



## March 2024 Newsletter

### A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT:

*Dear Members:*

*We're off to a good start in 2024. Now with two buildings to showcase the interesting history of our town - our museum on the town green and the Bushnell House, at 121 South Main Street - we are busier than ever. Our top priority in 2024 is to get the Bushnell House in ship shape, and open to the public.*

*Leading the Society are our 2024 Officer recently voted in:*

- *President: Marcy Fuller*
- *Vice President: John Lee*
- *Treasurer: Darlene Jones*
- *Secretary: Gail Colby*

*The officers and volunteers thank you, as members, for your support as we progress toward our goals of preserving the history of Westbrook in print, online, at programs and events, and in the museums. We welcome new ideas and new volunteers for projects.*

*We are hoping to hear from you and see you this year.*

Sincerely,

Marcy Fuller, President, Westbrook Historical Society.

## **AT OUR MUSEUM on the Town Green:**

- The museum (closed to the public in January and February) opened this month, beginning its every Wednesday hours of 9 – noon for the rest of the year.
- During January and February each year, volunteers work behind the scenes, planning for the year and doing the hard but rewarding work of preserving items from Westbrook’s past. This year, they were particularly busy, with several donations of items from residents.
  - A trunk with vintage clothing from the home of 19<sup>th</sup> century sea Captain Samuel C. Magna was contributed by his descendant Grace Jeromski. She and **Roberta DeLeo, WHS Textile and Clothing Curator**, performed the task of carefully sorting, preserving, and cataloging of the contents that are now preserved in the museum’s ever-growing garment section.
  - What do you do with old negatives? Town resident Kevin Palm dropped off a box of over eight hundred negatives from the late 1950s of Westbrook buildings, people, and events. **WHS Archivist Sandy Forest** performed the arduous task of scanning the photos, sorting them, and inventorying them. Several photos tell stories, like the building of new housing developments and images of places that are now gone. A few photos are seeking someone who can identify them. If you stop in the museum, ask to see them!
  - Do you know about the Westbrook Veterans Honor Guard? It was a group of seventeen veterans who rendered full military honors at funerals for veterans. They formed in 2003 and for many years performed two funerals a week. Some members attended over one thousand funerals. Their memorabilia, including photographs of the group, were found at the Westbrook Senior Center by Courtney Brooks, who passed the items on to the **WHS President Marcy Fuller** for preservation in the museum.

## **AT THE BUSHNELL HOUSE at 121 South Main Street:**

- Volunteers have made assessments of needs, worked with the town officials, cleaned the “carriage house” on the property (a big job!), and had the chimney cleaned and inspected with hopes of using the old fireplace (resulting in a disappointing but understandable “no” to that hope). The WHS Officers, particularly **Vice President John Lee**, are taking the lead on this project.

## **UPCOMING EVENTS:**

- **April 29<sup>th</sup>, 4:00 p.m.:** The Westbrook Historical Society Book Club meets at the town green museum. Book will be: The Book of Lost Friends, by Lisa Wingate. Check FACEBOOK for future book club dates and book titles.
- **May 18<sup>th</sup>:** Speaker Kevin Gardner will repeat his popular presentation about Stone Walls. This event will be in partnership with the Westbrook Land Trust.

- **June 8<sup>th</sup>:** Connecticut Open House Day for Historical Museums. Our museum will be open with discounted book prices and more on this day. It is also Westbrook Family Day on the town green, making it a good day to introduce children to the museum.
- **August 3:** Westbrook Historical Society's annual "Day on the Green" craft fair.
- **October 5:** Cemetery Tour of the "Lower Cemetery" (South Main Street Cemetery), also in conjunction with the Westbrook Land Trust, followed by reception and exhibit in the Bushnell House carriage house.
- We are working with the Witness Stones Project to research the life of Westbrook enslaved person Toby and his family, who lived on Toby Hill Rd. and to commemorate his life and preserve his memory with a stone to be erected in town.

### **SEE US AND WESTBROOK HISTORY ELECTRONICALLY:**

- **NEW YouTube channel:** "Westbrook CT Historical" is now a channel on YouTube. Tune in and watch "Get the Back Story" about our Historical Society, produced by Matt Izzo in 2023, featuring our President Marcy Fuller. On this channel are also past electronic presentations about Westbrook. See the "Celebrating Bill Hahn, the Man and His Hotel" video from 2016, and the "3D LiDAR and GPR Investigation at the Old Burying Ground" 2020 presentation.
- **FACEBOOK: Westbrook Historical Society of Connecticut** is a reliable source for updates on our events. It also serves as a way for the public to share historical comments and information. Recently, because street sign names often capture history in a unique way, we have been posting snippets of "Why is the street named that?" More and more comments are being posted on our Facebook page as people add their memories and ask questions.

### **HOW CAN YOU BE INVOLVED?**

- Ask to be on a project. Here is a list of projects that may interest you: Help with any upcoming event in any role, researching (we'll show you how), taking photographs of museum items for our records, help with our website, producing a photo book of "Then and Now" Westbrook scenes.
- We are hoping to schedule a "Back in the Day in Westbrook" get-together for long-time Westbrook citizens. We would love some volunteers to help make this event happen. We have heard enthusiasm for this idea from many, and are hoping that someone or some group will help. Contact us if you have interest in this.
- Comment on Facebook.
- Stop in our museum on the town green to say hello on a Wednesday morning. Bring a friend. Bring a child. We'd like to see you.

**FINAL WORDS:** *Our Society lost one of our most devoted and wonderful leaders at the end of 2023: Nile Barrett, our Vice President and Past President and our dear friend,*

*who loved Westbrook history. Nile bequeathed a substantial amount to our Society. At our March 2024 meeting, her daughter presented us with a check and some of her historical paintings. We will use her donation thoughtfully and we will treasure her paintings, as we treasure our memories of Nile.*

**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.**

**Tel: 860-399-7473; Mailing Address: P. O. Box 148, Westbrook, CT 06498.**

**Website: <https://westbrookcthistorical.org> (Note the ct!)**

**Email: [westbrookhistoricalsocietyct@gmail.com](mailto:westbrookhistoricalsocietyct@gmail.com) (Note the ct!)**

**FACEBOOK: Westbrook Historical Society of Connecticut**