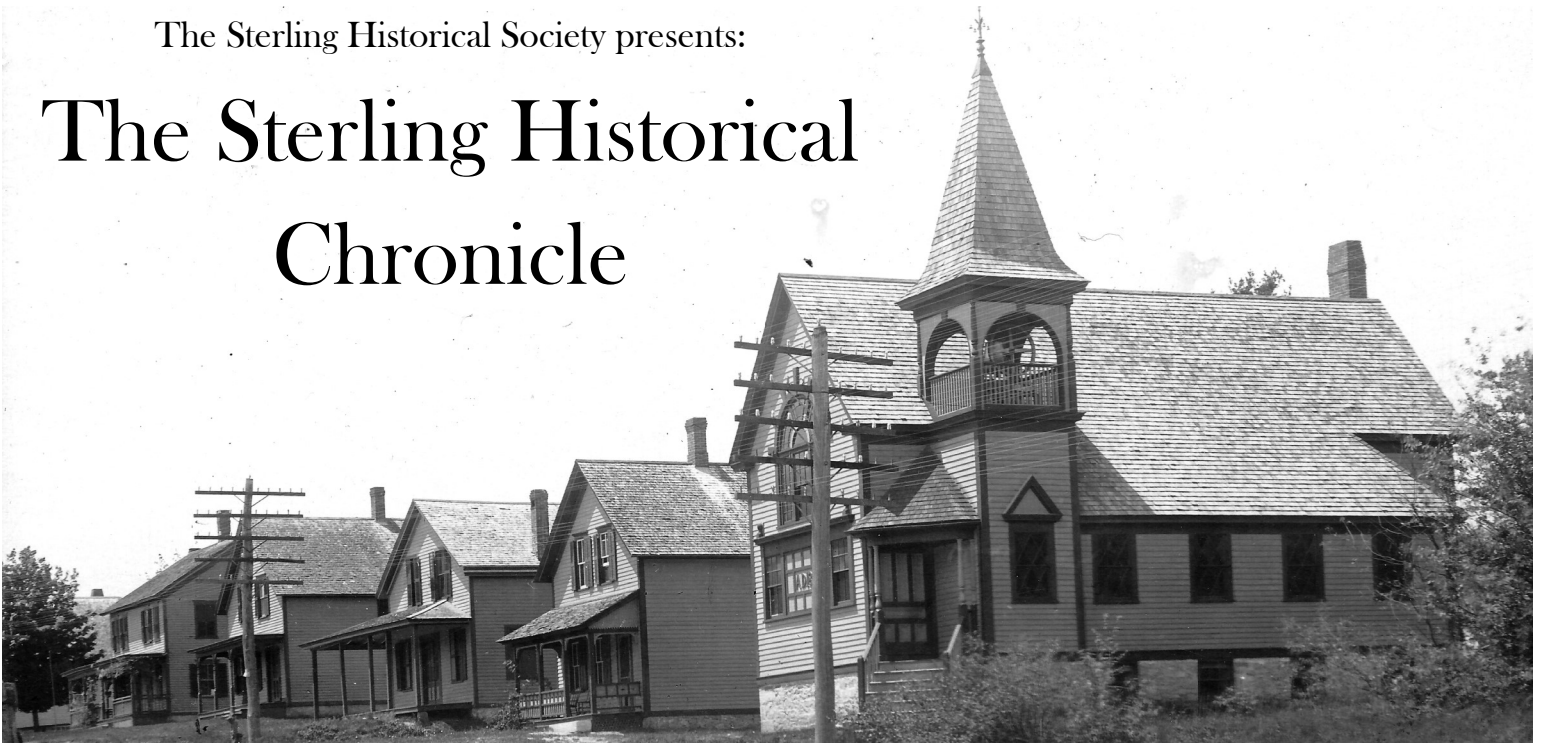


The Sterling Historical Society presents:

The Sterling Historical Chronicle



VOLUME 2

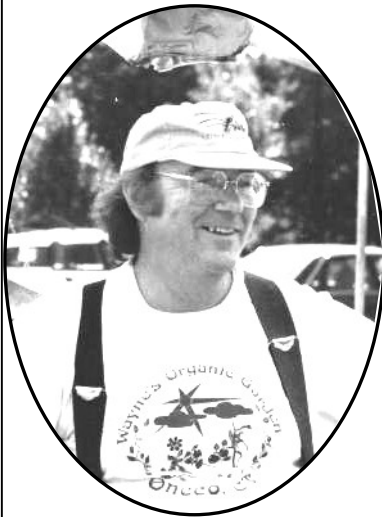
SEPTEMBER 2019

ISSUE 1

Dear Readers, there was no June issue as we took the extra time to honor two individuals who contributed so much to our community.

WAYNE MILLER HANSEN

January 1, 1945—May 2, 2019



Proprietor of Wayne's Organic Garden 1989-2018

The Town of Sterling has lost an awesomely gentle man with the passing of Wayne Hansen. Wayne was born in Corvallis, Oregon, son of Miller and Betty Jean Hansen, and grew up in Grand Forks, North Dakota. He won a scholarship to the prestigious Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire, one of the oldest secondary schools in the United States. From there he enrolled in Harvard. But Wayne would never complete his studies at Harvard, being enticed by the growing anti-war sentiment of the time. He traveled around the country in

SEE HANSEN, PAGE 2

JOANNE GRZELAK

November 16, 1949—May 25, 2019



Teacher at SMS for 35 years

Ms. Joanne Grzelak, beloved teacher at Sterling Memorial School from 1971-2006 passed away suddenly on May 25.

It was her and her family's wish that a detailed obituary not be published and so we asked for your memories in order to pay tribute to a wonderful educator and friend whose legacy is the impact she left on all of us.

"We are all going to miss this wonderful lady and her million dollar laugh." - Lee Shippee

TRIBUTES CONTINUE ON PAGES 3 AND 4

HANSEN *Continued from page 1*

active pursuit of demonstrations demonizing the Vietnam War. Much changed in the 60's, and so did Wayne. It would appear that Wayne would never be marginally involved in anything. He was either 'all in' or 'all out'. These times and the associations brought about in this generation may well have been the catalyst that gave birth to Wayne's interest in the organic industry. He became a legend in the organic farming movement, in 1989 creating the first certified organic farm in eastern Connecticut, and only the second in all of the State.

Wayne's Organic Garden may have been considered a business by many, but to Wayne and his wife Marilyn, whom he wed in 1990, it was a passion. They were part of the CSA (Community-supported agriculture) organization, a food production and distribution system that directly connects farmers and consumers. Farmers earn important early-season capital and have a guaranteed market for their produce. Barring a disastrous harvest, consumers enjoy overall lower food costs, field-fresh produce, and greater access to high-demand fruits and vegetables like long-stem strawberries and heirloom tomatoes. In addition to the CSA, Wayne and Marilyn attended four farmers' markets in the area, also making his produce available at the Willimantic Food Co-op. It was not unusual to find the fruits of his labor sitting in a box on the counter of the local Post Office, for anyone who happened in, to share. Wayne was never a competitor in the field of organic gardening, but simply a staunch advocate and often a mentor, knowing the value of local, naturally grown and healthy vegetables. He was proud of his contribution to the health of the community. He may have been best known for his garlic, for which he welcomed the opportunity to promote and instruct anyone willing to listen about its cultivation.

In February of this year, Wayne received the well deserved 1st Annual CT NOFA (Northeast Organic Farming Association) "Bill Duesing Organic Living on the Earth Award" in the Farmer/Farm category.

Wayne described his typical workday, from Spring through Fall as, up at seven, or before, hand-watering seedlings in the hoopouses, harvesting of lettuce and other greens, then picking less heat-sensitive produce, rinsing and packing for market. The afternoon might include hand cultivating, setting out more plants, or going to market. Then he would work till six, or later, doing some lighter cultivating or similar activity. As you might imagine, it is not a schedule easily modified. It requires a profound love for the task. But Wayne was not all work, as demonstrated by his appearance with the cheese hat in celebration of "Cheese Day", and for wearing wildly colored, crazy, tie-dyed socks.

To his neighbors and many friends, Wayne Miller Hansen will be missed.

-Written by Ron Marchesseault

Upcoming Events

Stop by and chat with us on the following days!

Ekonk Grange 37th Annual Grange Fair—Saturday, August 10, 2019

Sterling Family Day —Saturday, September 14, 2019

Be sure to visit our booth, shared with the Oneco United Methodist Church!

Sterling Farm Day —Saturday, October 19, 2019

FROM THE ARCHIVES—*Moosup Journal*, July 11, 1940: "An aged turtle was discovered by Everett Walker on Sterling Hill Monday morning and because of the dates carved upon the turtle's shell Mr. Walker has christened the turtle 'War Baby.' In 1861, the time of the Civil War, an individual with the initials A.P. carved the turtle's shell. In 1914 the turtle was discovered again by a party who added his initials, B.Y. Mr. Walker added his E.W. and the date, 1940, and set the tortoise free."

REMEMBERING MS. JOANNE GRZELAK

I am sitting at my desk here at the historical society thinking about Ms. Grzelak, the enigmatic educator who taught here at the former Sterling Memorial School from 1971 until 2006. Some may know our historical society room is housed in one of her former classrooms, Room 19; scraps of her handwriting remain on the blackboard, peeking out from behind our 1855 map of Windham County. How she loved history and maps! I always found it fitting that we found our permanent home in the old classroom of a woman who fought to bring ancient history alive for her students through her units on Ancient Greece, Egypt, the Middle Ages, Japan, and more. She introduced me to my favorite young adult author, John Bellairs, who wrote supernatural mysteries anchored in historical trivia. I've spent a good part of my adult life trying to recreate the library she had for my own son - would any childhood be complete without ever having read *The Hatchet*, *Trolley to Yesterday*, or *Tuck Everlasting*?

I look all over this room and know there is not much left of her influence; looking through our archives, I finally start to find more of her contributions; in classroom newsletters which she made monthly (a passion of hers was paper crafts, but more specifically card-making). Her obituary in the *Bulletin* recently mentioned stamping - she had a whole "stamp cave" where she could make the one-of-a-kind cards cherished by her friends. If you had her for a teacher in the 90's, you might remember that she was on the cutting edge of technology then, using computer software to print out letters with the latest word art software in the days when few of us even had a home computer (she was the first person I exchanged email with in 1995!). In addition to the monthly newsletters and the weekly journal prompts, she also created classroom anthologies, excellence certificates, and thank you cards. I personally have donated much of the ephemera from her class found in our archives from when I was a student of hers in 1995-6.

However, her influence doesn't stop there - she was responsible for the myriad of photographs of students in our yearbooks, "News You Can Use" newsletters, community calendars, and the list goes on. My first memory of her was her taking a picture of me when I was in the first grade, and like a mother, she was almost never in the photos because she was always so busy taking them. She once wrote, "Sometimes we get too wrapped up in the presents that cost money and must be bought at the mall. We sometimes forget those that can be more precious...those gifts of ourselves." She gave us all of herself for her entire career.

Above all, when I think of her as an educator, I remember that she was **fair** in every sense of the word. If you thought you didn't deserve a grade, she would tell you why you *earned* the grade you got and her arguments were flawlessly solid - and the same was true of her sage advice.

One fond memory was when she brought in sushi for the entire class at the end of her unit on Japan - in the mid 90's, sushi was not easy to find in eastern CT by any means. She put us in kimonos and took our pictures and we had a lovely classroom party. We had no idea where she could have found the sushi though, as no students knew of any local Japanese restaurants, and when we asked, she told us she had actually driven to somewhere in New London early that morning to pick it up fresh for us. She lived in Jewett City -she put in that much effort to dazzle us with exotic food and everything else because she cared that much for us.

And she never stopped caring, either. When I lost a ring on the soccer field in 8th grade, I remember she pulled me out into the hallway and asked me to describe it and then she pulled it from her pocket. It had been missing for months and I had given up hope that I would ever see it again. I still have that ring today. The last time I saw her was at the 2002 SMS graduation; I was a senior in high school and had won the Andrew Shippee Scholarship Award and she presented it to me. I never forgot how sincere she was when she told me "Congratulations." We had a short chat after the ceremony, and she gave me a hug before wishing me luck.

Speaking of scholarships, Ms. Grzelak's friends & fellow former educators have established the Joanne Grzelak Award to be bestowed upon two graduating SCS 8th graders who excel in the field of social studies. The first awards were given at this year's graduation ceremony on June 13 to Liam Stahlbush and Riley Griffin. The hope is that this award will be given well into the future.

I sit here in this empty room tonight, two hours before our meeting, and I can't believe that the time has come to write this for a teacher whom I respected so much. I once invited her to see our society and catch up with her as an adult; she graciously declined, citing ill health. I had always hoped one day she would have felt well enough to stop in for a chat. Oh well, in spirit then.

-Megan McGory Gleason, Sterling Historical Society President

**IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE
FUNDS TO FUTURE AWARDS PLEASE
CONTACT:**

JOANNE GRZELAK MEMORIAL FUND

C/O MARLENE BARRY

85 MILNER AVE.

MOOSUP, CT 06354

TRIBUTES...CONTINUED

**Ms. Grzelak**

“Funny how a single word can remind you of a teacher you had 35 years ago. The word ‘solidarity’ always brings Ms. Grzelak to my mind. While going to school in the 1980’s I often walked by her car parked in the school parking lot which proudly displayed a bumper sticker reading ‘Solidarność’, solidarity in Polish, representing the Polish Solidarity Labor Union movement. Every single time I hear or read the word ‘Solidarity’ I think of Ms. Grzelak.” -Paul Jarry

“I remember her playing softball with us. She was always the pitcher. And if the ball hit her... we were out!” -Steven Caron

“When I look back at my childhood and the teachers who have inspired me to learn, Ms. Grzelak is top on my list. I remember one time my frustration got the better of me and she noticed. She took me aside and had a nice heartfelt conversation with me to build my confidence back up. That's the kind of teacher she was. She took the time to know each of her students in that special way. I can still hear that hearty laugh as though it were yesterday. I remember looking forward

every year to receiving one of her handmade pencil cases/pouches that she gave to all of her students. It is nice to hear that her handwriting is still on one of the chalkboards at the old school. It seems fitting that a history teacher literally left a part of her history there. I am sad that she is gone but thankful for all that she has given me through her teaching. She was and is unforgettable.” - Kim Schmidt

“One of my favorites. Came to one of my plays and left me an engraved stone that said Bravo on my desk the next school day. I still have it.” -Nick Magrey

“She was an excellent teacher, although many didn't realize it at the time, but looking back you can see how much you learned. I worked with her during my first semester field experience in the education program in college. The first of 3 different teachers I would work with.” - Michael Gadoury

“She was one of my favorites. Always made classwork fun. I remember doing those extra puzzles she had and walking into class with a prize on my desk for completing it.” - Missy Beaudoin

“I have had such a great experience with all these teachers but no one has ever replaced Ms Grzelak. I'm almost 33 and STILL talk about her as my role model. The day I got that A++ was everything. I knew that loud laugh, the fun necklaces she would wear, sharing her travels into her classroom ... I remembered when I graduated that I let her know what an impact she has done for me. I remember running into her almost 10 years later at the store and hugged her and shared our stories. I truly admired her and how she was with her students. She was so engaging and loved how she added her creative flare to make it her own. It has inspired the way I've worked with children and do as much traveling as she did. Now owning my art and yoga studio and having my own students, I feel a lot of who I am was because of her. I will truly miss her. She was my SMS memory.” - Erica Treaster

“She was always so up-beat, so positive no matter what health issues she had. She always gave the best advice; if I came to her with a problem with a student she would put it into perspective and look at it from all angles and tell me what to do and she was not wrong.” -Marlene Barry

“One of SMS’ best.” - Renae Lefebvre Vandale

“It was a privilege to have called her my teacher.” -Ryan Gooslin



Joanne's happy place was the beach, and her friends loved spending time with her in Maine and in Myrtle Beach. Next time you visit, take a moment to remember her.

From the President's Desk...

Dear Readers,

We had an incredible turnout for our April 20th presentation on the Titanic and how it related to the Marriott Quarry. Who would have thought that for a number of years, one of the survivors of the sinking lived and worked right here in town? It seemed like the stuff urban legend dreams are made of, but it is true. See our new displays at this year's Family Day to learn more, if you missed it.

It seems every time I stop by the historical society room, there are presents waiting for us. We have received many anonymous donations of photo albums, page protectors, office supplies, and the Rec. Dept. has graciously shared binders and notebooks with us as well. Our closets and hearts are full! Thank you so much for your donations! We look forward to putting all of it to good use. Another donation came from out-of-state of some small but interesting documents relating to "Smith's Bridge" (the bridge over the Moosup River in Oneco.) (Shown below.)

One of the things we have been working on this summer is helping others with their research. A writer from Atlas Obscura contacted us wanting to know about the Voluntown Pound and its long history which began back in 1722, and a researcher of railroad architecture also contacted us looking for photos of our long-gone railroad stations. We have some photos, but suspect there are more out there.

We are closing in on our busiest season: fall! Not only are we tabling at Family Day, but we are adding Grange Day in August and Farm Day in October to our list of events where you can come and talk to us even if you can't make it any other day. We love to see all of you.

Lastly, this issue was a difficult one for me to put together. Not only did I grow up passing Wayne Hansen's gardens and seeing him around town, but learning of Ms. Grzelak's passing soon afterwards caused a bit of a hesitation from me. If she taught me anything, it was that things worth doing are worth doing well so we took the time to do this issue to the best of our abilities; Wayne and Joanne deserved nothing less. -MMG

"To Asa Montgomery Town Treasurer for the Town of Sterling for [place?] to pay Ebenezer Smith one Dollar of the Town's money in your hand it being for sawing plank for Smith Bridge & for putting the Plank onto the Bridge & this order shall be good accounting with you for the same Sterling April the 11 Day of 1803—Lem'l Dorrance, David Gallup, A. Gordon } Selectman" - donated by Ralph Wadleigh, Jr. from the estate of his cousin, Jonathan B. Smith, deceased 1988.

Research Requests

These are requests which have been received by our society. We do our best to answer questions but perhaps our readers may be able to help, too! Please email sterlinghistoricalsociety@gmail.com with information if you are able to help.

- 1080 Plainfield Pike , specifically historic photos from when it was the undertaker’s home (Orren Bates).
- 246 Snake Meadow Road, history of the home.
- Historic photos of Oneco and Sterling RR stations/depots.

Our Wishlist

- SMS/SCS yearbooks! **ALL YEARS (except 1991, 1992) STILL NEEDED!** It is okay if the copies are not clean as we will try to cobble together clean copies from multiple yearbooks.
- Any issues of SMS newsletter “News You Can Use” or other town-related newsletters or ephemera.
- Home videos of our town, events, parades, graduations, we can convert most formats to DVD.

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 We have many resources available in our room for your own historical research including the C.E.T.A. Research papers compiled by a team of researchers in 1978 and led by Carolyn Bailey-Orr. This research, written by hand on several reams of yellow legal pads, has been organized and put into page protectors and binders by the SHS after we received the repository of information from the town hall. It took us five years of preparation to be able to present this project to the public! Much of the research was later compiled by Mrs. Orr into her book, *The Roads Lead Back to Glory* (1982), of which only 50 copies were originally printed. Another 50 were printed in 1991, and we are currently at work on scanning and digitizing her book in order to have it reprinted in the future.

.....
 Other resources we have include Frank Decker’s life work of *The Pike Saga*, five large tomes of genealogical research written by Mr. Decker from the 70’s through 1990. We will also be digitizing these and printing them so that they will be available to the public for the first time ever.

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 We also have The Hale Collection, some early Voluntown church records, and many hard to find & out of print books relating to all of eastern Connecticut. Come visit us and learn something new!

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Deadline for submissions: Nov. 1, 2019

Sterling Historical Society Officers:

President: Megan McGory Gleason

Vice President: Arlene Roberts

Secretary: Ruth Battey

Treasurer: Ron Marchesseault

Curator: Michael Gadoury

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 c/o Sterling Town Hall
 P.O. Box 157
 1183 Plainfield Pike
 Oneco, CT 06373

Our meeting schedule is the **second Tuesday of every month except December** at 7PM unless otherwise announced. Our room is open from 6-8pm on that same second Tuesday, by appointment, and by chance.

Email: sterlinghistoricalsocietyct@gmail.com

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Facebook: <http://facebook.com/SterlingHistoricalSocietyct>

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