



## Westbrook Historical Society & Museum August 2023 Newsletter to Members

### A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT:

#### **TWO AUGUST EVENTS – WE HOPE YOU COME.**

**AUGUST 7, 4:00 PM: HISTORICAL NOVEL BOOKCLUB.** We'll discuss *Arundel*, by Kenneth Roberts. Held in our air-conditioned building on the green.

**AUGUST 19, 1:00 PM: ARCHITECTURAL WALKING TOUR** of three iconic Westbrook Center led by Architectural Historian Sebastian Liseo. Read more below.

*Dear Members:*

*Programs, projects, progress - that's been our summer. All made possible with people – people contributing volunteer time, items for our museum, funds, knowledge, skills, and new ideas toward our goal of preserving Westbrook's history.*

*We hope you, as a member of Westbrook Historical Society, are pleased with the programs we've held this summer, our museum, our responsiveness to inquiries, and our progress. If not, please tell me. I like to hear from members.*

*Thank you for your support.*

*Sincerely,*

*Marcy Fuller, President, Westbrook Historical Society*

### **AT OUR MUSEUM (OPEN EVERY WEDNESDAY, 9 TO NOON):**

- **Now on Display:** Memories of Westbrook's Annual Illuminations. Come in and see photos and ephemera about the illumination of cottages (with Chinese lanterns) that began in 1884. Flip through our collection of newspaper clips about the Illuminations and read about old-fashioned fun and games, the music, dances, sidewalk promenades, and firecracker displays that attracted large crowds to our small town. Do you know

people and families who vacationed in Westbrook cottages and hotels in 1920? If you do, you may find their name among the many mentioned in the 1920 newspaper clip and you may also be able to help us identify the names of young people in the 1920 newspaper photo.

- **New Items Donated to our Museum are currently available for viewing.**

Several paintings and painted objects by Westbrook artist John Wilson (1930-2015), who was also founder of Westbrook Historical Society, were donated to our museum. They are now on display. Plus, we received an original painting owned by John Wilson. The painting of seaside village is by artist Norman Maffei (1923-2015), a famous artist with a passion for marine art, who was unique for writing detailed notes on the back of his paintings. The Maffei painting was owned by John Wilson, and, yes, Maffei's handwritten descriptions are on the back. (Google Norman Maffei for an interesting read.) All John Wilson's treasures were donated by Fred Volk III.

A suitcase of vintage clothing of the Magna/Stannard family from the household of Captain Samuel Magna and the estate of Ted Norton. It was donated by Grace Jeromski. Our museum's Textile and Clothing Curator, Roberta DeLeo, has added the clothing to our collection.

The Stannard Family Bible from years 1754 to 1931, with most entries prior to 1900, was donated by Don Stannard. It was the bible of Peter Stannard II, son of Peter Stannard who is buried the smallpox grave in Westbrook, a grave that was rededicated in June.

## **THE PETER STANNARD (1731-1778) SMALLPOX GRAVE REDEDICATION:**

- On June 3, an especially meaningful and unique ceremony took place in Westbrook. The grave of Peter Stannard, Revolutionary War soldier and victim of smallpox (as noted on his gravestone), was rededicated. The little cemetery with his gravestone and a few others was cleaned up, landscaped, and fenced in by a new iron fence. The cemetery is now protected, preserving an important chapter in Westbrook history.
- Several people in Westbrook made this happen: Westbrook town officials, Westbrook Foundation, our Westbrook Historical Society, the Westbrook Fife and Drum Corps, the pastor of the Westbrook Congregational Church which Peter attended, as well as individual citizens. Peter Stannard's descendants came from as far away as Wisconsin and Minnesota and joined our townspeople to pay tribute to this man whose life ended so sadly.
- The gravesite is off Toby Hill Road on a nature trail.

## **IN OUR COMMUNITY:**

- Lest we forget, our society tries to help our town remember our heroes. After the May 29 Memorial Day Parade, our President Marcy Fuller honored Donald Calderari with a short talk in front of the Veterans Memorial on the green. In June we held our fourth 2023 open-to-the-community presentation, *Remembering Connecticut's Doughboys*, in the library community room.
- On June 10<sup>th</sup>, we opened our museum for CT Open House Day and Westbrook's Family Day, where we featured the launch of Westbrook's first history book for children. *I Live in Westbrook, Connecticut* is authored by Fran Russell and illustrated by Bud Loomis, whose original artwork for the book was displayed.
- And if you've been reading the *Harbor News* this summer, you know that Westbrook history buffs have made it to "Person of the Week" news. Both Marcy Fuller, our President, and Fran Russell, author of the new Westbrook history book for children, took the honors recently.

## **OUR UPCOMING ARCHITECTURAL TOUR ON AUGUST 19, 1:00 PM:**

The tour will start outside of the Westbrook Congregational Church and will move to the Riggio building and Westbrook Historical Society building (exteriors only). The tour will be followed by a cold-drink-and-cookies reception inside the church's air-conditioned Fellowship Hall.

Architectural Historian Sebastian Liseo will lead the walk and talk. Mr. Liseo, a summertime Westbrook resident, is an instructor of Italian culture and language at the Education Center in Longboat Key in Sarasota, Florida, and the Adult Education Program there. He received his Bachelor and Master of Science degrees from Central Connecticut State University, and Master of Liberal Arts Degree from Wesleyan University. He was born in Melilli, Italy, where as a boy, he was surrounded by Mediterranean architecture, a topic in which he now has expert knowledge. He leads historical architectural tours in Venice, Florida, where he explains the history of architectural features, as he will do in Westbrook.

Mr. Liseo will be at the reception following the tour welcoming comments and questions.

The tour is free and open to the public, made possible by our Westbrook Historical Society. We also thank the Westbrook Congregational Church for offering us the use of their air-conditioned hall for this community event.

**WE GET ASKED:** *Is there a Westbrook Historic District, and are there funds available to help homeowners preserve historic homes?* Answers: **YES, and YES.** Read on for clarifications.

- The Westbrook Historic Town Center District is recognized by Federal (the National Register of Historic Places) and State (Connecticut State Register of Historic Places) jurisdictions.
- A map showing the properties within the Historic District is available at the Westbrook Historical Society and also online at: <https://westbrookct.us/DocumentCenter/View/6029/Westbrook-National-Historic-District>.
- A list of “Contributing Properties” accompanies the map. Owners of “Contributing Properties” in the historic district are encouraged to apply for tax credits for historically sensitive preservation work through the State Historic Preservation, under the Department of Economic Development. The link to this website is: <https://portal.ct.gov/DECD/Services/Historic-Preservation>.
- Need help navigating through the process? Westbrook Historical Society has a member who will help.
- Also, check out **Preservation Connecticut** (<https://preservationct.org>), a non-profit organization dedicated to helping Connecticut people and businesses preserve their historical property. Their successful “Circuit Rider” program provides on-site assistance throughout CT.

## **WE’RE GETTING HIPPER.**

We recognize that technology is increasingly important to members – for research and for communication – and it has become one of our top priorities for investment of funds and volunteer time. Take a look at our progress:

- **Digitized records in our research center:** After hours of scanning by volunteers, we now have a list (which will continue to get longer) of digitized records in our research center. The digitized items include Saybrook (Westbrook was part of Saybrook until 1840) Town Acts, Oyster River Quarter records, Town of Westbrook annual reports, records of the Westbrook Congregational Church and the Westbrook Methodist Church, records that were housed in the Museum of Early Engineering (the Bushnell House) about David Bushnell, the Turtle and documents from the “Descendants of Westbrook Settlers” group, and the Peter Stannard II Family Bible. WHS members can request to view these records at the museum. Sandy Forest, our archivist, is leading the scanning and digitizing work of our society.
- Our Westbrook Historical Society **FACEBOOK** page continues to grow in popularity, new members and posts of comments and photos from Westbrook history lovers. FACEBOOK continues to be a key communication tool for us.

- OUR OWN **WESTBROOK HISTORICAL SOCIETY WEBSITE** IS COMING SOON. This is capital-letter worthy for our society, putting us on par with other town historical societies. We have engaged the professional services of the company who designed websites for other historical societies in CT.
- Technology is also key to attracting and developing the next generations of history preservationists. Two Westbrook high school seniors have chosen Westbrook Historical Society for their senior community service projects. One is going to work on Westbrook history entries in **Wikipedia**. The second student will soon select his project, likely technology based also. Both will be working with our volunteers. In July, a third young man produced a **video** of our museum as part of a project for a video products camp. (Youth engagement and technology – a nice combination for our growing society)

### WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP US CONTINUE TO BE SUCCESSFUL?

- **Cookies?** We'd love some of our members to bring cookies to the August 19 reception to be held after the Architectural Tour. If you could, please contact us by email (see below email address or reply to this newsletter email.)
- **Tell your friends about the August events.**
- **Save the date:** Oct 14 is the probable date for our "Day on the Green." We will let you know by email and FACEBOOK when a date is finalized.
- **Read** the new Westbrook children's history book, *I Live in Westbrook, Connecticut*, with a child.
- Check Westbrook Historical Society **FACEBOOK** page routinely, for reminders and for interesting stories and photos. Post your own too.

**The Westbrook Historical Society Museum, located at 1196 Boston Post Road on the Westbrook Town Green, is open to the public Wednesdays 9-12 and by appointment.**

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**Email: [westbrookhistoricalsocietyct@gmail.com](mailto:westbrookhistoricalsocietyct@gmail.com) (don't forget the ct!)**

**FACEBOOK: Westbrook Historical Society**