

HARWINTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2023

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Church Seeks Funds To Repair Weather Vane



Church Weather Vane

The Council of the Harwinton Congregational Church has applied to the town for federal funds to repair the weather vane at the top of the church steeple. The estimated cost of the project is \$12,300.

The repair would fix a section of the weather vane that is bent and has come loose. Repair requires removing the entire weather vane, which church council members say is larger and heavier than it appears from the ground. It is an expensive process requiring special skills and equipment.

The weather vane's current condition raises a public safety concern because it is attached to the church, which is located on a busy curve in the road (Route 4) and near the town green, a side road and private homes. There is a fear that a piece of the weather vane could break off and injure a person, vehicle or property.

The church Council has applied to the town for a grant from the American Rescue Plan Act

(ARPA), a federal stimulus program that provides funds to aid economic recovery from the COVID pandemic. ARPA funds have been used for many projects throughout the state, including several in Harwinton.

Weather Vane History

The Congregational Church Is one of the most recognized buildings in Harwinton. Its traditional New England church design with its white spire and weather vane extends above the tree tops and is visible from many local vantage points.

The current church building is not the first to have been built at this location – it is the third. The second Congregational church meeting house was 141 years old when it was destroyed by a fire on July 20, 1949 that was believed to have been caused by lightning. Only the bell from the steeple survived.

The church was rebuilt but without a steeple until the Torrington Methodist Church offered Harwinton its steeple. The offer was accepted because it was thought to be an appropriate style for the new Harwinton building. Once the steeple was moved to Harwinton and refurbished, it was placed on the church bell deck. That was 13.5 years after the fire.

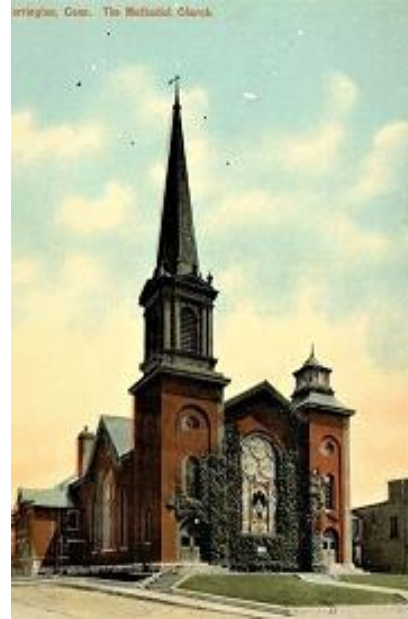
A bright gold-leaf weather vane was donated for the top of the steeple by Harwinton resident “Kay” Blood in memory of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. A. Curtis Blood.

See Weather vane, page 2

Weather vane in need of repair
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That weather vane was made in Danvers, Mass. and was fashioned in the form of the ichthys or “Jesus fish,” a Greek symbol believed to have been used by persecuted Christians in the early history of the church to secretly identify themselves to other Christians. The weather vane also functions as a lightning rod.

ARPA: The American Rescue Plan Act (or ARPA) of 2021 provides stimulus payments to qualified projects via its COVID-19 Stimulus Package or American Rescue Plan. The \$1.9 trillion economic stimulus bill was passed by the 117th U.S. Congress in 2021. Several Harwinton projects have benefitted from the ARPA funds.



Methodist Church Steeple

NOTE: Connecticut is 36th in cloud-to-ground lightning strikes per year with an average of more than 22,000 lightning strikes annually.

SCHOLARSHIP DEADLINE NEARS: The Harwinton Historical Society is offering a \$1,000 scholarship this year to a qualified candidate. Applications are available at high school guidance departments, at the Harwinton Town Library and Harwinton Town Hall. Applications must be post marked by April 15, 2023, to be considered. Mail to Harwinton Historical Society Scholarship, PO Box 84, Harwinton, CT 06791 or by email to harwhistsoc@gmail.com

HARWINTON’S OUTSTANDING CITIZEN OF THE YEAR, BRUCE BURNETT, WILL BE HONORED AT A BANQUET ON APRIL 21st AT FAIRVIEW FARMS GOLF COURSE. RESERVATIONS ARE DUE BY APRIL 11 and are \$55 PER PERSON (\$20 FOR CHILDREN UNDER 10). TO MAKE A RESERVATION, CALL 860-485-9683.

**TO RENEW OR BECOME A MEMBER OF THE HARWINTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY PLEASE FORWARD DUES OF \$15 PLUS YOUR NAME, FULL ADDRESS, TELEPHONE AND EMAIL TO
HARWINTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY TREASURER
PO BOX 84
HARWINTON, CT 06791**



REWIND ... *A look back at earlier times and a mixture of events from Harwinton's history*

Hat Shop Permit

In 1815 Abijah Catlin applied for and was issued a license by the Commissioner of Revenue permitting the Harwinton resident to make hats. His hat shop was located on Burlington Road a little west of Harmony Hill Road. At the time, popular hats for men included wool felt bowlers, newsboy caps and straw dress hats for summer. For winter, beaver hats were also popular, so much so that they nearly contributed to the extinction of the beavers.

Communicating Without Electricity

In 1842 Harwinton resident Reuben Bartholomew was paid 25 cents to ring the church bell notifying Harwinton residents each time someone in town died. After alerting people with one ring, the bell was then tolled once for every year of the deceased person's life.

Statistics 1845

A ledger dated 1845 lists 235 families living in 231 houses in Harwinton.

Lake Harwinton Dam Breaks

In 1938, on a spring day, 44 acres of water emptied into Catlin Brook and then into Lead Mine Brook when a dam that had created Lake Harwinton burst.

Ranger Andy

From 1957 to 1968 Orville Andrews was "Ranger Andy" on the popular afternoon children's television show that aired week days from 4 to 4:30 on WTIC-TV Channel 3. The show often featured Ranger Andy leading the audience of children in singing the show's theme song, "The longest song. The song that never ends."

Businesses Oppose 485

In October of 1980 ten Harwinton businesses submitted a petition to the state Division of Public Utility Control asking the DPUC to reconsider switching the town to a separate 485 telephone exchange because the change would result in increased costs to the businesses. The DPUC rejected the request.

New Dog Pound for Harwinton

At the beginning of 1997 a new dog pound – built with \$96,927 of state funds, was nearly ready to open. The town had been without a dog shelter since the old one closed in 1994. The new pound is attached to the salt shed at the town highway garage property on Locust Road.

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