



The Reed House

1972

NODEN-REED PARK

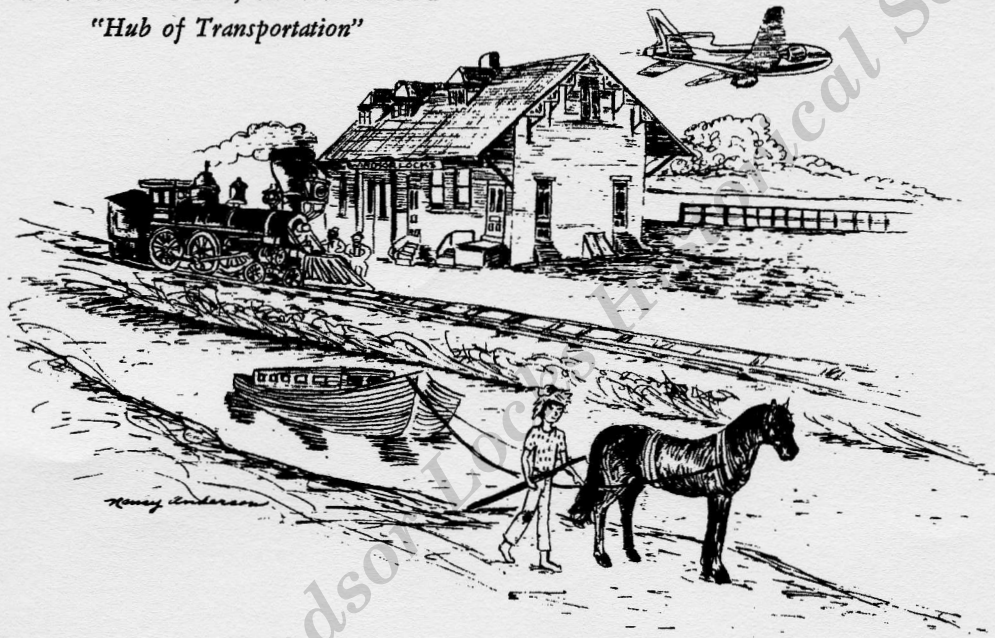
WINDSOR LOCKS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

58 WEST STREET

WINDSOR LOCKS, CONNECTICUT

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"Hub of Transportation"



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INTRODUCTION

This Booklet has been compiled by the Windsor Locks Historical Society from newspaper accounts, copies of land records, books, letters, family records and personal recollections of residents and former residents of Windsor Locks.

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From Album of the Late
Gladys Reed

Vital Statistic Information of

Hendrick Roddmore
Mrs. Henry English, Windsor

Published 1978

THE REED HOUSE



Built in 1840

Property of W...

SAMUEL DENSLOW FARM

In 1637, just nine years after Peter Minuit's legendary purchase of Manhattan Island for twenty-four dollars, Indian Sachem Nahano sold a considerable amount of land in the present Windsor Locks-Suffield area at, quite likely, the prevailing rates. Thus began a series of land transfers ultimately resulting in the Noden-Reed Park as we know it today.

The purpose of this booklet is to present a brief history of the ownership of land, and hopefully to widen the circle of area interest in the park, its buildings and in its former residents.

On Christmas in 1759, seventeen years prior to the rather violent argument between our country and England, one Samuel Denslow bought from the Phelps and Griswold families a ninety acre plot of land for four dollars an acre. Had Samuel Denslow lived to sell this land at today's prices he would be a very rich man as well as the world's oldest person.

The acreage remained intact through many generations until relatively recent real estate developments reduced its size from ninety acres to approximately twenty-two, the present size of the Noden-Reed Park.

Records indicate Samuel Denslow was a man of many and varied interests and talents. His name appears often in accounts of his activities including that of helping to design Windsor's Oliver Ellsworth Home. Ironically, in spite of gallant though futile efforts to obtain adequate nursing aid for his son who died in an army camp in New York State, Samuel Denslow hired a captured Hessian soldier who worked on the farm for some fourteen years during and after the Revolutionary War. We shall learn more of this Hessian soldier in later paragraphs.

In 1785 the property "passed" (whatever that means) to the son-in-law of Samuel Denslow, a Martin Pinney. Research fails to shed much light on the lengthy period from 1785 until 1852 when land records tell of the sale to David Pinney. David Pinney owned the farm for a fairly short period before selling to Samuel McAuley on March 21, 1865.

After Samuel McAuley Senior's death the ninety acres went to his heirs, Samuel and Benton McAuley, and again, after Samuel Junior's death, to Benton.

Once more Christmas played a role in the ownership of the farm. On December 24, 1919, Chester Reed and Leroy Sadler acquired the property. When Leroy Sadler died the Reed family became the sole owners. Since it is well within the memory span of many local residents, this time period from 1919 until 1974 is, perhaps, the interval of greatest interest.

SAMUEL DENSLOW FARM (Cont.)

It may be well to note that land records show the owners of the property, but do not tell of the families who rented or operated the farm for the owners at different times during its existence.

From 1759, the year of Samuel Denslow's original purchase of the ninety acres, until 1974 when Gladys Reed willed the remaining acreage to the town of Windsor Locks, actual ownership changed several times. Ownership, however, does not indicate tenancy. Some of the families who held title to the property chose to have others farm it rather than work it themselves.

With two exceptions little is known of the persons who worked the land. One of these was a McCutcheon family who lived there sometime between 1904 and 1919. The actual dates are not known.

The other and more fascinating exception is the Jared Williams family who occupied the farm from 1900 until 1904. Edith, Raymond and Ruth Williams who spent part of their childhood in the Reed house are presently living in nearby Granby, Connecticut.

The Windsor Locks Historical Society earnestly solicits any information concerning people who have lived on the farm at any time in the property's history.

During its long farming history the fertile soil of the ninety acres has felt the soft tread of Indian moccasins, the heavy boots of farmers, the hungry bites of plowshares and the countless tracks of nearly all types of domestic animals including the not so domestic peacock. It has seen the transition from actual horsepower to heavy farm machinery's mechanical horsepower. In stark contrast it has also known the weightless shadows of the long extinct passenger pigeon and the modern inter-continental jet.

For nearly a half century the Reed farm was a busy and productive enterprise. A pond on the property once furnished a haven for transient flocks of wild geese. This same pond with its adjacent ice house proved its cooling worth before the days of electric refrigeration. A slaughterhouse and smoke house added to the increasing productivity of the farm by supplying processed meats to a store operated by the McAuley family.

The Reed farm continued to operate full scale until the 1950's when real estate developments reduced its size to approximately twenty-two acres, the present size of Noden-Reed Park. Even in its reduced state some farming was carried out until relatively recent times.

THE NODEN-REED PARK

Before her death in November 1973, Miss Gladys Reed, the last surviving member of the Reed family, willed the remaining acres to the town of Windsor Locks with a provision naming the area the Noden-Reed Park. Miss Gladys Reed was the daughter of Joseph and Hannah (Noden) Reed.

Three acres of the park along with its barn and farmhouse have subsequently been designated as a Historical Site and is the headquarters of the Windsor Locks Historical Society and its museum.

Built about 1762 the first dwelling on the property was replaced in 1840 by the present Reed House. The exact location of the original house is not known and may, or may not, have been on the same spot.

Today the Reed house has nine rooms some of which are additions to the 1840 home. The section of the building before additions has a foundation made of stones taken from the Windsor Locks Canal area, a project begun in 1827. The large brick barn located nearby was built about 1826 from bricks made in a Windsor Locks brick yard.

THE REED HOUSE

With its aura of nostalgia the Reed House is an ideal setting for the Windsor Locks Historical Society's Museum. The nine rooms of the former farm house have been converted into areas of varied interests. Generally, the artifacts, heirlooms and other memorabilia relate to the farm and surrounding neighborhood and to people who have lived in Windsor Locks.

From the date of its opening, April 4, 1976, the museum has added almost continuously to its collection and has carefully catalogued most of the items on exhibit. It welcomes, and indeed, solicits any suitable items visitors may wish to contribute or lend for display.

For those interested in the lives of the original occupants of the Noden-Reed Park area, the Indian Room contains many mementos from those early times, including, of course, arrowheads found nearby.

The Noden-Reed Room is a treasure of information concerning community history and is, in itself, worthy of a visit.

For the same reason, the Denslow Parlor with its family heirlooms also furnishes added insight into the lives of families who have lived here.

From a human interest viewpoint the "1840 Room" is quite likely the most captivating section of the museum. Its authentic mid-nineteenth century furnishings create a feeling of warmth for the room and for the people who used it.

The Alice Coffin-Mae Egan Library is so named in honor of these two former town librarians. This room contains many rare publications including periodicals, old newspapers, the Denslow Bible and a collection of President Woodrow Wilson's speeches.

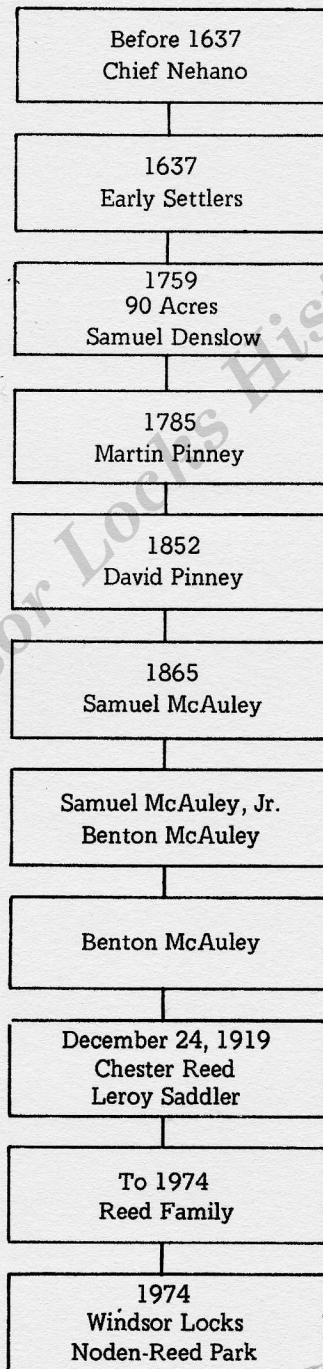
With its many pictures of the Windsor Locks area along with a number of personal items, the Thomasine Haskell Conant Room has been named in memory of this generous lady who donated the land now occupied by the Windsor Locks Town Library on Main Street.

For many years Boy and Girl Scouts' activities have been an important part of the lives of the youth in Windsor Locks. The success of their scouting endeavors has been, in large measure, due to the dedicated efforts of such men as the late Roy Sargent. The "Roy Sargent Room" is a tribute to him and to those who have followed him in scouting.

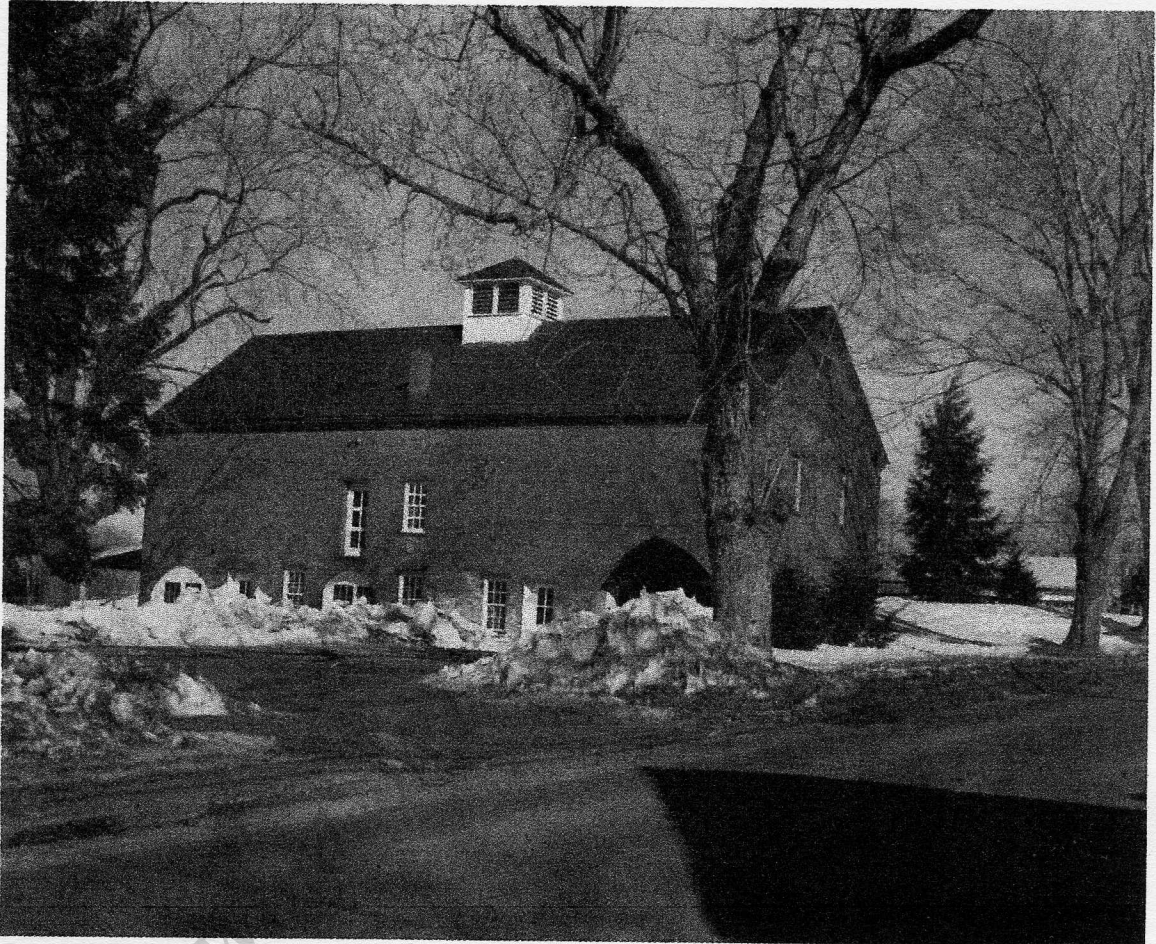
The bed, bureau and mirror in the bedroom were given to the museum by Dr. and Mrs. David Young while many of the smaller personal items were once the property of Mrs. Helena Bailey Spencer, a former resident of the community.

PAST OWNERSHIP

With some regrettably missing dates, the recorded titles of ownership of the land now containing the Noden-Reed Park appears in the chart form as follows:



THE REED BARN



For more than one hundred and fifty years the brick barn near the Reed House has withstood the rigors of New England's capricious weather to stand as a sturdy monument to the exceptional quality of the workmanship of its builders.

The building is unique in several respects. One of a very few all brick barns still in existence, and needing only minor repairs, it is essentially as sound as it was when built in 1826.

With its two level design, farmers were able to unload feed on the second floor where it could easily be dropped to the animals below with considerable savings in time and effort. This second floor also provided extra storage space.

For whatever reason, esthetic or otherwise, the barn's designers added a touch of beauty to their work by inserting an attractive border along the top of the brickwork. The doorway arches are another fascinating feature. Constructed without the customary keystones, the arches are a tribute to the ingenuity of their designers.

THE BRICK BARN (Cont.)

Many initials and dates have been cut into the barn's interior woodwork and brickwork. The earliest carved date found so far is 1874 although many initials probably precede that date by several years. Since the carving of initials continued well into the present century, it is quite possible that some of them belong to persons still living.

The barn as well as the Reed House has most deservedly been designated a Historic Site.

HENDRICK RODDMORE

Soon after his capture in Bennington, Vermont, in 1776, Hendrick Roddmore, a Hessian soldier, was hired by Samuel Denslow to work on the Denslow farm. Roddmore, or Rodimore, or Roddemore, depending on the source of information, lived for some fourteen years in a cabin built by his employer.

Fact or fancy, neither proved nor disproved, a legend has grown up around Roddmore's presence on the farm. In his native country it was customary to decorate trees in celebration of Christmas. Probably to bring a touch of home to his new country, Roddmore is said to have decorated a Christmas tree on the Denslow farm. If not the first, it was certainly among the first of such trees to be decorated in the United States.

The location of the cabin is fairly well-established. Records indicate it was built on the southeast section of the farm, not far from the present intersection of Spring and West Streets. A determined effort to pinpoint the exact location is planned with the hope of eventually erecting an appropriate marker. A small stream running through this area still bears the name "Hendrick's Brook".

In his remarkably comprehensive book, "The History of Ancient Windsor", Henry R. Stiles tells of a couple bizarre incidents in Roddmore's life in Windsor Locks.

At some unknown time during Hendrick's stay on the Denslow farm he married a local girl named Polly. Later he became disenchanted with his marriage contract and, with Teutonic exactness, set a price on his unhappiness by declaring he would "give up to forty shillings to be rid of her". Since this amounted to about ten dollars, the going price for departing wives would seem to be a bit low even for those earlier times.

HENDRICK RODDMORE (Cont.)

In a fit of despondency, or perhaps to save the forty shillings, one day Roddmore decided to do the departing himself. Using "a nice ditching rope" Hendrick attempted to commit suicide by hanging. Cut down by his friends in time to save his life, Hendrick was indignant, not because his life had been saved, but because his ditching rope had been cut!

Polly died on December 25, 1790 and shortly after Roddmore moved to Windsor where he remarried. In Windsor he became a shepherd, a natural occupation for him since, after his suicide try, he must have felt exceedingly sheepish.

Hendrick and his new wife received full communion in the First Church in Windsor on August 5, 1792 and hopefully, lived happily ever after.

VITAL STATISTICS

Hendrick Roddmore

Polly, Hendrick's first wife, died December 25, 1790, at age 40

Hendrick renewed his baptismal covenant on March 18, 1792, under the ministry of Henry A. Rowland

Hendrick and his second wife were administered full communion on August 5, 1792

These records were taken from the First Church in Windsor, United Church of Christ, Palisado Avenue, Windsor, Connecticut

WHAT'S NEW?



One of many pictures in an album collected by Gladys Reed, her whimsical caption "What's New" presents both a challenge and a question for the Windsor Locks Historical Society.

Plans for the possible creation of a Farmer's Museum in the brick barn along with some needed restoration work on the barn and house are being formulated.

With a highly appreciated grant from the Historic Assets Fund of the State Department of Commerce, the future of the Noden-Reed Park looks very bright. This grant will be used for restoration work on the barn and house.

The Noden-Reed Park's seasons will begin each year on the first Sunday in April and will be open to visitors from 2 p. m. to 5 p. m. on alternate Sundays through October. The Reed House will also be opened for annual Christmas programs.

Constantly seeking means to make its museum more interesting, the museum staff has converted the second floor south wing hallway into a photo gallery.

WHAT'S NEW? (Cont.)

A recently acquired mantel has been installed at the top of the stairs leading to the second floor of the Reed House. Made of durable oak, this sturdy mantel once graced the home of Eli Horton on Spring Street. Later it became the property of the Knights of Columbus Home when they bought the property.

At the time of the demolition of the former Horton home, Louis Nai, a Windsor Locks resident, had the foresight to salvage and store the mantel until a suitable place could be found for its display.

Mr. Nai gave the mantel to Michael Danyluk who, in turn, donated it to the Noden-Reed Museum where it stands as proudly today as it did more than a century and a quarter ago in the Horton house.

The latest addition to the Noden-Reed Park's Museum is a collection of class room objects from the now closed St. Mary's and Union Schools. It is quite possible and even probable that some of the museum's visitors may have used the very items now on display in the small hallway on the second floor.

And, of course, for those more patient individuals who care to wait, the Noden-Reed Park's Time Capsule will be dug up in the year 2054.