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## Changing Cityscapes

by Michelle Tom

Broad Street's Plaza Building

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## Annual Report

of the Windsor Historical Society

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## Upcoming Events

See what's happening this summer at WHS!

## The Howard Family in Quarantine

by Kristen Wands, Curator



Ann Howard as played by actor Susan Bucholz  
| Photo by George Petro.

In light of the recent COVID-19 pandemic, we've been hearing the word "quarantine" often these days. Quarantine has been practiced for centuries. It was used to prevent the spread of disease even before modern germ theory was accepted. According to the Center for Disease Control, quarantine as we know it was first used in the 14th century when the city of Venice, hoping to avoid plague epidemics, required arriving ships to remain anchored off shore for 40 days prior to making land.

Both families who lived in the Society's two historic houses were involved in a quarantine situation in the late 1700s. Captain Nathaniel Howard and his family, under the care of Doctor Hezekiah Chaffee Sr., were quarantined for smallpox around 1787, when the Howards' youngest son George was still an infant. Capt. Howard caught smallpox on a voyage to London, and in order to prevent him from spreading the disease throughout Windsor, Dr. Chaffee arranged for he and his family to be isolated in the "secluded cottage" of Gaylord and Abigail Denslow. At the time, smallpox was a fearsome and deadly disease across the globe.

During the Howards' time in quarantine, smallpox infected not only Capt. Howard, but also all three of his sons. The care for all of them fell squarely on the shoulders of Mrs. Ann Howard, who for the remainder of her life, spoke often of the "sufferings and sorrows" of the "Straw beds, foul linnon [sic], hard work, and constant watching" she endured during the family's isolation.

Ann Howard also remembered with distaste the family's limited diet while in isolation. George later recounted this in a memoir: "Hasty pudding, sage tea sweetened with molasses, no bread, no butter, no salt, roast potatoes was our constant bill of fare." Thankfully, Ann's hard work and sacrifice paid off. The whole family recovered and

was "once more let loose upon the world's commons." Windsor did not experience a smallpox epidemic at that time.

Eventually, through efforts credited largely to British physician Edward Jenner, vaccines were developed, first using live smallpox variola, then cowpox, and later using modern vaccines. Some physicians in this region advertised early forms of inoculation in the *Hartford Courant* in the late 1700s, and these would have been options available to Windsor residents.

**INOCULATION.**  
THE subscribers have opened their Hospital, and are now ready to receive all that are disposed to receive the Infection of the Small-Pox by Inoculation, their usual safe method will be pursued, good accommodations provided by the public's humble servants,  
JOHN DICKINSON,  
WILLIAM B. HALL,  
Middletown, September 30, 1793. 99

1793 ad for inoculation in the *Hartford Courant* | *Hartford Courant* archives

We do not have any evidence to give us insight into Dr. Chaffee's views on inoculation. Of the medical books available to him during his lifetime, some suggested treating smallpox with infusions made from almonds, melon seeds, and other ingredients, while others described the process of inoculation, which was still in its infancy. Due to the success of smallpox vaccines, the World Health Organization was able to announce that smallpox had been officially eliminated on May 8, 1980.

**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.

**NEWSLETTER STAFF***Editorial Advisors:*

Doug Shipman, John Mooney, Michelle Tom, Kristen Wands

*Managing Editor:* Sue Tait Porcaro

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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Sue Tait Porcaro, *Admin. Assistant*

Doug Shipman, *Executive Director*

Michelle Tom, *Librarian/Archivist*

Kristen Wands, *Curator*



Doug Shipman  
Executive Director

## Transitions, Pandemics, & Postponements

Wow! What a great place to be! My sincerest thanks to the Board, staff, volunteers, members, and community leaders that have made my transition to Windsor Historical Society so smooth, and my first few days here such a joy. I can't wait for what lies ahead! This is a great place to be because of you – your dedication and hard work, love of history and financial commitment, have made Windsor Historical Society one of the best historical organizations in Connecticut.

It takes a special person to focus all of these assets to develop such a strong organization, and Christine Ermenc will long be remembered as the leader and professional colleague who so skillfully guided WHS to be the special place that it is today. We will all miss her warmth, expertise, hard work, and friendship, and we wish Christine and her husband Bill Hosley the very best as they begin their well-deserved and no doubt busy retirement! (If you did not have a chance to say "goodbye" to Christine, please stop by when she and Sue Tait Porcaro celebrate the release of their new children's book *Annie's Home* later this year).

We have much to look forward to, and it is my honor to have a role in shaping Windsor Historical Society's next chapter. With our hard-working Board, exemplary professional staff, loyal volunteers, and members, I take seriously my charge to:

- + Build-on the excellent programs for which the Society has become known
- + Include all Windsor residents in the Society's future

+ Set the stage for our next century with the Society's 100th Anniversary celebration in 2021

No one aspires to start their tenure with such an organization in the middle of a pandemic, yet here we are. At least in the short-term (we all hope) our focus has been on postponing events and programs rather than imagining new ways to serve our public.

As the coronavirus pandemic stretches on, however, we are finding new and exciting ways to use electronic media – our website, Facebook, and other means – to make Society resources accessible to those who are learning from home. In addition to responding to research and other requests, Society staff have been developing new video content, learning activities, and other historical content while working from home. If you are not already receiving email updates from the Society, please add yourself to our email list using the "Subscribe to our mailing list" box on our website home page, so you can get updates about these and other new features!

While we have had to postpone some events, we are still planning to hold them as soon as health and safety conditions permit. These include the annual Shad Derby Trivia Contest, *Annie's Home* book launch, and our Historic House Tour. We also hope to be able to welcome you on June 17th to our Annual Meeting and Board vice president Bob Bell's fascinating talk about Windsor's food traditions.

So, stay tuned to our website at [windsorhistoricalsociety.org](http://windsorhistoricalsociety.org) for updates, announcements, and new features!

I hope to see you soon!



# WINDSOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Bridging Centuries. Bridging Cultures.

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## Annual Report 2018 - 2019

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### **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.

### **Our Hope for the Future: Our Vision**

Knowledge of local history gives the Windsor community and visitors a connection to the past, an understanding of the present, and a sense of responsibility for the future.

## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

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### Transitions: To a New Executive Director and a New Century for Windsor Historical Society!

As Windsor Historical Society approaches its second century, our organization is in great shape. I can tell you that our staff is top notch, our board of directors is strong, our activities are praised by funders and emulated by sister organizations, and our finances are well managed.

Some exciting challenges for the Society's second century include finding space for our ever-growing collections, continuing to offer programs that appeal to young and old and to people of all backgrounds who live here in Windsor, sharing history beyond our doors through social media and perhaps satellite displays, and starting to plan some wonderful celebrations to mark the Society's 100th birthday.

One important task for our board of directors was to find a new executive director, and the board stepped up to the challenge. An executive transitions committee headed by Randy Graff applied for and received funding through the Nonprofit Support Program at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving to work with consultant Catherine Bradshaw of TSNE MissionWorks. With hard work and a little luck, we found Doug Shipman, who comes with a long background in history museums and nonprofit management. We are so excited and I know you will be as welcoming as you can as Doug becomes familiar with the Society and begins to find his footing here.

So friends, by the time you read this, I will have retired. My heartfelt thanks to you for supporting our work, and for making my time at Windsor Historical Society the capstone of a career I have truly loved.

Christine Ermenc  
Executive Director

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## YEAR IN REVIEW

### Programs and Services: Bringing History to Life



*We got to examine unique Spencer rifles in an amazing afternoon program. Photo by Sue Tait Porcaro.*

Which were the most popular of the thirty-five programs we offered in this time period? Local history programs, hands-down! The capacities of our meeting room were sorely taxed on a cold January evening when Jerry Roberts showed us images of the Connecticut River from the air with commentary – also the title of his recently published book. Bob Bell's program on the evolution of Bradley airport, like Jerry's program, attracted over 100 people. Over-attendance is one reason we decided to hold the fall 2019 tornado program off-site. The Rainbow Dam and Fish Ladder tour is limited to 40 people. But on the day of the tour, the people just kept coming, and we managed to accommodate sixty-two people I didn't have the heart to turn away.

Other great local history programs in this time period included Liz Burke's talk on Evelyn Longman Batchelder, a local sculptor, Gordon Kenneson's herb garden-based talk

about medicinal herbs, a prelude to the Chaffee House doctor's office opening, and our second Great Windsor History Hunt where participants pick up a book of clues which lead them to historic sites around town. Member Herb Hallas published a history of mid-twentieth-century Windsor and generously donated some of the books for our store that sold out immediately. A large second and third book order sold out too — yet one more testament to local history's power. Jenny Hawran of WIN-TV and I began interviewing people caught in the 1979 Windsor/Windsor Locks tornado for an upcoming documentary.

One of the reasons our members love our newsletter is that it's a good way of sharing the history we so carefully preserve. And developing the articles gives staff members a chance to do what we trained for and love — research! Local history posts are always most popular on our Facebook page. Throwback Thursdays, featuring commentary about a historic photograph in our collections, are always winners, and generators of much online discussion.

And that's what we aim to be with every program: a meeting place where people can connect with Windsor people, places, and events from the past up to the present, and with one another.

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### **Collections: Preserving and Protecting our Heritage**

In my almost twenty years here, I have never seen such a year for acquiring new collections. The Dillon family, the Carmon family, the Dembkoski family, and others kindly allowed archivist Michelle Tom and her volunteers to digitize family photos, some dating back four generations. These and other photographic donations greatly strengthened our holdings and perspectives on late 19th-century and 20th-century Windsor. We were one of the local historical societies approached by the *Hartford Courant* to be part of the *Greater Hartford Memories* coffee table book which meant even more Windsor images surfacing. Archivist Michelle Tom documented the community thank-you event that Congregation Beth Ahm held just prior to closing its doors in Windsor. She also documented high flood waters and demolished tobacco sheds.

Some interesting family collections from the Endees and Kernans, Gordon Kenneson, the Tryon family, and Elizabeth Parker came our way. Business collections included more Combustion Engineering materials and fifteen issues of a newsletter published by and for General Electric employees between 1925 and 1927, and town of Windsor annual reports from 1999 up to the present.



*Antiques wagon train, thanks to Milt Porteus. Photo by Michelle Tom.*

Wedding items from Harriet Louise Cooke Nelson and Bernice Bissell joined the collection. In the 1920s, Windsor Historical Society operated the Betsy Kob Tea Room from what is now the Strong-Howard House. Neighbors across the street had preserved the wooden sign for the tea room, painted with a scene of the property, and they donated it back to us.

An amazing collection of family photographs, documents, furniture, and house furnishings came to us from the Porteus/Morgan family. The Society's Dr. Hezekiah Chaffee House is under-furnished because our collections do not include furnishings that reflect the wealth of the Chaffees. However, the Morgans and

Chaffees were neighbors and moved in similar economic circles. Some of the Morgan family furnishings will find a new home in Dr. Chaffee's house. The Morgan descendants were unusual in that they documented everything they could. Most people in the family photographs and daguerreotypes were identified. We even learned the names of their horses!





Little ones enjoy decorating cookies in December 2018.  
Photo by Michelle Tom.



Our grounds got an incredible spring cleaning by Talcott Resolutions who worked so hard. They even helped us with a bulk mailing!  
Photo by Michelle Tom.

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**Sustaining the Society: Cultivating and Allocating Resources**

In my last full year as executive director, I worked with a committee to start a planned giving program. We asked members who have been especially supportive to consider leaving the Society a legacy gift, and at the same time asked them how they wanted the Society to move forward into its second century. Some interesting suggestions have emerged and they will be available to Doug Shipman as he starts to plan for the Society's 100th anniversary celebrations and charts out a course for the Society's future.

Our members, our friends, and the Windsor business community stepped forward to make our November pre-holiday auction the most successful one in several years. And the spirit of holiday giving continued as members fully funded our year-end appeal for the illustration and production of the *Annie's Home* children's book based on Howard family members living in the Strong-Howard House in 1810. Thank you, all!

**Looking Ahead to 2019-2020 Fiscal Year**

A documentary on the Windsor/Windsor Locks tornado will be unveiled on the 40th anniversary of that disastrous occurrence. The newly hands-on Chaffee House doctor's office will open. *Annie's Home* will be finished and published. Our members have told us how important they feel it is for us to serve school audiences and ever-broader segments of our community. We will continue our school programs, social media postings, public programs, and the newsletter. Oral histories will continue, we hope, and will expand out into more communities of color in Windsor. Your new executive director will gain fresh insights, and new initiatives will arise as he reaches out to community members to introduce themselves and learn more about how Windsor people want to interface with history. It is an exciting time as Windsor Historical Society brings its first century to a close!

## STAFF

*Executive Director*  
Christine Ermenc

*Curator of Collections  
and Interpretation*  
Kristen Wetzel Wands

*Librarian/Archivist*  
Michelle Tom

*Administrative Assistant*  
Sue Tait Porcaro

*Educator and Outreach Manager*  
John F. Mooney IV

*Facilities Coordinators*  
Terence Bagby  
Walt Stevenson

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## FINANCIAL REPORT

### Statement of Activities year ended June 30, 2019

#### Change in unrestricted net assets

Operating revenues, gains, and other support:

Contributions and grants	\$ 33,547
Fundraising events	16,200
Programs, admissions, and publications	12,069
Interest and dividend income, net	16,987
Membership	9,433
Store sales	7,137
Net assets released from restrictions	302,128
Total operating revenues, gains, and other support	<u>397,501</u>

Operating expenses:

Program services	250,786
Supporting services	55,944
Fundraising services	51,138
Total operating expenses	<u>357,868</u>

Income from operations: 39,633

Other changes in unrestricted net assets:

Net realized and unrealized gains/(losses)	21,849
Depreciation	(101,742)
Change in unrestricted net assets	<u>(40,260)</u>

#### Change in temporarily restricted net assets

Contributions and grants	72,565
Interest and dividend income, net	186,894
Net realized and unrealized gains	210,920
Net assets released from restrictions	(302,128)
Change in temporarily restricted net assets	<u>168,251</u>

Total change in net assets 127,991

# BOARDS, COMMITTEES, AND VOLUNTEERS

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Liz Burke  
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Ed Paquette  
Agnes Pier  
Diane Varholak  
Mark Walker, Treasurer  
Jim Welsh  
Beverly Garvan, Hon. Director  
Sterling Viets, Hon. Director



*Our cider tasting historic libations event was well-attended and enjoyed by all! Photo by Michelle Tom.*

## Auction Committee & Volunteers

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Lucia Gentles  
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Resolutions  
Gordon Kenneson  
Windsor Garden Club

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Barbara Tanguay  
Laura Toal  
Jim Trocchi  
Diane Varholak  
Diane Vozzola  
Dawn Whitney



# ANNUAL GIVING

The following individuals, businesses, foundations, and granting agencies made gifts to support general operating costs, programs, and exhibitions at the Society between July 1, 2018 and June 30, 2019. Their names appear in the category that reflects their giving totals for this period. We make every effort to ensure accuracy in this report. Please report omissions and errors to the Society.

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## **\$10,000 or greater**

Estate of Gordon Ulmer  
Hartford Foundation for Public Giving

## **\$5,000 to \$9,999**

Estate of Walter Becker

## **\$1,000 to \$4,999**

John Bainbridge  
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Marcia & Sam Hinckley  
William Hosley & Christine Ermenc  
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Seattle Foundation  
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## **\$500 to \$999**

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Richard & Alice Patton  
Mike & Lu Rabbett

## **\$250 to \$499**

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James Trocchi  
Lois Warner  
Eliot & Susan Williams  
Wilson Paint & Wallpaper  
Center, Inc.  
Windsor Animal Clinic  
Windsor Woman's Club  
Susan Zorro

## **Gifts under \$100**

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Anne Austin  
Diana & Douglas Barnard  
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 Beverly Titus  
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 Janet Wallace  
 Carolyn Youngs

**Corporate Match Donations**

General Electric  
 IBM  
 Lincoln Financial Foundation, Inc.  
 Prudential Financial



Girls Scouts enjoy the Great Windsor History Hunt! Photo by Christine Ermenc.

**In-kind Donations**

Back East Brewery  
 Union Street Tavern

**Memorial & Honorary Gifts**

*In Honor of Warren & Dorothy Ball*  
 Christopher Barber  
*In memory of Edward Darcy*  
 Joan Juba  
*In memory of Orsamus R. Fyler*  
 Estate of Gertrude Hotchkiss  
*In memory of Margaret Jedziniak*  
 Coralee Jones  
*In memory of Carlton Parkinson*  
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 David & Anne Frusciante  
 Barbara Goodwin  
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 Connie Thomas  
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**Object Donors**

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 Liz Burke  
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 John Conant  
 Connecticut Secretary of State  
 Thomas Dembkoski  
 John Ellsworth, Vintage Radio  
 and Communication Museum  
 Paul Gallo  
 Sheila Gleckman  
 Jenny Hawran

Dawn Hunter, Windsor High School  
 Rebecca Joyce, Windsor Senior Center  
 Enita Jubrey, Town of Windsor  
 Gordon Kenneson  
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 Carol and Steve McOmber  
 Roberta Merrigan  
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 Donna Tracy  
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 William Warner-Prouty  
 Colette Yeich

## Changes in Cityscape: The Plaza Building

by Michelle Tom, Librarian/Archivist

The Broad Street Green area is the commercial center of Windsor, but it has been so for less time than you might think. In 1929, the last unoccupied parcel of land facing the green got a brand new building, one that would fundamentally change the character of the neighborhood: The Plaza.

Even before the Plaza Building saw its first tenants move in, some neighbors resisted the transition to a commercial zone there. The *Hartford Courant* at the time wrote of a controversy all too familiar in developing towns, "Several adjacent property owners voiced their opinions and some felt strongly that a business block at the location would be a detriment to the beauty of the 'Green'...Two nearly adjacent property owners spoke in favor of the project."

Nevertheless, the Plaza was built, and over the years many different businesses have occupied the premises. As we pass by the building now, we can't help but to imagine what its next incarnation will be.

*This page, from top to bottom:*

1. 1937. The Plaza Building a couple of years before it was renovated to house a movie theater. Note the houses to the north and south. Windsor Historical Society collections 1954.2.4.71, photo by William S. Leek.

2. 1946 saw the construction of another commercial building supplanting a former residence when the First National Supermarket moved in. WHS collections 2008.79.171, gift of Mary Olds Mott.

3. 1973. WHS collections 1998.12.1.757, photo by Adelbert Coe.



## 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 holiday

Historic House 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](http://windsorhistoricalsociety.org)

**Listed below are events currently planned for summer 2020.**

*Please note that due to the COVID-19 pandemic we reserve the right to cancel or postpone events in the interest of public health and safety. Please check our website at windsorhistoricalsociety.org, email us at info@windsorhistoricalsociety.org, or call us at 860-688-3813 to confirm events.*

May 7, June 4, August 6  
5:30 PM to 7 PM

**First Thursdays Genealogy Support Group**

Located in Windsor Historical Society's library. Just starting out? Experienced but stumped? Want access to Ancestry.com including World Explorer? Join others for discussion and problem-solving.

Free

May 9, 11 AM to 3 PM

**Hearth Cooking Class: Sweet Treats**

With foodways expert Becky Hendricks. Make queens cake, rolled wafer cookies with red currant cream, almond macarons, and oliebollen (Dutch apple fritters).

*\$35. Limited enrollment; reservations and prepayment needed by May 1.*

May 17, 1 PM to 2:30 PM

**Rainbow Fish Ladder and Farmington River Power Company Tour**

More shad after Shad Derby! View migrating fish, fish ladders, turbines, and generators at work and discover the history of this fascinating and largely unexplored corner of Windsor.

*Reservations by May 15. \$6 adults, \$5 seniors and students, WHS members \$4. Rain or shine, thunderstorm cancels.*

June 13, 11 AM to 3 PM

**Hands-On History Open House Day**

As part of Connecticut Open House Day, tour Windsor Historical Society's nationally award-winning hands-on Strong-Howard House and meet Captain Nathaniel Howard and his wife Ann. Visit our hands-on learning center and

Windsor history galleries and help operate a working model of the Windsor Locks Canal.

Free

June 17, 7 PM to 8:30 PM

**Let's Eat: A History of Dining Out in Windsor**

Popular lecturer Bob Bell will talk about food traditions in Windsor, from 18th and 19th century taverns, to beloved community restaurants like the Windsor House, Carville's, and Bart's, to emerging new culinary venues like Lilly's Soul Food. Program starts at 7:15 following a short annual meeting.

***Come early at 6pm and meet our new executive director, Doug Shipman! Light refreshments served.***

*\$6 adults, \$5 seniors and students, WHS members free*

June 26, 6 PM to 8 PM:

**Historic Libations: Our Founding Fathers' Bar Tab**

Based on the bar tab of our Founding Fathers (after the 1787 Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia). Sample Madeira, claret (Bordeaux), porter, beer, hard cider, and punch, plus entertaining commentary from educator John Mooney. Over 21 only.

*\$15 adults, \$14 members*

July 15, 10 AM to 11:30 AM

**Behind-the-Scenes Collections Spotlight: Quilts**

With curator Kristen Wands. See some of the Society's beautiful collections of rarely exhibited pieced, album, and crazy quilts from the 1850s to the mid-20th century.

*Limited enrollment, reservations by July 16. \$6 adults, \$5 seniors, \$4 WHS members*

July 31, 1 PM to 6 PM

**American Red Cross Blood Drive**

We are excited to partner again with the American Red Cross to launch our 2nd blood drive. We'll be working together to give back to the community in a truly life changing way since each donation we collect can save up to three lives.

*Sign up online at redcrossblood.org or call 860-688-3813*

August 1, 10 AM to 4 PM (tentative)

**Windsor Historic House Tour**

A striking selection of beautifully and creatively furnished historic Windsor residences will be open for public touring. See homes from several centuries built in a variety of architectural styles.

*\$30 in advance; \$35 day-of-tour tickets. \$5 discount is offered for House Tour volunteers.*

August 22, 10 AM to 11:30 AM

**Garden Herbs: Their Medicinal and Culinary Uses**

An outdoor (if weather permits) program based at Windsor Historical Society's herb garden. Did you know that sage was used for tooth care and calming the nerves as well as for seasoning? Hear more from horticulturist Gordon Kenneson and foodways expert Becky Hendricks.

*\$6 adults, \$5 seniors, \$4 WHS members*

**Children's Book, Annie's Home Launch Party**

Keep an eye out for a new date as we launch the children's book written by our own Christine Ermenc and illustrated by Sue Tait Porcaro. More info to come.