

## Superintendents and Matrons of the Tolland County Home

Andover, 1883-1886

### 1883-1884

**Mrs. John Loomis**, daughter of Commissioner Edwin Alvord.

**Miss Anne Alvord**, niece of Commissioner Edwin Alvord.

**Miss Williams** replaced Mrs. Loomis.

### 1884

**Mr. and Mrs. Blackman** served as Superintendent and Matron for only a few months (May - July 1, 1884), leaving "by mutual agreement."

### 1884-1887

**Mrs. Susan O. (Thrall) Smith**, the widow of Chauncey Smith, a farmer and cattle broker in Stafford Springs, was Matron of the Home in Andover from July 1, 1884 until it closed in the spring of 1887. She then accompanied the children to the new Home in Vernon where Mr. & Mrs. Moody succeeded her. Mrs. Smith then worked in Vernon as a nurse and housekeeper. She died February 8, 1906 at age 75.

Vernon Center, 1887-1955

### 1887-1890

**Edward F. Moody**, a Civil War veteran and former Enfield Town Farm and Poor House Manager, with his wife **Ellen C. (Norris) Moody** started working at the Home as Superintendent and Matron on April 1, 1887 and remained until 1890. A news report alluded to the death of daughter, Ruth, as a factor in their withdrawal. Edward died May 8, 1894 at age 61; and Ellen died June 14, 1914 at age 72. They are both buried in Enfield Street Cemetery.

"Mrs. Moody is just the woman to accomplish the best results in this work. She is a lady of strong sympathies, has a warm heart for the little folks, and of large executive ability, and systematic in everything she undertakes. The little waifs who come to her almost instinctively call her 'mama,' and to most of them she is more the loving mother than they have ever known." (*The Rockville Journal*, October 30, 1890, p. 4)

### 1891-1893

**William Harrison Horton** and his wife **Armena (Corbin) Horton**, former farmers in Union, worked as Superintendent and Matron of the Home starting January 1, 1891. Lucy, their only child would have been four years old at the time. When scarlet fever struck the Home, Mrs. E. W. Upham, a longtime friend, came to the Home to help Mrs. Horton care for the seriously sick children, working day and night for three weeks. During this most difficult time, she also succeeded in the equally difficult task of bolstering the strength of the exhausted Hortons. Thus recovered, the Hortons continued to serve until October 1893 when replaced by the Talbots. William Horton died in 1920 at age 81; and Armena died in 1926 about age 94. They are buried in Monson, Massachusetts.

"No work ever undertaken had ever given us the satisfaction as did the effort to take good care of those children," stated the Hortons. (*Tolland County Temporary Home, Thirty-Seventh Annual Report, 1919-20*, p. 8)

### 1893-1908

**Edward Sumner Talbot** and **Elizabeth (Beckwith) Talbot**, once from Coventry, living in Hartford, started at the Home on October 19, 1893 with their 14-year-old son, Ward. Sadly, Elizabeth died in the Home November on 26, 1903. A year later, in October 1904, Edward married **Grace Stone**. They remained administrators of the Home until Edward retired at age 52 in October 1908 to winter in California for a rest and change. They then settled in Manchester where Edward passed away in July

1920. He is buried at River View Cemetery, Essex. Grace continued to live in Manchester with her children. She died March 14, 1968 and is buried in Buckland Cemetery with them.

#### **1908-1925**

**Edwin Harrison Hick(s)**, a machinist, and **Imogene (Palmer) Hick(s)** of Hartford, the longest serving Superintendent and Matron, were appointed October 3, 1908 to succeed the Talbots. The Hicks' daughter Ethel grew up in the Home where they served until March 1, 1925, returning to Hartford, where Mr. Hicks entered the employ of the Hartford Fire Insurance Company. The family later lived in Windsor with daughter Ethel, a secretary at Loomis Chafee School.

Imogene P. Hick died December 17, 1954 at the age of 80. Edwin Hick died August 3, 1955 at the age of 82 in Windsor and is buried with his wife at Cedar Hill Cemetery, Hartford.

#### **1925-1931**

**Albert Edward Weeden**, a 47-year-old machinist and toolmaker, and **Martha R. (Wilcox) Weeden**, also 47 years old, although childless, came highly recommended by their friends in Thompsonville. He was born in Norwich, attended the public schools in Winsted, and graduated from the Winsted High School. Albert and Martha Weeden became Superintendent and Matron of the Home on March 1, 1925. Previously, Mr. Weeden had charge of about fifty boys for the Bigelow Carpet Works.

During a celebration July 5, 1926 Albert Weeden was taken ill at the Home, and only survived a few days. He died at the age of 58 years old and is buried in the Enfield Street Cemetery, Enfield. Martha Weeden continued on as Superintendent until April 22, 1931 when she resigned to marry George Hastings, a farmer in Suffield.

#### **April-Nov 1931**

**Mrs. Alice A. Snutsel**, a widow of East Hartford succeeded Martha Weeden as Superintendent in April 1931, but only served for seven months. June 16<sup>th</sup> Mrs. Snutsel was critically injured in an auto accident as a passenger in a car driven by Mrs. Evelyn L Southwick, also of the Tolland County Home. Alice later announced she would resign due to her health, recommending that a man and wife would be better suited for the position. Dr. Higgins and the board of management concurred. She enjoyed a festive Thanksgiving with the children before her departure.

#### **1931-1944 and 1945-1947**

**Albert Snyder McClain** and **Emily Roberta (Freeland) McClain** came to the Home in November 1931 after considerable experience at Northfield Seminary (Northfield, Massachusetts); Martha Berry School (Rome, Georgia); and the Leake and Watts Orphan Home (Yonkers, New York). Emily, a graduate from Wellesley College, with further studies at Columbia and Trinity colleges was an inveterate teacher. Albert, described as intelligent, progressive, and energetic, together with Emily may have been the best-loved and most effective Superintendent and Matron at the Home. Then January 27, 1944 Albert McClain resigned because of ill health. A farewell reception was held, and they announced plans to move to Florida, where Mr. McClain looked forward to a much-needed rest.

Mr. McClain's recuperation in Florida did him well and they returned to New England, both in good health. In June 1945 interim Superintendent and Matron Robertson resigned. The County Commissioners felt they were very fortunate that they could prevail on Mr. and Mrs. McClain to return to the Home. While children in the home regretted seeing Mr. and Mrs. Robertson leave, as they were popular with the group, they were happy that Mr. and Mrs. McClain were with them again.

Mr. and Mrs. McClain remained at the County Home until the first of July 1947, familiarizing the Hamiltons with their new duties and then retired, again. Albert McClain died at the age of 75 in 1950 in Florida. Mrs. McClain spent the rest of her life at their residence in Northfield, Massachusetts and wintering in Florida. She died September 26, 1958 at the age of 84.

#### 1944

**Everett Robertson and Hilda Alice (Baker) Robertson** of Willington were appointed January 30, 1944 to head the Home. Mr. Robertson, born in Rockville, graduated from Rockville High School and Manchester grade school, was an independent painter and carpenter in Rockville, Tolland, and Willington. His wife, Hilda Alice Robertson, had devoted most of her past life to work with children. She was at one time employed at the Children's Village in Hartford as assistant at the Girl's Cottage and later as the housemother. She was also substitute supervisor at Newington Home for Crippled Children. They worked at the Tolland County Home one-and-a-half years before resigning. Hilda Robertson died February 23, 1978 in Tolland at the age of 91. Everett Robertson passed away July 26, 1984 at the age of 80 and was buried with his wife Hilda at Grove Hill Cemetery, Hartford.

#### 1947

**John Ernest Hamilton and Olga (Miller) Hamilton** were appointed May 30, 1947 to succeed the McClains as Superintendent and Matron of the Tolland County Home and started their new duties on June 9, 1947. The Hamiltons came to the Tolland County Home from the Ethel Walker School, Simsbury, where Mr. Hamilton was in charge of the staff dining room and Mrs. Hamilton was employed as a hostess. Previously they were employed as superintendent and matron of the Third District Detention Home for Children in Hartford. The Connecticut Humane Society also employed Mrs. Hamilton for 20 years. The Hamiltons stayed only a matter of months, leaving for reasons unknown.

John E. Hamilton died May 12, 1988 at the age of 90. He founded the American Indian Defense Association in the 1930s and remained its head for decades. He was best known as "Grand Sachem Rolling Cloud," an Indian leader involved in lawsuits seeking the return of land to his tribe, the Mohegan-Pequot Indian Nation. Mrs. Olga Miller Hamilton died February 17, 1966 at the age of 64. She was treasurer of the American Indian Defense Association, a charitable association for the welfare of American Indians. They are buried in Cedar Hill Cemetery, Hartford.

#### 1947-1954

**Elsie M. (Smith) Robb and Joseph J. Robb.** Elsie, a worker at the Home since 1940 and resident seamstress, was appointed Superintendent in late 1947 or early 1948, having her husband, Joseph, a former loom fixer, as the Assistant Superintendent. Mrs. Anna Murphy served as Matron. When it came to caring for the children, Mrs. Robb was "all in." For example, when the Hartford Home was given a television, a local request was published on behalf of the Tolland children and was soon rewarded! The Robbs served until May 1, 1954.

Joseph Robb died June 1, 1985 at the age of 88. Elsie Smith Robb, a nearly lifelong resident of Vernon and a member of the Congregational Church, died in Vernon October 16, 1987 at the age of 87. They are buried at East Cemetery, Rockville.

#### 1954

**Einar N. and Ebba M. Levin** succeeded the Robbs on May 1, 1954. Since the family emigrated from Sweden in 1923, Mr. Levin served as a chauffeur and butler for well to do families. With his domestic experience, they looked forward to living in the country and caring for the fourteen children who resided in the Home. On June 7<sup>th</sup>, after barely a month, they resigned.

#### 1954-1955

**Walter Meyer and Lottie Ruth (Crandall) Meyer** succeeded the Levins as Superintendent and Matron June 7, 1954. Lottie brought with her years of experience, having worked at the Home under several superintendents. The Meyers had a 17-year-old son Walter and served until the Home closed July 1, 1955. Afterwards the Meyers continued to live in Vernon where Walter died January 11, 1956, at age 51 and was buried in Grove Hill Cemetery, Rockville. Lottie died November 21, 1964 at the age of 64.