

On the heels of *The Hartford Courant's* September 29 special edition entitled "Complicity – How Connecticut Chained Itself To Slavery," we want to highlight some of Windsor's African-American history. I sat down with Al Narcisse, historian for the Archer Memorial A. M. E. Zion Church on Hayden Station Road, who shared some interesting facts about Windsor's African American community.

By Connie Thomas

Sandy Archer and the Archer Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church

Sandy Archer was born as a Maryland slave around 1806. It is said that through the Underground Railway, Sandy escaped from slavery and settled in the Windsor area. After his arrival, he worked in the tobacco fields and saved enough of his earnings to purchase property in the village of Hayden Station. Near his property stood a quiet grove of pine trees. It was the site of camp meetings all through the 1800s. These camp meetings attracted African-American farmers and brick makers from neighborhoods on Cook Hill Road, Hayden Station Road and Windsor center.



Sandy Archer of Windsor, CT, date unknown

In 1887 the camp meetings with their itinerant ministers evolved into an officially recognized church with a permanent minister. Rev. Dennis White arrived to a parish without a church building or a parsonage. On June 25, 1892, Sandy and Elizabeth Archer sold a plot of their land to the congregation for \$5. Five years later William O. Hayden, a large landowner, donated additional land and Fredrick Thrall made a sizeable contribution to create a church building which was erected in the pine grove. In 1908 the Archers were able to sell their land on Pink Street (today's Hayden Station Road) for \$1 to the church. This is the same year Elizabeth died and was buried in the pine grove where the camp meetings had been held.

Sandy Archer died on July 9, 1914, years. His death certificate states that the names of his parents are unknown, another sad legacy of slavery. He, too, was buried in the "new" cemetery in the pine grove on today's Hayden Station Road. The next year the little

white church was moved from under the pines to the site where today's church stands. The little church became infested with bees; and, during an effort to smoke out the insects, the structure caught fire and burned. It was replaced with another building and used until it was condemned in 1975. Finally, in 1981, the present church was constructed.

Al Narcisse very kindly shared the only picture he has of Sandy Archer, the former slave who made a big mark on a little town in New England, our Windsor.

The information for this article was taken from a church booklet entitled "Archer Memorial AME Zion Church Presents Our 115th Church Anniversary Celebration - A Journey of Faith, May 4-5, 2002." You can get a copy of Complicity by calling The Hartford Courant at 860/241-3912 or go online at www.ctnow.com/slavery.



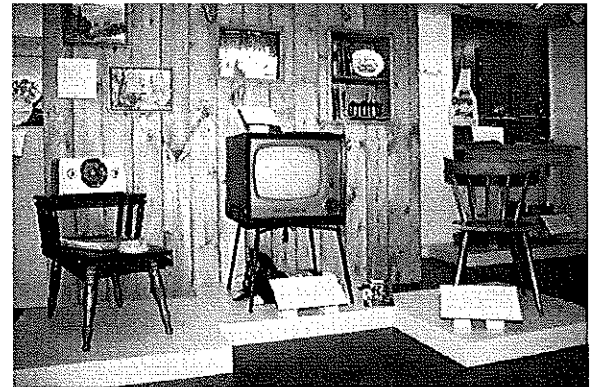
Modern Windsor Exhibit Opening

October 10 was the night to party at the Windsor Historical Society! The occasion was a members and friends preview of a new exhibition, "Modern Windsor: 1945- 1965." The price of admission was simple: wear or bring something from the exhibition's time period. Party goes in poodle skirts, dog collars, bomber jackets, cat's-eye glasses, fox stoles and blue suede shoes were greeted at the entrance with classic cars and rock 'n roll music. Inside, a selection of delicious and caloric munchies awaited: Jello salads, deviled eggs, Swedish meatballs and Lipton's new-in-the-fifties "California dip," served with the newest (in the fifties) ridged potato chips.

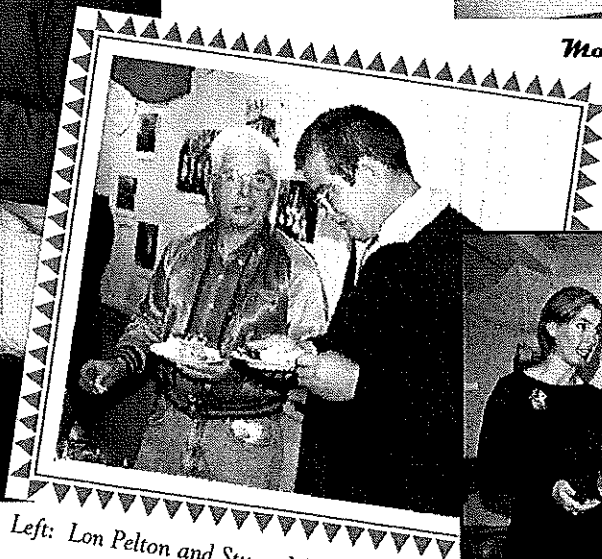
The exhibition itself explores one of the most important eras of growth in the town's history, a period when Windsor became a premier American suburb. The objects and images in Modern Windsor reveal

how Windsor fit into the national picture of suburbanization, growth, consumerism and fears associated with Communism and the Cold War. Many objects have been loaned from members of the Windsor community and reflect domestic life at mid-century. Photographs allow visitors to peek into homes and businesses and look down the streets of postwar Windsor. Visitors can also explore a 1950's kitchen, watch vintage television shows, discover what it was like to grow up in Windsor in this period and find out about the big new corporations in town including Combustion Engineering and its nuclear research.

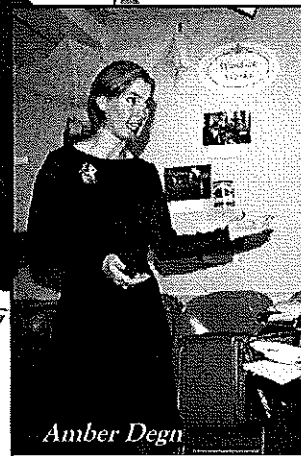
An associated series of lectures will take place over the course of the year. For more information about the exhibition, group tours or for a schedule of the exhibition-related programs, please call 860/688-3813.



Modern Windsor exhibition



Left: Lon Pelton and Stuart McPhail



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