Vol. 4 No. 4

Summer 2012

## Calendar of Events

All of our programs are open to the public.

Saturday, July 21
3rd Annual
"An Evening
at the Museum"
5pm to 8pm

Wine & beer tasting, specialty foods and silent auction

\$25 per person or \$40 per couple

# Saturday, August 18 Quiet Corner Fiddlers 6pm to 8pm

Grounds open at 5pm for those who would like to picnic before the concert. Concert starts at 6pm If it rains, this event will be held indoors at the Lebanon Senior Center

Connecticut Humanities Council in part by the Connecticut Humanities Council

# Saturday, September 15 <u>Tavern Signs</u> 2pm

Talk co-sponsored by the Jonathan Trumbull Jr
House Museum

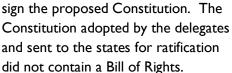
Saturday, September 29
Annual Outdoor
Antiques Show
9am to 3pm
\$5 admission

More events on page 4

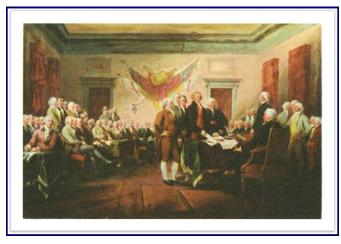
## Celebrating the Bill of Rights

By Alicia Wayland

On September 17,
"we the people"
will celebrate the
225th anniversary
of the signing of the U.S.
Constitution. On that
date in 1787, the
Constitutional
Convention ended after
a long hot summer in
Philadelphia as 39 of our
nation's Founding Fathers
gathered 'round a table to



Earlier in the year, the Constitutional Convention opened in Philadelphia on May 25, 1787, and elected George Washington as the presiding officer. The Convention was called to amend the Articles of Confederation, under which the national government was operating. The Articles retained most power in the hands of the sovereign states and the national government was consequently a weak government. The delegates gathered for the Constitutional Convention felt a strong central government was needed. After much secret debate, they came up with a brilliant federal government with an intricate system of checks and balances with clearly defined legislative, executive and judicial branches. The Constitution they devised was sent to



The Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776 by John Trumbull

the states for ratification but without a Bill of Rights, in spite of protests by some of the delegates.

On October 17, 1787, the Connecticut General Assembly set a date in January 1788 to hold a Constitutional Convention. Copies of the proposed

How would the voters in Lebanon, the "heartbeat of the Revolution," react to this new-fangled form of a federal government? Not very well.

Constitution were sent to each town for debate and for the election of delegates to attend the convention. How would the voters in Lebanon, the "heartbeat of the Revolution," react to this new-fangled form of a federal government? Not very well. The voters met in three stormy town meetings in November and December, in which

Continued on page 8

#### The mission of the Lebanon Historical Society

To encourage a sense of community, the Lebanon Historical Society connects residents and visitors with the people, places, objects and stories of the Town's past.

#### **Board of Trustees**

President

Glenn Pianka

Vice President

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Al Vertefeuille

Personnel
Betty Forrest

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Suzanne Yeo

Publications
Jacy Worth

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Director

Donna Baron

Ex-Officio

Archie Andrews III

#### From the President

Glenn Pianka

First off, I want to thank the Board members and general membership for affording me the opportunity to serve in this capacity. During my twenty years of membership it has been truly rewarding to serve with many fine people who have shared the same goals and long term visions for the society. We continue to develop those visions with a very capable and diligent Board, Director, Staff, and members like you who are reading this right now, all of whom, I know, will make my experience as President a most fulfilling part of my life.

The new storage building, which has been in the planning stages for quite some time now, is about to have a groundbreaking during the latter part of June. The 20' x 24' building will be of post and beam construction and will emulate a typical small barn one might find in the Lebanon countryside -wood shingled roofing and all. It will be used to store things from the antiques show, second Saturdays, patio furniture, and for other events or functions not directly related to exhibits. This space will free up the current accessory building at the front of our property which will be used for our agricultural items and other display articles which do not require temperature and humidity control.

One of our first planning meetings was to begin to develop a "wish list" to be presented to the Adams Trust. Along with general improvements to office and audio visual equipment, we have also included maintenance items in a prioritized listing along with some seed funding to start the process of relocating the Beaumont House here to our property. This is my "dream project" in that when the museum was being developed (1996) we recognized the need to address this matter. The initial concept designs included the use of the Beaumont House as the anchor building to the complex that we presently have. After lengthy discussion we abandoned the idea of moving the house at that time due to size and use issues, but that is how the main portion of our museum got its general outline.

As we have all heard..."Rome wasn't built in a day"...but it sure is amazing what a symphony of like-minded people can accomplish in a relatively short period of time. Thank you so much for being part of the orchestra. I'll do my best at the podium.

Thanks to Prides Corner Farms for the loan of many beautiful plants, to Kahn Tractor for the loan of a new Kubota tractor and to Rand Wells for the use of his hay wagon. A special thanks to those who volunteered their time to create another award winning float this year.



## **Director's Message**

Donna Baron

As part of our participation in the StEPS-CT project, the Lebanon Historical Society Board of Trustees reviewed our mission statement.

The mission of the Lebanon Historical Society is to preserve & interpret all aspects of the history of Lebanon, from its earliest inhabitants to the present day, with a special emphasis on Lebanon's role in the American Revolution.

This is a straight-forward statement about the historical facts that form the basis of what information we present. A good statement, but perhaps not one that reflects what the Historical Society is doing today or how we want to make sure that local history stays relevant today. Using the workbook provided by the Association for State and Local history for StEPS as well as mission and vision statements from other heritage organizations around the state, the Board worked together to craft a mission statement for the 21st century. Guidelines recommend that a mission statement briefly explains what we do, why we do this and for whom we do this.

In April, the Board approved a revised mission statement.

To encourage a sense of community, the Lebanon Historical Society connects residents and visitors with the people, places, objects and stories of the Town's past.

The Board went on to adapt the following guiding statements to expand upon the mission statement.

#### Operating philosophy - what we do:

Through innovative and creative use of all our resources we will:

preserve and interpret Lebanon's historical record through active collecting and preservation, research, publications, programs and exhibits;

emphasize Lebanon's role in past wars, especially the American Revolution;

present and illuminate Lebanon's past through engaging programs and communications; value our visitors and supporters and provide programs and services that meet their needs and interests;

make Lebanon's history interesting, relevant and fun;

share what we have learned about connecting our constituents to the past with colleagues at other heritage organizations.

#### Organizational values - what we believe:

History inspires us to care about the place where we live.

History helps us to better understand the present.

History must be preserved for future generations.

History can and must be engaging for people of all ages.

#### Vision – our hope for the future:

By sharing an awareness of local history, the Lebanon Historical Society seeks to provide our community and visitors with connections to the past, an understanding of the present and a sense of responsibility for the future.

By formally adopting the new mission statement and guiding statements, the Board and staff recommit themselves to serving our members, Lebanon residents and our visitors as we explore together the many aspects of our community's past.

## Wecome

To our newest members

Donna Crawford Bzdrya of Bridgeport

Mary Sprague Langsdorf of North Carolina

Rose Scott of Massachusetts

#### **History Trivia Answer:**

The first poem was by Delton Briggs and the second by Janet Briggs.

#### **Contact Us:**

The Lebanon
Historical Society
856 Trumbull Hwy
P.O. Box 151
Lebanon, CT 06249

860-642-6579

museum@

historyoflebanon.org

www.

historyoflebanon.org

#### **Museum Hours:**

Wed. thru Sat. 12pm to 4pm

## Library & Research Center

by appointment.

### **Upcoming Programs & Events**



Walktober

Saturday, October 13 **Liberty Hill Walk** 10am to 12pm

Walktober



Saturday, October 20 Strolling Through the Past South Green Walk

**Ipm** 

Meet at Town Hall

Sunday, October 28 Pastor's Library **Dedication & Talk** on William Buckingham

Time to be announced

Sunday, November 11 Concert Work & Labor Songs by Rick Spencer

Connecticut This concert is funded Humanities in part by the Connecticut Humanities Council

2pm

Sunday, December 2 Tree Lighting **Open House** 6pm

Mulled cider, ginger snaps & kids crafts

You can always visit our website

www.

### historyoflebanon.org

to see a list of our current events and programs

### **Charles Franklin Geer**

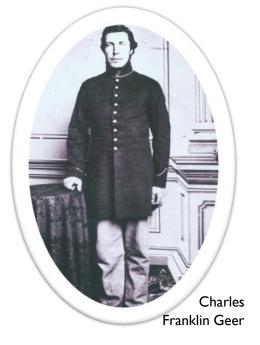
By Linda Heatherly

Charles Franklin Geer was a native of Lebanon, CT, brother to Joseph Nelson Geer who was Harold Geer's grandfather. He lived on Rt 207 in the original Geer Homestead built by Cyrus Geer, Joseph and Charles's father. At the age of 19 Charles joined the 18th Regiment, Connecticut Volunteers when it was formed in August of 1862 as a private in the infantry unit. The regiment spent most of the war in campaigns in the Shenandoah Valley. In June of 1863, while serving under Gen. Milroy at Winchester, the regiment was defeated by Confederate forces under Gen. Ewell and about half of the men were taken prisoner.

Pvt. Geer spent one month at the Libby Prison in Richmond, VA and then, together with

most of the men, was detained in a parole camp at Annapolis until October.

They were then officially exchanged and could resume participation in the fighting. The regiment was reformed and then stationed at Martinsburg.



Their first assignment came on December 10 when seven companies of the regiment were ordered to Charles Town, West Virginia because word had come that Confederates were approaching the area. No contact was made with the enemy and it appears their biggest problem was the bitter cold weather they experienced. They returned to Martinsburg on Christmas Day.

The Connecticut 18th participated in heavy fighting during the spring and summer of 1864 at New Market. Piedmont, and Lynchburg. Its losses

were so great that it was relegated to guard duty at Hall Town during the fall and winter and thus did not take part in the destruction of the Shenandoah Valley under Gen. Sheridan. After Appomattox the regiment was assigned to the Continued on page 9



Left: Charles's gun Above: A knapsack, belt and a set of letters sitting on top of a chest all belonging to Charles.

## Ed Tollmann, Featured Volunteer

By Betty Forrest

Stories. Liberty Hill. Swyden's store. Aspinall, Geer, Spellacy, Hinckley and Chappell. Roberts and high school History Club. All of these names and places sparked a life-long love of history and stories for Ed Tollmann, outgoing president of the Lebanon Historical Society.

Ed and his family relocated from Oceanside, Long Island to Lebanon in 1947 to become involved in the chicken business.

That changed subsequently from birds to the insurance world. The Lebanon that Ed and his two sisters and three brothers knew was much more rural than it is now. Ed spent a lot of time at the Stebner's dairy farm which was like a second home. Mr. Stebner used to tell stories about the "way things were".

Old folks would come to these meetings and tell accounts about the past. Ed quickly developed a love of Lebanon's history through these colorful stories of the town's past.

This, and riding his bike to the Swyden store in the Liberty Hill section of Lebanon where "maybe 12 guys" would sit around and tell tales about the past helped to set the foundation for a passion about history-especially Lebanon's history. Then in high school, Jean Roberts, Ed's history teacher, started a history club with a membership of 12 students. Old folks would come to these meetings and tell accounts about the past. Ed quickly developed a love of Lebanon's history through these colorful stories of the town's past.



Ed Tollmann

historical
preservation caused
him to be against
getting rid of the
old buildings in the
center of town
before our present
library was built. He
joined the Cemetery
Commission, where
Mr. Aspinall noted
that "Ed ain't gonna'

Ed's interest in

amount to nothing." Ed decided then that he would show the old timers that that wasn't the case. After a couple of meetings of the Cemetery Commission, the story telling would start. Ed began tape recording these sessions and oral histories were done for posterity. These are available at the historical society.

Although Ed was a member of the historical society early on, he did drop out for a bit. He credits Alicia Wayland for getting him interested in the group again. She started dialogue about Lebanon beyond the Green. This was the bullet that Ed needed to become involved again. There was talk about building an actual museum. He was on the building committee to help make it happen. He took the first museum director around to acquaint her with the town. He filled in when help was needed. He became vice president of the society and then president when an unexpired term needed to be filled. He then filled two terms as president, with very clear goals and a vision of what the Lebanon Historical Society might be and do. Ed helped to write the Lebanon Arcadia book with Claire Krause and Alicia Wayland. His section--no surprise--

Continued on next page 9

If you are looking for a little project this summer or fall we have a few things we would like to have some help with.

You can work for a few hours a day one or two days a week in a cool comfortable environment.

You can work alone or with a friend.

And for a few projects you can take materials home with you.

Organizing photographs

Indexing Lebanon related articles in local history books

Transcribing letters or account books

Photocopying records

Reviewing oral histories

If you are looking for a special gift for someone who enjoys history or who just wants to know more about Lebanon, stop in the museum and purchase a copy of

Lebanon: Three centuries on a hilltop town

Written by Rev. George Milne

#### A Good Read

by Donna Baron

In Connecticut in the American Civil War: Slavery, Sacrifice, & Survival



author Matthew Warshauer describes a state whose citizens were divided. The Union cause against secession (and ultimately for emancipation) was not supported by all residents. Lebanon-born governor William Buckingham led Republican support for the war effort, but his leadership was constantly challenged by peace activists and southernrights Democrats. Warshauer sets the experiences of Connecticut soldiers, industrialists and women against this contentious background to reveal life in a time when being a patriot meant very different things to different people. Written in a reader -friendly academic style, this book is well worth

a reader's attention.

## **Amazing stories from our archives**

By Donna Baron

Many different documents provide insights on life in Lebanon during the Civil War. This August 16, 1863 letter from R. Amelia Bentley of Lebanon to Mrs. Robert D. Holt or Hole of Waterford allows us to eavesdrop on the happenings of one road in town, probably in "the Village" (now Village Hill).

The letter begins with an acknowledgement of a letter received and explains that R. Amelia has been in Rockville for a visit and has been busy with her children, cows and a garden.

She continues "Mr. Bentley is still in R[ockville?] but I expect he will leave there the last of the week for good, he may not stay at home long for he thinks of working at his trade this winter. Mr. Bentley was drafted but the surgeon would not accept him, exempted him for cardiac (heart) disease. I was very glad to see him come home from Norwich. I assure you I little expected to see him again in this world."

"Stanton Babcock was also drafted, he was exempted for being the <u>only son</u> <u>of a poor widow</u>. William Noyes was drafted, he was clear on account of his kidneys being disordered. Arthur Kingsley hired a substitute so you see that the street has not suffered on account of the draft/ Elisha Avery was drafted but got clear some way I don't

know how."

"I suppose Mr. Holt/Hole has got home before tis time. How is he? I heard at first that he had lost his right arm, but did not really know how it was until I received your letter." R. Amelia goes on to talk about other neighbors, the DeLaps, Hales, and Potters, and a

The Civil War "draft" In the summer of 1863, the federal government set county by county quotas for new enlistments. If the were not enough volunteers or acceptances of bounties, the names of all eligible men were drawn one by one to fill the quota. Not only could a "conscript" hire a replacement but doctors performing physical examinations were known to exempt some men on flimsy medical justification.

Nathan who has a drinking problem and "raises Ned" when drunk. "Mrs. Tilden continues to pace the street. Her husband is a paroled prisoner. He is in Anappolis [sic]."

After a few remarks about her children, Eve, William and Henry, R. Amelia ended the letter but apparently not wanting to waste space she added recipes for Steam Pudding and Cottage Pudding.

This summer a group of Historical Society volunteers are searching for local materials that reveal anything about Lebanon and the Civil War. If you have old letters, account books or diaries from the 1860s we would love to have a chance to look at them. If you have family Civil War memorabilia, please do let us know.

R. Amelia Bentley has not been identified. Neither she nor her husband appears in the Lebanon Vital Records. In the 1860 census the only Bentley listed was 64 year old Eleazur who according to the 1854 map of Lebanon lived on Village Hill Road In the 1870 census and on the 1868 map there are no Bentleys in Lebanon, but perhaps R. Amelia was a daughter-in-law who lived in the Village for just a few years. Among the other names mentioned in the letter: Arthur Kingsley was the son of Shubael Kingsley who also lived on Village Hill Road according to the 1854 map. In the 1860 census Eleazur Bentley had Shubael Kingsley as well as Averys, Noyes, and Babcocks as neighbors.

## Thank you to this year's annual appeal donors

Ralph & Marlene Adkins Mary Lou Beckwith Pierre & Sandy Belisle

Carmen Bell Charlie Bender Helen Bender

John & Christine Bendoraitis

Ken & Janet Benson

Larry & Connie Berglund Alton & Jill Blodgett

Bill Brauch Lynda Breault

Delton & Rose Briggs

Shirley Brodeur Joyce Burdick Judith Cariglia

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Richard Patton

Exhibit News



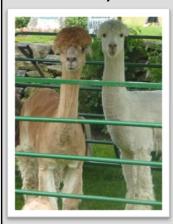
## Hats on Parade!

Our display cases are filled with a wonderful collection of vintage ladies' hats on loan from the Franklin Historical Society and from our own collection.

Please stop in and take a look.

If you know a high school junior or senior interested in volunteering for community service hours, senior projects or scouting projects please have them contact Donna Baron, Director of the Lebanon Historical Society at 860-642-6579 or email dbaron@historyoflebanon.org with your ideas

## We couldn't do it without you!



Thank you to all the crafters and volunteers for making this year's Second Saturday's event such a great success.

Alpacas
Pam & Steve Bennett

Broom making Grant Bombria

Blacksmiths Steve Melady, Mike Ferri, Ted Swol, Nancy & Daniel Callihan

> Corn Shelling Bill Bender

Homing Pigeons Mark Tollmann

Gas Engine Rod Nosal

Farmer's Cow Robin Chesmer

Furniture Making &
Decorative Painting
John Baron, Doug O'Connor
Paul & Lynn Rulli

Antique Cars Jim Handfield, Martin Peterson, Peter Smith, Brian Bartizek

Wood Carving
Jim Easton

## The Bill of Rights

Continued from page 1

the Constitution was read and debated over and over. Finally, the town voted 81 to 41 against ratification and instructed the town's delegates to the convention, Ephraim Carpenter and William Williams, the Signer, to vote against it. At the convention, William Williams, who had originally opposed the Constitution because it did not contain a religious test for elective office, went against his instructions and voted for the Constitution. Ephraim Carpenter voted against it.

The Constitution was overwhelmingly ratified by Connecticut on January 9, 1788. On June 21, 1788, New



Portrait of William Williams, by John Trumbull

Hampshire became the ninth state to ratify the Constitution. On July 2, 1788, when the Confederation Congress received the news that three-quarters of the states had now ratified the Constitution, they convened a committee to put it into operation. However, the majority of the states sent over 200 recommendations to Congress for amending the Constitution, most dealing with the need to add a Bill of Rights. On September 28, 1789, the first Federal Congress elected under the new

Constitution sent to the states a total of twelve proposed amendments to the Constitution, ten of which protected individual rights, while two were more administrative in nature. Those two did not win approval. On December 15, 1791, the eleventh state needed for passage finally ratified the ten amendments to the Constitution that have become known as the Bill of Rights. Significantly, three states did not ratify the amendments, including Connecticut. Although both houses of the Connecticut General Assembly seemed in favor of the amendments, they could not come to a final agreement on uniform action ... so they did nothing!

Connecticut General Assembly seemed in favor of the amendments, they could not come to a final agreement on uniform action ... so they did nothing! The honor of ratifying the Bill of Rights was left to other states. However, 148 years later, in 1939, on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the passage by Congress of the Bill of Rights that was sent to the states, Connecticut – along with Massachusetts and Georgia – responded to an invitation from Congress and belatedly ratified the Bill of Rights.

Fortunately for the nation, the Bill of Rights and its guarantees of individual liberties had already been set into the Constitution on December 15, 1791. As a member of that First Federal Congress, Jonathan Trumbull Junior of Lebanon, a strong supporter of the Constitution, voted for the Bill of Rights and helped to formulate the policies that set up the new government under the Constitution that our nation still operates under today.

To learn more about the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, log onto this National Archives Web site: http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/charters.html

#### **Charles Geer**

Continued from page 4

disposition of military equipment and supplies. Most of the men, including Charles, were mustered out at Harper's Ferry in June of 1865. He survived the war without being wounded though he spent considerable time in the hospital.



He married Elizabeth Wightman in (?), died in 1920 and is buried in the Yantic Cemetery in Norwich, CT (photo on left). He had no children. My father, Harold Geer has spent years researching and following the route of the 18<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Connecticut Volunteers during the war, and he has amassed an extensive library on the 18<sup>th</sup>. A chest containing Charles' backpack, his cap, knapsack, eating utensils, canteen, letters home, and two guns found in the attic of the homestead

captured his interest early on. Consequently, he and my mom have visited many historical sites and even the Libby Prison where Charles was detained. Hopefully, there will be some of Charles's artifacts on display at the museum's Civil War Exhibit slated to open in the summer of 2013, to showcase the 197 residents of Lebanon who served in this war.

## **Volunteer**, Ed Tollmann

Continued from page 5

was the Liberty Hill part with pictures and subtitles.

Ed thought that it was important to rotate the museum's programs between the churches, and civic and historical topics. He has worked on being visible enough to be associated with the historical society and as such becoming a kind of ambassador for it. (My words--not his.) Presently he is serving as a liaison between the Adams Family Trust and the LHS. Ed is very proud of building a strong and committed board for the society. His motto was to ask the people you want to volunteer. Don't wait for them to volunteer. He is proud of the board that has been built and he will miss **Lebanon Historical Society Newsletter** 

working with the folks who serve on it. Living in the past, and maybe learning how the town was and how it worked in the late 1800's to the 1960s holds some fascination for Ed. Collecting

things and stories from a time long ago and sharing them with others should keep them alive for him as well as for others. Keep those stories coming, Ed.

## A few of Second Saturday's activities









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## New or replacement granite bricks available for the memorial walkway

Sadly, the cast concrete of our memorial bricks has not held up as well as we wanted. Some bricks have become illegible. If families would like to replace their bricks, new gray granite bricks are available at cost,

#### \$44 each.

Replacement bricks can be placed in the same location as the fading bricks or can be relocated to higher ground.

If you would like to order replacement bricks, please call the museum office at 860-642-6579. New memorial brick orders will be filled with granite bricks for a donation of \$100 to the brick fund. Donors will still be able to select the wording for the dedication. Please contact the museum if you would like more information.



Page 10 Summer 2012 Lebanon Historical Society



## Saturday, July 21 from 5pm to 8pm

Tickets \$25 pp \$40 couple

Your check will assure your ticket will be held at the door

Many thanks to the generous contributors to this year's event

Beltane Farm Carole & David Brown

Farmer's Cow

First Congregational Church of Lebanon

KC's Wine & Spirit Shoppe

Jim & Geri McCaw

Joan Merritt

Prides Corner Farms

Linda Wadsworth

Willimantic Brewery



A few of the items in this year's silent auction are

### Hydrangea Trees

from Prides Corner Farms

Gift Certificate for a Christmas Tree from Heatherly Tree Farm

Cheese Basket

from Beltane Farm

Wine & Gift Baskets From various donors





**Include charities** in your estate planning and make a difference in the lives that follow. Every day,

people from all walks of life make gifts to charity through their wills, making a tremendous difference in the world they leave behind.

If you are interested in leaving a legacy of your own, please visit www.leavealegacyct.org or contact the Lebanon Historical Society.

### From the Pastor's Library

Memorandum

found in an account book now in a private collection:

In view of the death on the 5<sup>th</sup> of Feb of the Hon W<sup>m</sup> A. Buckingham a native of this place & the founder of this Library the Committee feel called upon to express their sense of the puerty [sic] and high principle which marked his life of the most eminent 7 most efficient public service he performed in the time of the nation's great peril \_ of his large beneficence practiced in private & in public; & especially the sense of his consideration & generosity in founding a Library for the use of the pastors of this church a

sion which is sure to contribute especially to aid & furnish those who shall be called to the pastoral office here & so to the advantage of the church itself. They deem it appropriate that by a vote of the church, the Library bare & is to bare his honored name. They express their deep sense of loss in his death & their sympathy with his family & friends who mourn the departure of one to them so dear. Resolved that this minute be placed on the records of the Library. Lebanon Feb 1875





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**History Trivia Question:** Do you know who wrote these poems for the 1938 Lebanon Elementary School News - Special Issue?

"Little Robin A little robin was in the tree, singing sweetly just for me. I said to him, "what a fine day," but he turned and flew away."

Untitled "When it isn't snowing and the ground isn't white. I go fishing with my daddy, but we never get a bite."



Free Parking

Admission \$5

**Food For Sale** 



Programs, exhibitions & services of the Lebanon Historical Society are made possible in part by a generous grant from the Connecticut Humanities Council.

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