



November 2024 Newsletter

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT:

Dear Members:

I am writing this at Thanksgiving time, which makes me pause to think of all the people from loyal, long-term members to brand new ones who deserve thanks for making 2024 successful for our society and town.

A special thank you to those who gave us financial support. For privacy reasons, we are not publishing names of contributors of funds, but please know that your gifts made this all possible.

We hope to continue this pace of attracting volunteers, visitors, members, and ideas in 2025. As communication becomes more and more electronic, we hope you will tap into our FACEBOOK page and our website, both of which have news, comments and stories about our town's history. (See the bottom of this newsletter for site addresses.)

Thank you for being a member of Westbrook Historical Society. I love hearing from members, in person or in writing, and we aim to be the society you want for our town.

Sincerely,

Marcy Fuller, President, Westbrook Historical Society

Here is an update on the major initiatives by our Westbrook Historical Society:

- **OUR MUSEUMS:**

- Our **Historical Society Museum on the Westbrook Town Green** continues to maintain its prominence as an iconic Westbrook landmark, welcoming visitors on Wednesdays 9-noon, and opening for many special events.
- Our recently opened **Bushnell House** on South Main Street, including the opening and use of its Carriage House, has been a lot of work with a lot of joy. Several people gave us items to add to the authenticity of this 18th century home. We expect more work and joy in 2025, as we hope to gather more furnishings and visitors.
- THANKS go to Archivist Sandy Forest, Secretary and Seasonal Decorator Gail Colby, Textile and Garment Curator Roberta DeLeo, Volunteer Grace Jeromski, Bushnell House Docent Mary Ann Loscalzo, and VP John Lee. These people and President Marcy Fuller are the ones who engage with our visitors and deal with the many duties of maintaining the museums in shipshape fashion.
- THANKS also go to Gary Nolf, for his talks and demonstrations of Westbrook's Native American fishing methods and hunting tools at the Bushnell House.

- **The August annual DAY ON THE GREEN** craft fair was the 43rd run by our Historical Society. This year, twenty-four booths offered crafts. President Marcy Fuller led this event, with many WHS helping hands.
- **A September ART SHOW OF WESTBROOK ARTISTS**, displaying art by and in memory of Nile Barrett, John Wilson, and members of Westbrook Art Gallery, attracted many. On display also were two unique slide opera books famously made by Westbrook Art Gallery Artists David T H Jones and William Kent. This Art Show was the first event to be held in the Bushnell Carriage House and included tours of the Bushnell House. THANKS go to member Linda Durie for organizing this event, and to Sandy Forest, Gail Colby, Docent Mary Ann Loscalzo, and John Lee for all the work it took to prepare for and run this.
- **An October CEMETERY TOUR of the “Lower Cemetery” (South Main Street)** was done in partnership with the Westbrook Land Trust, who held a reception and exhibit in the Bushnell Carriage House following the tour. Sandy Forest, who is our society's go-to person for cemetery records, was leader of the tour. Several WHS members became researchers and then storytellers at gravesides: Sandy Forest, Marcy Fuller, Grace Jeromski, Claire Smith, Marti White. THANKS go to them and to the Westbrook Land Trust, for being great partners in preserving the history of Westbrook.

- **Also in October:** An historic initiative for our town – the **WITNESS STONES PROJECT** – was made possible with a grant from the **WESTBROOK FOUNDATION**. Four WITNESS STONES PROJECT Research Workshops, taught by Witness Stones executives, were well attended and shed new light on the lives of the enslaved in Westbrook. The attendees dove into the official old documents of two people who were enslaved in Westbrook – Toby (for whom Toby Hill Road is named), and his wife Jude. **On November 3**, two witness stones, honoring Toby and Jude, were unveiled and placed in the ground by one of their descendants, Pat Wilson Pheanious. The ceremony was led by WHS President Marcy Fuller, Westbrook Congregational Church (WCC) Pastor Jeanette Hicks, and Pat Wilson Pheanious. THANK YOUs for this project go to Westbrook’s Mike Cyr whose interest in Toby’s story stimulated the project, to the Westbrook Congregational Church who hosted the workshops and prepared an area on the front hill of the church property for the witness stones to be placed permanently so all in Westbrook can view easily. Special thanks to WCC’s Scott Hartzell for his donation of time, masonry expertise, surrounding stones, and garden chores for this first-of-its-kind Westbrook memorial. And to the Westbrook Foundation for funding this initiative for preservation of Westbrook history.
- **Also in October**, a new section was added to our website’s News tab. It is called **“Our Town Stories”** and will serve as a collection point for articles written about Westbrook. The debut article was written by MacLean Sarr about the background on Westbrook Train Stations. *THANKS* to MacLean for our first article and to Sarah Smith, a new tech volunteer helping us make our website user-friendly and timely. Members are encouraged to submit stories about Westbrook history for this section.
- **November 11, Veterans Day**, was another success for our town, held on our town green with our museum in the center of all the activity. Over a hundred attended. Our President, Marcy Fuller spoke about Westbrook WWI veteran Elihu Chapman Stevens.

COMING UP: Our museum on the green will be open for the December 8th Tree Lighting. The museums will be closed as usual in January and February, while we spruce up and plan events. For next year we are planning a Cemetery Tour highlighting Civil War families, Bushnell House events, colonial cooking demonstration, planning for the country’s 250th anniversary in 2026, and programs about our town’s history. Keep up to date with us on FACEBOOK and our website. If you’d like to be involved in some of these initiatives, reach out to us.

OUR CONTACT INFORMATION:

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

Email: westbrookhistoricalsocietyct@gmail.com (Note the ct!)

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

FACEBOOK: Westbrook Historical Society of Connecticut.