
Founders News

Newsletter of the Society of the Descendants of the Founders of Hartford March 2012

Court and Dinner Topic: Connecticut's Witch Trials

IN the mid-to-late 17th century, seeking out “witches” and putting them on trial was common in the New England colonies. The most famous trials, remembered today largely due to the town’s marketing efforts, took place in Salem, Massachusetts. But Connecticut had its own witch trials, and not much is generally known about them.

At the May 8, 2012 Court and Dinner of the Society of the Descendants of the Founders of Hartford, the “hidden history” of Connecticut’s witch trials and executions will be discussed by Connecticut State Historian Walter Woodward. Dr. Woodward is an acknowledged expert on the subject of 17th century witchcraft trials; he is the author of a new biography of John Winthrop Jr., a man instrumental in changing Connecticut from a place that fiercely pursued and punished alleged witches to one in which execution of people found guilty of witchcraft was banned.

The dinner will be held at the Officers’ Club of Connecticut, located in the State Armory in Hartford, 360 Broad Street. (This was also the location of last year’s Court and Dinner.)



Dr. Walter Woodward

Cocktails will begin at 6 p.m., with dinner at 6:45 and Dr. Woodward’s talk will follow.

The crime of “witchcraft” was included in laws enacted by the parliament of England during Queen Elizabeth I’s reign. In each of the New England colonies, witchcraft was a capital crime that involved having some type of relationship with or entertaining Satan. The earliest laws of Connecticut and New Haven colonies made it a capital offense for “any man or woman [to] bee a Witch.”

Many court records have been lost or destroyed; thus, there are varying accounts of the number of witch trials in Connecticut.

Come hear the whole story at May’s Court and Dinner!

Meet Your Founders Council: Bob Hall, Governor

This is the first in a series of brief profiles of those on the Council (Executive Board) of the Founders of Hartford.

Since 2005, Robert S. Hall of West Hartford has been Governor of the Society of the Descendants of the Founders of Hartford. He is descended from John Hall, one of the guides who led Thomas Hooker’s party to Hartford. John Hall was also one of those who left Hartford in 1637 as part of the Hartford settlement’s voluntary conscription to fight the Pequots.

A retired dentist, Bob grew up in West Hartford, graduated from the Loomis School in Windsor, then earned degrees from Middlebury and the University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine. He practiced for seven years in Hartford, then started a group practice in Farmington, where he remained for 37 years.

Dentistry appealed to him, he says, because he could “be my

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Meet Your Council, continued

own boss from Day One, work with people, but mostly, be in a profession which could have an impact on the quality of a person's life."

Both Bob's parents were proud of their ancestry, and his father's first cousin spent many years putting together the Hall genealogy.

Bob and his wife, Marcia, have three children and five grandchildren. His hobbies include world travel, photography, and sports; he referees high school soccer and lacrosse, and plays ice hockey, squash, and tennis.

His hope for the Founders of Hartford is "to continue the good work of those members who preceded me, and to keep the Founders a sound organization for many years, so my grandson can become the Governor of the Founders some day."



Dr. Bob Hall, Governor

Could You Be On the Council?

The Society of the Descendants of the Founders of Hartford is always looking for members willing to serve on its Council (executive board).

Council meetings are held twice a year in Hartford, so a requirement of Council membership is that a person live close enough to Hartford to be able to attend meetings.

Anyone interested should contact Governor Bob Hall at the Founders post office box (see below) or by writing him at rshallct@gmail.com.

Insignia Available

Three types of insignia are now available to members of the Founders of Hartford. Why not buy one and show your pride in your ancestry?



The rosette, shown here, costs \$15.

Small medals, about the size of a dime, made of enameled silver, are \$60 by mail or \$55 at the annual Court and Dinner. Worn without the ribbon, they make a quite attractive pendant.

Large medals, about the size of a half dollar, are \$135 by mail or \$125 at the dinner. Each medal has a ribbon attached. To order by mail, send a check payable to "Founders of Hartford" to the Society of the Descendants of the Founders of Hartford, P.O. Box 270215, West Hartford, CT 06107-0215.

Do You Know People Eligible to Join the Founders of Hartford?

Many people have become aware of the Founders of Hartford by speaking with a present member. Membership information may be found on the Society's website, foundersofhartford.org (select "Membership"). Or a prospective member may write us at P.O. Box 270215, West Hartford, CT 06107-0215.

For Genealogy, Try The Godfrey Library

Connecticut has several fine sources of genealogical information. One that might not be known to some Founders of Hartford members is the Family History Center at the Godfrey Memorial Library in Middletown.

The library, at 134 Newfield St., is privately owned and operated, but is open to the public, free, six days a week (except in winter, when it's three or four days a week). It also has an excellent website, www.godfrey.org, that can be a source for much genealogical research.

Some material is available at no charge online, but for full access to the data it is necessary to be a paid subscriber. There are various levels of membership. If you're not familiar with this resource, check it out. Many Founders of Hartford members have found it to be an invaluable aid to their searches.