

History of Rocky Hill: 1650- 2018

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Bring Us Your History

Much of our knowledge of the history of Rocky Hill is based on *the History of Ancient Wethersfield*, a packaging of the work of Rufus W. Griswold at the turn of the 20th Century, organized by Henry A. Stiles of Windsor, Connecticut. Most subsequent Rocky Hill historical documents rely heavily on Stiles, often repeating assertions in this text verbatim. A problem with this approach is that historians tend to concentrate on the town’s history before the 20th century. Another problem is that much of the information in Stiles doesn’t stand up to scrutiny.

This document is an attempt to present a fact-checked, up-to-date version of Rocky Hill’s history. Rather than repeat, once again, the conventional wisdom concerning our town’s history, it attempts to use traditional sources, fact-check them, and bring them up to date using untapped resources, including the vast amount of information now available on the Internet.

This is an untested view of Rocky Hill history. You are invited to make your additions, insights, and corrections using the form provided on the http://www.rockyhillct.gov/rocky_hill_town_historian/index.php website. Your input will be reviewed and, if appropriate, added to our store of knowledge. Please identify yourself, date your correspondence, and cite the source of your information. More extensive submissions can be sent to thistorian@rockyhillct.gov.

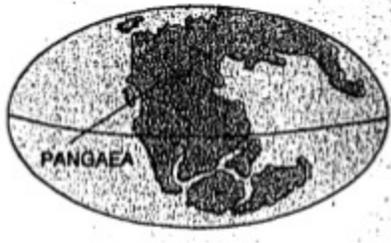
Acknowledgements

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Origins: 250,000,000 BCE to 1730 CE

Dinosaurs

Rocky Hill has a history that dates back to Pangea, which existed when there was only one continent. When tectonic plates floated on the Earth’s magma to form the continents as they exist today, the piece of ground which is now Rocky Hill went along for the ride.



250 Million Years Ago



Today

Over the course of 250,000,000 plus years many creatures have lived in Rocky Hill. Many left their footprints.

In the 1960s, a construction worker found these footprints and the result was Dinosaur State Park with extensive facilities to describe this span of time and the creatures who lived here during the earliest periods. People come from all over the world to see our dinosaur artifacts and learn about their history. You can learn about Dinosaur State Park at their website, <http://www.dinosaurstatepark.org>.

Pre-European History

Tens of thousands of year ago, New England was covered by a deep glacier. As the glacier melted and receded approximately 15,000 years ago, a moraine, which is a

collection of rock and sediment left behind by the receding glacier, accumulated and blocked up the Connecticut River creating a long, narrow lake, Lake Hitchcock. At its longest, Lake Hitchcock stretched from the moraine dam at present-day Rocky Hill, Connecticut, to St. Johnsbury, Vermont (about 200 miles).



The lake existed for approximately 3,000 years, after which a combination of erosion and continuing geological changes caused it to drain creating the Connecticut River.

Among the things the glacier left behind are the rocks that seem to grow out of our soil providing material of New England's ubiquitous stone walls and the trap rock quarry which is a part of Rocky

Hill's unique landscape. ⁱ

The Europeans Arrive

Immediately before the arrival of English settlers in 1634, the area from modern Wethersfield to Middletown was occupied by the Wangunk tribe, a peaceful people who seemed content to fish and grow crops. The Pequots and Mohawks took advantage of the Wangunk's peaceful nature by bullying and exacting tribute from them. ^{iv}

The Wangunk invited English settlers from Watertown, Massachusetts to settle among them in hopes that the more warlike English might protect them from the Pequots and Mohawks. In 1634, a group of settlers, led by John Oldham, left Watertown, Massachusetts and settled on the banks of the river in a town they called Watertown (modern Wethersfield).ⁱⁱ



In 1636, on a trip to Massachusetts Bay Colony, John Oldham sailed into the harbor at Block Island. A group of Mashpee Indians approached his boat as if to trade. When they got on board

they tomahawked him to death in front of his children. The English in Massachusetts Bay Colony blamed the Pequots for this murder and several punitive skirmishes were launched.

Relations between the settlers in Wethersfield and the Wangunks steadily deteriorated as the English maneuvered to acquire more and more of the Wangunk's tribal land. The Wangunks suggested to the Pequots that they should attack the English in Wethersfield. The Pequots did this, killing six men and three women, abducting two girls, and killing twenty cows and a horse. The English responded by attacking the Pequot fort at Mystic, Connecticut, burning it to the ground and massacring the inhabitants: men, women, and children. The native tribes were appalled by the violence of this attack, and relations between the English and native people, including the Wangunk, never recovered.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Settlement of the Town

In 1650, Samuel Boardman of Wethersfield was given a deed for 30 acres of land at the southeast side of a rocky hill, south of the village of Wethersfield, along the west bank of the Connecticut River. Boardman was followed by others and a district of Wethersfield called Stepney was established. By 1655, a road had been built from Wethersfield and a river ferry was carrying people, particularly Wethersfield farmers who tilled land in Glastonbury, across the river.^{iv}

The population of the area (which would become Rocky Hill) grew. In these early years the Congregational Church was the official state church in Connecticut and a powerful presence. A measure of a settlement's stature at that time was its designation by the Congregational Church as a parish. The Stepney district of Wethersfield became Stepney Parish in 1722. Another measure of Stepney Parish's growth was being allowed to have its own burial ground. Before 1730, Rocky Hill people were buried in the cemetery behind the Wethersfield Congregational Church. In 1730, The Town of Wethersfield granted Stepney Parish permission to establish its own burying ground, Center Cemetery.^v

Maritime Rocky Hill

Yankee ingenuity has always been an integral part of Rocky Hill's history. Our people have always been able to use their creativity and resourcefulness to optimize their resources and take advantage of any opportunities that presented themselves.

The Ferry



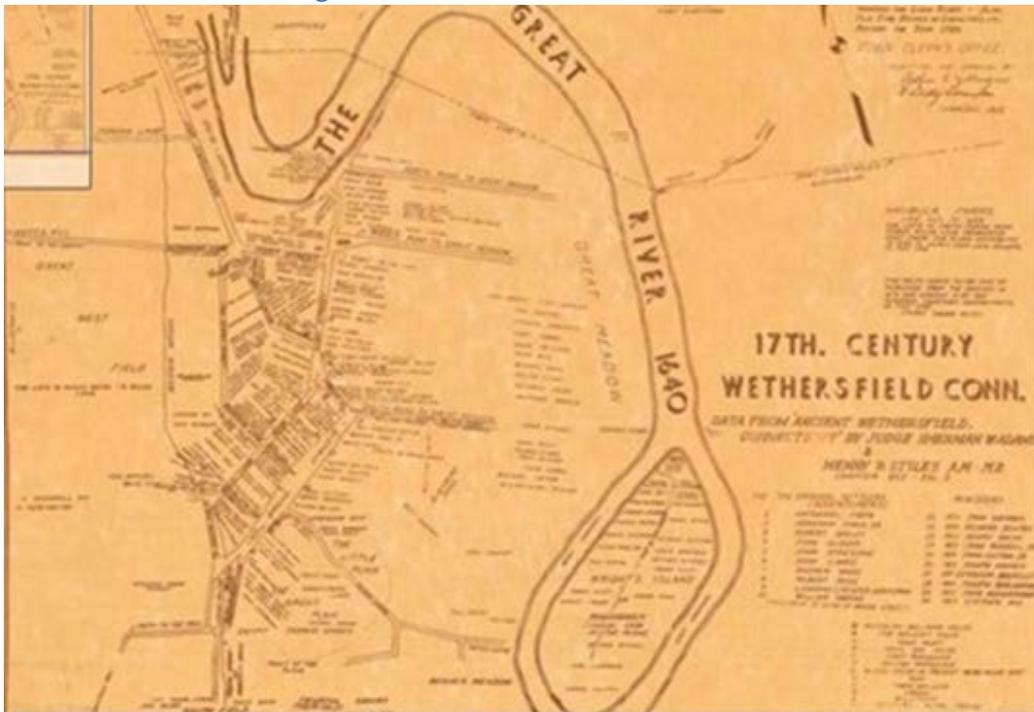
Steam Ferry Nayaug – until 1920



Tug Cumberland and Barge Hollister III
Operating in 2017

As early as 1650, farmers from Wethersfield were crossing the Connecticut River to get to the fertile alluvial fields on the east side. Ferry service developed almost immediately in response to this need. Although there are records of a regularly operating ferry as early as 1650, the first legislative approval of a ferry wasn't recorded until 1673. At various times the ferry has been powered by sails, sweeps (oars), poling, and a horse on a treadmill.^{vi vii} Although authority over the ferry has changed several times, The Rocky Hill-Glastonbury ferry is still operated by the State of Connecticut in 2017 making it the oldest ferry in continuous operation in the United States.^{viii}

The River and Seafaring



[http://emuseum.chs.org/emuseum/view/objects/asitem/People\\$00409169/2/displayDate-asc;jsessionid=76AFAB5A3A87D0CBAB470253EC62FBAD?t:state:flow=7b9e5b0e-](http://emuseum.chs.org/emuseum/view/objects/asitem/People$00409169/2/displayDate-asc;jsessionid=76AFAB5A3A87D0CBAB470253EC62FBAD?t:state:flow=7b9e5b0e-)

[33b5-4881-b448-33f2723500a3](#) (Note: You can zoom in on the online version for more detail.)

For many years, Wethersfield served as an active river port. A double oxbow (a sharp U-shaped turn in the river) had created a deep oxbow lake¹ in that town which served as an excellent harbor. Thomas Deming built the first ship launched in Wethersfield, a sloop called the Tyrall², in 1649. Thus began a shipbuilding tradition in Wethersfield/Rocky Hill which lasted for over 200 years.

A hurricane in 1696 weakened the channel in which the river flowed and by 1700 the river had overflowed its banks creating a new straight channel and eliminating the north bend of the double oxbow. This converted the deep oxbow lake into a somewhat shallow cove (Wethersfield Cove) which was no longer suitable as a harbor. Wright's Island was overrun by the river creating one of many bars above Rocky Hill which made navigation above that point close to being impractical. Wethersfield's river port and ship building activities moved south to the Stepney Parish riverfront.^{ix x}

On the face of it, the Connecticut River didn't seem conducive to navigation and maritime trade. In the 18th Century, the Saybrook bar at the mouth of the river, which averaged six feet in depth, presented a barrier. If the bar could be crossed, the river offered more navigation problems. The river meandered to the sea. There were many oxbows and shoals with shifting, unpredictable silt bars which had to be navigated. At points, the river became very shallow. Moreover, the river is a tidal river so the downward current and the rise and fall of the tide had to be factored in. The river floods in the spring and the current flows strongly downriver. This complicates travel upriver during this period. The hills which rim the river create changing, swirling, unpredictable winds which provide few opportunities to raise sails. Ice was a danger from late November to late April and fog was a recurring problem.^{xi xii}



Again, Yankee ingenuity came to the fore to overcome these impediments. While the river created a challenge, the prospect of trading goods produced in Central Connecticut such as apples, apple cider, barley, corn, beef, flax, hemp, pears, pear cider, peas, pork, rye, tobacco, and wheat, created an opportunity.^{xi}

¹ A deep accumulation of water at the base of the 'U' in the upriver oxbow.

² An ancient spelling of Tryon, a prominent family name along the river.

Rocky Hill shipbuilders designed small, shallow-draft ships capable of carrying the region's goods, such as horses ³, lumber, deer and beaver pelts, cattle, hay, hoop-poles ⁴, pipe staves ⁵, bricks, salted beef, pork, and fish, corn, potatoes, onions, and other produce down the river. Ships returned carrying goods such as wool, cotton, rum, brandy, wines, sugar, tea, molasses, salt down the river and returning with goods from southern states and Caribbean islands, such as rum, brandy, wines, sugars, teas, molasses, salt, coal, and other goods ⁶. Rocky Hill shipbuilders were skillful enough to build ships, mostly sloops, some schooners, and a few brigs which were small enough to navigate the river but had enough cargo capacity to make a trip to the south or the Caribbean islands then back up the river profitable.^{xi}

Sailors found ways to navigate up and down the river. One way was by towing ships with rowboats. Sometimes they sent crews ashore or into shallow water to pull the ships along with ropes. Often they would row an anchor out ahead of the ship, drop it, and 'kedg' up to the anchor to pull the boat over shoals and bars. ⁷ Sometimes one or more men would sit on the boom which would be let out, and the weight of the men would cause the ship to list, thereby lessening its draft.^{xi}

Merchants were able to turn a profit even though a trip up the river usually took as long as a trip from the Caribbean to the river's mouth, about two weeks. ^{xi xii}

Roger M. Griswold, a turn of the 20th century historian, described Rocky Hill as one of the busiest, most significant ports on the Connecticut River during most of the 18th century. It is credited with servicing the towns west of Hartford including Newington, New Britain, Farmington, and Cheshire.^{xi}



A ship of special note was the Minerva. At the beginning of the Revolutionary War, the United States has a very small navy and the states maintained navies of their own. The Minerva was the first ship commissioned by Connecticut. She was a brig, two-masted and square-rigged. She carried a crew of 100 men and 16 guns. She was probably built in Rocky Hill by her owner, William Griswold. She saw service as a ship of the Connecticut Navy and as a privateer. There is a common impression that the ship on Rocky Hill's town seal is the Minerva. This can't be true since a brig like the Minerva has two masts and the ship on the town seal has three. ^{xi xiii}

³ Cattle were typically driven to an ocean port like New London, the ship was sailed down the river without this weight, and the cattle were loaded in the ocean port.

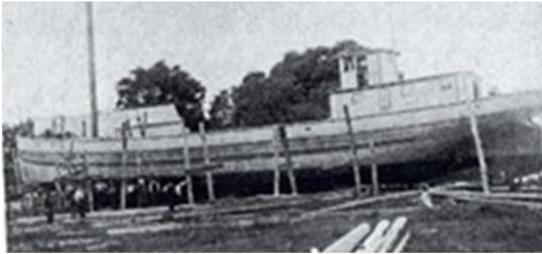
⁴ A sapling used for vertical barrel staves.

⁵ Used in making horizontal barrels.

⁶ This isn't intended to be an exhaustive list. The canny Yankee sailors were able to adapt to opportunities as they arose.

⁷ Kedging involved using a winch having crewmen manually haul the line up to the anchor.

As long as the Connecticut River was left in its natural state, Rocky Hill functioned as the practical head of navigation because the sand bars north of Rocky Hill made it too



*(Seabury Belden Shipyard –
Mike Martino: Rocky Hill Remembered)*



Seabury Belden

shallow to navigate ⁸.
With the advent of improvements to the river such as dredging, levees, and navigation aids, the river opened to Hartford and points north. Rocky Hill's importance as a river port began to wane although, as late as 1870,

sailing vessels were still operating from Rocky Hill docks. Although dredging opened Hartford's wharves to commerce, Rocky Hill continued to receive goods and offload freight and passengers during times of low water. The last shipyard in Rocky Hill, the Seabury Belden Shipyard, closed about 1903, ending Rocky Hill's era of commercial maritime activity. ^{xiv xv xvi}

Rocky Hill and Slavery

Slaves in Rocky Hill

The population of African-Americans in Rocky Hill has always been small. They were 700 African-Americans in Connecticut in 1730 out of a total population of 38,000 or a little less than 2% of the population. Two percent of the population of approximately 800 people in Rocky Hill in 1730 would have amounted to about 16 African-Americans. ^{xvii}

The African-American population of Connecticut increased by 40% between 1756 and 1774 which calculates to about 22 African-Americans in Rocky Hill. We know that Squire John Robbins owned 7 or 8 slaves ⁹, and that Elias Williams, William Griswold and William Webb were also slave owners. There were probably others. The slave owners we know of were all mariners and had probably been desensitized to the evils of slavery during their trips south. ^{xvi ci}

The General Assembly put a halt to the growth of slavery by declaring that, "No Indian, Negro, or Mulatto shall at any time hereafter be brought or imported into this State by sea or land from any place or places whatsoever to be disposed of, left, or sold within the State." Slaves already in the State would continue in bondage. In 1784, the General Assembly passed the first Gradual Emancipation law. It provided that anyone born a slave after that time would be freed on their 25th birthday. A second Gradual Emancipation Act was passed in 1797 lowering the emancipation age to 21. Slavery was outlawed altogether in 1848, although by that time there were only six slaves left in the entire state. In 1898 there were three African-American families out of 266 total families in Rocky Hill. ^{xviii xix xvii}

⁸ Head of Navigation is the farthest point upriver to which an ocean-going vessel can navigate.

⁹ Rocky Hill folk lore credits Squire John with owning the most slaves north of the Mason-Dixon line although the Middlesex Historical society reports that Phillip Mortimer clearly owned more slaves and Rhode Island slave owners owned many more.

Rocky Hill and the Slave Trade

Many historical Rocky Hill documents have nebulous references to Rocky Hill sailors

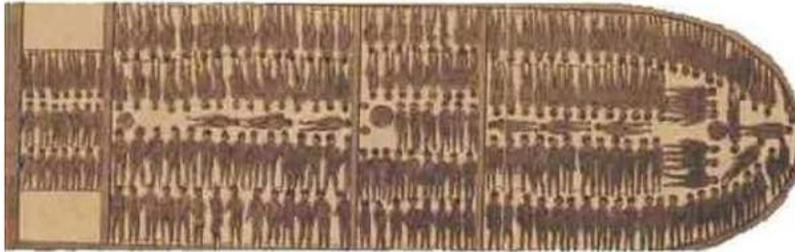


By SimonP at en.wikipedia - Modification made by SimonP. Transferred from en.wikipedia, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2547506>

being involved in the Atlantic Triangle Slave Trade. While there are some records of Rocky Hill ship's captains returning from the southern ports with 3 or 4 slaves, apparently as part of their personal estates, this was not the Atlantic Slave Trade. The Atlantic Triangle Slave Trade involved large-scale traffic in slaves, cash crops, and manufactured goods between West Africa, Caribbean or southern American colonies, and New England (primarily Rhode Island) or Europe^{xx}. If it was a

clearly defined, highly profitable, if deplorable, on-going industry. Given that Rocky Hill was a small river port, 50 miles up a hard to navigate river, and accessible by ships with a limited cargo space, it seems unlikely that Rocky Hill was ever a terminus for the Atlantic Triangle Slave Trade.

The oldest known reference to Rocky Hill's involvement to this trade is in Stiles's *History Of Ancient Wethersfield* where he states that "the Probabilities are" that because sailors



Slave Ship Brooks, approx.. 600 slaves on board

from Narragansett Bay traded in slaves, "enterprising men" from Rocky Hill made "an honest dollar" in the slave trade.^{xvi}

The most glaringly wrong statement here is that anyone who traded in African slaves would be characterized as an enterprising man making an honest dollar. Trading in African slaves was illegal in Connecticut as of 1774 and in the United States as of January 1, 1808. If our sailors traded in slaves, they weren't enterprising men making an honest dollar; they were criminals. It is also a poor argument to equate Newport or Providence, with their deep-water ports which were open to the sea and capable of accommodating the largest ships, with Rocky Hill, a port 50 miles up the hard-to-navigate Connecticut River which accommodated primarily small sloops and schooners. The ports on Narragansett Bay did, indeed, traffic in slaves and were capable of accommodating large ships like the infamous slavers, the Brooks and the Tacora of Amistad fame.

Later historians, apparently, citing Stiles, used terms like “it is probably safe to surmise,” (Roger M. Griswold) “it stands to reason,” (Roderick Wilscam) and “a local historian hints” (unattributed 1930 Hartford Courant Article) to justify claiming that Rocky Hill was involved in the Atlantic Triangle Slave Trade. Phrases like this are suspect and the stuff of folk lore. New England’s involvement in the slave trade was negligible compared to Great Britain, even in Rhode Island. Granted, any degree of involvement in salvery was shameful.^{xxi}

If it proves true that Rocky Hill was involved in the Atlantic Triangle Slave Trade, then we should accept and own this ugly truth. If it proves untrue, we should be glad that we don’t have this stain on our legacy.

The Underground Railroad

Although there is ample evidence that slavery existed in Rocky Hill, there is also evidence there was opposition to it. Importation of slaves from Africa to Connecticut was outlawed in 1774. The Gradual Emancipation Acts of 1782 and 1797 slowly made slavery in Connecticut untenable (although it was 1848 before slavery was entirely abolished in Connecticut). This is not to say that Connecticut was a beacon of enlightenment. There were Black Laws on the books which often forbade African-Americans to work, own property, or even live in some towns. These laws made it all but impossible for an African-American to survive, let alone thrive, in Connecticut.^{xxii}

Even as Connecticut was in the process of phasing out slavery, two acts of Congress criminalized helping slaves to escape their bondage. The 1793 Fugitive Slave Act forbade abetting slaves in their escape, but this law proved ineffective because it failed to address



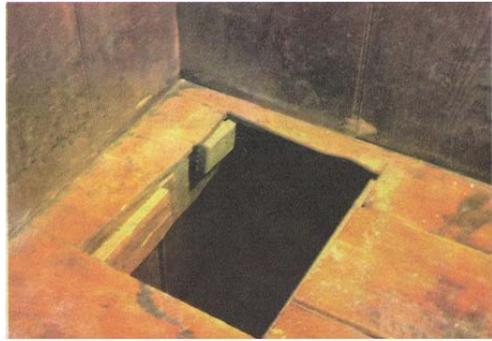
60 Riverview Rd. A slave girl lived here in 1820.



20 Riverview Rd. was a stop on The Underground Railroad.

the interstate nature of the escape routes (the Underground Railroad). In 1850 the Second Fugitive Slave Act was passed as part of the Compromise of 1850. It allowed for slave catchers to act across state lines and imposed legal penalties for harboring slaves. It’s ironic that southern slaveholders, who have traditionally been rabid advocates of state’s rights, used the power of federal legislation to protect the “peculiar institution” of slavery.^{xxii}

It is difficult to document the activities of the Underground Railroad in Rocky Hill accurately because they were illegal and because there were probably people in Rocky Hill who supported slavery and would turn their neighbors in for harboring slaves. However, Rocky Hill was an ideal location for a stop on the Underground Railroad. There is ample evidence that it served as one. It was a stop on the Post Road and was still an active, if diminished, river port.



20 Washington St. – Slaves were hidden here

A survey of slave ownership reveals that the slaves owned in Rocky Hill were owned primarily by mariners and the abolitionists we know of were often their children. Elias Williams was a documented slave owner ^{xxiii} while his son, Eliel Williams, had a slave closet in his attic at 82 Elm Street. ^{xxiv} William Webb of 60 Riverview Road owned a slave girl in 1820 ^{xxv} while his neighbor Lewis Whitmore was sheltering fugitive slaves at 20 Riverview Road. ^{xxvi}

Early Industry

Mills at Dividend¹⁰

The following report is a brief history of Rocky Hill's first industrial park that was located in the southern extremities of the town in an area known as Dividend which was reached by a road of the same name.

When Wethersfield was granting concessions for public use in the 17th century they reserved a strip of land 20 rods ¹¹ wide from Coles Hill on the east side of the burying ground southward to “Bulkeley's Corne Mill” site. Later, this narrow strip, part of which was used for a roadway, was divided among adjoining proprietors and some other sections were divided into small lots. Hence, the name Dividend was applied to this section of Rocky Hill.

Dividend is located approximately eight miles south of Hartford in the south end of the town of Rocky Hill, Connecticut, adjacent to the Cromwell town line.

Dividend Brook, which flows through this property, originates in the western part of Rocky Hill and flows in an easterly direction to the Connecticut River. The brook is a small stream which meanders through an area called "Pleasant Valley" located between Route 99 ¹² and the Connecticut River. There are two natural waterfalls along this stretch of the brook. It is along this section of Dividend Brook that Rocky Hill's first industrial park began. It grew and flourished until the early 20th century when all industry here finally ceased.

In 1661, 28 years after the settling of Wethersfield, the town made a concession to

¹⁰ The content of this section is copied, for the most part, verbatim from a paper entitled “Historical Report of Dividend Brook Industrial Archaeological District, by June Cooke, 2008.

¹¹ One Rod = 5” 6: so 20 rods is 110 feet.

¹² Once known as the Stage Road, Saybrook Turnpike, Route 9, Main Street, and Main Street.

Governor Winthrop of 140 acres conditional on his erecting a corne mill (gristmill) there. He failed to do so, and in 1668 he released the property back to the Town of Wethersfield. In 1665 the Reverend Gershom Bulkeley, minister of the First Congregational Church in Wethersfield, expressed, to the Town officials, an interest in building a grist mill.

In 1667 the town of Wethersfield granted to Rev. Bulkeley 115 score acres¹³ together with Mr. Stone, the Reverend's assistant. Mr. Stone received 100 acres and 110 acres went to Rev. Bulkeley. Rev. Bulkeley's acreage extended all the way to the Connecticut River.

At the most easterly waterfall on Dividend Brook, where the Connecticut Valley Railroad now spans the stream, is the site where Rev. Bulkeley built his gristmill in 1667. The town of Wethersfield gave him permission to flood as much of the town land as he needed to produce sufficient waterpower to operate his mill. This mill pond later became known as "Lower Dividend Pond."

Later, Rev. Bulkeley was granted an additional 150 acres towards the west. He then relocated his



Ruin of Mill on Dividend Brook

gristmill upstream in a hollow just below the second most westerly waterfall. Here he utilized the natural rock outcropping as part of a new dam which created a pond now known as "Upper Dividend Pond." Here in 1758 he added a ship's bakery to the gristmill facility where a variety of hard bread and biscuits were produced for vessels sailing to the West Indies and other foreign ports. An old

account book at the Connecticut State Library verifies the bakery was still operating there in the years 1797-98. Gershom Bulkeley's gristmill remained in the family for five generations-a span of one hundred and fifty years.

In the late 1700's Ephraim Goodrich established a saw mill on the site of Rev. Bulkeley's original gristmill. It is possible that Rev. Bulkeley's son Edward had a fulling mill there also.

This was the beginning of industry along Dividend Brook. Both the Upper and Lower ponds still exist. Some stone work of Bulkeley's original dam can still be

¹³ A "score" means 20, so 115 X 20 = 2,300 acres.

seen. The building of the railroad in 1871 obliterated the bulk of the original gristmill site.

In 1775 Deacon Simon Butler and his partners Josiah Curtis and Burrage Merriam built another gristmill on Dividend Brook near the Middletown Road. Also, at this time, Butler built a long berm along the hillside between the dam and the gristmill to create a holding pond for water to power his gristmill. After about 50 years of use Capt. William Butler, Simon's son, took over the property and erected a new building on the site of the old one. The mill was in use until about 1870 when it was then owned by Robert Sugden Jr. For a year or two prior to 1870 Fredrick Butler made pen handles there. The mill was demolished about 1880.

In 1829, a short way upstream from the gristmill adjacent to the dam, Capt. William Butler built a saw mill.

Some stone work from Butler's gristmill dam is still intact as is the holding pond which it created. A small amount of cement work is still visible at the gristmill site along with two iron rods in a vertical position. Everything else is entirely gone.

About 1830 Gershom Bulkeley's gristmill property passed out of the family. A Mister Russell manufactured axes here for a short time.

In 1845 Leonard Welles and Alfred Wilcox manufactured chisels, plantation hoes, saws and other edged tools here for many years until Wilcox's death, the result of an accident with the machinery. Following Welles and Wilcox, Joseph Jory, an English blacksmith, produced the first never-slip horseshoes with removable corks at this site in 1866. He sold the patent for these horseshoes a year later for \$10,000.00 to a firm in Boston.

After Jory, C. E. Billings constructed a new mill building, replacing the old one. This building was used mostly for drop forgings.

Charles Billings started out at Dividend in Rocky Hill and ultimately founded the Billings and Spencer Company of Hartford, Connecticut and also the Billings & Spencer Company Limited of Welland, Ontario, Canada¹⁴.^{xxvii} ^{xxviii} The Rocky Hill Historical Society provides a detailed history of Dividend Pond along with maps and several informative videos at <http://www.rhhistory.org/dividend-pond.html>.

A small gristmill was still in use nearby. Remnants of the drop forge operation still remain.

In 1854 William Sage Butler and Robert Sugden Jr. established a foundry downstream from Butler's sawmill. They constructed a dam¹⁵ upstream from the foundry site which created a three acre pond. A long sluiceway had to be built to carry water from the pond to power machinery at the foundry.

At this time Butler and Sugden petitioned the Town of Rocky Hill to build a road from Dividend to the Middletown Road, thus Pleasant Valley Road was laid out

¹⁴ This area is the site of Dividend Park in 2017. It contains scenic trails with historic markers and is a great way to take a pleasant walk and learn about Rocky Hill's History.

¹⁵ This dam collapsed March of 2001.

and constructed in 1854

This foundry was called the Pleasant Valley Foundry (noted on the Rocky Hill 1869 map as the "Shear Factory"). They manufactured shears, which were reportedly sold all over the United States and Canada. They also produced lamp brackets and miscellaneous hardware. In 1857 Butler patented a single shot, muzzle loading pistol. This pistol was cast in one piece after which the barrel was bored out and the frame was then fitted with the trigger mechanism. These pistols were produced at this site. According to the 1860 Industrial Census, the Pleasant Valley Foundry employed 30 men and 4 women. This census lists pig iron, molding sand, coal, etc. as materials used at the foundry and indicated power, to run machinery, by water.

In 1863 Mr. Sugden purchased the interest of his partner, William Sage Butler for \$6,000.00, containing 10 acres with a dwelling house, barns, saw mill, gristmill and factory buildings standing there on which included land covered by a pond. Said pond covered about 3 acres. Mr. Sugden continued in business until October 8, 1865 when the foundry and finishing shops were destroyed by fire. The fire was believed to be the work of an arsonist.

Mr. Sugden again went into business with his former partner, William S. Butler. They rebuilt the business and in 1868 sold the business to Elisha Stevens, a toy manufacturer in Cromwell. Stevens then went into partnership with George Brown, a pattern maker, from Forestville, Connecticut. At this foundry they produced miniature toys, cast iron banks and many types of chandeliers. In the mid 1870's this business was also destroyed by fire. Stevens and Brown became insolvent. Elisha Stevens satisfied all of the company debts after which he went into bankruptcy. The business was never rebuilt.

Several of the original shear molds and molds for lamp brackets were recovered in the course of excavation, others still remain, along with many other artifacts related to the business. The site is otherwise untouched.

In 1884 Charles Billings and George D. Edmunds built a new brick building on the hill south of the Bulkeley dam and operated machinery by a long belt from the mill in the hollow. Manufacturers' tools were made here. The small gristmill continued in operation there. Edmunds continued operations at least until the 1890's. From a photo taken about 1909 it appears the building was still in use. The cement steps from the building down the hillside to the brook are still intact. There are also tool remnants imbedded in cement footings near where the building stood. Slag piles and remnants of the foundry furnace are still visible at this site.

xcv

Tinsmiths and Yankee Peddlers.

Yankee Peddlers are another example of Yankee Ingenuity. Just as the seafarers on the Connecticut River recognized the value of their town's goods, found a market for them, and developed a means of conveyance, so did the Yankee Peddlers. Yankee Peddlers got their start in Berlin, Connecticut when, in the 1740s, the Pattison brothers, Irish immigrants, established themselves as tinsmiths and sent sales representatives up and down the east coast to hawk their wares.¹⁶ The Danforth family, who were based in Norwich, Connecticut at the time, followed suit. The practice soon spread to surrounding towns and the wagons of Yankee Peddlers were soon rolling along roads up and down the east coast.



The typical peddler evolved from being a commissioned salesperson who specialized in one product into an independent entrepreneur who obtained goods on consignment, loaded them into a specially built, efficiently loaded wagon and, most often, sold them to individual housewives along the route.^{xxix}

Connecticut owes its unofficial title of the Nutmeg State to these peddlers. The story is that customers in the south accused the peddlers of selling them nutmegs carved out of wood. Hence, the sobriquet was meant to be a slur on the peddler's honesty. A nutmeg is encased in a hard shell, much like a hazel nut. The peddlers claimed that the witless Southerners didn't know that they had to remove the shell to get at the meat and grated away at the wood-like shells to no avail.^{xxix}

The Danforth family moved their operations to Rocky Hill and became highly successful tinsmiths with operations in Rocky Hill, and Philadelphia. They were conspicuous contributors to the production of tinware for the Yankee Peddlers. Thomas Danforth III of Rocky Hill was a mentor to many tinsmiths and silversmiths including another son of Rocky Hill, Ashbil Griswold. Ashbil was trained as a tinsmith by Mr. Danforth then moved to Meriden, Connecticut where he made his mark as one of the leading silversmiths of his time.^{xxix}

Many Yankee Peddlers hit the road with wagons loaded with the works of Thomas Danforth III and Ashbil Griswold^{xxix}.

¹⁶ Some sources say the Pattison brothers were based in Meriden or New Britain.

The Foundry

The foundry was located on the river bank at the end of Glastonbury Avenue beginning in 1865. It was in almost continuous operation from then until 1983 when labor unrest



Champion Manufacturing



Connecticut Foundry

forced its closure. Although the foundry burned down twice, once in 1865 and again 1918, it was rebuilt both times. Apparently the operators felt the products created there justified the occasional inconvenience of rebuilding. From 1900 to 1916 the site was occupied by the Champion Manufacturing Company. There is a display at the Rocky Hill Historical Society of some of the interesting articles forged at the foundry.^{cii}

The Foundry experienced violent labor unrest in the 1970s and 1980s and that, along with pollution issues related to the air and the river, forced its closure.

The ruins of the foundry are still there in 2017 and plans are being made to develop this scenic riverfront property.

Fishing

People have fished the Connecticut River throughout history. There were hunter/gather Indians who fished; there were sailors who fished; farmers who fished; Ferrymen and



Shad Fishermen – Early 20th Century

shopkeepers who fished. Fishing was a common way for Rocky Hill residents to add to their food supply and income.

There are many varieties of fish in the river. Among the most prominent are shad, alewives, and northern pike, although you may cast your line and pull out trout, bass, blue gills, and other surprises. There are many accounts during the late 19th and early 20th centuries of prominent people coming out to Rocky Hill from Hartford, the state capital

and a cultural and financial hub at the time, to dine on the town's shad at the Shipman Tavern or DeRyer's Inn where it was considered a delicacy.^{xvi}

The Hale family was typical of Rocky Hill river people. There is an extensive account of them, at <http://www.rhhistory.org/historical-papers.html> in the Searchable Histories file entitled *Shad Fishing on the Connecticut River: Arthur Hale*. There are also two videos on this site which show fishing on the river. *Alewifes Fishing 1930*, shows the Hale family at work. Another video, *Shad Fishing: Essex, Ct*, is a documentary of shad fishing on the river.

In the 1960s, an awareness grew that years of industrial pollution and untreated waste was making the river's fish dangerous to eat. In the years since, the river has been cleaned up substantially. The United States Department of the Interior designated it one of fourteen American Heritage Rivers and a "Blueway" in 2012.

Although the river is much improved and in 2017 is a popular recreation resource, fish, regardless of their source, have suffered from years of pollution and it is wise to check with The Connecticut Department of Public Health before eating fish from the river.^{xxx xxxi}

Ice

In our age of refrigeration, it is hard to remember what a significant part of Rocky Hill's economy the ice industry was. Ice farms dotted the New England landscape in the 19th and early 20th century, including Charter Pond which was owned by the Spring Brook Ice Company. The southern terminus of the Charter Pond was at the Goffe Brook dam in Rocky Hill and the northern terminus was where Millwoods Park in Wethersfield is today. The ruins of this dam still exist just south of where Interstate 91 crosses over Old Main Street.



There was another ice farm along Dividend Brook. Ice farmers prided themselves on the clarity and purity of their ice and took great pains to prevent bubbles and impurities.^{xxxiii}



tray.

Frederick Tudor of Boston developed methods for storing ice and preventing it from melting in the early 19th century. The first use for this new technology was to provide ice for domestic use. Most households in America, including those in Rocky Hill, had an ice box, the precursor of the refrigerator. An iceman would come to the house at regular intervals to deliver large blocks of ice for the ice box. In spite of insulation, the ice would melt and one of the household chores was the daily emptying of the drip



Ice Cutting

<http://connecticuthistoryillustrated.org/>



Ice Truck & Horse-drawn Wagon

<http://connecticuthistoryillustrated.org/>

It wasn't long after Tudor's discovery that ice could be stored that enterprising Yankees realized that they could combine these technologies with their maritime culture to ship ice to the southern states and the Caribbean, both for consumption and as a primitive form of air conditioning. Again, Yankee ingenuity capitalized on an opportunity.^{xxxii}

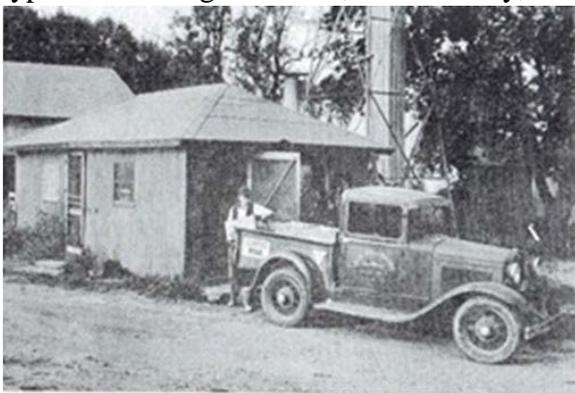
The ice industry lasted into the 1930s when refrigerators replaced ice boxes and reefer vehicles replaced the old methods of transporting ice over distances. The Spring Brook Ice Company still exists in New Britain, Connecticut selling ice and heating oil.^{xxxiii}

Other Industries

Yankee ingenuity involved spotting opportunities and seizing upon them. The same person was often a ship owner, storekeeper, farmer, and anything else that yielded a profit. At various times in the town's history there were tanneries, wagon makers, blacksmiths, corn broom makers, and numerous other profit making enterprises.^{xvi}

Farming

Had it not been for its position as a river port, Rocky Hill might have been simply a typical New England town, that is to say, a rural agricultural community. Rocky Hill has always had a farming tradition which was at least as important as its maritime endeavors and its industries. A review of the cargos that left Rocky Hill shows many agricultural goods being shipped south. This created a market which allowed Rocky Hill farms to boom.



Milk being loaded at Elm Hill Farm on Elm St.
Across from Ashwell Ave. in 1936.

Dairy farming accounted for much of Rocky Hill's farming. There were several very large farms in town including Broadview Farm, which covered much of the northeast part of town, and Sunnycrest Farm which spanned Parsonage Street and

extended from Chapin Street to Orchard Street. The Gilbert farm once included land now occupied by Rose Hill Cemetery, the Veteran's home, and an orchard which covered much of the land now occupied by the tennis club, the Big Y market, and land to the south. There is an excellent description of pre-industrial farming at Broadview Farm by

Hamlin Robbins at <http://www.rhhistory.org/historical-papers.html> - Searchable Histories. There is also a great deal of information on farming in Rocky Hill at <http://www.rhhistory.org/farms.html>.

Early Churches

The Fundamental Orders, Connecticut's first constitution, were created by the Congregational Churches of Wethersfield, Windsor, and Hartford. They were a civil manifestation of the Congregational tradition of governance by the congregation and were one of the building blocks of American democracy. While the Congregational Church was dominant, Rocky Hill wasn't a theocracy. Until 1818, everyone, regardless of religious affiliation, was required to financially support the Congregational Church. Attendance at Congregational services was mandatory unless a written statement was provided by a clergyman which stated that you were attending the services of another faith (i.e. you were required to affiliate with 'respected' religion). The Connecticut Charter of 1818 changed that. The Congregational Church was disestablished and separation of church and state replaced.^{xxxiv} The Congregational Church is still a pillar of



Rocky Hill Congregational Church



United Methodist Church

the Rocky Hill community. It occupies the south end of Church Street with the Methodist Church occupying the north end.

Meetings of the Methodist Church began in 1830 in an old sail loft near the river. Meetings were held over the years in a number of venues including a church located where the present church now stands and which burned down in 1894. The present church was dedicated in 1895.^{xxxv}

Medicine

In early New England, medicine was a cottage industry. There were midwives and bonesetters to provide some care, but medical care was typically provided at home. For the first 200 years after the first colonists arrived, there were no hospitals or medical schools. Oatmeal (poultice or internal) and soggy Chinese tea leaves (eaten) were

considered medicines. If someone got sick, the only recourse was to a do-it-yourself book like *English Physician, Every Man His Own Physician, or Domestic Physician*.

The Rocky Hill Historical Society's Center Cemetery tour progresses from the grave of 'Baby' Deming who died on the day she was born in 1730, very likely for lack of professional health care, to the grave of Aaron Hosford, one the first physicians in Rocky Hill. As the tours goes from doctor's grave to doctor's grave, it provides a history of health care in Rocky Hill.



Rufus W. Griswold,
Doctor, Historian



Oran Moser,
Doctor



David Moser,
Doctor, 1st Mayor

Doctors Joseph Higgins and Aaron Hosford were the first of a series of country doctors who serviced Rocky Hill. Dr. Daniel Fuller succeeded Dr. Hosford. Rufus W. Griswold began practicing medicine Rocky Hill in 1854¹⁷. Doctor Frank L. Burr was a protégé of Doctor Griswold. ^{xxxvi}The Rocky Hill Historical Society has the tools of Doctors Griswold and Burr in their collection, along with Doctor Burr's bag, and "shingle."^{cii}

Doctor Oran Moser set up practice in Rocky Hill in 1902. Dr. Moser was known for making house calls at all hours and in all kinds of weather; on horseback, on a bicycle, later by automobile, and sometimes on snowshoes. One can imagine Dr. Moser getting a call on his old-timey hand-crank phone during a snow storm, getting on a bicycle or horse-drawn sleigh, getting as close to the patient's home as he could, then strapping on his snowshoes to complete his mission. Dr. Moser's legendary snowshoes are in the Rocky Hill Historical



Society's collections. ^{cii}

During World War I Dr. Moser was the Examining Physician for the Hartford County draft boards. He was also the primary physician at the Connecticut Veteran's Home at Rocky Hill from 1932 until 1940.

¹⁷ This is the same Doctor Griswold whose notes were used by Henry Stiles for the Rocky Hill section of *History of Ancient Wethersfield*.

On September, 1, 1918 he was appointed Health Officer and Medical Examiner of Rocky Hill and held that post until October 6, 1952.

He never really retired and he died, still serving the community, on November 10, 1953. South School in the south end of Rocky Hill was renamed the Moser School to honor Dr. Moser in 1947.

Doctor Moser's son, David, was also a country doctor in Rocky Hill. He became the first Mayor of Rocky Hill in 1967 and filled that role until 1973. ^{xxxvii}

Rocky Hill Comes of Age

Incorporation

By 1840 the town which would become Rocky Hill had all of the prerequisites required to justify its being a separate town. It had a population of about 900 people and a thriving economy. Stepney Parish residents, wanting their own government, first petitioned Wethersfield for independent status in 1820. While this was not approved, a later petition to Wethersfield was approved on May 16, 1840, and by the Connecticut General Assembly on June 10, 1843. Thus, Rocky Hill became a separate town with its own government. The new government was to hold an annual town meeting and be governed by three Selectmen assisted by a Town Clerk, Treasurer, Assessor, Board of Relief (to dispense charity), Constables, and Grand Jurors. A few other positions were created like Tithingman, Haywarden, and Measurer of Wood but these eventually disappeared. ^{xxxviii}

The Town Meeting/Selectman form of government lasted from 1843 until the current Rocky Hill Town Charter was adopted on June 17, 1967. The Charter is still in effect with revisions having been made in 1970 and 1985. ^{xxxix}

Ground Transportation Replaces River Transportation

River Improvements and Steamboats

During the 18th century roads were poor, although stagecoaches, which plied the Old Stage Road¹⁸, were a common mode of passenger transportation. Rivers and large lakes provided the primary avenues of commerce. This restricted economic growth. The solution to this was construction of internal improvements which first manifested themselves in the digging of canals and later the building of railroads. ^{xl}

For most of the 18th century Rocky Hill enjoyed a privileged position as the best northern-most landing point on the Connecticut River for seagoing vessels. It also enjoyed the benefits of being the home of the ferry across the river to Glastonbury. ^{xvi}

The late 18th and early 19th century brought changes. As early as 1770 there were people working to put navigation markers in the river and dredge it to open navigation upriver to Hartford and beyond. Many river-based sailors and shipbuilders opposed this because they had gotten used to coping with the hazards of the river and weren't open to the increased competition improvements would bring. About 1790, dredging and other improvements began on the most hazardous points in the river. The pressure exerted by interests in Hartford ensured that further improvements would be made. ^{xli}

¹⁸ The Stage Road seems to have been the lower branch of the Upper Post Road which ran through Rocky Hill



<https://connecticuthistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/FarmingtonStagecoach-e1343314102347.jpg>



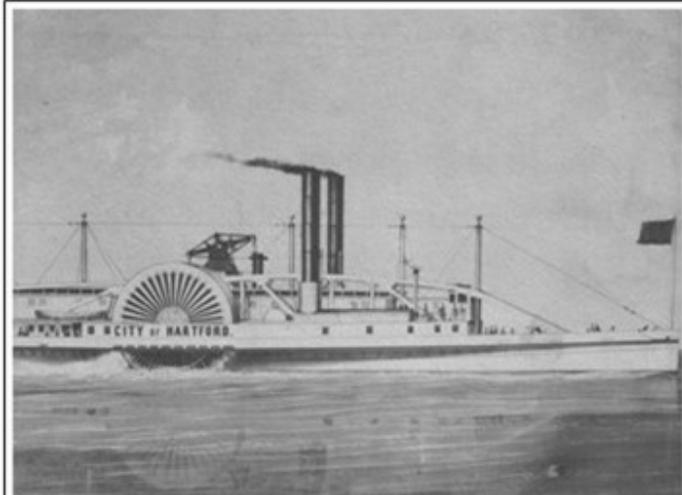
Length = 75', Beam = 14 1/2', Draft = 22"
 Connecticut Canals, Charles Rufus Harte, Mar. 16, 1938

Another factor which changed maritime traffic on the river was the introduction of the steamboat. The powerful, shallow-draft steamboats, churning their way up a dredged, charted, and deepened river began to eclipse the sail-powered, old fashioned maritime tradition of Rocky Hill.^{xii}

The River, the Farmington Canal, and Steamboats



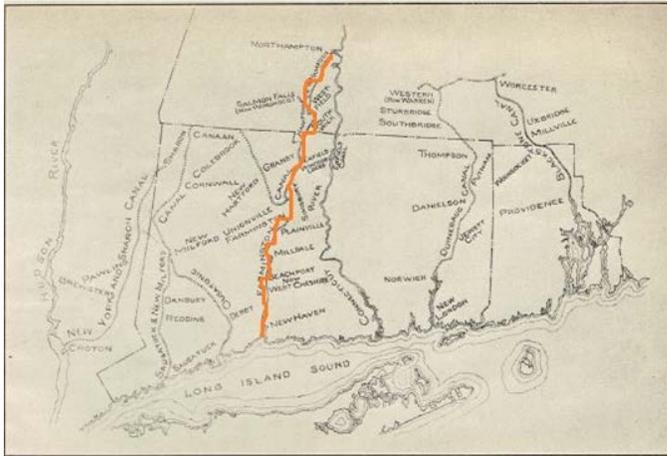
Connecticut Valley Railroad



City of Hartford Steamboat circa 1850

Yankee ingenuity was again in full bloom as new technology was introduced and applied to transportation. Sadly, this time Rocky Hill didn't take the lead or even keep up. Maritime interests in Rocky Hill opposed navigation improvements and the replacement

of sail with steam. While entrepreneurs in Rocky Hill were responding to change by working to maintain the status quo, other Connecticuters were involved in some dramatic innovations. Among them was construction of the Farmington Canal from West Haven, Connecticut to Northampton, Massachusetts with plans to extend it to Lake Memphremagog in Vermont. River interests responded by improving navigation on the river through such means as building canal locks



Farmington Canal

north of Windsor to bypass the Enfield Falls¹⁹ which had always been an impediment to northern navigation.^{xli}

The competition between the Canalites and the Riverites was so intense that none of them heard the toot, toot of the train whistle. Why churn up a river or canal for days at a time when you can load your passengers and cargo aboard a train and deliver them upstate or downstate in a matter of hours? The rivers and canals routinely froze in the winter while railroads were open year-round except in the most extreme weather.

Rocky Hill heard the whistle and responded, demanding a stop on the Middletown/Hartford Railroad as early as 1854. The Valley Railroad began stopping in Rocky Hill in 1871. This provided a boost to Rocky Hill's economy as a train could take advantage of the Rocky Hill-Glastonbury Ferry to pick up and unload cargo originating on both sides of the river. The railroad operated in Rocky Hill until 1975.^{ci xlii}

Motor Vehicles, Bridges, and the Ferries

Much as the railroad took business away from the river and canal, the advent of trolleys



Bulkeley Bridge



Arrigoni Bridge



Charter Oak Bridge



Putnam Bridge

took passenger business away from the railroads. Motor vehicles, in turn, cut into the short haul freight business of railroads and the passenger business of steamboats, trolleys, and the railroad.^{xliii} These evolutions in transportation resulted in radical changes to

¹⁹ These canal locks gave the town of Windsor Locks its name.

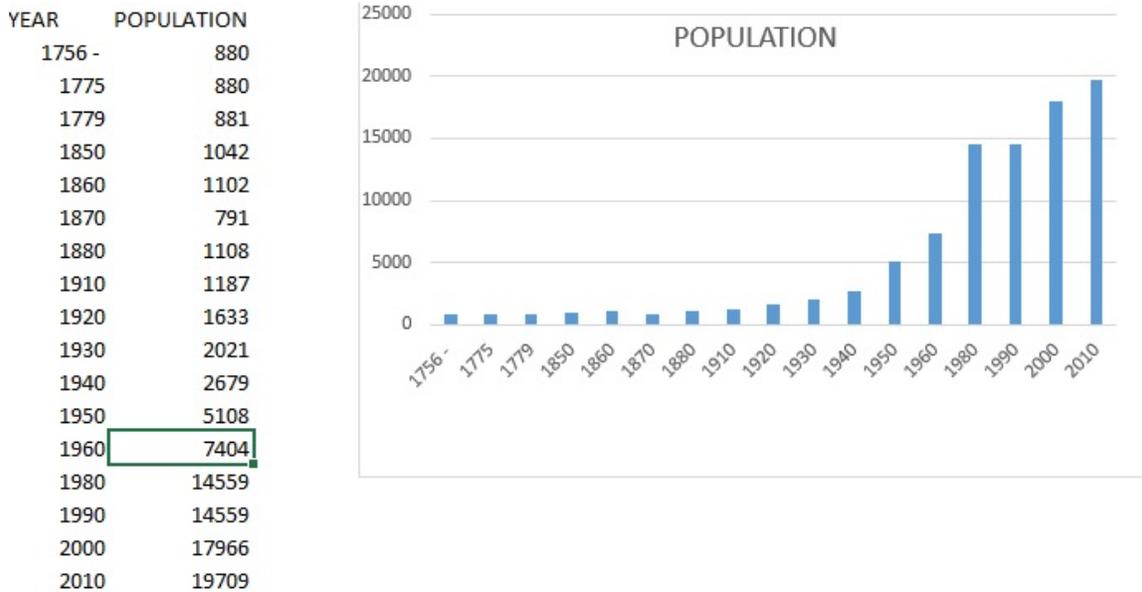
Rocky Hill, transforming it from a rural farming community to a residential suburban hub.

For many years, the Rocky Hill-Glastonbury Ferry was one of many successful ferries across the river. The Hartford Wagon Bridge was adequate to support the needs of ground transportation ^{xliv}. Toward the end of the 19th century, motor vehicles arrived on the scene and a movement to build bridges across the river threatened the ferry industry. ²⁰ At the turn of the 20th century, construction of bridges which were capable of supporting motor vehicle traffic began. In 1896 a bridge was built in Middletown. In 1908 the Bulkeley Bridge in Hartford replaced the Wagon Bridge which had burned down in 1898. The Arrigoni Bridge in Middletown opened in 1938. The handwriting was on the wall. The Charter Oak Bridge opened in 1942, and the Putnam Bridge opened in 1959. ^{xlvi xlvii xlviii xlix}

As more bridges were built, the ferry became what it is today: a pleasant, convenient way to cross back and forth between Rocky Hill and South Glastonbury. It also serves as an alternative when there are problems on a bridge. It is has become a fun resource to use on your day off and, as the oldest ferry in the United States in continuous operation, it is a historical treasure. ^{ci}

Suburbanization.

A chart of the population of Rocky Hill shows quantum leaps in the population as the means of conveyance to and from nearby cities became more efficient and accessible.



The population grew by a third when the trolley came through. With the coming of the Silas Deane Highway, it jumped from 2021 in 1930 to 5,108 in 1950 (even though the Great Depression and World War II impeded migration).

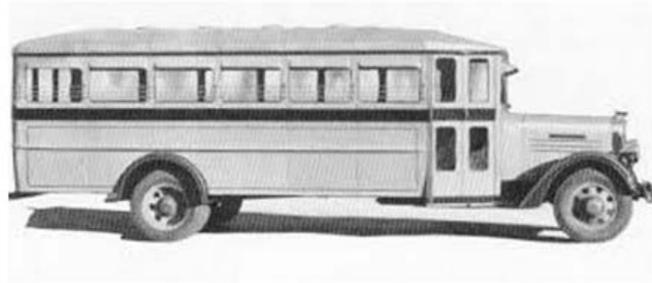
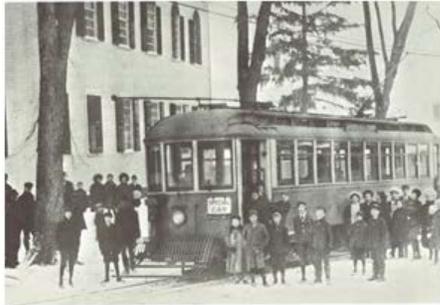
²⁰ See <http://www.rhhistory.org/historical-papers.html> Searchable Histories > Ferry, Rocky Hill Glastonbury papers.

Interstate 91 caused a quantum leap in population from 1960 to 1980 and fundamentally changed the nature of the town. Rocky Hill went from being primarily farm-based to being a thriving suburban residential community.

Commuting

Railroads, Trolleys, and Buses

The arrival of the railroad in 1871 made it practical for people to commute to Hartford and Middletown. In an oral history, (<http://www.rhhistory.org/historical-papers.html> > Historical Papers > Searchable Histories > *Harry Hick and Samuel Dimmock - Late 19th, Early 20th Century*) Harry describes the train stopping at the Rocky Hill station and commuters running to catch it.



Commuting became easier in 1909 when the electric trolley service started. It ran from Hartford down Farmington Avenue in Hartford, down Wolcott Hill Road in Wethersfield, across farms and woodlands, through Griswoldville, across where Parsonage Street now crosses the Silas Deane Highway, then to the corner of Old Main Street and Washington Street where there was a station. The trolley then ran up Old Main Street and the Saybrook Turnpike to Middletown. The Connecticut Company replaced the trolley with bus service in 1931¹.

Silas Deane Highway

By 1930, The automobile era was in full swing. The Silas Deane Highway²¹ opened in that year and commuting to Hartford by automobile became common. It is worth noting that, as recently as the 1960s, the Silas Deane Highway in Rocky Hill was a sparsely populated strip with a few farm stands and shops along it, not the backbone for strip mall after strip mall that it has become^{xlix.ci}



Silas Deane Highway - 1966

In a private conversation, Ralph Hick told a story about his father, Harry R. Hick carpooling to work on the Silas Deane to Aetna Life and Casualty in

Hartford. One member of the pool traveled from far-away Higganum.

²¹ Silas Deane was a Revolutionary era diplomat from Wethersfield. He served as ambassador to France and as a delegate to the Continental Congress.

Farms Give Way to Real Estate Development

Interstate 91

Interstate 91 fundamentally changed the town in that it made it practical for people to leave crowded cities such as Hartford, Middletown, and New Haven and buy comfortable, affordable houses in the suburbs. Wethersfield had been thoroughly suburbanized by 1960 and Rocky Hill was the next logical place to expand.

This expansion is a poignant story of a comfortable status quo coming up against practical reality. The tug of nostalgia for a passing time must be weighed against the practical need for housing for a growing population. The Rocky Hill Historical Society



Neumann Farm House
On Elm St. west of
Gilbert Ave.



Interstate 91 where the
Neumann Farm stood.

has launched a project to collect oral histories from people who remember the Rocky Hill of prior years. One of the themes being pursued is recollections of farm people as well as those of real estate developers and the descendants of real estate developers. The goal isn't to take sides but to capture what has been a watershed time in Rocky Hill's history.

Demographic Changes and More Churches

On January 24, 1898 the Hartford Courant reported on a Connecticut Bible Society census of Rocky Hill ^{li}. The demographic breakdown was as follows:

ETHNIC GROUP	NO. OF FAMILIES
Anglo-Saxon	195
Irish	42
German	10
French-Canadian	6
African	3
Swedish	3
English	2
Scottish	2
Hungarian	1
Italian	1
Polish	1

Religious affiliation broke down as follows:

DENOMINATION	NO. OF FAMILIES
Methodist	81
Congregationalist	75
Roman Catholic	68
No preference	13
Baptist	9
Episcopal	8
Lutheran	6
Unitarian	3
Seventh Day Adventist	1

Times had changed. Where Rocky Hill had once been a Protestant Anglo-Saxon town, there was now a diversity of nationalities and Christian religions. You no longer had to get a note from your clergyman if you didn't attend Congregation services. 13 families stated no religious preference; this may mean they were agnostic, atheistic, or apathetic. The record shoes that Jewish Families lived in Rocky Hill at this time. It's tempting to suspect that 'no preference' may have meant "not Christian."

Catholics in Rocky Hill

In the mid-19th century, Irish refugees began to arrive in Rocky Hill, probably as a result of the Potato Famine. The first Mass in Rocky Hill was offered in 1853 at the home of William Kelley by Father Lawrence Mangan of the Hartford Diocese. At the time, the Catholic population of Rocky Hill was too small to justify more than just a visiting clergyman. Services were held on the second floor of Academy Hall by Reverend John Ryan, the pastor of the Cromwell Parish. By 1878, the Catholic population of Rocky Hill had become large enough to justify the town having a mission, although it remained under the jurisdiction of Cromwell. Saint James Roman Catholic Church opened on Chapin Avenue in 1883. ^{lii}



St. James on Chapin St.



St. James on Elm St.



St. Elizabeth Seton on Brook St.

The opening of the Quarry brought several Italian families to Rocky Hill from Carvara, D’Abbruzzi a mining town in east central Italy. By the time of America’s entry into World War I the Italian population had grown substantially and had become an integral part of the community.^{cix}

After the war, the construction of the Silas Deane Highway and reliable bus service made it possible to live in Rocky Hill and commute to work in Hartford. Between 1910 and 1930, the population of Rocky Hill had doubled. By 1950, it had grown fourfold. A significant number of these new residents were Roman Catholic. In 1946, Saint James was designated as a parish in its own right and by 1960, the new Saint James Church on Elm Street had been built and dedicated.^{liii cix}

As the Catholic population of Rocky Hill continued to grow, some of the parishioners of Saint James felt a need for another church. Consequently, Saint Elizabeth Seton Roman Catholic Church was founded by Archbishop John F. Whealon of Hartford in 1984 as a mission of St. James Church. Early services used folding chairs and a converted drafting table as an altar. Space for the church was loaned to parish by the Wiremold Company and early parishioners jokingly called the congregation Saint Wiremold.^{liv}

St. James and Elizabeth Seton churches were consolidated in 2017 as a cost-saving measure. The new church will hold services at the old St. James Church. It will be named St. Josephine Bakhita after a Sudanese Saint of the late 19th century.^{lv}

Episcopalians



The 1898 Hartford Courant Article on Rocky Hill demographics showed eight Episcopalian families living in Rocky Hill. As early as 1914, services were being held in private homes.^{li} Sacraments were administered in Rocky Hill in 1928^{lvi}. As the general population of Rocky Hill grew, so did the Episcopalian population. An Episcopal Church mission began holding services at the Stevens School in Rocky Hill in February of 1961. Services at the newly constructed Saint Andrews Episcopal Church began in December of 1962^{lvii}.

Present Truth

William Miller (February 15, 1782 – December 20, 1849) was an American Baptist preacher who is credited with beginning the mid-19th century North American religious movement known as the Millerites. After his prophecies of the Second Coming did not occur as expected in the 1844, new heirs of his message emerged, including the Advent

Christians (1860) and the Seventh-day Adventists (1863). Later movements found inspiration in Miller's emphasis on Bible prophecy. The Bahai faith believes his predictions of 1844 events to be accurate.^{lviii}

Ellen White²² and her Husband James were staying with Albert Belden, another avid Millerite, at his farm on what is now France Street in Rocky Hill when Ellen had a vision. She sensed that God wanted her husband to cease his labors for Mr. Belden and write about his faith. He did this. The result was a tract entitled, *Present Truth* which became the foundation for many of subsequent Seventh Day Adventist beliefs and literature.^{lviii lix}

James White completed *Present Truth* in 1849 and walked eight mile to Middletown to mail it. In modern times, Seventh Day Adventists come to Rocky Hill to retrace James White's steps and commemorate this event.^{lx}

Schools

Education has always been a priority in New England Towns. Stepney was no exception. The town was exempted from paying taxes for education to Wethersfield in 1701 because it had procured its own teacher. Classes where held in private homes.^{xvi}

The first school building was built in 1712 in the middle of what is now Old Main Street, south of where Church street is located, on the east side of that street²³. In 1718, a second school was built on Cole's Hill where the flag pole in Center Cemetery now stands. Over much of the 18th and 19th centuries, schools were built and replaced as the population of Rocky Hill rose and fell and needs changed. A paper on <http://www.rhhistory.org/historical-papers.html> > *Searchable Histories, Brooks, Ruth Warner: Rocky Hill Schools* provides a detailed history of Rocky Hill schools.

Until the mid-20th century children walked to school, often walking several miles. Rocky Hill's schools were built to serve the four quadrants of town. Hence the oldest, North School²⁴, was built to serve children in the northeast part of town, The Center School District was accessible to children who could easily reach the center of town.²⁵ West



Center District



North District



South District



West District

Rocky Hill Schools at the Turn of the 19th Century

School, and later, West Hill School²⁶ served the west. South School sat at the corner of

²² Ellen White, who is believed to have a gift of visions and prophesy, was one of the founders of the Seventh Day Adventist Church.

²³ In early Rocky Hill, streets were very wide dirt roads and buildings were often built in the middle of the street.

²⁴ North School was converted to a private residence and still exists on Old Main Street.

²⁵ The Center School District consisted of Academy Hall, a building which is at the north east corner of Rocky Hill Town Hall, and one other building.

²⁶ West School was located on the northeast corner of the intersection of Elm Street and Cromwell Avenue.

Main and Forest Streets until Moser School was built in 1947²⁷. Moser is due to be replaced by a new intermediate school in the near future.

Not all Rocky Hill students went to high school until after World War II. Of those who did, wealthier students, who could pay the tuition, took the train to Hartford Public High School. Those who were less wealthy went to Middletown High School. After World War I, Rocky Hill students started attending Wethersfield High School using the trolley



Old Middletown High School

By Joe Mabel, CC BY-SA 3.0,
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=19378816>



Hartford Public High School

which had been introduced in 1909. In 1930 the trolleys were replaced by public buses which delivered students to Wethersfield High School. Rocky Hill High School was opened in 1955 and the Rocky Hill High School which exists in 2017 was opened in 1981.^{cxii cix}

Libraries

Until 1794, Rocky Hill people must have used the Union Library Society in Wethersfield,



Rev. Calvin Chapin House

although this involved travel and inconvenience. In 1794 the Social Library of Stepney Parish was formed under the sponsorship of the Congregational Church's pastor, Rev. Calvin Chapin. This library was a subscription library with 68 original subscribers who had access to the 87 original books and subsequent purchases. Rev. Chapin was the Social Library's first librarian, and the books were kept in his home which still exists at the southeast corner of Elm Street and Chapin Avenue. The library was subsequently relocated to a store on

the ferry landing.

The Free Library of Stepney Parish was established in 1795, one month after the Social Library of Stepney Parish. The Free Library was established because many residents of Stepney Parish resented the fact that membership in the Social Library was contingent on

²⁷ South School still exists at the corner of Forest and Main Streets. It had been used as a police station, home of the ambulance service, and is currently the home of Rocky Hill Public Television.

acceptance by a membership committee. The rules of the Free Library stipulated that the only qualification for membership was payment of dues (without any other screening process). Having two libraries in a small place like Stepney Parish created competition and contention.

By the 1820's more open-minded people were making the decisions and cooler heads prevailed. The two libraries agreed to combine and take the name of the original Social Library. The two libraries combined in 1829.

When Rev. Chapin retired, the new pastor of the Congregational Church, Rev, Louis Rockwood, became librarian. He merged the Social Library with another organization he had formed and established the Social Library Association of Rocky Hill. The library was run from his home at 42 Riverview Rd.

By 1876, it was generally agreed that the library should have its own home. The Rocky Hill Library was formed and merged with the Social Library in 1877. In 1886, the library moved to the second floor of Academy Hall where it remained until 1896. The library was moved to the former Valley Hotel, also called the Bulkeley House, on the south corner of Grimes Road and Main Street.²⁸

The library the Rocky Hill Library Association began was an effort to establish a permanent home in 1899 with the purchase of land on Church Street²⁹. A library building was dedicated in December of that year.

In 1925, operation of the library was turned over to the town as a free library, i.e. without the fees which had been required in the past.

At a town meeting in 1950, the library was named the Cora J. Belden Library after a woman who had been active in support of the library and who, along with her husband Elwood Belden, had been active in town affairs.

²⁸ Note that this building has served as a hotel, a post office, and as the library.

²⁹ This building was on the west side of Church Street, where the OR&L Realty parking lot is in 2017.

In 1967, the library building which currently exists was dedicated on Church Street. lxi lxii



Rev. Chapin's Home



42 Riverview Rd.



Valley Hotel



Academy Hall



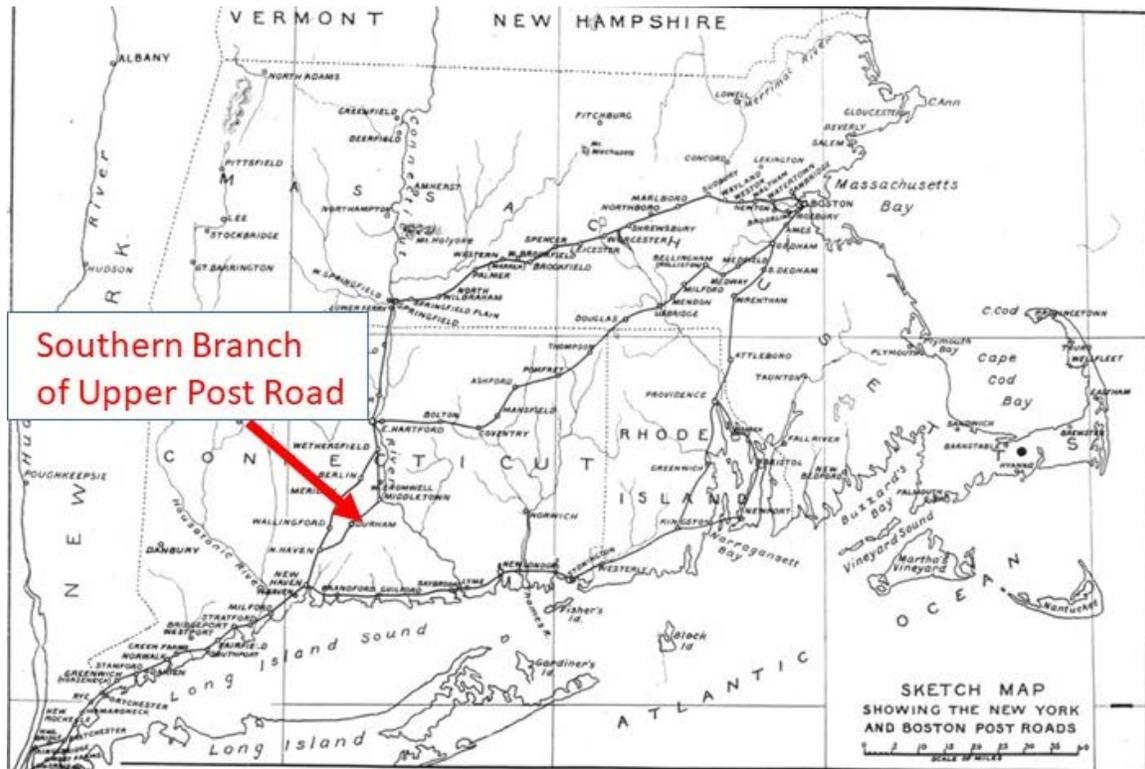
Old Church St. Library



Cora J. Belden Library

Public Services

Postal Service



In 1673, a branch of the Upper Post Road opened running from North Haven to Wethersfield and Passing through Rocky Hill. During this period, mail delivery was typically carried on horseback three times a week and mail was delivered in both directions.^{lxiii}

The first post office in Rocky Hill was established in 1802 when the Saybrook Turnpike opened, probably in the home of the first postmaster, Isaiah Butler. Mail was delivered on the turnpike, using a stagecoach. In 1812 the Valley Hotel at the south corner of Grimes Road and Main Street served as the post office³⁰.

Over the years, several people served as postmaster using various private homes, stores, taverns, and rental spaces. After years of moving around the Post Office settled in its current building in 1975.^{xvi}

Police

For most of Rocky Hill's history, until 1937, law enforcement was the purview of the state policing agencies supported by town constables. During this period the constable's civil duties included collecting taxes, notifying freemen of town meetings, reading laws enacted by the General Court at town meetings, executing commands of the Court, keeping the peace, and maintaining order in the market places. Constabulary duties were in addition to the constable's other means of employment. There was also a military aspect to the constable's duties. This included stopping the sale of arms to Indians,

³⁰ This building still exists in 2017. It has been the post office, the library, and a popular Inn.

ensuring that citizen's arms were in working order, and custodianship of armaments owned by the town.^{xvi}

The Silas Deane Highway opened in 1930, ushering in a dramatic increase in automobile



Rocky Hill's first police cruiser, a 1938 Ford Standard Tudor, photographed in June 1938. Car was black with gold lettering, featuring two fog lights, a roof mounted spotlight, a siren and a one-way radio.

traffic and population and an increased need for law enforcement. The first Board of Police Commissioners was formed in 1937 to oversee the constables and, in 1937, the town hired its first full-time police officer, Elmer J. Edwards. In 1938 he was named its first Police Chief. The town also bought its first cruiser, a 1938 black Ford Standard Tudor. The cruiser had a one-way radio which could only receive calls from the dispatcher in Hartford. The first supernumerary was also named at this time to supplement the

constables. State police were responsible for murders and fatal accidents. Constables handled traffic issues, burglaries, and other non-fatal events and had the power to arrest. Constables supported the State Police with illegal activities such as gambling, prostitution, and illegal liquor sales.

As the town has grown, the police department has grown with it. Staff and equipment have been upgraded to keep pace with population growth. By the early 1950s the needs of law enforcement resulted in the old South School being converted into a police station. The police force was composed of one chief, 1 full-time officer, 9 male, and 2 female supernumeraries.^{lxiv lxxv}



Forest Street Police Station- 1950



Old Main Street Police Station - 2017

In the early 1960s, the completion of Interstate 91 precipitated a period of rapid growth which continues to this day. The need for a modern, well-equipped police force wasn't immediately apparent to the town's funding agencies. In 1960 the threatened resignation of the police chief and a key patrolman was necessary to induce the town to staff and equip the force for modern needs. Obvious upgrades like an in-town radio dispatcher and 2-way radios were implemented. The police station began to be manned 24x7.^{lxvi lxxiv}

Today's Rocky Hill Police Department is a modern, up-to-date police force with state-of-the-art equipment, a SWAT team, K-9 support, equipment for law enforcement on the river, and a program to warn school children of the dangers of drugs.^{lxiv}

You can learn more about the Rocky Hill Police Department at <http://www.rockyhillct.gov/police/>

Fire Department

When you visit the Rocky Hill Fire Department, you come away thinking, "This is a band of brothers." There is a focus on preparedness and training and a palpable sense of loyalty and cohesion. Their equipment is state-of-the-art.^{lxvii}

This wasn't always so. From the early days of the town until 1927 fire protection was provided by ad hoc groups of townspeople who responded to alarms issued from the bells of the Congregational Church to form bucket brigades and fight fires. A volunteer fire department was formed in Wethersfield in 1803 but, given that transportation was via foot or horses, response from Wethersfield was not of much help. Disastrous fires were a part of Rocky Hill life before 1927. For instance, Academy Hall burned to the walls in 1839, and the foundry burned to the ground in 1865 and 1918. Articles in the Hartford Courant show that domestic fires were an everyday occurrence and, although the community rallied in the face of misfortune, protecting oneself from fire was an individual responsibility.^{lxviii}

That all changed in 1921. Elwood Belden owned a store on the west side of Old Main Street between Academy Hall and the Congregational Church. There was also the Grange Hall, a barbershop, and a grist mill and storage sheds used by Belden. A dirt path, which became Center Street, ran between the Grange Hall and Belden's store. There was room for all these buildings because the northern extension of the Congregational Church hadn't been built yet. The fire seems to have occurred as a result of a petroleum fire at Belden's Store. Belden's Store provided one of the town's early gas pumps and had a



Rear of Congregational Church



Ruins of Belden Store



View of Fire Scene from west

1921 Fire

large storage tank to service it. He also had a large storage tank from which he sold kerosene. On April 21st, a fire started which engulfed the Grange Hall, Belden's Store, the barbershop, and several barns and storage buildings to the west. The bucket brigade protected the Congregational Church and Academy hall but all the other buildings were burnt to the ground. Fire equipment from Wethersfield and Hartford finally arrived and brought the fire under control.^{lxviii lxix}



A town meeting was called on April 27, 1921 to address the need for fire protection but, because of resistance from ‘rugged individualists’, nothing came of it. The need for fire protection was finally acknowledged in 1927 with the purchase of a pumper and construction of the firehouse which is now the fire museum.^{lxviii}



Station # 1 – 739 Old Main St.



Station # 2 – 52 New Britain Ave.



Station #3 – 3050 Main St.

The fire department has grown as the population of the town has grown. In 1927, The Insurance Services Organization gave Rocky Hill one of its lowest ratings. Today it has one of the highest. The growth of the fire department has outstripped the growth of the town, and today, we have fire protection which is equal to and, in many cases, superior to the professional organizations in many large cities.

You can learn more about the Rocky Hill Fire Department at http://www.rockyhillct.gov/fire_department/.

Ambulance Service

Like the Fire Department and Police Department, the history of the Rocky Hill Ambulance Service tells the story of how our town has evolved from a place where people were expected to be self-reliant and cope with emergencies on their own to a place

where cooperation with fellow town's people resulted in a relatively safe environment of mutual support.

An article in the Hartford Courant in 1903 tells of a kerosene fire in which a mother and her son were killed and a son badly injured. The fire was quickly controlled and the injured people were laid out on the lawn and dosed with morphine. An ambulance from Hartford was called but there was no coordination services and the ambulance had to await authorization from Hartford's mayor before responding. This took several hours. The mother and son, who might have survived, died waiting for the ambulance. ^{lxx} Emergency responses improved somewhat over the years, but a person in need of an ambulance in Rocky Hill was still reliant on a speedy response from one of the nearby cities.

In 1946, the Wethersfield Volunteer Ambulance Service covered emergencies in Rocky Hill, although there was still a disturbing lag in response time. In order to respond, the Wethersfield service required a call from a doctor, the fire department or the police department. The volunteers then had to be alerted, get to their response vehicle, and drive to Rocky Hill. ^{lxxi}

It's hard to fully appreciate the importance of a readily available ambulance until you need one. The first ambulance service based in Rocky Hill came about almost by accident. In 1955, the Police Department petitioned the town for several equipment upgrades, all of which were rejected. The result of this frugality was that, after the only



police cruiser was totaled in a car chase, the town was left without a police car. The police force took advantage of the pressing need for equipment to

ask for a new cruiser/ambulance, a 1956 Dodge Sierra, four-door, eight passenger station wagon equipped with a stretcher, medical kit, and small oxygen bottle. Although the vehicle was used primarily as a police cruiser, a sub-group of the police department was trained by Dr. David Moser to serve as an ambulance squad. They were trained in basic first aid procedures, including how to deliver a baby. ^{lxxii lxxiii}

In 1971-1972, a meeting was held with town residents to establish a town ambulance service. In 1972, the Rocky Hill Volunteer Ambulance Service was established as an independent organization. In the summer of 1973 the association purchased the first ambulance from the Volunteer Ambulance Service (although this ambulance may have



Old Fire House



Forest Street Ambulance Service



Old Forge Ambulance Service

been borrowed); a 1970 Cadillac for \$7500.00. Twenty one members of the police force from the existing ambulance association, with advanced first aid certification, were given intensive ambulance training using the new vehicle. In September, 1973, the RHVAA began service to the town with 15 members. The ambulance was housed at the old fire house on Church St.

In 1974 first year calls totaled 185 with 15 riding members. In 1974-1975 they moved to the corner of Main and Forest St in the old police department building, In 1983 the RHVAA advanced to the intermediate level of care, we were among the first volunteer association to go to this level. In 1990 the RHVAA advanced to the next level of care – Paramedic. RHVAA was the first volunteer EMS provider to be certified at the level. At that time they contracted with Professional Ambulance Service to provide the Paramedics. In 1994-1995 two more ambulances were purchased. During 1997, RHVAA responded to 850 emergency calls with three ambulances on line and a membership of forty three. ^{lxxiv lxxv}

The President of the new association estimated that the ambulance could reach any place in town in five minutes as opposed to the 12 to 18 minutes it took for a commercial ambulance to respond.

In 2017, the Ambulance Service is a state-of-the art installation located at Fire Station #3 at the corner of Main Street and Old Forge Road. During the day, Aetna Ambulance Service furnishes Emergency Medical Services. Aetna Ambulance has a contract that provides paramedics 24 hours a day, every day of the year, as well as daytime ambulance transport services. Rocky Hill Ambulance has seven EMS vehicles: three ambulances, one paramedic vehicle, a UTV (all utility terrain vehicle), one vehicle for staff and one vehicle for the Chief. The service is funded by billing and donations. Part of the donations go into a scholarship fund for high school seniors who are pursuing a career in the medical field. A donation to the Ambulance Service is money well spent. ^{lxxvi}

Today they provide the town with emergency coverage Monday – Friday 6pm - 6am and 24hour coverage on the weekends and holidays. There are 53 active members and in 2016 they've responded to 1356 emergency calls. ^{lxxvii}

You can learn more about the Rocky Hill Ambulance Service at <http://www.rockyhillct.gov/ambulance/index.php>.

Public Works

The Department of Public Works doesn't get noticed or appreciated until there is a breakdown in service. In fact, they may be subject to hostility while doing their work, as when a street (which one of our grumpier citizens wants to use) is closed for repairs.

There was a time, as was true with fire protection and law enforcement, when Rocky Hill residents had to take care of themselves for public works other than road maintenance. The 1920 Rocky Hill Annual Report showed public works expenditures only for roads.

Russell Canfield, who grew up in the south end of town at the turn of the 20th century, remembered that: ^{lxxviii}

"... then there was a shed that ran along north of the barn in which I could remember a big roller. I never could understand what it was for until I asked and found out that it was used in the wintertime to roll the streets to flatten the Snow down."



Jarvis Gilbert and Jared Dimmock remembered: ^{lxxix}

When it snowed they never plowed the road bare because the horses wouldn't be able to pull the sleighs on bare roads. On the State roads they didn't have trucks with a hydraulic system then so there was

always another man sitting beside the driver to turn a handle to raise and lower the plow.

Refuse

Trash was less of a problem in the early days because the frugal Yankees in Rocky Hill didn't waste much. If a thing could be recycled or repurposed it wasn't thrown away. For example, corn husks could be turned into brooms; corn cobs could be turned into pipes. If organic matter was edible, it was feed to the livestock. Goods didn't come in elaborate wrappings which had to be disposed of, and tin cans, bottles, or jars could be used for storage.

As early as 1937, the need for a town landfill was recognized, and in 1939, refuse collection began. ^{lxxx} With the population boom in the early 1960s, waste disposal became a serious problem in Rocky Hill. An incinerator in New Britain had been handling refuse. In 1964 a landfill, which would be a source of controversy and conflict for many years would open in the Rocky Hill meadows. ^{lxxxii} Over the years, until the late 1970s, the landfill was the cause of fights between the landfill operator and the fire and police departments, with many law suits, some death threats, allegations of Mafia involvement, and an FBI investigation. The Rocky Hill landfill closed in 1979, and Rocky Hill refuse went to the Hartford Landfill. ^{lxxxiii} Issues with the problematic landfill were raised as recently as 2013, when a company attempted to reopen the landfill for clean waste and it was discovered that the landfill hadn't been properly capped when it was closed in 1979. ^{lxxxiii}

Sewers and Drainage

Until the 1960s, water service, sewers, and drainage were accomplished through wells, septic tanks, and brooks and streams. With the advent of tract housing and other residential development, these proved inadequate.

One Rocky Hill resident who grew up on a farm remembered the transition. He remembered the streams which had watered his cattle being put into conduits and his family being taxed for the improvements which forced them to sell their land. Most of the old timers recognized that change was inevitable and some found economic opportunities in selling their land attractive. Still, many remember transition from farms to suburbs with a sense of melancholy ^{lxxxiv}

The Rocky Hill taxpayer's association heard a presentation from the Metropolitan District Commission in January of 1954, so, even then, the town realized a need for sanitary measures to accommodate the burgeoning population. ^{lxxxv} In 1957 sophisticated drainage systems were being installed in the eastern part of town, and with the coming of Interstate 91 and the housing boom, sewers were becoming common in all parts of town. ^{lxxxvi}

Public Works Today

The Public Works Department provides a broad spectrum of services to the Rocky Hill community, focused primarily on the maintenance, repair, and construction of town infrastructure. Below is a brief overview of their primary responsibilities:

- Street/highway maintenance and construction
- Storm water Management
- Collection and disposal of municipal solid waste and recyclables
- Snow/ice removal
- Procurement, maintenance and repair of all Town owned vehicles and equipment
- Street signs and line striping
- Select open space and roadside mowing and maintenance
- Street sweeping
- Miscellaneous support services to other Town agencies ^{lxxxvii}

For more information see

http://www.rockyhillct.gov/departments/public_works/index.php.

Growth and Change

Electricity, Telephones, Radio

Until the end of the 19th century, there was no electrical service, telephones, or radios in Rocky Hill. The trolley came to Rocky Hill in 1909 and general electrical service followed in 1913. ^{lxxxviii} Electricity enabled party line telephones, with hand cranks for ringing up the operator. Dial phones weren't available until 1939. ^{lxxxix}

As for entertainment, you could read, do handy crafts, break out the guitar or banjo, or go to a public event at the Grange Hall, Shipman's Tavern, Mechanic's Hall or some such place. Harry Hick was the first town resident to own a radio (actually a crystal set). He got his license to transmit in 1912 when he was 19 years old. After World War I, radios became a common feature in homes. Televisions appeared after World War II but for

many years Rocky Hill was a rural town. Television reception was sketchy, and Channel 3, then WTIC, was the only station with reliable local reception.^{ci cix}

The Quarry

In 1898 there was one Italian family in Rocky Hill. The Quarry changed that. A short



Trap Rock Compressor

article in the November 3, 1899 Hartford Courant describes a crew of fifteen Italians at work on a railroad spur to the Quarry. We know that these fifteen men were miners from a town named Carvara, Abbruzzi, a mining town. Over the next few years, more Italians came to Rocky Hill, mostly from Carvara, and by the start of World War I, of the 95 people who served in the military during World War I, 14

were from Italy.^{ci cix}

The Quarry provided trap rock which was used primarily for road beds and river dikes. It was a booming operation for many years. “Booming” is an accurate characterization. Oral histories from Dr. Constantine Zariphes and Ruth Warner Brooks describe the sounds of explosions in the quarry and the roars of huge, often hard tired, trucks entering and exiting on Esther Road. There are several videos and documents on <http://www.rhhistory.org/quarry-park.html> which provide a wealth of information on the Quarry.

Rose Hill Cemetery Park

Rose Hill Cemetery Park opened in 1931 on land purchased from the Gilbert Farm. It is called a Park because there are no headstones, and plaques are flush with the ground. The administrative Building was added in 1940 and, in 1946, a funeral chapel was opened at the cemetery where wakes and services could be held.^{xc} Rose Hill is one of the most used cemeteries in the Hartford region.

Veteran's Home.

In 1932, The Fitch Home for Veterans and Orphans was located at Noroton Heights in Greenwich County. It had been in operation for sixty eight years and was substantially



deteriorated. A supply farm owned by a state mental facility on Retreat Avenue in Hartford was purchased by the state to supply the Fitch Home, and a few veterans moved there to operate the farm.

During this period, an important event occurred which would influence the future of Fitch. WWI veterans, including thirty five men from Connecticut, marched on Washington D.C. to

demand early payment of veteran's bonuses, which had been promised for 1945. The veterans were driven violently from Washington and our thirty five veterans returned to the state capitol building to apply for relief. Governor Wilbur Cross repurposed the Rocky Hill facility as a refuge for veterans in need. Word of this got out and many destitute veterans applied for admission. By 1940, after a great deal of political jockeying, it was decided to close the Fitch home and move the veterans to Rocky Hill.^{xci cix}

Parks

The Park Commission

Creation of a Rocky Hill Park Commission was suggested by the Rocky Hill Garden Club in a resolution presented at a Town Meeting in 1950. Later that year, the Board of Selectmen appointed Sigmund Adler, Russell Anderson and Roscoe Gardner, Jr., as the Town's first Park Commissioners. Their duties were outlined as follows: To beautify the town parks, greens, and other town properties.

The 1966 season started with a new Recreation Commission and the Commission elected the Town's first part time Recreation Director. All organized recreation and sports programs were his responsibility.

In 1967, Parks and Recreation, previously separate activities, were combined. With the approval of the Council, the Town Manager appointed a Parks & Recreation Advisory Board. In 1974.

In 1982 the Rocky Hill Parks & Recreation Department was awarded first place nationwide for towns under 20,000 population for outstanding "Life Be in it™"

programming, by the National Recreation & Park Association. The "Life Be in it™" campaign is a national effort to educate the public on the benefits of creative use of leisure. The program offered by the Department grew to 35 Programs per Season.

Ferry Park

The ferry landing and five acres of land attached to it have been a public resource since 1660 making it one of the earliest public parks in the Colony of Connecticut.

Plans to make the ferry landing a town park began in 1954. The Connecticut Foundry provided fill for the Park in 1957, and Ferry Park became Rocky Hill's first sizable public park in 1958. A boat landing was placed at the river's edge.

Hale's Landing marks the spot where each navigation season, the historic state-owned Rocky Hill-Glastonbury Ferry makes several daily trips to Tyron's landing in South Glastonbury and returns.

By 1960 Ferry Park had become a busy recreational boat launching spot, and two men were employed to collect fees and to enforce the rules as drawn up and posted in the Park. Picnic benches and tables donated by the Lions Club were installed, and a privet hedge planted along the western boundary line. When a new dock was installed, the area became increasingly popular both with local and out of town boating enthusiasts, and by picnickers and river watchers. The Council of Rocky Hill Garden Clubs planted and maintained floral and evergreen beds.

On June 4, 1974, ceremonies were held in Ferry Park to dedicate a sizable blue plaque which proclaims the Rocky Hill-Glastonbury Ferry as a State Historic Landmark. The Rocky Hill Garden Club continues to plant and maintain the flower bed at the base of the plaque.



In 1978 the Park was filled, graded and seeded. Picnic tables and benches and two gazing benches donated by the Rocky Hill Garden Club were installed by the Parks & Recreation Department. The boat launch and parking lot were resurfaced

in 1982, and a new dock facility installed.

A small restaurant is a popular spot in the summer, and the tugboat Cumberland, towing the barge Hollister, plies back and forth across the Connecticut from April to December, except on Mondays and Tuesdays.

Shipyard Park

In 1672, the early Wethersfield Colonists reserved five acres of land at the riverside for a public landing, and provided that it might be used for a shipyard. At various points in its history, this park has been known as Rope Walk Park, Riverview Park, and Shipyard Park.

The river front was once the center of activity with its shipyards, stores, taverns and mills. One house which still exists, known as “The Sail Loft”, stood opposite the Ferry landing. In this house, sails were fashioned for the ships built nearby.



The Rope Walk, a long covered building 600 feet in length, went up the hill to a spot at the rear of 39 Riverview Road. Here hemp rope was woven and worn rope dried and mended. The uphill end of this rope walk includes the present Shipyard

Park.

In 1949 the Rocky Hill Garden Club took on the project of creating a park on the Riverview hillside. On July 5th a flagpole and flag were installed.

The Civic Improvement Committee of the Garden Club located a boulder on the farm of Leland Gilbert and he moved it to its present location. The boulder is flanked with two blue-gray benches and a pebble path extends to the road. Evergreens and laurel were planted and an historic bronze marker was placed on the boulder.

The Green

There is a triangle-shaped green bordered by Pratt Street, Main Street, and Dividend Road which for many years has been an important sight for town events. It is unclear if this patch of land has ever been given an official name. In various documents, it is called Memorial Park, Cemetery Green, and Dividend Green.



The flagpole on the green is the result of a donation in 1917 by Joseph Bulkeley supplemented by donations from the town’s people. The original flagpole was wooden. It has been updated twice since 1917. In 1925, a monument to World War I veterans was installed by the town. In 1927 this was supplemented

by a World War I artillery piece.

Around 1960, the American Legion designed and contributed two Memorial plaques at Cemetery Green, one for World War II and the other for the Korean conflict. A much larger monument was later erected listing the names of all of the Rocky Hill people who served in the armed forces during World War II.

The Rocky Hill Garden Club placed a bronze marker at the foot of the "Constitution Oak" at the cemetery green. Local lore holds that this tree is from a cutting of the famous Connecticut Charter Oak although the two trees are of different varieties.^{xcii}

Bulkeley Park

In 1919, Joseph E. Bulkeley, the same man who championed the flagpole on Memorial Green, deeded an extensive wooded area of 24 acres along the river at the end of Oak Hill Road to the town. This land has been improved with hiking trails. It provides a wooded retreat with a pleasant view of the Connecticut River.

There is a legend that Captain Kidd buried a treasure in what is now Bulkeley Park, but you might as well leave your shovel at home. The origins of the story are pretty weak and, in over 300 years no one had found anything.^{xvi}

Dinosaur State Park^{xciii}

In August of 1966, bulldozer operator Ed McCarthy was digging the basement for a state office building when he flipped over a slab of grey sandstone containing ½ dozen strange markings.



Scientists for the University of Connecticut, Yale and other institutions were called in to take a look. They quickly determined that the markings were dinosaur footprints. Almost all of tracks are

Eubrontes, the track of theropod dinosaurs from the early Jurassic period. The Connecticut Valley has a long history of dinosaur footprint discoveries.

Work was stopped, and within 3 weeks the site was declared a state park by Governor John Dempsey. Two years was spent excavating the site, revealing over 2,000 dinosaur footprints. The site was declared a National Natural Landmark in 1968.

The original bubble building covered only the smaller trackway of 600 prints. Over 40 years ago, the bubble dome was damaged beyond repair and the permanent building – a geodesic dome - was built. The large trackway containing 1,500 prints was never covered by a building and was starting to show signs of weathering, so it was recovered to protect it from the elements.

Today, Dinosaur State park has approximately 50,000 visitors per year and the site includes 2.5 miles of hiking trails, an Arboretum, a picnic area, flower gardens and track casting and mining areas (seasonal). Inside the dome visitors can see the smaller trackway, museum exhibits and enjoy a Discovery Room.^{xciv}

Sunnycrest Park

Land for Sunnycrest Park was purchased in 1969 by the town from the Griswold family who owned Sunnycrest Farm. The State Department of Environmental Protection

provided half of the funds.

In 1975, Sunnycrest Baseball Diamond, Junior High Girls' Softball field, Sunnycrest Football field and the Stevens School Girls' Softball field were all developed and are currently maintained by the personnel of the Parks & Recreation Department.

In 1981, John and Ellen McVicar, (who constituted the entire Recreation Department for 13 years), were honored by the Connecticut State Recreation & Parks Association and presented with a plaque. In the Southwest corner of Sunnycrest Park (near Flanagan Field). The Rocky Hill Firefighters Association, with valuable assistance from Town employees, constructed a large covered pavilion made from discarded telephone poles and lumber.

Elm Ridge Park

In 1961, the town obtained the land which became Elm Ridge Park from the Connecticut Veteran's Home and Hospital. A road, required in the purchase agreement, was cut and 1,000 yards of gravel brought in as a base. Over 1000 feet of drainage tiles were purchased and installed by the Public Works Department.

The Junior Women's Club donated pre-School playground equipment for Candy Cane



City. The Town Recreation Department added several pieces of equipment for school age children. The American Enca Corporation donated a large whirl, and the Junior Women's Club (husbands) constructed a weather shelter. 1964 saw the completion of the fence along Elm Street, and the building of a road through the park. The Rocky Hill Lions

Club planted a large picnic grove and constructed fireplaces. The area was dedicated to the deceased members of the Lions Club at Memorial Day Services on May 30, 1965. The Lions Club also dedicated a 60 foot aluminum flagpole and flag on that day.

By 1966, five tennis courts were completed and plans for installation of bocce courts and drinking fountains were well underway. The following year the Little League diamond was completed and named in memory of Ronald DiMauro. On July 1, 1967, a Quonset hut for equipment and storage was erected, and in June, 1968 the swimming pool was dedicated. A soft ball diamond and five lighted tennis courts were highly successful, as was the basketball court.

In 1981 Amy Beardsley was hired as the first Aquatics Director operating Elm Ridge Pool and the high school pool. This unique approach of Parks & Recreation personnel handling all aspects of pool operation and programming within a Board of Education facility has served as a model for other Connecticut communities. This highly successful joining of forces between Town and Board of Education has exposed the residents to full use of a very expensive facility.

In 1981 the Friends of the Park were organized to fund-raise for playground equipment

for Elm Ridge Park. In 1984 the first fruits of their labor, a \$6,300. piece of redwood playground apparatus was installed.

Also, in 1981 the Town was awarded a \$160,000 grant to develop Elm Ridge skating pond and Little League field, by the State in the Land & Water Conservation Fund Program.

On July 29, 1982, Mrs. Inez Wormcke, for many years a member of the Town Planning & Zoning Board, including stints as Chairman and Vice-Chairman, was honored at the Park when a grove of maple trees in the playground was dedicated to her.

Quarry Park

The future of the quarry's site, a highly significant piece of Rocky Hill history, was jeopardized in 1987 when a developer petitioned to build condominiums there. The plan faced strong opposition, and the development was rejected. After rejecting the development, the Town Council voted to split the cost of the property with the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection. The state owns the land and has dedicated it to recreation. Hiking trails have been blazed and the park provides a scenic walk through the quarry's history. The park is thoroughly described at <http://www.rhhistory.org/quarry-park.html>.

Dividend Park

Prior to 20004, the Rocky Hill citizens were strongly opposed to the Town selling a 68-acre parcel of wetland which was to be included as part of a larger parcel of a proposed industrial park. They were aware of the historical and environmental significance of this parcel. On December 7, 2004, this 68-acre parcel in the Dividend area of Rocky Hill was set aside as open space in perpetuity following a Town referendum. In April 2006, this area was listed on the State Register of Historic Places and designated an archaeological preserve to be known as "Dividend Brook Industrial Archaeological District."^{xcv}

Before the archaeological dig in the early 2000s, Dividend Park was an area of blazed trails which, although popular with hikers, was sparingly used. It is a very different place today and well worth the visit. As you enter the park on Old Forge Road, you'll find a container with tour maps. These maps will lead you from place to place and at each stop there is a marker explaining what used to be there and its historical significance. There are enough ruins that a serious history wonk can envision what this area was like when it was a



booming 19th Century industrial area.^{xcvi}

The hills to the north forming this valley have been leveled for development. The hills to the south are presently being mined for sand and gravel. The northern slope of these hills which border Dividend Brook have been left partially intact.^{xcv}

Foundry Labor Problems

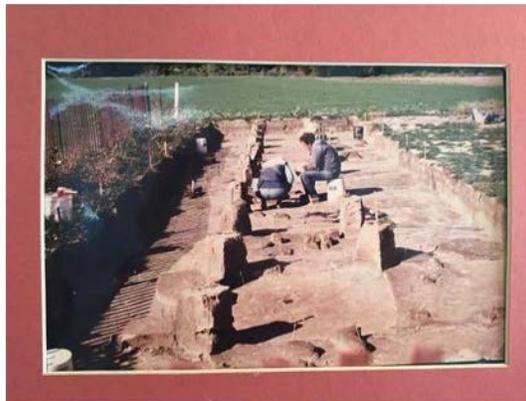
When you walk by the quiet, peaceful banks of the Connecticut River at the end of Glastonbury Avenue in 2017, it is hard to remember that in the 1970s and 1980s this was the site of violent labor unrest. The Teamsters had organized strikes in 1966, 1967, and 1971 without success, but by 1977 the International Ladies Garment Workers had sponsored a series of violent strikes that included fire bombings, tire slashing, bottle throwing, and a shooting which prompted the owners to cease operations and close the plant for a while. ^{xcvii} The union won certification in 1979, but the owners fought the certification until 1982 when it was reversed by a federal court. The foundry closed in 1983, for a number of reasons, including a slump in the industry, failure to meet pollution requirements, and an unmanageable level of debt incurred in fighting unionization.

Digging Up Native American History: The Morgan and Lone Pine Sites

In his oral history at <http://www.rhhistory.org/historical-papers.html> > Searchable Histories > *Dr. Zariphes: Growing Up on Old Main Street*, Dr. Constantine Zariphes Junior describes growing up on Old Main Street with Dave Cooke and searching for Indian artifacts in the woods between Old Main Street and the Connecticut River. Both men became capable archaeologists when they grew up, contributing a great deal to our understanding of pre-European Rocky Hill.



RHHS member and amateur archaeologist David Cooke digs at the Morgan Site in the Rocky Hill Meadows.



June Cooke, David's wife, found a piece of Indian pottery while hunting pheasant with David in the fall of 1977. This led to the full scale dig.

Dave Cooke's contribution began in the fall of 1977 when he was hunting for pheasant in the Rocky Hill Meadows with his wife June. While she was bending to recover a fallen pheasant, June picked up a piece of handsomely decorated Indian pottery. June was an accomplished archaeologist in her own right and called Dave to look at what he had found. The couple investigated further and realized that they had discovered the site of a significant Woodland Indian settlement. In the classification of archaeological cultures of North America, the Woodland period of North American pre-Columbian cultures spanned a period from roughly 1000 BCE to European contact. The Eastern Woodlands cultural region spanned from what is now eastern Canada south of the subarctic region, along the eastern United States, and along the Gulf of Mexico. ^{xcviii}

In May of 1986, an archaeological dig was begun under the auspices of the Albert Morgan Archaeological Society at what became known as the Morgan site.³¹ What the dig uncovered was a village which had been occupied two or more times, as carbon dating shows that the site was occupied in the 12th and 14th centuries.

Many of the artifacts found at this site are available for public viewing at the Rocky Hill Historical Society.^{xcix} There is a thorough treatment of the Morgan Site at <http://www.rhhistory.org/morgan-site.html>.

In 2016, Dr. Zariphes took Ed Chiucarello and Bob Herron on a tour of the woods and showed us the Lone Pine Site, another Indian encampment. While the Morgan Site is an archaeological success story, the Lone Pine Site is a cautionary tale. Dr. Zariphes has studied archeological techniques and knows the correct way to conduct a dig. Sadly, many people who don't know the techniques have gone to this site with shovels and pails and dug poorly conceived holes which have done a great deal to damage to the site and compromised it. Dr. Zariphes has collected and cataloged many surface artifacts such as spear points, arrow heads and hand tools which he has donated to the Rocky Hill Historical Society.

Rocky Hill at War

King Phillip's War

After the Pequot War, discussed earlier, relations between English settlers and the Wangunk tribe had become untenable. The Wangunk were forced south to Middletown, then west to the Connecticut-New York border, where they merged with the Scatacokes, and finally to Wisconsin where they apparently disappeared from history. By the start of King Phillip's War there was little or no Native American presence in the Wethersfield-Rocky Hill area.^{iv} Even so, throughout New England, King Phillip's War raged and no town was entirely safe from Indian attack. Records show that five men from Wethersfield served in the train bands which fought the Indians. Although it is unclear if any of these men were from Stepney, it is a possibility. The five Wethersfield men were:^c

John Latimer
Anthony Wright

John Belden
John Palmer.

John Chester

French and Indian War

The French and Indian War was fought between England and France and their colonies from 1754 to 1763 and resulted in England dominance in North America. There are five men buried in Center Cemetery who are recorded as veterans of the French and Indian War. They are:^{ci}

Stephen Riley
Gideon Goodrich

John Church
Manus Smith

Hezekiah Goodrich

³¹ The land was part of the Winding Brook Turf Farm, owned by Doug Morgan. He was not related to Albert Morgan after whom the Archaeological Society was named.

In addition there is a Petti-point fabric case in the Rocky Hill Historical Society's collection which was given to a Jonathan Johnson of Rocky Hill by Indians and carried by him at Fall of Quebec (1759).^{cii}

According to the town history included in the 1948 Rocky Hill Annual Report, there were five forts built in Rocky Hill during the French and Indian War. Fort Deming is the only one for which we currently have a history. It was located about 50 yards from the northwest corner of the intersection of Old Main Street and Parsonage Street. Materials from Fort Deming were used to build the house at 447 Old Main Street. This house is known as the James Warner House but is believed to have been built by Daniel Deming.

Revolutionary War

Rocky Hill was Stepney Parish, a part of Wethersfield, during the Revolutionary War and fought with the militia and Continental Army units as Wethersfield citizens. There is a story, which Rocky Hillians want desperately to be true, that, as men from Stepney Parish were responding to the Lexington Alarm and marching to Wethersfield, they passed the Duke of Cumberland Inn. They saw the tavern sign, with the Duke's picture on it, and shot it full of holes. The sign is in the Collection of the Connecticut Historical Society.^{ciii}

There were 880 people living in Stepney Parish in 1775. Of these, there were 51 men who served in the revolution buried in Center Cemetery. They are:

Belden, Abraham	Curtis, Wait	Holmes, Thomas	Smith, David
Belden, Moses	Deming, Jonathan	Hosford, Aaron D.	Smith, Eliakim
Blinn, Hezekiah	Dickinson, Wait	Kelsey, Moses	Smith, Ezekiel
Boardman, Elizah	Goff, Gideon	Miller, Joseph	Stanley, James
Boardman, Levi	Goodrich, Elizur	Morton , Benjamin	Whitmore,
Boardman,	Goodrich, Ephram	Pomeroy, Oliver	Hezekiah
Nathaniel	Goodrich, Ichabod	Rash, Jeremiah	Williams, Daniel
Boardman, Return	Goodrich, Oliver	Riley, Ackley	Williams, Elias
Bulkley, Edward	Goodrich, William	Riley, Ashbel	Williams, Eliel
Bulkley, Joseph	Griswold, Jacob	Riley, Jacob	Williams, Israel
Bulkley, Peter	Griswold, Joshiah,	Robbins, Frederick	Williams, William
Bull, Roger	Lieut.	Robbins, John	Grimes, Hezekiah
Butler, Charles	Griswold, William	Robbins, Richard	
Chapin, Calvin, Rev.	Holmes, Daniel	Sanford, Erbin K.	

As to service in the Army, a walk through Center Cemetery shows many markers identifying the people who responded to the Lexington Alarm in 1775. Our ancestors were in it from the beginning.

Of all the stories of Rocky Hill heroes, a favorite is the story of Reverend Calvin Chapin. He was a fifer in Captain Pratt's company during the Revolutionary War. He was 12 years old at the time. It is important to note that a Fifer's job wasn't to make music. Fifers, drummers, and buglers were heard over the smoke and noise of battle and conveyed commands to troops engaged in battle. It was considered bad form to shoot a boy who was playing commands on his fife, but, when fifing may result in you being shot, you may be hard-pressed to follow this custom. The twelve year old was engaged in a dangerous occupation.^{civ}

The Revolution seems to have accelerated the development of ship building in Rocky Hill. Prior to the war, most of the ships from Rocky Hill were sloops and schooners which were relatively small vessels. According to the New London and Middletown Customs House Logs, there was a marked increase in the number of the larger brigs registered in Wethersfield from 1775 onward. Since Stepney Parish (Rocky Hill) was the primary port for Wethersfield, ship registered in Wethersfield were probably associated with Rocky Hill.

Many of these brigs were used as privateers. Privateers were commerce riders and were licensed by Connecticut or the Continental Congress to attack enemy shipping. Silas Deane was a member of the Continental Congress in 1775 and later became Ambassador to France. Barnabas Deane was Silas Deane's brother. Barnabas influenced his brother to lobby for the authorization of privateers and the Continental Congress authorized Barnabas to build and deploy privateers in 1775. The brig *Revenge* was one of these privateers. The *Minerva*, which was originally commissioned as a warship of the Connecticut Navy, and several other brigs which were registered in Wethersfield, served as privateers. ^{xi cv}

Barbary Pirates The Quasi-war, and Impressment

It was not clear sailing for Rocky Hill shipping after the Revolution. Rocky Hill ships were menaced by Barbary Pirates, the French, and the British.

Barbary Pirates sailed from North Africa and demanded tribute from vessels sailing between the Straights of Gibraltar and the Italian boot. Most countries sailing in this area routinely paid the tribute as a cost of doing business, but the independent-minded Americans refused to do this. Their slogan was, "Millions for defense but not a penny for tribute." The *Connecticut*, a Middletown-built frigate with many crew members from Rocky Hill engaged in battle with the Barbary pirates in the early 1780s. Records are sketchy, but it seem likely that other Rocky Hill sailors engaged the pirates.

After the French Revolution, the United States and France engaged in an undeclared armed conflict over American trade with the British in the West Indies, The British and French were at war and the French felt betrayed because, although they had supported the United States in its war for independence, the United States, unwilling to be associated with France during the Reign of Terror, didn't support them. The French confiscated Rocky Hill ships, sailed them to French islands like Guadalupe and Martinique and imprisoned the crews, some of whom were never heard from again. Among these were the schooner *Chance*, which was confiscated by the French and taken to Guadalupe in 1799 and destroyed, and the *Sloop Industry* which was taken in 1800 and sold.

The British also interfered with Rocky Hill shipping. There were bad feelings over the Americans rebelling, prevailing, and bringing about what amounted to a world war with France. Moreover, the French, with whom they were at war, often sailed to American ports like Charleston and Savannah, reflagged their ships as American, and sailed to the islands in the West Indies posing as Americans. On occasion, British sailors would desert the harsh treatment practiced by the British Navy, and sign on to American ships.

The British, in a display of arrogance, not only stopped American ships, but kidnapped American sailors, claiming they were British, and forced (or impressed) them into the

British Navy. The British were also know to confiscate American ships on fairly skimpy grounds.

The Embargo Act of 1807 was a law passed by the United State Congress and signed by President Thomas Jefferson on December 22, 1807. It prohibited American ships from trading in all foreign ports. Needless to say, New England ports like Rocky Hill, who depended on maritime trade for their livelihoods, were hurt by this act and were violently opposed to it.

War of 1812

There are five sailors in Center Cemetery who are identified as serving in the War of 1812 as compared with 51 men who served in the Revolutionary War. This may serve as a measure of the lack of popularity of this conflict in Rocky Hill.

Bulkley, Gersham
Bulkley, Henry

Butler, Samuel
Goodrich, Jasper

Robbins, James

Rocky Hill's commitment to the War of 1812 was tepid compared to its zealous engagement in the Revolutionary War. The Embargo Act had embittered Rocky Hill people whose incomes had been badly curtailed.

Although Royal Navy ships were too big to enter the river because of the Saybrook Bar, they lurked outside of the river mouth like a cat waiting to catch mice. They attacked the small commercial ships exiting the river.³² Although a few privateers, like The Henry (described as "a large ship") sailed against the British, the river was mostly bottled up. We know that the schooner Archer, the sloop Julia, and an unnamed brig were tied up at the John Williams II shipyard on the south bank of Hog Brook for the duration of the war
xi xvi xli cv

Civil War

The Civil War began in April, 1861. The stories of the Rocky Hill men who served in the Civil War are extensive enough to warrant a book of their own. By the end of the war in



April 1865, Rocky Hill had sent 128 soldiers to war. The population of Rocky Hill was 1102 people at the time so, given that the town's families were tightly interrelated, it is safe to say that everyone in town had at least one loved one at jeopardy in the war. Among the many notable people are Captain Jarvis Blinn who was killed at the Battle of Antietam, the Levaugh Brothers, one of whom was wounded at Antietam and two of whom

³² We know the British wanted to attack ports on the river. They attacked the town of Essex overland and burned it.

were captured and died in Confederate prison camps, and Eli Rodman who served in the Company G, 29th Regiment, Connecticut Volunteer Infantry (Colored). There are too many stories to include in this brief narrative. A file containing details about each soldier who served in the Civil War is available at www.rhhist.org and there is a wealth of information in the Rocky Hill Historical Society library.

War with the Plains Tribes: A Congressional Medal of Honor Recipient

We have one record of a Rocky Hill man who was involved in these wars. Charles Sheppard who was born here and enlisted as a private in Company A, 5th United States Infantry in St. Louis, Missouri. Sheppard was stationed at Fort Peck, near Cedar Creek in northeastern Montana, from October 21, 1876 to January 1877. The mission of his unit was to capture the Indian leaders Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse and Lame Deer.

The Montana winter of 1876 was bitter cold with temperatures of 35 degrees below zero



Chief Sitting Bull



Chief Lame Deer

with deep snow and high winds. On Dec. 18th, Sheppard was part of a unit which attacked Sitting Bull in his camp. With the element of surprise, they managed to drive off the Indians and capture most of Sitting Bull's supplies.

On Jan. 8, 1877, Chief Crazy Horse attacked the US troops.

Sheppard's unit responded with Gatling guns, and cleared out the snipers, causing Crazy Horse to flee under the cover of snow squalls.

The U.S. losses included one dead and four wounded. Crazy Horse was captured the same month, and Chief Lame Deer was captured on May 8, 1877. On April 27, 1877, Sheppard was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his bravery in action with the Sioux Indians at Cedar Creek, Montana. ^{cvi}

Spanish-American War

Secretary of State John Hay called the Spanish-American War the "Splendid Little War." It was a complete victory for the Americans and a total rout of Spain. Soldiers from Connecticut were scheduled to invade the Spanish colony of Puerto Rico but the war ended before they were deployed. ^{cvii}

The following soldiers from Rocky Hill served in the war:

Nathan Guile
Williett Roe

Arthur Hale
Capt. Elias Williams

Sylvester E. Morse
Abby Green-Bangs

The following sailors served:

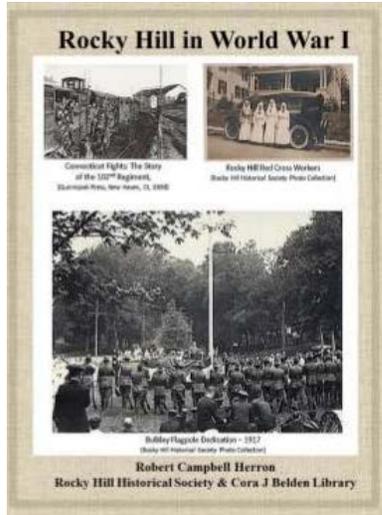
- Lyman Appley enlisted at the start of the war. ^{cviii}
- Bert Davis was a sailor aboard the USS Connecticut when it became the flag ship of the Great White Fleet and it seems likely that he was in the Navy during the war. ^{cix}

World War I

Because of its magnitude, World War I effected every corner of the world, including Rocky Hill. 95 people, four women among them, entered military service and joined the

war. The war had dramatic impacts on Rocky Hill. The population at home pitched in to support people at war and keep morale high. They faced shortages of essentials such as food and fuel.

The Rocky Hill Historical Society has been active during 2016 and 2017 preparing to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the start of the war. A book entitled *Rocky Hill in World War I* is available at the society which contains an in-depth accounting of Rocky Hill in the war. The historical society's website, www.rhhistory.org, contains a record of the experience of individual service people during the war. The historical society also contains a substantial amount of information on the war in its library as well as an extensive collection of World War I artifacts.



In addition to the 95 people who went to war from Rocky Hill, 129 veterans joined Rocky Hill's population after the war. Many of these veterans established businesses, became active in town politics, and joined the American Legion which was a highly influential organization in the town between World War I and

World War II.^{cix}

World War II

Seven of the people who went to war in World War II from Rocky Hill gave their lives for their country. Although they are buried on foreign soil they are remembered with a series of markers in Center Cemetery.

They are:^{cx}



- Ellis Beck was killed in action in France. He was a star athlete at the University of Connecticut. He had two brothers in the Army, Lt. Robert Beck of the tank corps, and William Beck with a motorized infantry division.
- The two Benino brothers, Frank and Horace, died in France in 1944. Horace was killed in action in early August and a few weeks later Frank was killed in a motor vehicle accident. Their father, Nunzio Bennino was a veteran of WWI.
- Armond Chapron was killed in action in Germany in May of 1945.
- Richard Dexter was a turret gunner on a B25. He was killed in action over Corsica in 1944.
- Albert Goss was a Marine. He was reported killed in action at Eniwetok Island, Sept, 14, 1944.
- Staff Sergeant Henry Maxham was a much-decorated gunner on a B17. He was killed over Germany in 1945.

The Rocky Hill War Council documented the names of 248 people who served in the military during World War II, including 13 women, and erected a monument on the green where Main Street and Dividend Road meet. Many of our citizens who came to Rocky Hill to make their homes here were also veterans of the World War II effort, but are not included in the list compiled by the Rocky Hill War Council.^{cxii} There are video files of some of our men and women relating their experiences in the war at <http://www.rhhistory.org/historic-videos.html>.



Like the rest of the country, Rocky Hill adjusted to the war while experiencing things like rationing, war work, civil defense, and fear for the safety of friends and loved ones involved in the fight.

Dr. Constantine Zariphes and Douglas Robbins both tell of being young boys on the north end of Old Main Street and bringing food that their mother prepared to soldiers who were encamped south of what is now Matteson Avenue, in Quarry Park. The soldiers

staffed listening stations to detect enemy planes and protect Pratt and Whitney, Colt's, and other defense industries.



The World War II draft board used Academy Hall for operations, and the roof was used as a plane spotter's location during the war to protect our skies against an enemy attack. The plane spotters later moved their base to Quarry Hill. ^{cxii}

Korea

As the population of Rocky Hill grows it is getting more and more difficult to acknowledge all of the people who went to modern wars from Rocky Hill individually.

Killed in Korea



SGT. MATTHEW CARUSO

However, the town and the historical society seek to identify and honor these people and hope you will bring the service of your loved ones to our attention.

At the flagpole on the Green there is a plaque, placed circa 1960, which reads, "In Memory of all Rocky Hill Veterans Who Served Their Country in the Korean Campaign 1950–1953." The names of veterans who went to war from Rocky Hill aren't enumerated on the plaque. The Town Assessor's Office has a large list of people who applied for tax abatements for their service in Korea but this probably doesn't provide a complete list of Korean War veterans.

Many veterans of the Korean War are buried at the Rose Hill cemetery but since Rose Hill is a regional cemetery, it is impractical to try to identify who among these people were residents of Rocky Hill without a labor-intensive search of obituary records.

At least one veteran, Sergeant Matthew Caruso of the U.S. Marine Corps, was killed in Korea on December 6, 1950. Sergeant Caruso was apparently killed during the

withdrawal from the Chosin Reservoir when the Marines were surrounded by Chinese troops and had to fight their way to the port of Hungnam in a frozen, gruesome battle which has become one the legends of the United States Marine Corps.

The following Korean War veterans are buried in Center Cemetery:

Raymond P. Barrett
Ernest Nicols Currieri
William F. Holmes
Harold A. Ryan

Harley Brown
Robert A. Depereio
James J. Jr. McKinnon
John Henry Walker

Roger W Brunell
Vincent S. Gondolfo
Burton W. Russell
William Farrar McNeil

Vietnam

As with Korea, the number of veterans and the difficulty of enumerating them make it difficult to identify all Rocky Hill veterans of the Vietnam War.



Highest Honor
Air Force Sgt. John Lee Levitow of Glastonbury receives the Medal of Honor at the White House Thursday from President Nixon (AP).

At the flagpole on the green, there is plaque which reads, "In Memory of all Rocky Hill Veterans who served their country in the Vietnam era."

Richard Caputo was the only Rocky Hill resident we know of who was killed as a direct result of action during the Vietnam War. He was a Private First Class in the U.S. Army and was killed by small arms fire while performing his duty as Armored Reconnaissance Specialist.

John Lee Levitow, Airman 1st Class in the US Air Force, was serving as Loadmaster on an AC47 Gunship in Vietnam on Feb. 24, 1969. His work was to remove flares from the racks and drop them to light the enemy positions for the US troops. A flare capable of burning through the skin of the plane ignited inside the cargo area. Although he was already wounded, Levitow grabbed the flare, dragged it to the open door, and threw it out in spite of the burns and damage done to his hands.

After being treated for his injuries, Levitow flew an additional twenty combat missions. On May 14, 1970, President Richard Nixon presented him with the Congressional Medal of Honor at the White House.

The following are known Vietnam veterans from Rocky Hill:

William Richard Bligh
John Lee Levitow
Charles Stanley Zagroba

Richard Caputo
John Marks
Kenneth Roberts Sr.

Wasył Krawciw
David A. Pellerin

The Gulf Wars



As the population of Rocky Hill has grown, monuments exist to honor the veterans of more current wars but, with the larger population, it has become harder to honor each veteran individually. The Rocky Hill Historical Society tries to keep track of our veteran's service and encourages anyone who has knowledge of a local veteran to bring it to our attention. LET'S REMEMBER THEM ALL!

There was a display honoring Gulf War veterans at the entrance to Town Hall but it deteriorated and has been disassembled. The pictures have been scanned into *.jpeg files and recorded at the Rocky Hill Historical Society.

Rocky Hill: The Last 25 Years

1993 marked the 150th anniversary of Rocky Hill becoming an independent political entity; 2017 will mark its 175th. A lot has happened in the past 25 years. Not everything is documented here, in part, because the town's history is still unfolding and anything written about it now would be based on subjective impressions rather than objective history. However, there have been some events of historical significance which we can discuss.

New Town Hall

It's hard from the existing documentation to tell where Town Hall has been located at various times. We have been able to build a partial timeline from existing sources but are asking people with information about town halls in Rocky Hill at various times to share their information with us.

In the early days of Stepney parish, town government was conducted in people's homes, with town meetings held at the Congregational Church.^{cxiii}

During 1679 (According to Stiles), a "Town House" was established on Parsonage Street. Stiles says this was the only office the town owned for business purposes until as recently as 1904. Sometime in the mid-1800's, town operations moved to the Upper floor of Academy Hall.

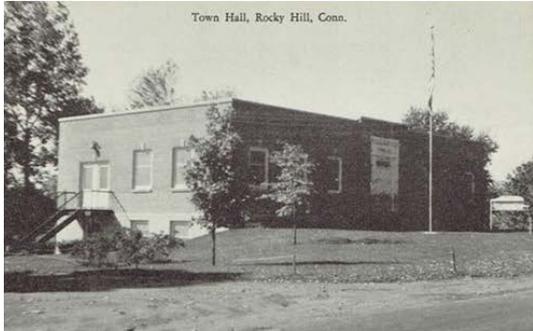
In 1899, when the first library was built on the south west side of Church Street operations were moved there and later to the old Grange Hall on Old Main Street.³³

There is an article in the October 17, 1921, Hartford Courant which describes a town meeting held at the Congregation Church. This makes sense, as the Grange Hall, where the meetings had been held, burned down in April 21, 1921.

³³ Where the OR&L Realty Parking lot is on 2017.

From 1930 through 1954, a town hall is mentioned in a Courant articles about Rocky Hill although the location wasn't revealed.

In 1954, a New Town Hall was constructed near the corner of Church and Old Main Streets. In 2017, this building is the home of the police department.



Built 1954



Built 2002

In 2000, Center School housed Parks & Rec and School Administration.

In 2002 a Town Hall replaced one of the buildings which comprised Center School³⁴. The current Town Hall opened in October 2002. It was named for Nicholas A. LaRosa (then Town Manager).

Dividend Brook Industrial Archaeological District

The Cooke family has made several important contributions to Rocky Hill History. Among them was Dave Cooke, leading the Morgan Archaeology dig. His wife, June, took the lead in digs which led to the establishment of the Dividend Pond Trails and Archaeological District.



June Cooke at Dividend Archeological Site

In 1973, Rocky Hill obtained the land along Dividend Brook from Bigelow-Sanford Inc. (Bigelow Carpets). Hartford Courant articles from the time indicate that the town bought the property south of Old Forge Road from Bigelow-Sanford for \$225,000,000 for use as an industrial park. Bigelow may have thrown in the park property for “\$1. And other valuable consideration.”³⁵ This sale was for the old Belamose site.

In 2002, June Cooke and the Office of State Archaeology conducted three archaeological digs at the Sugden Shear Factory along Dividend Brook.

In 2006, the Dividend Open Space became a State Archaeological Preserve named Dividend Brook Industrial Archaeological District. It is listed on the State Historical Register. The Rocky Hill Historical Society provides a detailed history of Dividend Pond along with maps and several informative videos at www.rhhistory.org . Historic Places > Dividend Pond. ^{cxiv}

³⁴ The carved ships and floral swags on the Town Hall are remnants of the old school.

³⁵ Required consideration for a binding contract.

Ed Chiucarello started a cleanup of Dividend in 2011. He engaged many volunteers in cleaning litter out and by June of 2012 there was a grand opening of Dividend Pond Trails and Archaeological District.

Strip Malls, Housing, and Industrial Complexes

Peter Revill, the President of the Rocky Hill Historical Society, prepared a fact sheet for the town's 1997 annual report ^{cxv} In it, he wrote, "Since the 1960s, Rocky Hill has experienced a balanced growth while retaining its rural charm. It is still primarily a residential community with a gradual expansion of its commercial and industrial base." The same might be said of Rocky Hill in 2017. These words appear on the home page of the town's website, "Our Town is well-positioned to accommodate growth and community reinvestment without sacrificing our caring, small community atmosphere." We face the same challenge of balancing growth while preserving our town's essential character today that existed in 1997. It's instructive to compare Mr. Revill's report with Rocky Hill twenty one years later.

It is noteworthy that much of the development which Mr. Revill described was on the east side of town while most development since then has occurred on the west side.

Strip Malls

In 1997, Mr. Revill mentioned three strip malls, Cold Springs, Town Line Plaza, and West Hill Center. Today, a new stretch of strip malls dwarfs these. The road old-timers call the Shunpike was once a bucolic country road. Today it is most often referred to as Cromwell Avenue of Route 3 by newcomers. Gone are the farms and single family homes which once lined this road. They have been replaced by an unbroken string of strip malls from the Shunpike's intersection with New Britain Avenue to Brook Street. Small industrial parks line the road from Brook Street to the Cromwell town line.

Residential Housing

Century Hills, with its complex of apartments, condominiums, houses, and a nine-hole golf course had resulted in a significant increase in residents of the town by 1997. Over the past 21 years, the area west of the Shunpike has been transformed from a heavily wooded historical area to an expansive neighborhood of single-family houses. The large Alterra Apartment complex has recently been built near the northwest intersection of Brook Street and the Shunpike.

Hotels

Several hotels have opened since 1997. They seem to fall into two categories. One is those with easy access to Interstate 91 such as the Super 8 near the Interstate 91/Silas Deane crossover and the Hampton Inn on Waterchase. Another is those that provide accommodations for recently built industrial/office parks (although these are also easily accessible from Interstate 91).

Industrial/Office Parks

In his 1997 report, Mr. Revill discussed the contribution of stores like Caldor at Town Line Plaza and the Ames Department Store Headquarters at the corner Dividend Road and Pratt Street. Today, the Ames is gone. The headquarters has been empty since 2002 and has become a blighted eyesore in the middle of a historical area. Ames and Caldor's were apparently victims of the emergence of the internet with sites like Amazon.com replacing brick & mortar stores and cutting into their narrow profit margins.

Belamose Industrial Park, once contained Pratt and Whitney, Colt's Firearms, Bigelow Carpet, and several other large tenants, is still a business center which contains primarily warehousing facilities. Mr. Revill described the industrial park in the southeast part of town near the corner of Old Forge Road and Dividend Road, which contained McKesson-Robbins, the Rare Reminder, etc. It still exists, much as Mr. Revill described it in 1997.

Over the past 20 years Rocky Hill has had a substantial net gain in industries with the jobs and the contributions to the Grand List they bring. Driving on West Street or Brook Street, a long-time resident of Rocky Hill can't help but be struck by the area's transformation from a farming area to a complex of industrial/office parks. As you drive by, you're likely to think, "This is new" and "that's new." You have to turn onto Henkel Way or Corporate Drive to appreciate that, by design, the huge Corporate Ridge complex is connected to the Bures Logistics Truck Depot and several others complexes on Brook Street in a well-planned out development effort.

WFSB Television

Channel 3, WFSB, the dominant television station in Central Connecticut, has been located in the Corporate Ridge complex since 2006. This has dramatically increased Rocky Hill's visibility to the rest of the state.

An article in the April 26, 2006 Hartford Courant stated that:

"The main reason for choosing Rocky Hill was that the site allowed us to build the kind of facility that we needed, and the location is excellent. News is what we do and Rocky Hill provides excellent access to Hartford and the state Capitol," said (Elden) Hale, who lives in Rocky Hill."

State Government Facilities

Several Connecticut state facilities are located in Rocky Hill in addition to the veteran's home and Dinosaur State Park. Among them are the State Library Warehouse and the Department of Transportation Central Laboratory on West Street. The Connecticut Lottery moved to the old Wiremold plant on Brook Street in 2007.

The State Health Facility opened in Rocky Hill in January of 2012. This is an example of history and current events crossing paths in that the opening of this facility still arouses emotions and strong opinions. Rather than add to the contention, it seems prudent to quote the article in the January 13, 2012 Hartford Courant and let the reader do the interpreting.

NEW PUBLIC HEALTH LAB NEARLY READY

Author: Drury, David

Full text: The long-awaited, state-of-the art Department of Public Health laboratory is nearing completion and is expected to be ready for occupancy by late spring. Construction of the \$75-million facility, located on 22 acres across the street from Dinosaur State Park and adjacent to the Veterans' Home and Hospital, should be substantially completed by the end of February. A June occupancy is planned, public health spokesman Bill Gerrish said. The three-story, 100,000-square-foot-building will replace the health department's cramped, antiquated laboratory at 10 Clinton St. in Hartford. It will be rated for both Bio-

Safety Level 2 and Level 3 work, allowing for testing on such potentially virulent agents as tuberculosis and anthrax. About 100 lab employees working in Hartford will relocate to the new facility. The move will be done in phases and take 8 to 12 weeks, Gerrish said. Construction on the West Street site began in 2010 after the State Bond Commission in April approved funding. The work had been pegged to end in 2011, but was pushed back a few months because the project has seen "its share of issues," said Jeffrey R. Beckham, communications director for the Department of Administrative Services. "It's one of our more complicated buildings." Designed by the Stamford architectural firm Flad & Associates, with construction management services by Whiting-Turner of New Haven, the building will house lab facilities for biological, environmental chemistry and biohazard testing, along with administrative and scientific support services. About 5 percent of the lab space will be dedicated for testing Bio-Safety Level 3 agents. The bulk of the area will be used for the more than 2 million tests the department does annually for newborn disorders, sexually transmitted diseases, food- and water-borne illnesses, environmental screening and other public health issues such as rabies and influenza. State health officials warned that, without the new lab, testing would be contracted to outside labs because of the deterioration at Clinton Street. The design of the building includes sophisticated safety and security features, such as multiple air-handling systems and biocontainment areas. The property is accessed through a gated entrance and there will be 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week security.

Historic Districts

The National Register of Historical Places, administered by the U.S. Department of the Interior, recognizes properties of significance to the community, state, or nation. The designation may result in some tax benefits for historical preservation of income-producing properties, but places minimal restrictions on a property.

The Rocky Hill Historical Society is in the process of creating maps and supporting documentation to be used in walking and bus tours of these historical districts as well as for electronic documentation. The historical society welcomes your help and input. They can be reached at infoRHhistory@gmail.com.

Elm Street District

The Elm Street Historical District was established on March 20, 1998 and was the first historical district established in Rocky Hill. It extends along Elm Street from the Silas Deane Highway (Main Street) to Grimes Road. The designation was proposed by the State Historical Commission, and the study was conducted at no cost to the town.^{cxvi}

Ferry/Riverfront District

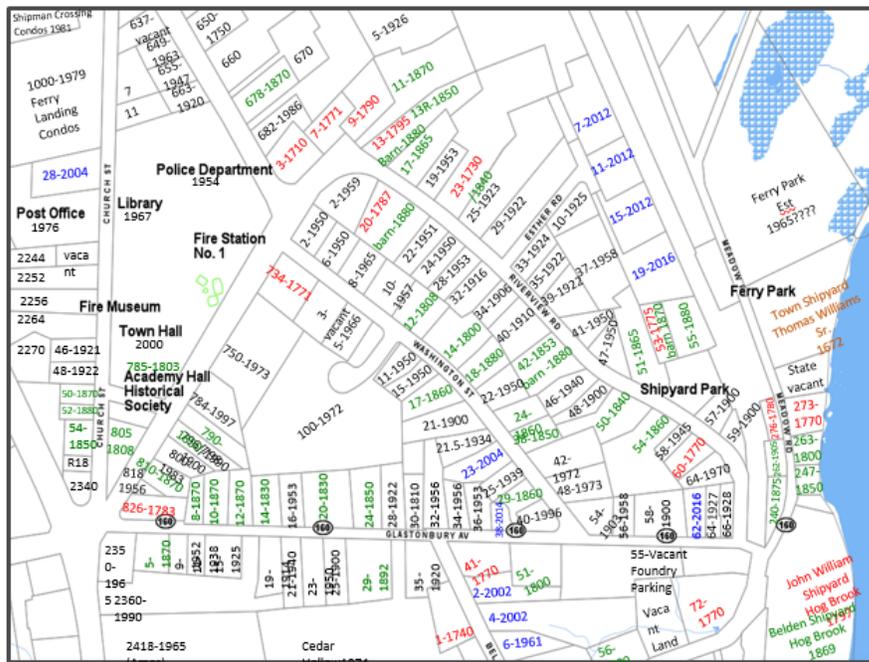
The ferry/riverfront district spans the Connecticut River and includes parts of Rocky Hill and Glastonbury. On the Rocky Hill side, it starts at the Rocky Hill Ferry Landing and runs south along Meadow Road, the first street above the river, before it turns uphill along Glastonbury Avenue. Meadow Road and the lower sections of Glastonbury Avenue and Riverview roads contain all the surviving historic resources associated with the development of this river landing. The Glastonbury section includes Ferry and Pease lanes and part of Tryon Street in Glastonbury.

The Historical District is named the Glastonbury-Rocky Hill Ferry District although the main flow of traffic on the ferry has traditionally been west-to-east from Rocky Hill to Glastonbury. The ferry was first established to carry Wethersfield farmers to their fields in Glastonbury. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a branch of the Upper Post Road passed through Rocky Hill dropping mail, cargo, and passengers at the ferry landing, some of which crossed the river. There was also an active river port in Rocky Hill in the eighteenth century where goods and passengers loaded and disembarked for destinations in central Connecticut such as Hartford, New Britain, and Cheshire. Some traffic crossed the river on the ferry to access the east side of the river. In the nineteenth century, the railroad arrived, again running up the west bank of the river and dropping its contents in Rocky Hill for distribution. ^{cxvii}

Center District

The Rocky Hill Center Historic District was established on January 24, 2007. It is the largest historical district in town and encompasses the governmental and residential center of town. It is situated just east of the Silas Dean Highway and extends for more than a mile to the east. It also extends north to the Wethersfield town line and south to include Pratt Street, Memorial Green, and Center Cemetery.

Historic buildings as well as the modern buildings that comprise government buildings occupy the triangle formed by Old Main and Church Streets. These include the Congregational Church, (a readily visible Rocky Hill landmark near the south end of the triangle), and the Methodist Church at the north entrance. Another historically significant building is Academy Hall, which has existed since 1803; the Town Hall, Fire Station #1, and the Cora J. Belden Library are also in this triangle.



Tour Map Key:
 Numbers on left are house numbers
 Numbers on right are construction dates:
 Red = 1700s
 Green = 1800s
 Black = 1900s
 Blue = 2000s

Map by Ed Chiucarello

Glastonbury Avenue, Washington Street, and Riverview Road fan out from the center towards the river, and connect with several smaller streets. The eastern side of the district ends just before the boundary of the Rocky Hill Ferry Landing.

The district is partially bordered by a wooded rocky ridgeline on the northeast a “Rocky Hill” which gave the town its name. Much of the ridge forms Quarry Park, a public recreation area which includes an abandoned trap rock quarry, woodland hiking trails, and the former rail line of the 1871 Connecticut Valley Railroad at its eastern base. Old Main Street cuts across the lower western face of this ridge and runs from Glastonbury Avenue to the Wethersfield town line. Some historic residential properties on the northeast side sit high above the street, while those across the road slope away to the west where there was once expansive farm land.

The district contains 232 structures which contribute to its historic character. Historic houses, by far the largest category of contributing resources (75 percent), include a range of architectural styles and types dating from circa 1650 to 1956. Among them are colonial dwellings, some dating back to the town's earliest settlement period, nineteenth-century farmhouses, along with numerous twentieth-century suburban homes. Many of these properties contain associated period outbuildings, such as barns and sheds or garages. Institutional structures include churches, schools, and other civic buildings.

Riverview Road contains a wealth of old private residences dating from the river port's heyday to the stately buildings of the Victorian Era. Washington Street, Glastonbury Avenue and Pratt Street contain a mix of historic structures and modern buildings (many of these “modern” buildings were built as long ago as the early 1900s).^{cxviii}

[West Rocky Hill & the South End](#)

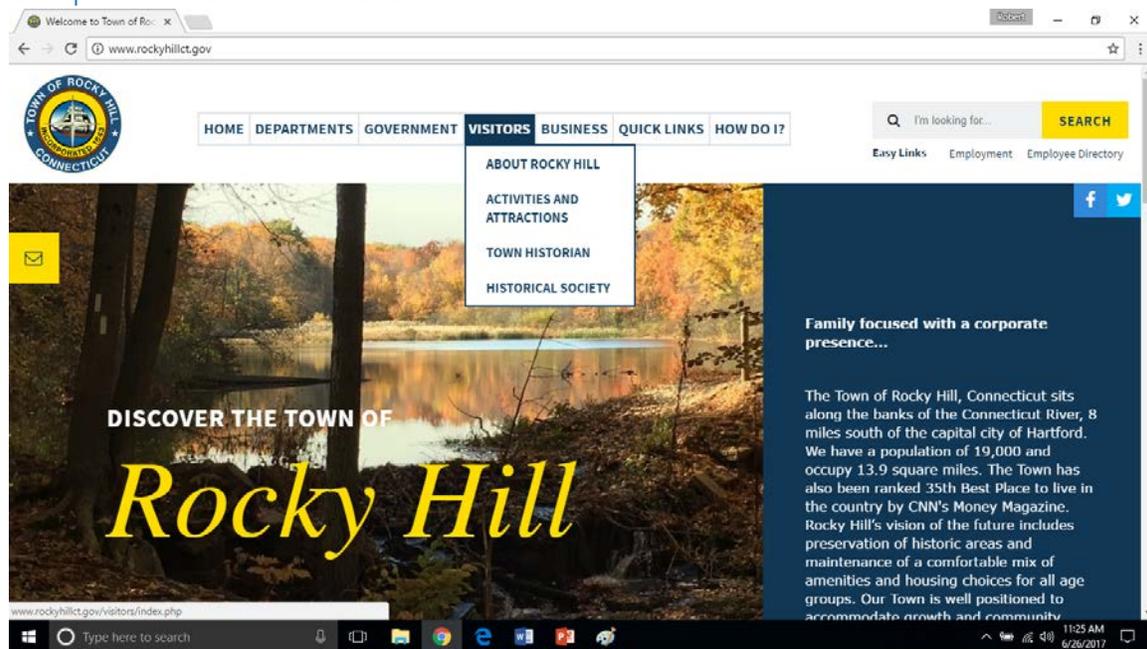
Although the National Registry hasn't declared that West Rocky Hill and the south end of town as historical districts, there is a lot of history in these parts of town which the Town Historian and the historical society are in the process of documenting.

[Church Street Park Created](#)

For most of Rocky Hill's history, there has been a six-cornered intersection where Church Street, Old Main Street, Glastonbury Avenue, Main Street/Silas Deane Highway, and Elm Street meet. For many years this intersection provided an example of small town civility as people who meet at the intersection determined whose turn it was to proceed and acted accordingly. As the population has grown and the volume of traffic has increased, the town's tradition of civility hasn't been enough to prevent accidents here.

In order to remedy this congestion, Church Street had be closed at the Glastonbury Avenue intersection, creating a cul-de-sac with new landscaping, lighting, benches, sidewalks, and angled, on-street parking at the Congregational Church. One entry point of the old intersection has been removed, routing all traffic seeking access to Town Hall, the Cora J. Belden Library or the U.S. Post Office to Old Main Street and the former Center Street (which is now part of Church Street). This has reduced the congestion substantially.^{cxix}

Computers and Town Affairs



Rocky Hill, like most New England towns, has a long tradition of public involvement in town affairs, starting with men of the 1700s in tricorne hats speaking up at public meetings about things like common grazing land or fees for dock usage. Our town has done a superior job of preserving these traditions while introducing modern technologies to facilitate the process. Today you'll hear exchanges about senior services and construction of the new intermediate school, and heated debate over the proper use of the meadows. If you attend a public town meeting such as a Town Council meeting you'll see an open process with substantial public involvement operating as it did several hundred years ago.

In the twenty-first century we are able to use the power of computers to make the process even more open. It is well worth a tour of the Rocky Hill town website, www.rockyhillct.gov. There is a wealth of information about the town including a link to the town's Facebook account, its Twitter account, links to the town officers and agencies, and calendars of upcoming events.

You can watch videos of Town Council, Board of Education meetings, Zoning Board meetings, as well as other public sessions.

Under the Visitor menu you'll find access to the Town Historian and the Historical Society. Try Quick Links. It will take you to a variety of useful pages ranging from help in paying your taxes to posting a notice on the town's three electronic bulletin boards. Look into Documents on Demand, which automatically sends documents relating to the town agencies to your e-mail. It's worth tinkering on this site. There is a wealth of information and statistics on the town.

If you don't use a computer, you can view public meetings on Rocky Hill Public Community Television.

Looking Toward a Bright Future.

Demographics

On January 24, 1898, when the Hartford Courant reported on a Connecticut Bible Society census of Rocky Hill, the focus was on religion and national origins. ^{cxv}:

Over time, as people with different backgrounds intermarried and national boundaries changed, it has become increasingly difficult to make an apple-to-apples demographic comparison between figures for 1898 and those of 2017.

In 1898, these were the demographics people monitored:

ETHNIC GROUP	NO. OF FAMILIES
Anglo-Saxon	195
Irish	42
German	10
French-Canadian	6
African	3
Swedish	3
English	2
Scottish	2
Hungarian	1
Italian	1
Polish	1

Religious affiliation broke down as follows:

DENOMINATION	NO. OF FAMILIES
Methodist	81
Congregationalist	75
Roman Catholic	68
No preference	13
Baptist	9
Episcopal	8
Lutheran	6
Unitarian	3
Seventh Day Adventist	1

By 2010, the demographics site: <http://www.city-data.com/city/Rocky-Hill-Connecticut.html>, was reporting things like gross income, building permits issued, education levels, etc. but considerably less about ethnicity and religious affiliations. Definitions have changed. Most of the people in the 1898 survey would be classified as ‘White’ today. Perhaps in the future, even the 2010 ethnics demographics will become meaningless and the breakdown will be humans – 100%.

2010 Demographics:

RACE	%
White Only	79.8%
African-American Only	3.6%
Latino	5.4%
Mixed Race	1.3%
Native American	0.1%
Asian	9.8%
Pacific Islander	.01%
Other Race Alone	.01%

Town Accolades

A quick survey reveals that our town is often recognized for its outstanding achievements over the past 25 years.

- In 1996-1997, Oran A. Moser School was named State Champion by the Governor's Committee on Physical Fitness. President Bill Clinton granted Moser an additional Certificate of Recognition.
- In 2003, Rocky Hill was voted the #1 Sportstown in Connecticut by *Sports Illustrated* for demonstrating high quality involvement in facilitating and enhancing community sports.
- In 2006, Oran A. Moser School won an Elementary School Program Award from the Connecticut Association of Schools.
- In 2007, Rocky Hill was rated 35th in the top 100 places in the United State to live,
- In June, 2013, Hartford Magazine cited Rocky Hill as one of the top small towns in Connecticut citing our central location and access to good highways, tourist attractions such as Dinosaur State Park and the Rocky Hill/Glastonbury Ferry, and our unique mix of shops, public amenities, public services and historic charm. A May 2017 article in that Magazine echoed these sentiments.
- The March 18, 2011 issue of the New England Real Estate Journal called Rocky Hill a town, "... with a plan for the future" citing Rocky Hill's central location, business-friendly environment, low tax rate, and educational system and other public amenities.
- The Hartford Business Journal website reported, "Based on DOL's research, North Stonington has been identified as having the strongest economic growth at 25.8 percent from 2010 to 2014. The other fast growing municipalities are: Kent (+24.9 percent), Hampton (+22.4 percent), Lyme (20.8 percent), and Rocky Hill (20.5 percent)."

Not too shabby for a small community on the Connecticut River. We are a town with a proud past, a stellar present, and a bright future.

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