

Attention Getters in the Nineteenth Century

Here is a collection of articles of local interest that first appeared in the *Mountain County Herald* in the 1850s and in later editions, after the paper had changed its name to *The Winsted Herald*. I'm sure they were much talked about when first published, and still hold our interest today. The first entry in particular is at the moment once again pertinent, as the CHS is considering erecting some sort of night lighting in front of the society.

“Wonder of wonders! Water Street [Center Brook Road] has a veritable, bona fide *street lamp*, and Colebrook is henceforth to be lighted at night. One of ‘Morse’s Patent Self-extinguishers’, of regular city style and size – a ten dollar cut – was erected last week near Conroy’s blacksmith shop, [today behind Abbott’s house at 2 Center Brook Road] and another we hear is talked of for the church park and still another to stand near Rockwell’s barn. [Today’s Town Hall] A denizen from the Rock District (our north suburb) came tramping down all unconsciously, a night or two after the lamp was lighted, and upon seeing the light, stopped dumb-founded. He stood for more than a minute, it is said, wondering whether he was in Colebrook or New York. What, pray, are we coming to; what does this single ray of light, so suddenly bursting the gloom of our past, reveal to us? Is it the harbinger of long rows of enchanting beams, transforming Main Street, [tongue-in-cheek reference to Colebrook Road] School Hill Avenue (!) and Water Street into a brilliant triangle of fairyland (!) splendor? Quite a transformation, ‘tis true.”

August 1, 1879

“The Willimantic Linen Company is making a trial of the new electric light in their mule room and winding room in mill No. 2. The light used is what is known as the Brush Electric Light, and is the invention of Charles F. Brush of Cleveland, Ohio. The machine for generating the electricity is about four feet in length and twenty inches in width and is placed in the basement, where the power required for running is easily applied.

The electricity is conveyed by wires to the lamps above, and the light is emitted from the tips of two carbon rods, placed perhaps one fourth of an inch apart. The light obtained is pure white, and has this peculiarity: that it brings out the most delicate colors as perfectly as sunlight. The light was tested for the first time when the mill was in operation on Wednesday evening. Some idea of its immense power may be gained from the fact that in the mule room, which is 200 feet by 70 feet, and which has required 72 gas burners; four electric lights illuminated the room perfectly, and with a quality of light superior to gas. In the winding room, two electric lights were used and supplied the place of 64 gas burners. The apparatus used is simple and not liable to get out of order. The lamps are adapted to burn about thirteen inches of carbon without adjustment, and the carbons last some six or seven hours, when they can be replaced in a few seconds without interruption to the light. Another peculiarity of electric light is that it produces very little heat, and gives an inappreciable amount of non-respirable gasses. An equal amount of gas light produces 200 times as much heat, and about the same proportion of non-respirable gasses. The healthfulness of electric light is therefore a great point in its favor,

as compared with any other artificial light; and there is no danger of fire or explosion in its use. The cost of the carbons consumed in each lamp is from two to three cents an hour. The expense of running the lights, after the first cost of the machine and necessary apparatus, is small, about one-twentieth that of gas light, while the light obtained is immeasurably superior in every respect.”

February 7, 1879

Mr. F. D. Thompson purchased last spring the hotel formerly known as the ‘Seymour’, [today, the Colebrook Historical Society] and has re-christened it the ‘Thompson House’. He has thoroughly renovated, repainted and refurnished it, and now has the finest location in the town. He contemplates making it a first-class family hotel, and all who are now stopping there have thus far been greatly pleased with his management. For the pleasure of his guests, Mr. Thompson treats them to a drive about the country every pleasant afternoon. In front of the house there is a fine croquet ground, where may be constantly seen a party of merry players. The house is surrounded by a broad and shady plaza, where the older guests watch with delight the merry players of tennis, if they so desire.

Among the guests are the following well-known ladies and gentlemen: Dr. W. B. DeForest and wife, New Haven; Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Hurlbut and son, Chicago; Mrs. Sanford and son, New Haven; J. M. Kelsey, N. Y. and Mrs. A. L. Ropp and son, Newark, N. J. Mr. Thompson expects during the week ten more guests, and is receiving many applications from various parts of the country asking for terms during the months of August and September. His new venture will undoubtedly prove a financial success.”

August 9, 1882

“A new type of match has been invented in France. It is designed to supercede the present dangerous Lucifer and Locofoco match, and is said to answer the purpose completely. It is impossible to ignite this match without bringing it in contact with friction paper or cloth prepared for the express object; and the two being always kept apart except when to be used, neither can take fire from spontaneous combustion, or through the thefts of rats and mice. It has been proposed in one or two instances that the insurance companies introduce a clause into their policies, rendering them null and void as to all buildings insured, in which any other than the new French match may be used.”

April 19, 1856

“Local Stage Schedules: Horace Skinner’s stages from Otis, Cold Spring, New Boston, Colebrook River and Hitchcocksville will connect daily at Winsted with the 1:53 pm train down. Returning on arrival of the 10:35 am train from Bridgeport.

C. S. Hill’s stage leaves Winsted daily on arrival of the 10:35 am train from Bridgeport for Colebrook Center, Sandisfield, New Marlboro and Barrington.

A deduction of five cents is made when tickets are purchased at the office.”

January 19, 1856

Historic Bytes

Bob Grigg