



<p>PAGE 2 Director's Message <i>by Christine Ermenc</i> Roots</p>	<p>PAGE 4 & 5 Changing Streetscapes <i>by Michelle Tom</i> Farmington River Bridges</p>	<p>PAGE 6 & 7 Windsor Founder Series: James Eno <i>by Kristen Wetzel Wands</i> Part 5 of our Founder Series</p>	<p>PAGE 8 Upcoming Events See what's happening this fall and winter at WHS!</p>
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Seasonal Challenges in the Early American Home

by John Mooney, Education and Outreach Manager

The main idea behind the Society's Strong-Howard House is to transport guests back to the year 1810, when the Howard family dwelt within the home. We put forth significant effort to make sure that it felt lived in and portrayed the various aspects of domestic life that the family would have routinely taken part in. Inside the house we attempt to convey seasonality with several different visual accents. The meal on display in the dining room is changed between the spring/summer and fall/winter to reflect the different food the Howards would have had access to. In the bedroom we change both the bedding and the bed hangings at the turn of the seasons. Most recently our curator, Kristen Wands, introduced fake flies into the house to demonstrate that the Howard family would not have had screens in their windows, which were quite uncommon during the first half of the nineteenth century. While these aesthetic touches lend the house an organic feel of seasonal change, many of the hard truths of early nineteenth-century life can only be understood through the experiences of the families who lived through them. Families such as the Howards had to contend with shifting predicaments throughout the year, ranging from frigid indoor



Costumed Interpreter prepares a roast in the Strong Howard House. The fireplace was the focal point of domestic life in the winter and a necessary, but uncomfortable, component of chores in the summer.

temperatures in the winter to swarms of pests in the summer.

Every year, as temperatures plummeted and winter approached, early American families like the Howards were busy preparing for the coming challenges of the season. They preserved and dried fruit, salted meats, and stored vegetables throughout the fall, for use during winter. Once snow was on the ground, they could collect firewood and transport it easily by sleigh. The collection of firewood was a major priority early in the winter to ensure that they would have enough wood to last until the spring.

During winter the family would most often be found in the kitchen, or keeping room, where they kept a fire going constantly throughout the course of each day. The coals of the fire typically remained warm enough overnight to make for an easy rekindling in the morning without the need to reignite the fire using a spark from flint and steel. Even with a roaring fireplace, indoor room temperatures on the coldest days would often remain under fifty degrees, with most of the heat being drawn out through the chimney, rather than into the room. Under these circumstances daily chores became exceptionally difficult to

(Continued on page 3)

OUR MISSION

Windsor Historical Society invites people to connect with Windsor's evolving history by preserving, interpreting, and sharing our community's artifacts and stories.

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Roots

What is American's second most popular hobby after gardening and the second most popular class of websites after "adults-only" ones? If you guessed "genealogy", you'd be right! On the first Thursday evening of most months, family historians take over our library and share family history stories, research strategies, and ways to surmount "brick walls" in our free genealogy support group sessions. Everyone is welcomed, and most attendees return again and again.

Starting over three decades ago, the advent of digital technology and growing public access to online genealogical databases revolutionized and democratized the pursuit of genealogy. In recent years, television shows like *Who Do You Think You Are* and *Finding Your Roots* that focused on the ancestry of celebrities have further popularized it. In 2017, purchases of DNA testing kits more than doubled, and it has been estimated that well over 12 million Americans have had their DNA results analyzed.

This fall, we have engaged local genealogist Jennifer Zinck for two programs. She will tell audiences more about direct-to-consumer DNA tests: how they work, and how to maximize the usefulness of information provided for people of all demographic backgrounds. Sometimes contacting unknown relatives with DNA matches can be sensitive due to secret adoptions or misattributed paternity; Zinck will provide tips.

I asked staff member Sue Tait Porcaro and volunteer Gordon Kenneson, both avid genealogists, how they got started and what the pursuit of genealogy means to them. Gordon's initial impetus was a schism in his small family; exploration of family history has led to new friendships with cousins and other family history researchers,

and eventually even a behind-the-scenes discovery in the archives of Westminster Abbey. For Gordon, the detective work of putting together puzzle pieces and solving mysteries is challenging and fun. The historical record is far from complete, especially for those who are researching enslaved ancestors. Names can be changed, misspelled, or alternatively spelled. The most important thing to Gordon is that for him, genealogy "opened up a whole world. Suddenly, I felt like I belonged."

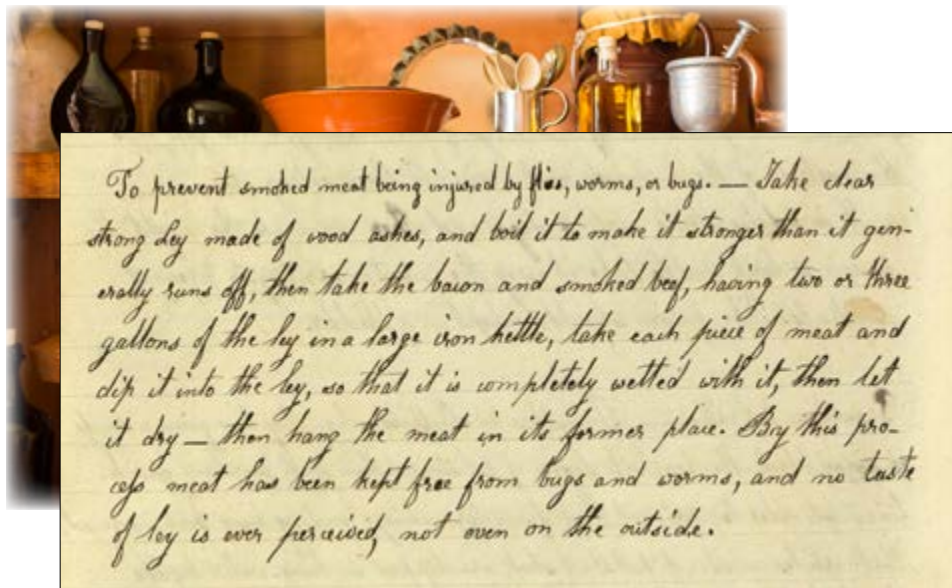
When she was ten years old, Sue Tait Porcaro found a folded up, handwritten family tree her great-grandfather had completed. It goes back ten generations and became the springboard for her own family tree. When she's asked why she's "into" genealogy, this quote from Richard Llewellyn's 1939 novel *How Green Was My Valley* about a Welsh coal mining family during Queen Victoria's reign comes to her mind:

"I saw behind me those who had gone, and before me those who are to come. I looked back and saw my father, and his father, and all our fathers, and in front to see my son, and his son and the sons upon sons beyond. And their eyes were my eyes. (...)Then I was not afraid, for I was in a long line that had no beginning and no end, and the hand of his father grasped my father's hand, and his hand was in mine, and my unborn son took my right hand, and all, up and down the line that stretched from Time That Was to Time That Is, and Is Not Yet, raised their hands to show the link, and we found that we were one...."

See for yourself what it's all about at one of our genealogy programs this fall. It's fine to dabble, then decide "not now". No pressure. We can certainly help if you decide to dive right in. As Gordon says, a whole world awaits.

Christie

(Continued from page 1)



John Gaylord Jr. recipe for keeping bugs off meat, WHS Collections, c. 1800 | 1962.25.3

complete. No matter the temperature, clothes and dishes still had to be washed, yet when set to dry they could often freeze solid. Quill ink, wines, and fruit preserves were also known to solidify from the cold. The only solution to prevent freezing was to keep these possessions as close to the fire as possible. However, doing so also increased the possibility of an accidental house fire. As would be expected, winter temperatures brought hardship, discomfort, and even danger to early American homes.

While it might be assumed that the spring and summer months brought a carefree reprieve from the harshness of winter, in truth the warm season carried its own unique set of difficulties. Many chores, such as ironing and cooking, involved heat, meaning a fire often had to be kept lit in spite of high temperatures and humidity. For those fortunate enough to have one, the luxury of a summer kitchen, built away from the center of the household to reduce the diffusion of heat, could reduce the uncomfortable nature of summer chores. Along with the heat, pests posed a major nuisance for early

American families. While window screens had yet to become popular in the early nineteenth century, numerous home remedies of varying effectiveness were used against flies and mosquitoes. Families might use cloth covers to protect both food and valuable possessions in the house, such as paintings and mirrors, from fly specks. One rather questionable solution against mosquitoes was to burn brown sugar in order in an attempt to smoke them out of the house. Catherine Beecher, in her 1841 guide to homecare, *A Treatise on Domestic Economy*, recommended dealing with ants by pouring boiling water on the cracks through which they have entered the house. She continued by advising to paint over the cracks with highly poisonous mercury chloride in order to prevent the ants from returning. Fortunately, since the nineteenth century, we have developed far safer and more effective methods for dealing with insects.

In a world where indoor comfort can be attained by simply setting a thermostat, it's easy to forget how much in past centuries the seasons affected daily life. Winter

undeniably stands out as the most disruptive season in New England for domestic comfort. Along with freezing temperatures, winter could also bring hunger and death to a family that had not prepared properly for it. While summer was certainly a less dangerous time of year, it often proved to be no less uncomfortable. For a family living in the early nineteenth century, like the Howards, a large portion of each day would be spent dealing with the difficulties brought on by the seasons. The next time you tour a historic home, be it the Strong-Howard House or any other, make sure you take the time to imagine the tremendous difficulties that the families who dwelt there had to face every year. Doing so can provide a better understanding of the past and will also certainly increase your appreciation of modern conveniences!



Dried fruit in the Strong Howard House
photo by John Mooney

Changes in Cityscape: Farmington River Bridges

by Michelle Tom, Librarian/Archivist

Palisado Avenue Bridge

According to tradition, several bridges have spanned the Farmington River along what is now Palisado Avenue, following the old road from Hartford to Springfield. Most of the early versions fell victim to the freshets that surged through and flooded that area with regularity. These images show the most recent bridges at this location.



1860-1890s, looking southeast. This covered wooden truss bridge was built in 1854 and was sometimes called Fenton's Bridge. Alvin Fenton operated a general store out of his house, just up the street from here. The bridge's stepped center abutments were designed to break up ice floating downstream. WHS collections 2013.1.25.



c.1904-1914, looking northeast. The trolley bridge on Palisado Ave. was built in 1904. This is the only photo we have of the "bridge house" that used to sit on the bank of the Farmington River. WHS collections 2014.42.81.



c.1915-1916. From this view looking north, you can see First Church, the start of Pleasant Street, and the very top of a shad hatchery to the left of the covered bridge. WHS collections 1954.2.6.3. Photo attributed to William S. Leek.



1936 or 1938, looking south during the flood of 1936 or after the hurricane of 1938. By 1916, automobile traffic had already taken its toll on the aging wooden bridge. Its old timbers were breaking down, so the town replaced the wood bridge with this steel one. WHS collections 1992.46.3. Gift of Elizabeth Parker.



1989. In September of 1989, construction began on the current bridge over the Farmington River, placed in the same spot where the trolley bridge used to be. WHS collections 1992.42.41.443. Photo by Adelbert Coe.

Poquonock Bridges

Mills dominated the Poquonock industrial landscape, and many of them were built adjacent to the Farmington River just south of Poquonock Center, along with dams used to power the mills. Here too, floods, fires, and automobile and trolley traffic led to transformations of the nearby bridges.

All photos here attributed to C. Robert Hatheway, except where noted.



Early 1880s, looking northwest. In 1869, Moseley Iron Bridge & Roof Co., of Boston built an iron bridge to replace an old covered bridge that had been destroyed by fire. This bridge was, accordingly, referred to as the Moseley Bridge, as well as the Poquonock Bridge. WHS collections 1993.60.90B. Gift of William and Carrie Phelps Kendrick.



c.1887, looking northeast and downstream, you can see Dunham Mills on the left and the Hartford Paper Company on the right. WHS collections 2010.39.11. Gift of Jim Silliman.



c.1895, looking northwest. Trolleys came through Poquonock leading north to Rainbow in 1894. The bridges stood next to each other with trolley bridge on western side and vehicle bridge on the eastern side. Buildings in Poquonock Center visible in distance on right. WHS collections 2000.30.175. Courtesy of Julius Rusavage.



1936, looking west during the great flood. The trolley bridge was replaced around 1908. An enlarged Dunham Mill sits on the right. WHS collections 2000.30.183. Courtesy of Julius Rusavage.



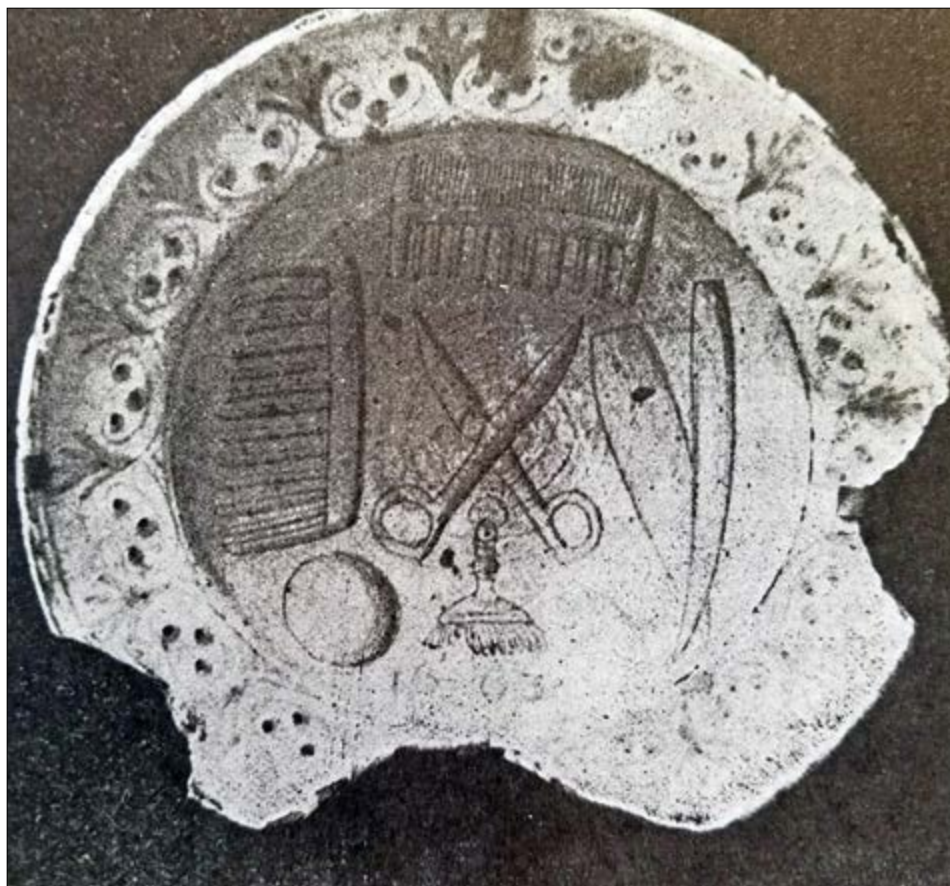
1953. After over a century of dangerous curves at the bottoms of hills on either end, the most recently built bridge finally straightened out Poquonock Ave. This photo shows the relationship between the old and new bridges, before the old was dismantled. WHS collections 2001.54.5. Photo by Philip Ellsworth Jr.

Windsor's Founders: James Eno, Huguenot Barber and Religious Rights Advocate

by Kristen Wands, Curator

Like most founders of Windsor, James Eno was born in England. Unlike most founders, he was of French Protestant, or Huguenot decent. The son of Jean Hennot, James was baptized as Jacques Hennot (later anglicized to James Eno) on August 21, 1625 in the Threadneedle Street Church in London, a church for Huguenot congregants. His great-grandfather, also Jacques Hennot, is listed in documents in the British Museum as having fled to England from religious wars in Flanders in 1518. While Windsor's James Eno was a relatively late arrival and does not appear on the Descendants of the Founders of Ancient Windsor's Founders List, he does appear on the 1930s Founders' Monument on the Palisado Green.

James Eno came to America and settled in Windsor by 1648, one of the few Huguenots to settle in Connecticut. On August 18, 1648, he married Anna Bidwell, the widow of Richard Bidwell and five years later, he purchased a home from the widow Mary Collins, on Silver Street, (now called East Street), where his descendants continued to live into the 1850s. By profession, James Eno was a barber. According to the land records, a November, 1663 deed "recorded a grant of a stray of land to James Enno in the Palizado to build him a shop to Barber in and he has now built it." Henry Stiles's *The History of Ancient Windsor, Vol. II*, contains a photograph of a delft barber's basin, passed down in the Eno family, with a history of having been used by James. The current whereabouts of this basin are unknown. We at Windsor Historical



Delft barber basin | From Henry Stiles, *History of Ancient Windsor, Vol. II*

Society would love to hear from anyone who has seen it recently.

James Eno's religious beliefs, though different from those of Windsor's other founders, do not appear to have prevented him from serving in positions of power in the community or from marrying into the town's prominent families. During his time in Windsor, Eno served stints as constable, juryman, way warden, and fence viewer. He also served as a land agent for Windsor, helping to purchase land from Nassahegan, a sachem of the Poquonocks in 1666. He owned land in Windsor and Simsbury, an island in the Simsbury River, and land in Tilton's Marsh—gifted to him for his service in the 1666 land deal on behalf of the town. After his first wife, Anna Bidwell, passed away in 1657, he married Thomas Holcomb's widow, Elizabeth Holcomb, in 1658. She

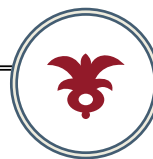
died in 1679, and in 1680, he married Hester Eggleston, widow of James Eggleston. When James Eno passed away in 1682, Hester and Eno's son James administered his estate.

It is clear that Eno's religious differences from many of his Puritan neighbors eventually became a problem for him and his family. In March of 1663/4, the Connecticut Colonial Court Records state, "The Church of Christ at Windsor complaynes of James Enoe and Michael Humphrey, for severall things contained in a paper presented to the Court. Mr. Clarke, in behalf of the Church complaynes of James Enoe and Michael Humphrey for a misdemeanor, in offering violence to an established law of this Colony." The court considered Eno and Humphrey's paper a danger to the welfare of the colony,

but the Court had decided not to censure them, “provided answerable reformation doth follow.” This paper does not appear to have survived so we can only guess at its contents, but it is apparent that they had been critical of the church. Another letter, drafted by William Pitkin of Hartford in October of 1664 and signed by a total of seven men including James Eno, does survive. It states, in part, “Our aggreviance is, that wee and ours are not under the Due care of an orthodox Ministry, that will in a due manner administer to us those ordinances that we stand capable of, as the Baptizeing of our Children, our being admitted (as wee, according to Christs order may bee found meete) to the Lord’s Table.” Eventually, this letter led Windsor’s church to reaffirm the Half-Way Covenant, which allowed those who had not been granted full church membership to be baptized. Under earlier Puritan doctrine, full church membership and its attendant privileges, which included the right to have one’s children baptized and the right to vote, was restricted to individuals who had

been baptized themselves and had also reaffirmed their Puritan beliefs with a reported conversion experience later in life. Many of the descendants of the original Puritan immigrants to New England never reported a conversion experience, thus rendering their children ineligible for baptism. In spite of the church’s stated reaffirmation of the Half-Way Covenant, disagreements continued to simmer. James Eno was among those Windsor residents who joined Benjamin Woodbridge’s new congregation, which met in the old Town House, when the Windsor church split in the late 1660s.

Like his great-grandfathers, James Eno was not afraid to stand up for his religious rights and those of his children. In Windsor, he provided services to his town, through his work as a barber but also through the town offices he held that were of value to his neighbors. He achieved a measure of wealth and prominence, and he and his descendants had long-standing influence on the town and its church.



If you love the work we do, please talk with your legal and financial advisors about leaving us a gift in your estate plan such as a bequest of cash or securities in your will.

What your legal and financial advisors will need to know:

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Visit us

Admission is free to browse the museum store, the *450 Years of Windsor Stories* galleries, and the Hands-On-History Learning Center.

Wednesdays - Saturdays
11 AM - 4:00 PM
closed on major holidays

Tours of Historic Houses
11 AM & 1 PM

Tours & Library Admission
\$8 Adults
\$6 Seniors & Students
FREE for children under 12 and WHS members

Can't make it to the Society in person? For in-depth research resources, check out our website, windsorhistoricalsociety.org

Upcoming events

For more information contact the Society at 860-688-3813 or info@windsorhistoricalsociety.org

September 13, 7 PM to 8 PM
DNA & Your Family Tree with Genealogist Jennifer Zinck

Learn about three types of DNA most commonly used for genealogy and how each helps you discover family history. Explore direct-to-consumer DNA testing companies and common testing strategies ensuring that genealogists get the most out of their DNA testing budget. We will also discuss the most successful methods for contacting and collaborating with DNA matches.
 \$6 adults, \$5 seniors, \$4 WHS members

September 20, 5:30 PM to 7 PM
Community Read-in on the lawn

Bring a picnic and your favorite book and hang out with other book lovers on Windsor Historical Society's lawn. Book giveaways for participants thanks to Windsor Public Schools. *Rain date: 9/21. Free*

September 25, 7 PM to 8 PM
Exploring Your AncestryDNA Results with Jennifer Zinck

Once results come in from DNA testing, many don't know what to do with all the names and numbers. Zinck will explore the information provided in AncestryDNA results, discuss methods to manipulate the results, and introduce third-party tools that maximize the use of DNA as a tool for genealogy.
 \$6 adults, \$5 seniors, \$4 WHS members

October 4, 5:30 PM to 7 PM
First Thursdays Genealogy Support Group

Just starting out? Experienced but stumped? Want access to Ancestry.com? Join others for discussion and problem-solving. *Free*

October 10, 7 PM to 8 PM
Spanish Flu Epidemic of

1918-1919 and Implications for the Next Pandemic

With Connecticut State Epidemiologist Dr. Matthew Carter. World War I killed 17 million people. The epidemic that started in the war's final year infected 500 million and may have killed 50-100 million (up to 5% of the global population). Both events forever changed world history, politics, and human life.
 \$6 adults, \$5 seniors, \$4 WHS members

October 20, Noon to 4 PM
2nd Great Windsor History Hunt

Pick up your book of clues at the Society, your passport to discovering a fascinating array of historic sites in town and a little history along the way. Once you have found each site, snap a picture. When finished, return to the Society to have your photos checked. If you found all the sites, place yourself in a drawing for the prize of your choice! Refreshments and prizes awarded from 3 – 4 pm. For all ages; families encouraged.
 \$10 per carload, \$5 per individual

October 30, 5:30 PM to 7:30 PM
Exhibit Opening: Christopher Miner Spencer, An Inventive Mind

Christopher Spencer, who raised his family in Windsor, is known for his famed Spencer Repeating Rifle, automatic screw machine, automobiles, and boats. Enjoy refreshments with us and at 6 pm, Curator Kristen Wands will read from Vesta Spencer Taylor's personal reminiscences about her father.
 \$6 adults, \$5 seniors, FREE to WHS members

November 1, 5:30 PM to 7 PM
First Thursdays Genealogy Support Group

Just starting out? Experienced but stumped? Want access to Ancestry.com? Join others for discussion and problem-solving. *Free*

November 11, 2 PM to 3 PM
Palisado Cemetery Tour with Emphasis on World War I

On the 100th anniversary of the ending of World War I, discover compelling stories of Windsor men and women who served in the armed forces and on Windsor's home-front with Society Director Christine Ermenc.
 \$6 adults, \$5 seniors, \$4 WHS members

November 17, 6 PM to 9 PM
Windsor Historical Society's Festive Pre-Holiday Auction

At The Lodge on Deerfield Road. Provides the perfect opportunity to find great holiday gifts and getaways for someone you love, sponsor free admission to the Society, or make the holidays special for a Windsor family in need! Tickets are \$40 in advance, \$45 on auction night, and cover a delicious buffet dinner, beer, and wine.
 To purchase your tickets or offer an auction donation, call 860-688-3813 or email info@windsorhistoricalsociety.org.

December 1, 11 AM to 2 PM
Gingerbread House Cookie Decorating and Holiday Recipe Sharing

We'll supply cookies, frostings, and all manner of decorations. Bring a holiday recipe to share and learn a bit about holiday traditions as you work.
 \$6 adults, \$5 seniors, \$4 WHS members

December 6, 5:30 PM to 7 PM
First Thursdays Genealogy Support Group

Just starting out? Experienced but stumped? Want access to Ancestry.com? Join others for discussion and problem-solving. *Free*

December 7, 6 PM to 8 PM
Historic Libations: Ciders (Hard and Sweet)

Sample a variety of delicious hard ciders and a hot mulled sweet cider as Society staffers John Mooney and Michelle Tom share some fascinating facts of apple and cider history in Windsor, from the time of Henry Wolcott's large apple orchard in the early 17th century to the present day popularity of hard cider varieties.
 21-and-over program \$15 adults, \$14 members