry Water Ski Club
Coventry Youth Baseball
Coventry Youth Basketball
Coventry Youth Football
Democratic Town Committee
Eastern Highlands Health
Economic Development Commission
Energy Conservation/Alternate Energy
Committee
First Congregational Church
Girl Scouts
Housing Authority
Housing Rehabilitation/Fair Housing
Committee

Inland Wetlands Agency
Insurance Advisory Committee
Knights of Columbus
Lions Club
Local Emergency Coordination Committee
Nathan Hale Ancient Fife and Drum Corps
North Coventry Fire Department Building
Committee
North Coventry Volunteer Fire Department
Parent-Teacher Organizations
Parks & Recreation Commission
Pension Committee
Personnel Appeals Board
Planning & Zoning Commission
Police Benevolent Association
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
Public Works Building Committee
Republican Town Committee
Second Congregational Church
Presbyterian Church
St. Mary's Church
Storrs Community Church
Tara Farm Rescue
Tercentenary Committee
Town Council
Veterans Memorial Committee
Village Improvement Society
Water Pollution Control Authority
Youth Services Committee
Zoning Board of Appeals