



The Chronicle Quarterly

Weston Historical Society

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Visions of Sugar Plums

to keep the fires burning. Thanksgiving is right around the corner and perhaps a wild turkey will be shot for the feast, or possibly a deer or one of the pigs could be used for dinner. One Thanksgiving menu from the 1860's included:

Raw Oysters
Boiled Rockfish, Egg Sauce
Potato Balls
Roasted Turkey, Stuffing, Giblet Gravy
Browned Sweet Potatoes, Baked Squash
Cranberry Jelly, Sour Grape Jelly
Molded Spinach
Venison Patsy
Ham Baked in Cider, and Garnished
Mince Pies, Pumpkin Pies, Fruit
Coffee
Hygeia Sparkling Lithia Water

The hay has been cut and bailed and hoisted up in the rafters of the barn for the cows and horses to eat during the winter. The apples have been picked, some being used to make applesauce and others saved for a cake or pie. The crabapples have been made into jelly; the herbs have been gathered and dried to spice up meals during the long and barren winter months, and the root vegetables have been dug up and brought into the cellar to keep cool for the months ahead. Warm stockings are being knitted and warm pants, coats and dresses are being sewn together for Mom, Dad, and the children.

Daylight is fading so the chores of milking, feeding the chickens, the horses and the pigs has to be done in near darkness and the weather is turning crisp and cold. Firewood is being split and stacked

Thanksgiving Cake – Sift two pounds and a half of flour, in which you mix three tsps. of baking powder. Cream three pounds of sugar and one of butter together, Add eighteen eggs and beat five minutes; add half a pound of blanched and chopped almonds, a teacupful of preserved lemon peel. Bake two hours.

Although this is probably a most mighty menu for the simple farmers of the Coley Farm over the years, it was probably a bounty that they shared with less fortunate neighbors to bring a ray of sunshine to enter their home.

Preparations will soon start for the Christmas holidays. A tree will be cut from the property and decorated with simple natural ornaments. Strings of popcorn and cranberries will be strung by the



Visions of Sugar Plums, cont.

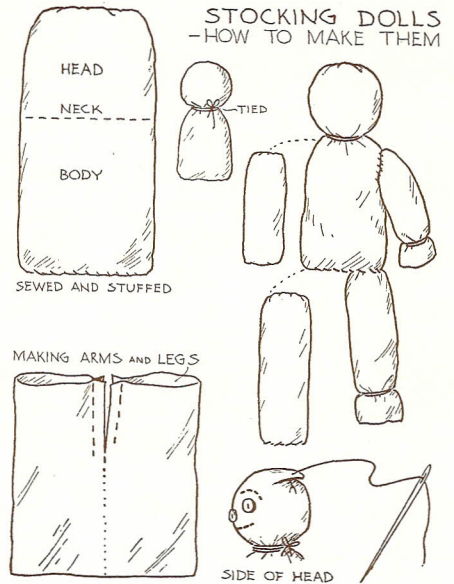
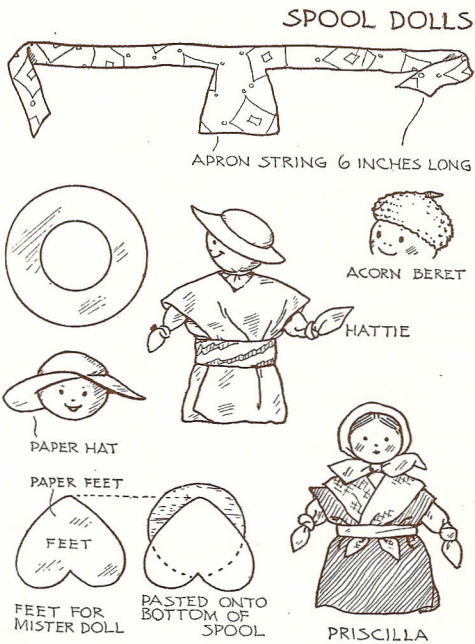
children. Pine boughs are gathered to place on the mantles giving the house a delightful holiday scent. The silver will be polished and the good china brought out and readied for the Christmas feast. There will be sweet breads and pies to be baked, possibly candy and gingerbread, for sure. There will also be toys to make for the children. David Dimon Coley and his wife Mary Elizabeth, the original owners of the Coley homestead, most likely made wooden jointed dolls, whittled toys and sock dolls for their children. Tin toys were just beginning in earnest in Pennsylvania during the

1840's, but probably had not made it to Weston or the surrounding areas. The two toys below are examples of what might have been made.

With the industrial revolution and advances in manufacturing, many hardware foundries turned to the production of cast iron toys and banks to increase their revenue. Although usually only affordable to the most affluent of the Victorian age, the emerging middle class also sought toys for their children. With advances in printing and lithography, many toys,

games and books became available for the common folk.

By 1910 when James Coley lived on the Coley Farm, toy manufacturers had convinced the public (and the Council of National Defense who almost cancelled Christmas due to the war effort and sacrifice on the part of the people) that toys were educational, not frivolous. Newspaper comics reflected a new attitude by viewing the world from the vantage point of the kids themselves. Children's books such as Penrod and About Harriet explored the full range of the feelings of youngsters. This tolerance was certainly welcome, but to children good fortune was perhaps more accurately measured in the contents of their toy chests. In 1912, two thirds of toy sales came at Christmas, and many stores did not carry toys during the rest of the year. By 1920 sales had almost tripled and the bounty of playthings (shown below) helped to raise the toy-chest level all year round.

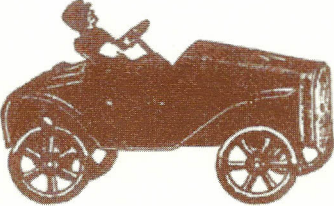




Visions of Sugar Plums, cont.

The children's imagination envisioning themselves in the driver's seat led the way for a field day with the transportation toys of 1910-1920. Old-fashioned models that evoked travel by horse or bicycle were still popular. The playthings that reflected the new technologies, such as airplanes, dirigibles, and auto-

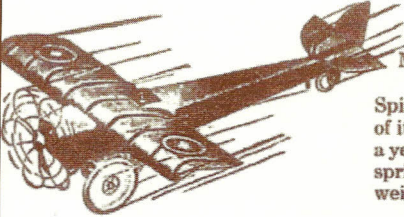
Toys on the Move



FRICTION AUTO RACER

Every child expects the toy auto to climb hills the same as father's does. For that reason this model is exceedingly popular. Runs either backward or forward. Measures 7 inches in length. Enameled red, trimmed with gilt. Shipping weight 1¼ pounds.

98¢



MECHANICAL TOY AEROPLANE

Spins in circles around the floor to the tune of its whirling propeller. Painted gray with a yellow propeller and wheels. Has a strong spring. Length 12¼ inches. The shipping weight is 1¼ pounds.

98¢

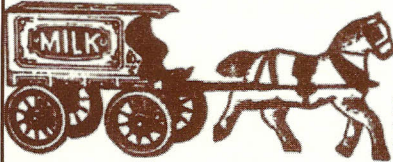
mobiles, had children making more noise and traveling faster in their imaginations than every before. Perhaps one of the children at the Coley house during this decade received a "Mysto Magic Set" which transformed him into Houdini or an "Erector Set" which enabled him to construct spectacular edifices.

Even though there were still chores to be done during the winter months and schoolwork to be done as well, the children of the Coleys probably found time to do some sledding or even ice skating on one of the many small ponds that dot our landscape.

whole new series of heroes for children to aspire to. Little Orphan Annie was extremely popular even when she transferred from the pages of the newspaper to radio. Kids eagerly collected seals from the jars of the sponsor's Ovaltine Chocolate Milk Mix. In return they would receive free rings, badges, shake-up mugs and secret-code cards. They could then decode such momentous messages as 8-36-18-28-22/30-44-2-24-40-18-28-10.

Twenty years later the comics revealed a


The boys were enthralled with Flash Gordon. When the planet Mongo threatened to collide with Earth in 1934, Yale-bred polo player Flash Gordon and a beautiful girl named Dale Arden were kidnapped aboard the rocket of crazed genius Hans Zarkov. Initially launched as a cartoon, it soon became popular on the big screen and in Big Little Books. Tarzan made an appearance in the 1930's and by the end of the decade was an established hero of 21 fast selling novels, a deftly drawn comic strip and a 15-minute daily radio serial and 16 movies.



MILK WAGON

11½ by 4½ inches. Strong and durable, with red open spokes, green hub caps, twisted wire loop handles. Litho in bright colors. Imitation rubber tires and metal wheels. The front wheels turn.

59¢



MECHANICAL BIKE RIDERS

The Toy of the Hour. Rides for dear life and right into the hearts of the little ones. Big 25 cent Bike Rider. "Uncle Sam" on his way to Mexico. Length 8¼ inches; height from string 7 inches; heavy weight to balance; moves quickly by raising and lowering the cord.

25¢

"Reach for the Sky" were words shouted by children all over the country and young children were thrilled to hear cowboy character Tom Mix bark out this battle cry. With his Wonder Horse Tony they ran through

Visions of Sugar Plums, cont.

180 feature films before the radio show began in 1933. In real life, the old gentleman went through three wives and four million dollars. However, he guarded his public image as a nonsmoking teetotaler. He wanted to keep his public persona such that parents would not object to letting their children see him on screen.

And who could forget the man and his co-pilot whose mission it was to “save the whole universe”. That was Buck Rogers and his co-pilot Wilma Deering who used such wonderful accessories as an Electro-cosmic Spectrometer and the Super Radiating Protono-former. In days of the 1930’s and 1940’s the heroes always captured the villains and sent them for rehabilitation, from which they escaped and kept the story line running sometimes for years.

In the 1930’s a sharp-profiled comic strip detective was introduced. Gangsters were running wild and getting off scot free. In the very first week of the comic strip,

Jeremiah

Trueheart marked the first time anyone had been gunned to death on the funny pages. Dick’s life continued for many episodes later with his fiancée Tess Trueheart. Quaker Oats brought the detective to radio and with it a cunning sales gimmick, the Dick Tracy Secret Service Patrol, of course using box tops to gain a sergeant’s badge for 5 box tops, a lieutenant’s for seven, and so on.

The girls of this era were thrilled with paper dolls of all kinds. The little princesses, Elizabeth and Margaret Rose Windsor of Great Britain fulfilled a cherished dream of little girls. However, probably one of the most well-known and popular name of this era was Shirley Temple. Her first film in 1934

was Stand Up and Cheer. Shirley was 5 at the

time. The blonde moppet soon became the child of the 1930’s. As Hollywood’s top box-office draw from 1935 to 1938, her average of four pictures a year grossed \$5 million annually. Her yearly salary was \$300,000 and was well enhanced with royalties from a deluge of merchandise – doll, doll clothes, soap, books and ribbons. Even hairdressers profited from the star’s popularity, being besieged by girls demanding golden “56-curved” hairdos, just like Shirley’s.

TOM MIX' INJURIES

Danger and difficulty have never chased Tom Mix, yet broken bones stopped him. He has been blown up once, shot to pieces and injured at times in movie stunts. The chart shows the location of some of Tom's injuries. (X marks fractures, circles, bullet wounds)

- A. Skull fractured in accident.
- B. Nose injured when artillery wagon blew up in China.
- C. Shot three times by sniper in Spanish-American War.
- D. Shoulder fractured in circus accident.
- E. Collar bone broken four times in falls.
- F. Shot by bandit in Mic home.
- G. Right hand shot from movie accident.
- H. Shoulder fractured when horse was shot from under him by bandits in U. S. Marshal days.
- I. Shot by auto snipers in Texas.
- J. Shot twice in left arm by Oklahoma outlaw.
- K. Shot below elbow by outlaw.
- L. Shot through shoulder by killer he arrested.
- M. Wounded in gun fight with outlaw.
- N. Left arm broken four times in movie stunts.
- O. Hand broken in movie stunt.
- P. Shot by leg man while Okla. horse thief.
- Q. Shot in leg when 14 years old.
- R. Leg trampled by horse.
- S. Fractured knee in wagon accident.
- T. Leg broken while stunting for movie.
- U. Fractured ankle breaking wild horse.
- V. Foot and ankle broken in wagon accident.
- W. Shot through leg by bank robber.
- X. Three broken fingers, hand and arm fractured in screen fight and film stunt.
- Y. Shot through elbow in real cage catch hold-up scene.
- Z. Broken arm in film stunting.

NOTE: Stunts from twenty-year-old records are not indicated, nor is it possible to show on the diagram the hole four inches square and many inches deep that was blown in Tom's back by a dynamite explosion.





Visions of Sugar Plums, cont.

James Burr Coley, the last of the Coley family to live at the Coley Farm, was probably enthralled with the advent of television. In 1952 the faces that dominated the nation's TV screens were vaudeville and radio comedians like Milton Berle who brought his comedy into the living rooms across the country. Although called an "idiot box" and the corruption of children's morals, the television went from 3.2 million in homes in 1950 to 32 million by 1960. Jimmy might have watched Fred Allen and newsman Edward R. Murrow. Other favorites included situation comedies such as *I Love Lucy*, *Burns and Allen*, *Mr. Peepers*, *Ozzie and Harriet* and *Our Miss Brooks*. Sid Caesar and Imogene Coca (a former resident of Weston) brought "Your Show of Shows" to television in 1954 drawing families together for an hour of laughs.

Game shows followed and children's program including *The Lone Ranger*, *Hopalong Cassidy*, *Lassie* and

Rin-Tin-Tin, *Space Patrol* and *Captain Midnight*. Who did not want a coonskin cap to be just like *Davy Crockett*? Variety shows and full-length dramas joined the ever growing list of television shows that had Americans glued to their television sets for hours.

We have certainly come a long way from the sock and wooden dolls that David D. Coley and his wife Mary Elizabeth might have made for their children. Space travel is no longer a fantasy, cowboys and Indians are no longer politically correct and our cops and robber shows are far too graphic. We no longer live in an age when we cook on the open fire, or use bed warmers for those cold winter nights, but our hopes and dreams for our children and loved ones are probably not too much different from those of the Coleys over the years. We all wish for health, happiness, and prosperity for ourselves and those we love.

We wish you all a very happy Holiday and may you share it with loved ones.

YOU THINK POSTAGE IS EXPENSIVE?????

One of the great things about working with Sharon Gilbert, our archivist, is that we get to pour over old documents and papers that sometimes reward us with fun facts and information. Recently we found a paper discussing postal rates in the mid-1850's.

An article from the "Commercial Travelers MONITOR, Vol. VII, Number 3, Summer of 1977" entitled "Early Postal Rates" states:

Remember when it cost only three cents to mail a letter and a penny to mail a postcard? Those were certainly the "good old days" but early postal rates were not always so reasonable.

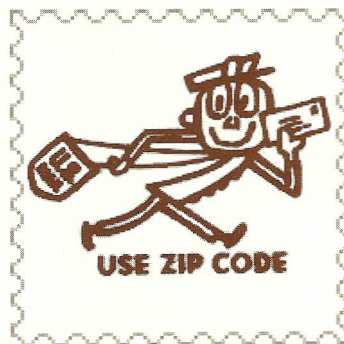
For example, before 1851 it cost between six and eight cents to mail a single page letter 40 miles. The cost rose to 25 cents when the letter was sent over 400 miles. The price was doubled, tripled and quadrupled with each successive page added to the letter. During this period, rates were anything but a bargain.

At least early Americans didn't have to worry about the cost of envelopes – none was used. The letter was simply folded and the address placed on the

outside sheet, then you would have to take your letter directly to the post office in order to mail it. If you were the addressee, you would have to pick your letter up at the post office. Those who lived near one of the 40 big cities of the time could pay a carrier one or two pennies to deliver mail to the home. Street letter boxes didn't come into existence for mail collection until 1858 and free city delivery did not begin until 1863. Today's 13 cent stamp is looking better all the time.

Our very own post office in Weston operated from approximately 1830 until 1910 with boxes for residents and a central spot for the postman, who rode a horse to deliver the mail to those without boxes at the post office.

Wonder if we will ever say that 44 cents is a bargain or will we be figuring out the cost of sending letters via email?



LYONS PLAIN vs. LYONS PLAINS

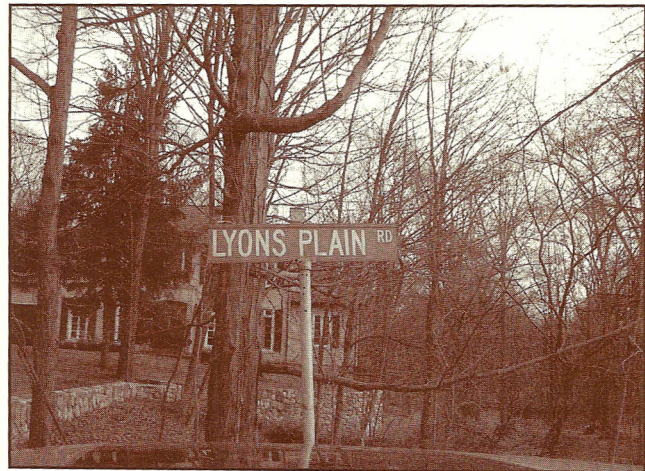
We recently received an email from Lou Bregy who lives on Lyons Plains in Weston and has for many years. Lou at one time was also a trustee of the Historical Society and has a vast



knowledge about old homes and their construction. Lou has sent us this information for use in the Chronicle and we are grateful for his taking the time to educate us on this matter.

“Lyons Plains vs. Lyons Plain Rd. – The part of Lyons Plains Road south of the Cartbridge / Fanton Hill intersection was originally a short section of the turnpike chartered to G. W. Bradley et al and mis-named by the legislator’s clerk as Northfield Tpk. (rather than Norfield) in the official Private Acts and Resolutions of the State of Ct. The charter is appended to the report of #167 Lyons Plains Rd. Weston residents called it Bradley Street up to the 1920’s when the state improved and paved the road and re-named the entire road Lyons Plains Rd. running from the intersection of Rt. 57, Weston Rd., to the Davis Hill, Valley Forge, Kellogg Hill intersection. (It had a state route number which Lou could not remember). Bradley Street extended only from Coleytown Road North, to the Cartbridge / Fanton Hill intersection. North of the intersection, the road was part of the 3rd cross highway and

only this section was called Lyons Plains Road before the state highway work. “Disagreement as to whether the name was “Plains” or Plain has been going on for over a hundred years and should be left to personal preference. The post-mark on the mid 19th century post office used “Plain.” Beers Atlas used “Plains.” The Treadwell family who donated land for the Episcopal Church ca. 1850 firmly said Plains. The matter was specifically addressed by Scott Hill in Ruth Treadwell Fox’s oral history after she or her sister used the word “Plains.” Some find the abrupt ending of “plain” awkward, not euphonious. Other old families do not and use “Plain.” A Fairfield deed dated 1768 cites land “near Lyons Farms and bounded...,” usage similar to “Green’s Farms.” Over the last several decades one person, not one of the old Weston or Connecticut families, devoted great effort to enforcing the “Plain” name as the only permissible correct use. There were frequent letters to the editors of newspapers and government agen-



cies were notified. Signs were even changed. The “Plains” faction has no such champion and just quietly continues their usage.”

Thanks Lou. It is nice to know that we can use our preference, *and still be right.*

Old Time Christmas Recipes

CHRISTMAS COOKIES AND SUGAR PLUMS

The following recipes come from "A Child's Christmas Cookbook" dedicated to the warm, nostalgic memory of an old-fashioned Victorian Christmas that would have been celebrated at the Coley House.

CHRISTMAS CHUCKLES

It is hard to tell if these are cookies or candy. Boil ½ cup white corn syrup, 1 package butter-scotch bits, ½ cup sugar. Turn off heat. Add ¾ cup peanut butter, 3 cups crushed cornflakes. Drop spoonfuls on waxed paper.



MARSHMALLOW DELIGHTS

Melt chocolate in 1 double boiler, caramel in another. Quickly dip marshmallows, roll in chopped nuts, Use toothpicks; or dip the marshmallows in bowl of cream, roll in piles of colored sugar.

KRIS KRINGLES

Mix 2 cups flour, 1 cup powdered sugar, 1 cup cornstarch. Cream 1 pound butter. Stir while you add flour mixture slowly to butter. Divide in 4 parts. Wrap in foil. Chill. Shape in 1-inch balls. Place 2 inches apart on ungreased cookie sheet. Flatten with floured fork. Bake at 325 for about 20 minutes or until lightly browned. 7 dozen.

HONEYPOPS

Put 3 quarts popped corn in large bowl. Boil 1 cup honey, 1 cup sugar, dash of salt. It's done when small bit dropped in cup of cold water makes soft ball. Stir popcorn while you pour this in. Grease your hands. Squeeze into balls. Makes 2 dozen



TREE COOKIES

Would you like to hang decorated cookies on your Christmas tree? Use your favorite recipe for rolled cookies. Before baking, poke hold near the edge of cookie. Put a dry bean in the hole. Remove bean very carefully, when cookies cool. String on bright ribbons.

Don't forget to feed your pets special treats and the birds as well.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS !

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