

July 8 1959

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BILL JACKSON, who claims to be the oldest retired livery man in Danbury, pictured around the turn of the century with one of his modern (for those times) "taxis." Jackson entered the horse and carriage trade in the 1890s. Now 83, he can be found at his Indian Trading Post, Sugar Hollow road. (News-Times photos—Don Dallas)

Bill Jackson Recalls Days He Owned 20-Coach Livery

By **DON DALLAS**

DANBURY — William (Bill) Jackson—who claims to be the oldest retired livery man in Danbury—was born and bred in the era when a Connecticut Yankee was fiercely individualistic, frugal, independent, a great competitor, and no waster of words.

Now, almost 84, Jackson, who lives with his son and daughter-in-law at the "Indian Trading Post" on Sugar Hollow road, is still full of zest and "joie de vivre."

He attributes his pep and enthusiasm to "never worrying" and to his fortune and fun in "them good old days."

Bill was going to school when the famed Blizzard of '88 buried Danbury. "I run away more than I went, by gosh!" he gleefully claims, still using the lusty jargon of the days when he was a pioneer coachman.

After working as a hatter until 1899, ambitious Bill Jackson changed to the horse and carriage trade.

He purchased fancy New York coaches with rubber wheels. From an initial investment of two, his organization grew to a stable of 20 horses, 20 coaches and five drivers. "Boy, I wanna tell you, those cabs just took Danbury," he says.

Horse Doctor, Too

An un-official horse doctor, Jackson claims: "I never lost a case." He claims to have invented a colic cure—"greatest medicine God ever put on earth"—and used it successfully.

"My God, I've had some nice horses," he says with prideful recollection. Today, at 83, he rides horses for his health. Two years ago he amazed his friends

by sticking fast on the back of a busting bronc whose middle-aged owner was afraid to mount it.

Horse traveling—not unlike modern driving—was often hazardous. Bill remembers one splendid calamity. He was driving a "real fat tomato" back from the Danbury Fair at dusk. She took up two seats. Bright lanterns on a haywagon in front of his coach frightened Bill's horse and sent it scurrying back toward Danbury. The coach overturned and Bill, a little fellow, found himself squashed beneath more than 200 pounds of female obesity. When he recovered his wind, he let loose with a long, hearty laugh.

Yankee Businessman

A Yankee businessman, Mr. Jackson was always on the lookout for a good deal. And, as he had a sizable stable, he "never let anything slip by that was a dollar rent." They called it the "101 Ranch Circus." Bill Jackson's stable at one time was filled with horses, snakes, black bears, and almost all denizens of the countryside—except skunks—at 50 cents a week per stall.

As a tough dad, he upholds the Yankee tradition of "learning the hard way." He taught his son, Harold, who with his wife lives at the "Trading Post," how to ride a horse. Dad set son on a "gentle" mule, then laughed with glee as the mule ripped, kicked and snorted, trying to unload its unwelcome cargo. But terrified, Harold couldn't let go.

"It was a speedy ridin' course," he recalls.

Harold learned so well, in fact, that he became a crackerjack horse trainer and pistol marksman. The late cowboy, Tom Mix, christened him the "Tom Mix of Danbury."



DAPPER JACKSON, well established as a Danbury livery man in the early 20th century, posed for a picture which was to be used on his new-fangled "Colic Cure." It was great stuff, he said. Somehow he never got it patented.

What does Bill Jackson think about the modern "young whipper-snappers?" "They're livin' too fast . . ." But he smiled when he said it.

quor Waiver

News-Times

iday, October 23, 1959

Pioneer 3-5591



William Jackson

W. A. Jackson, Retired Livery Man, Dies at 84

DANBURY — William A. Jackson, who claimed to be the oldest retired livery man in Danbury, is dead at 84.

Mr. Jackson, owner and resident of the Indian Trading Post on Sugar Hollow road, died in Danbury hospital this morning after a short illness.

Born in Monroe Aug. 1, 1875, he was the son of the late Henry and Jane Jackson and lived in Danbury practically all his life.

He worked as a hatter until 1899 and then started out in the horse and carriage trade. He owned a good deal of property on Sugar Hollow road which he converted into summer cabins and a trading post.

Because of his prowess as a horse trainer and pistol marksman, the late cowboy actor, Tom Mix, once nicknamed him the "Tom Mix of Danbury."

He still rode horses "for my health" last summer, at which time he was the subject of a

feature story in the News-Times.

At one time he maintained a stable of 20 horses and coaches, and employed five drivers.

Surviving are a son, Harold H., of Danbury; a granddaughter, Miss Barbara Jackson of New York city; a grandson, Sgt. Thomas H. Jackson, stationed with the Marine Corps in New Bern, N.C.; and one nephew.

Funeral services will be held Monday afternoon at 2 o'clock in the Tomlinson Homestead, 336 Main street, with the Rev. F. Graham Luckenbill, rector of St. James' Episcopal church, officiating.

Burial will be in Wooster cemetery. The funeral home will be open Sunday afternoon and evening from 2 to 4 and from 7 to 9.

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THE WESTCHESTER HISTORIAN

to north, south and east. Hackalah Bailey of Somers ran the Danbury Stage over the Croton Turnpike to connect with his JOHN JAY of which he was the owner and Captain.^{45, 46} He used the Upper Dock at Sing Sing where Stephen Collyer and Henry Hanes were boat operators. In bad weather he carried passengers as far north as Peekskill. Levi Foshay operated the Village Stage from Foshay's Hotel on the Lower Landing.⁴⁷ He made daily connections to Tarrytown, Dobbs Ferry and Yonkers, leaving at 9 A.M. For Ferry service, on old maps one can see "Ferry" marked for a crossing to Nyack. One of the earliest was a horse ferry operated by Captain Haaf from Scarborough, about 1826⁴⁸, and William Campbell advertised his little ferry (sailboat) DART which passengers could secure by "aplying" at the "Steamboat Hotel, Upper Dock."⁴⁹

One of the best known families of river boatmen from Sing Sing was that of the Jenks family. By 1837 young Captain Jacob W. Jenks began a packet line to New York with his sloop the FANNY,⁵⁰ running from the Lower Dock "every Saturday afternoon to New York and leaving New York every Wednesday afternoon" on the return trip "as the weather will permit. The following year⁵¹ he operated a new sloop the J. W. JENKS leaving the Lower Dock at Sing Sing. Later Captain Jenks also ran the EUREKA, the LEADER, the ORA, as daily packets from Sing Sing, at different times, from the same dock. (The lower part of Middle Dock, was later known as the Jenks Dock.)⁵²

While Captain Jenks was operating his line, the sloops were beginning to feel the effects of the early steamers on the river, which doomed the quiet, useful lives of the sloops for carrying passengers, and the speedier steamers gave stiff competition to freight rates. By 1849 with the coming of the Railroad, the sloops were almost eliminated as popular conveyors. The boat fare dropped to 20¢ when the Railroad's was 45¢ to New York City, and although some sloops still operated up until the turn of the century, — mainly to carry freight, by 1900 the sloop had vanished from the Hudson.⁵³ No longer did passengers promenade the decks by day and dance to music on deck by moon-

~~July~~ Mary Greenwood Hickerston
Sing & Thomas L. Collyer 18

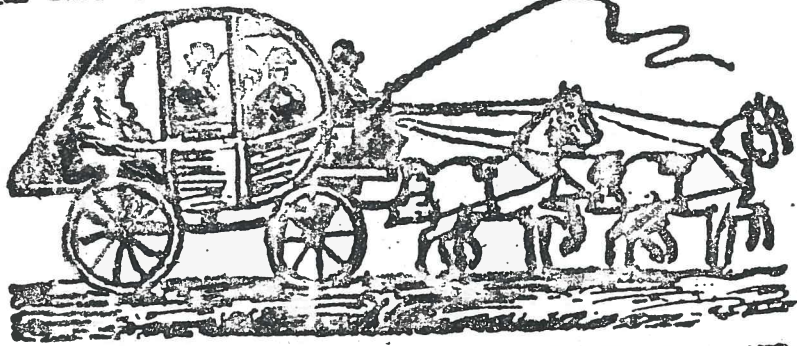
THE WESTCHEST

Many out of town sloops could be seen. There was the big sloop MARGARET w 1835, and sailed under Captain Abe L. GLIDE from Nyack, under Captain A. J. General Van Cortlandt, the Katrina Van the Martin VanBuren, the William Nelson CAN EAGLE built by John I. Woolsey c harbor⁵⁴.

Up to about 1820 most of the sloop Sparta Landing, but when the Leggett Bro Mattocks moved their business up to Sing Sing to Sing Sing and Sparta Landing v change was largely due also to the construction of the Turnpike (Albany Post Road today) and the coaches from the Sing Sing docks more common.

The sloops carried the bulk of the freight in the river, the stages transported boats

FARE REDUCED.



**NEW-YORK, CROSS-RIVER
AND**

**DANBURY MAIL
STAGE.**

From The Westchester Historian

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1976

Brookfield Bicentennial News



By Jan Narwold

How often we do see a horse and rider trotting down the main roads of Brookfield in this year of 1976? Unfortunately, it is almost a novelty to look out the window and see a horse tied up at the Village Store. - a rare occasion for children to cluster around and pat the horse's nose. Horses and ponies have even come to be legislated for or against with extensive regulations as to how and on what acreage they may be kept. But it was not always so in Brookfield. Even at the turn of the century the roads were quiet except for the clip-clop of horses and riders or wagons and buggies. A feature that was as common as the mail box was the public horse shed. Many long-time residents of Brookfield still remember the horse sheds. In fact, one notable Brookfield citizen (who shall remain nameless) tells of a riotous Halloween when he and some cronies procured or "lifted" some fresh homemade cider from a farmer whose farm was where UPS is now on Pocono Road, and fleeing with their booty, they retired to the Congregational Church horse sheds which, by all accounts, must have been on the Silvermine side of the church, to drink the ill-gotten cider.

Harriet Hawley, in one of her reminiscences, bemoans the passing of the horse and buggy and the advent of the motor car. She says "Shall I ever be able once more to sit in my grandfather's pew in the church, and from my vantage point by the window watch the horses in their sunny stalls, impatiently waiting to be unhitched and headed home?"

There would be, in the nearest stall of those rambling sheds Waite Clark's pair of matched sorrels, swishing their fine long tails so high, that they often hit the dashboard of his canopy-topped two seater with the plaid

robe thrown carelessly back over the tan cushions.

Jonathan Webb's black pacer restless and uncertain, hitched to the new high carriage with shining side lamps. Eager to be off with young John and his bride with the long gold earrings.

Daniel Sharp's old gray Nance, steady as the Concord buggy that always brought him and his second wife, held a buffalo robe in winter and a gray and black shawl for spring and fall. Nance was the only horse in the sheds that would gnaw at the old wooden beams.

Far sprightlier Jennie Bacon's tall bay had a white star on her forehead and actually seemed to understand that she pulled the eligible deacon's daughter in the finest wagon with a tan top and "fringe".

Each horse knew his stall as well as his owner who had inherited it, and possessed it as much as his house and lands. No one would have thought of putting a horse in another person's stall without a permit duly signed and sealed. Such a breach of etiquette was even more serious than getting seated in the wrong pew. For a horse shed was dear to a farmer's heart and regarded much like a barn.

When in summer, the church windows were open and the minister's sermon was beyond me, how pleasant it was to watch the row of horses stamping the flies off and shaking their Sunday clean harnesses. Also, Deacon Booth's black and tan beagle would come waddling in and curl up under his master's buckboard.

True, from my grandfather's pew I could not see the circus posters plastered on the back of the sheds but I knew they were there. Elephants, lions, and tigers, with a girl in yellow tights swinging upon a trapeze.

I was often roused from my horse shed considerations by the little cabinet organ sounding forth the last hymn, ending the Sunday service.

Someday, I often thought, I shall drive in with a horse of my own and alight with the air of the girl on the flying trapeze, and carefully tie my beautiful pawing steed under the waiting horse sheds and their weathered beams."

Yankees rally 'round

By Deborah Meyer
Modern Living Staff

Flipping through a legal volume, one might be amused to come upon an old Connecticut blue law, still on the books, which gives horse-drawn buggies the right-of-way on the road.

To the 150 members of the Yankee Pleasure Rallies group, however, horse-drawn vehicles are a thing of the present and that law has meaning when they're out for a leisurely Sunday drive with the family.

The informal group, devoted solely to the fun of pleasure driving, has grown from a membership of 10 to its present 150 in 10 years. Members come from all over Connecticut, New York and Massachusetts.

There are no dues, no officers, no by-laws and only about three meetings a year. This lack of structure, however, in no way daunts the enthusiasm of members.

"The first time we hitched up our peddler's wagon and took it out on the street, we drove an hour and a half into Bridgewater to get a loaf of bread and an hour and a half back," says Mrs. Robert Allen, group member.

Anyone who has a horse-drawn vehicle or who is interested in the old-time conveyances is eligible for membership. The group has rallies about three times a year and members may participate in the competitions.

Judging is based on performance, the driver's ability; condition of the horse or horses, harness and equipment; and the suitability of the restoration of the vehicle.

Some competitions also include an "appropriate attire" category, and then the drivers arrive in authentic costumes of the period of their rig.

A Trail Ride and Drive Sunday at 10 a.m. in White Memorial in Litchfield will open the season for the pleasure drivers. The public is invited free of charge to view the horse-drawn vehicles as they ramble over the trails and dirt roads. This is a non-competitive event.

"Driving horse-drawn vehicles is a lost art," says Mrs. Norris Bullard, another group member. "Before cars, horses were everything. Everyone knew how to drive a sleigh or carriage.

"But many of the people from this era have died. We value the old-timers who come to our rallies and give advice on how to drive."

Members in the group's old-timers class don't have to own a vehicle to drive. They just come to the rallies and take their pick of what they want to drive.

"We encourage children, too, and have special driving classes for them so they'll learn the art and keep it alive," continues Mrs. Ballard.

The "sport" is becoming more popular, though, asserts Mrs. Allen, who says people with riding horses like to do something after riding season. "They can hitch their horse to a sleigh or carriage and drive."

Members in the group own a variety of vehicles, including carriages, work wagon vehicles, jog carts and hunting carts. A vehicle may require a pony to pull it or up to six horses.

Vehicles average between 75 and 100 years old, says Mrs. Ballard. Occasionally, though, a modern version of an old rig will slip in.

Sears Roebuck puts out a "Special" which comes in a box and must be assembled at home. "It's good to play around with or train on," says Mrs. Allen somewhat disdainfully, noting

that it's not the real thing. "But it's welcome in our shows," she adds.

Members find vehicles in old barns, at auctions, or through "somebody who knows somebody who has one," explains Mrs. Bullard, who figures that the "Connecticut supply is about depleted."

"They're scarce items, and the prices keep going up," chimes in Mrs. Allen. "Of course you can find a lot of them in the Pennsylvania Dutch country, but they're new vehicles. They're not a restored antique."

Cost, of course, depends on the condition of the vehicle. The women estimate that most go for \$100 and up . . . and up.

Once a vehicle is purchased, then there's the problem of restoration, which is also becoming "a lost art."

"There are a few old-timers who can repair wheels, do upholstery or striping," notes Mrs. Ballard. ("striping," is painting decorative stripes along the sides of the rigs, similar to the art work on today's jazzy sports cars.)

As a result, more and more people are becoming do-it-yourselfers. "You dig out old books and catalogs and try to restore the vehicle as close to the original as possible," says Mrs. Allen, who suggests the reproduced versions of the old Sears catalogs as good references.

"You have to find the right accessories to go with the vehicle," she continues. "Sometimes you look for months to find the right parts."

Any type of horse or pony can be used to pull a vehicle, but "Morgans are a popular, adaptable breed," notes Mrs. Allen. "You can ride them, drive them and work them."

Rigs are not restricted to rallies, leisure driving or sitting in a barn. Owners are frequently called to participate in parades ("We carry the dignitaries of the day," says Mrs. Allen) or to take part in weddings.

"Being driven from the church to the reception in a horse-drawn carriage is the perfect finishing touch to an old-fashioned wedding," says Mrs. Ballard.

"There's no easier way to relax," adds Mrs. Allen. "It gives the bride time to unwind. When she gets out, she's ready to face the next thing."

Usually the driver will dress up in period costume for the occasion, and of course the procession is quite an eye-stopper. Mrs. Ballard recalls a delightful traffic slow-down one Saturday afternoon as her husband drove bride and bridegroom up Route 7 to the Fox Hill Restaturant in Brookfield.

All is not always rosy with rig owners, though. Occasionally there are break downs in the shows, an event that "is more heartbreaking than dangerous . . . To think you have to replace a part," says Mrs. Ballard knowingly.

Other problems result when drivers are not as conscientious as they should be and leave their animals unattended. "The horses get spooked and off they go," says Mrs. Allen.

Maintenance is not a time-consuming activity, note the women. The rig should be kept under cover and waxed for every show. The axles must be kept well-greased. The harness, too, needs to be kept in good repair and well-oiled.

"These vehicles will last indefinitely if taken care of," says Mrs. Ballard. "They're not like a car; they were made to last a long time."

Both women agree that the Bicentennial stirred up interest in old conveyances. "We're relaxed in our

antiques on wheels

MODERN
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THE NEWS-TIMES

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rules," they point out, "so we can have more people to participate."

Upcoming summertime competitions include June 26 at The Inn at Waramaug. The rally will begin at noon, the public is invited, and no admission charge.

As part of Old Roxbury Days, a competition will be July 24 on the field behind Booth Free School. The rally will include costumes, obstacle course. Gate admission is charged which will cover all of the day.

Anyone interested in the Pleasure Rallies group may contact Mrs. Ballard of Brookfield or Mrs. Bridgewater.



Horse Drawn Sleds

Brookfield Historical News

By Jan Narwold

"Now the ground is white
Go it while you're young
Take the girls tonight, and sing
this sleighing song!
Just get a bob-tailed nag
Two forty for his speed
Hitch him to an open sleigh, and
crack! you'll take the lead."

I doubt that these bob-tailed nags ever heard of Ascot or Churchill Downs, and I'm sure I don't know if two-forty was their speed, but I'll bet they were good steady farm horses and much-beloved by the boys at Curtis School where the picture was taken. This snowy day was well before 1900 because the school was remodeled after 1900.

For the life of me I can't figure out what it is that the horses are hitched to. Is it some sort of a homemade plow? a farm implement? Anyone who knows exactly what it is, please call and tell me so I can pass it on.

One thing I'll be willing to bet is that those placid horses bore names such as Nellie, Maude,

Exercise Course

money for the plans from town civic groups, and the course itself would be built by students in shop. He said the plans can be brought from a company in California for \$1,000. The estimated total cost for the project is \$3,800, he added.

"The exercise course would be open to the public and would show the community what the students can do," he said.

Ned, Bob, Jim or Dolly or the like. In the 1800's, no one got very creative over horses' names such as Secretariat, Scheherazade or Foolish Pleasure. When I was a small girl in northern New York State, I think every other two-ton farm horse was called Dolly, and if there were more than one on neighboring farms, they took their owner's last names for clarification. My favorite was Dolly Turner—big gentle creatures with velvety noses. Talk about Sasquatch! They had feet like dinner platters. How sad that most of this generation will never know the appreciation of good horseflesh. I'll bet these two at Curtis School were well taken care of by many an adoring school boy!

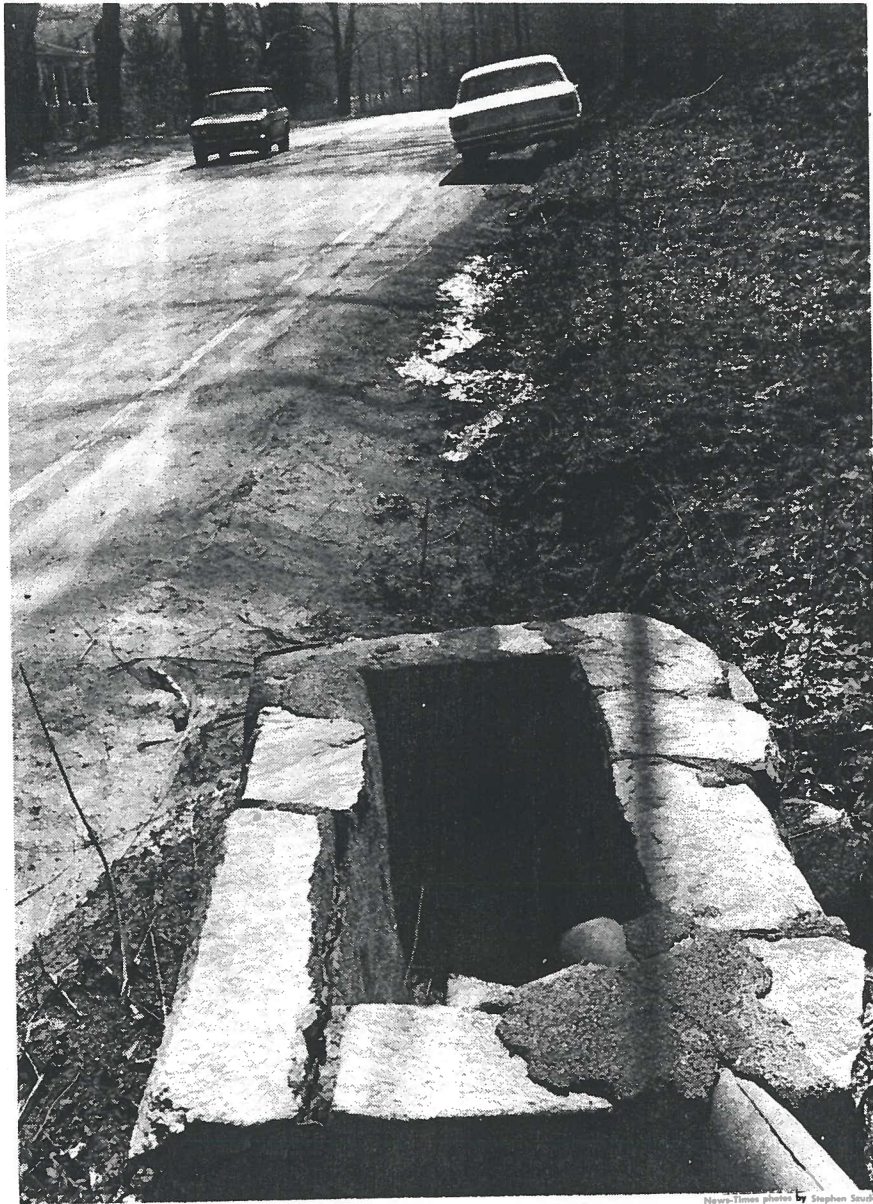
Memories of the Civil War

On Feb. 16 at 8 p.m. in the Historical Society Museum, Larry Stewart of the Brookfield Country Players will present a dramatic reading. This program is entitled "The Letters of Samuel J. MacDonald." The Historical Society has come into possession of letters written by Samuel MacDonald which were written from key spots in the battle between the states. The description is accurate and interesting. The author was a soldier from New York. The readings will be presented by Rick Hulswit and Larry Stewart. Civil War ballads will be sung by Ellie Ellis. Join us for coffee and an enjoyable evening!

On Saturday the museum will be open 10-3 and a Civil War film will be shown at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.

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Monuments to the past

Automobiles pass monuments to their predecessor, the horse. In front of 170 Deer Hill Ave., Danbury, is one of the few hitching posts still to be found along city streets. In Bethel, another

roadside memory of bygone years is this stone and cement horse watering trough. It is located on Route 58 across the road from the William Joll residence.



News-Times photo by Joseph Kugielsky

Above: Hope Jenkin Jones of Monroe is appropriately dressed for a ride in her Cortland wagon, made between 1890 and 1900 by the Cortland Carriage Works, Cortland, N.Y. Her outfit is a replica of an "afternoon

suit" worn by her mother in the early 1900s. Below: Norris Ballard of Brookfield pauses in his horse-drawn peddler's wagon. He did all the restoration himself on this early 1900s vehicle.

5/10/77





Sleighbells rang in front of Old Town Hall in the early 1900s, one of many eras to be celebrated by Southbury 200 next year. The event will mark the anniversary of the town's incorporation.

Photo courtesy of Southbury Historical Society

Residents planning town's birthday bash

By Janice Battista
News-Times staff

SOUTHBURY — Several town organizations have begun planning for next year's "Southbury 200" birthday. It will be an extravaganza, planners say.

Many residents may recall the week-long tercentennial celebration in 1973 honored the 300th anniversary of the settlement of the town.

The 200th birthday bash is to commemorate the date Southbury was incorporated as a town in 1787.

Still in their preliminary stages, involved groups are focusing on gaining group and public interest and trying to determine the size and scope of the occasion. Richard Perry, chairman of the Southbury Historical Society said.

"We need to bring together not only individuals, but groups that represent different aspects of the town," he said, adding that celebrations such as this "generate a great togetherness and spirit in the town."

Among the groups already participating in the project are the Southbury Historical Society, the Cultural Arts Committee, the Historic District Commission, the Lions Club, the 1973 Tercentenary Committee, the Selectmen's Office, the Historical

Society and several interested individuals.

Anyone interested in contributing ideas for the celebration is invited to the Southbury 200 meeting, Tuesday night at 7:30 in Town Hall, Room 210.

Some ideas under consideration for the event include a dance or a ball set in a theme of a particular era, a musical event, a pictorial history, school contests and a parade.

"There is some feeling that reliving Colonial days has been pretty well done here, but more awareness reflecting events of the 19th century is certainly warranted," Perry said.

Although the previous celebration was rather costly, the 200th celebration will try to balance between generating spirit and keeping it in monetary focus, he said.

"There is no question that in order for us to have a bonafide, rip-roaring, significant celebration, it will require the interest and support of a variety of individuals and groups that make up the town," Historic District Commission member Adrienne DelVecchio said.

"There has been a heavy influx of people in town," she said. "Many have moved into the area for what Southbury stands for and there is a whole new audience to appeal to."