

HARWINTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2023

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Town Historian to Lead Historical Society

Susan McClen Elected at Annual Meeting



Susan McClen

In photo right, Elaine Sederquist and Bonnie Andrews are surprised at the annual meeting on Jan. 8 with a cake to thank them for their contributions to the Historical Society. Both are retiring from their current positions on the Board of Directors



At the recent annual meeting of the Harwinton Historical Society, Susan Fenn McClen was elected to lead the Society as its new president. Sue replaces Bonnie Andrews who stepped down as president.

Susan is a Harwinton native and a long-time member of the Historical Society. She is an expert in genealogy research and is currently Harwinton's Town Historian and will continue in that position. Bonnie has been a member of the Society since the early 1970s. She served two years as president in 1976 and 1977 and seven consecutive years in that position beginning in 2015. She will continue in her role as curator for the Society.

Elaine Sederquist was recording/corresponding secretary for the Society since 2013. She will retire from the Board of Directors but continue as a member of the Programs Committee. The secretary's position on the Board of Directors is being filled by Martha Warren Mitchell.

Current members of the Board of Directors Martha "Marti" Lecko and Bruce Burnett were re-elected to three-year terms on the Board of Directors. Marti heads the program committee and Bruce is chairman of the scholarship committee.

Harwinton Historical Society

OFFICERS - 2023

President: Susan McClen
Vice President: Nancy Lyons
Secretary: Martha Warren Mitchell
Treasurer: Harry Schuh

DIRECTORS

Term Ends 2023

Michael Orefice
Everett Lyons

Term Ends 2024

Carol Kearns
Robert Lecko

Term Ends 2025

Bruce Burnett
Martha Lecko

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

Bonnie Andrews

CURATOR

Bonnie Andrews

BUILDING SUPERVISOR

Dennis Andrews

AUDITOR

Marilyn Mitchell

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Harwinton Historical Society

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Harwinton, CT 06791

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America's 250th Celebration



Eileen Porter Schmidt and Alice Ridgway, members of the volunteer organization Litchfield Patriots, were invited to attend the Historical Society's annual meeting at Town Hall on January 8th. Eileen and Alice were asked to explain plans that are being formulated for **America250** and the 2026 United States **Semiquincentennial** and to encourage Harwinton's participation.

Litchfield Patriots, Inc. is a non-profit organization that was instrumental in planning Litchfield's 300th anniversary celebration in 2019. As part of that event, Schmidt and a group of fellow volunteers have worked to clean more than 650 gravestones in two Litchfield cemeteries.

America250 is a newer multi-year effort designed to commemorate the semiquincentennial, or 250th anniversary, of the United States. This effort is being led at the national level by the non-partisan **U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission** created by Congress, and its supporting nonprofit organization **America250 Foundation**. The mission is to design and lead the most comprehensive and inclusive celebration in our country's history.

America250 represents a coalition of public and private partners all working to create initiatives and programs that honor our first 250 years and inspire Americans to imagine our next 250. The commemoration period began in 2020, culminates on July 4, 2026, and will officially conclude in 2027.

More news of this event and Harwinton's participation, as well as that of others, will be provided as it becomes available.

**Visit the HHS web site:
harwintonhistory.org**

Lewis S. Mills: Promotor of Education and Patriotism

By Bonnie Andrews

On a shelf in the Harwinton Historical Society library, located on the second floor of the Jason Skinner House, there are two copies of the book "The Story of Connecticut." Written by Lewis Sprague Mills, the book was designed specifically to encourage a fondness for history and a sense of patriotism in young students.

Mills was a supervising agent for the Connecticut State Board of Education for 31 years from 1908 to 1939. In 1918 he and two others were appointed to a state committee charged with preparing a guide to the history of Connecticut. Because the committee members had many other duties, they missed the deadline for completion, and the booklet was never finished.

Mills, who had a long-standing curiosity about the history of Connecticut, continued to work on the project in his spare time. After the others abandoned the assignment, Mills conducted new research that allowed him to resolve some of the questions he had about Connecticut's beginning as the thirteen colonies grew into a nation.

It was in 1955 that Mr. Mills presented an autographed copy of his book to Beatrice Kasznay (Garner) who was a student at Harwinton's Clearview School. Mills dedicated the "Story of Connecticut" to the "Boys and Girls of Connecticut." It is that same book that Beatrice (who now lives in Maryland), donated to the Historical Society.

A second copy of the Mills book was donated to the Historical Society's library this year by Harwinton residents Corinne and James Curtis.

Odell Shepard, a professor of English who was Connecticut's Lieutenant-Governor (and also an author), contributed an introduction to the first edition of Mills book. Shepard noted that Mills was seeking ways to promote patriotism in children beginning at an early age. Shepard observed that Mills understood children and hoped the book would awaken a lifelong devotion to the United States and that the children would "realize that we have a heritage of great value to preserve in times of peace and defend in days of war."

In 1960, a local regional high school was built for students from both Harwinton and Burlington and named Lewis S. Mills Regional High School. In spite of his advanced age and physical limitations, Mr. Mills was able to attend the ceremony that dedicated the school in his name. Mills died at age 90, five years after the high school was built. He is buried in Canton Center Cemetery. In addition to "The Story of Connecticut" Mills was also the author of "Citizenship and Government in the United States" and "The Legend of Barkhamsted Lighthouse."



**NOW IS THE TIME TO RENEW YOUR HHS MEMBERSHIP FOR 2023!
PLEASE FORWARD \$15 PLUS YOUR NAME, FULL ADDRESS, TELEPHONE AND EMAIL TO
HARWINTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY TREASURER
PO BOX 84
HARWINTON, CT 06791**
