

WINDSOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

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Windsor
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Connecticut



Most of our time is spent considering people, places, and things that are above ground. But when we take the time to look at what is hidden beneath our feet – underground – the layers of the past, present, and future become intertwined. Since the 1980s, Jim Trocchi has been uncovering objects of all sorts around the Society's buildings. His archaeological findings provide historical context for the Native American inhabitants as well as the Fylers, Strongs, Chaffees, Howards, Stiles, and others who have lived alongside Palisado Green. The artifacts they left behind shed light on many facets of their lives including what they ate and drank, how they entertained themselves, and how they built and used their homes. While the Strong-Howard House interpretation will focus on the Howard family in 1810, the Society continues to use other avenues to tell Windsor's long history – one that is informed and bolstered by the artifacts that came out of the ground.

Strong-Howard House Archaeology

Jim Trocchi, Secretary, FOSA

Last year, Windsor Historical Society's Executive Director Christine Ermenc invited State Archaeologist Nick Bellantoni and the Friends of the Office of State Archaeology (FOSA) to perform an archaeological survey inside the Strong-Howard House. Captain Howard's store was the focus of the 2013 season's first dig, which took place on May 14th and 15th. It is a 9-by-12-foot room that was added on to the original house around 1800. In the process of the Phase I renovations of the store, the carpenters removed the floor boards over the crawl space beneath this room to replace the footings and floor joists. Therefore, we had two days to complete a study to see if it could reveal any information about this section of the house and provide a more accurate estimate of when it was constructed. With many other interesting finds discovered during previous excavations, we hoped the opportunity to dig beneath the store's floor would be even more exciting.

We had an excellent turnout with 28 FOSA members over the two days. Everyone had something to do. Indeed it is unusual to be digging inside of a house. I

originally thought it would be a treat but soon found out the close quarters were somewhat cramped and having to wear a breathing mask made one's eye glasses soon fog up. Under Nick's direction, we divided the 9-by-12-foot crawl space into six one-meter squares. This encompassed nearly all the space under the floor. The entire operation went very smoothly with three or four persons excavating, then the excavated soil handed out the window to be screened for artifacts and then bagged and labeled.

Compared with past experience on this site, we found an unusually small number of pottery shards. Near the surface, we found pieces of newspaper but all were vintage 1960 and 1970. Perhaps they were used to prevent drafts in the winter. We soon were recovering a variety of typical historic artifacts such as: food, poultry and rodent bones, marine and nut shells, wrought and wire iron nails, pieces of brick, clay pipe stems, and numerous glasswares and shards. A surprise find was a 1/2" diameter musket ball.

Photo 1 displays one of the incomplete wine bottles with its detached neck shard. The bottom is composed of seven separate shards that I cemented together.



Jim Trocchi, May 14, 2013. Photo by Christina Vida

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WINDSOR
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Our Mission

The Windsor Historical Society aims to inspire public awareness and appreciation of the diverse peoples, places, and events that contribute to Windsor's evolving history. We preserve and interpret Windsor's historical record through active collecting, research, exhibitions, programs, and communications in the belief that an understanding of history can provide individuals and communities with connections to the past, a sense of belonging in the present, and responsibility for the future.

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Director's Report

Christine Ermenc, Executive Director



History's Print on the Landscape

The view from my office window is more than lovely. It is imbued with a history I can now glimpse after working at the Society for more than a decade. Across the street, there is the home built by Thomas Hayden for the Chaffee family in 1789, now owned and beautifully maintained by a descendant of the builder. In the distance lie the meadowlands that drew first the Native Peoples and then English settlers to this region. These meadows remain agricultural because river floodwaters inundate this landscape each spring, preventing more intensive development. All around us, other marvelous evidence still exists.

A toy becomes real in the mind of a child who remembers many long hours of play and adventure. A house becomes a home as it is invested with memory. A landscape infused with history and memories can become a powerful agent of civic engagement.

You can see this in action as you read through this issue. Twenty-eight archaeologists were committed enough to spend two days uncovering artifacts that will aid Curator Christina Vida in her quest to interpret the lives of the Howard family in 1810. Last fall, Advanced Placement students from Windsor High School toured Windsor's historic Broad Street and Palisado Greens with Christina Vida, and art teacher Marge Renno, soaking up the history of how buildings, bridges, cemeteries, and landscapes evolved. An exhibition of art produced by these talented young people called "Building Bridges" opens on January 9th. Don't miss this opportunity to see photography, ceramics, sculpture, jewelry and drawings inspired by their walks. In their artist statements, many students have told us that close observation of often taken-for-granted landscapes and learning the history behind what they are seeing has made them feel a deeper connection to their town.

This spring, you will have multiple opportunities to engage more deeply with Windsor landscapes through history. Our Facebook photo contest begins April 1. Send julian.mckinley@patch.com an image of a Windsor place and include a one sentence story beginning with "This is where...", then check out all the submissions on our Facebook page. On April 6th, we will repeat Beverly Garvan's "Ride to Remember" bus tour. Every participant is given a packet of historic maps and images to compare with what they see as the tour progresses. Last fall, our bus filled quickly with a waiting list of almost thirty people, so sign up early if you are interested. And then there's our house tour on April 26th. This is a wonderful opportunity to learn about architecture, neighborhood development, and early Windsor residents who left their mark.

(Continued on page 3)

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Interestingly the shards were found in four different excavated squares. Notice the center of its base rises into the bottle's interior; this is known as a "conical basal kick" (Hume, 1969: 71). Not shown in the photo is the pontil mark located on the exterior and opposite to the conical basal kick. This type of bottle is of a style that may date back to 1714 (Hume, 1969: 64). In that case, it dates before the house was built. But because it is a black glass it may have been made in



Photo 1 Stem and Base of Wine Bottle, currently on view in the Society's Gift Shop
Photo by Jim Trocchi

America as late as 1820 (Hume, 1969: 71). If the earlier date of 1714 proves correct, this bottle doesn't relate to the time period of this house but to one of an earlier period. This area of Ancient Windsor dates back to the late 1630s and was well populated even at that time. Hence, even though the house dates

back to 1758, the property has had many other owners before that time.

A surprising number of glass lantern chimney shards were recovered. I found it unusual to find so many in this one spot. In the past I have dug outside of this house and in the surrounding grounds and can't recall finding any. Photo 2 displays several incomplete chimneys where I was able to match some of the shards. The chimney on the far right is from my home and is used here as a comparison. The chimney to the far left is composed of five matched shards.



Photo 2 Glass Chimney Fragments
Photo by Jim Trocchi

Photo 3 displays two complete pharmaceutical medicine bottles. They both have mold seams going down the center of their body. The one on the left has a smooth body, while the one on the right has a 12-facet

body. The bottle lips appear to have been applied separately in manufacture unlike 17th-century English versions where the neck was tooled out at the top to form a lip (Hume, 1969: 74). These bottles probably date to the time period of the house.

Photo 4 is a hand blown bottle that looks to be in the pharmaceutical class. All of its pieces were found in one location, and I was able to mend the three shards that compose the shoulder and neck. The bottom half is complete and has a pontil mark but the mid section is broken up into several unmatched shards. It is clear glass, about 5 inches in length and was manufactured in the late 18th century (Hume, 1969: 72). This dates to the early years of our house.



Photo 4 Hand Blown Pharmaceutical Bottle
Photo by Jim Trocchi

Some other unusual artifacts that are worth mentioning are several brass tacks that remind me of those used for furniture upholstery, a very small scallop shell with a hole in its center that may have been used for decoration, a very small finial that looks like a toy bedpost, and a slate pencil. All the artifacts are in the care of the Society and plans are to integrate the information they provide into the visitors' experience of the House. I and the other FOSEA members hope that our efforts have contributed useful information to the ongoing archaeological and historic record for this period.

Bibliography: Hume, Ivor Noel. *A Guide to Artifacts of Colonial America*. New York: Random House, 1969.

Director's Report (Continued from Page 2)

Historic landscapes are like palimpsests, parchments so precious that they were written upon several times, sometimes with earlier messages partially legible. In the coming year, let us help you to make rewarding connections with the many fascinating messages Windsor's landscapes hold.



Photo 3 Two Medicine Bottles
Photo by Jim Trocchi

Descendants of the Founders of Ancient Windsor Celebrate 30 Years

Richard C. Roberts, President, DFAW

Saturday, September 22 drew nearly 50 members and friends of the Descendants of the Founders of Ancient Windsor to the Oliver Ellsworth Homestead to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of an organization that grew out of Windsor's 350th anniversary activities.

In 1983, a summer-long schedule of events celebrated the 350th anniversary of Windsor's first English settlement. Many of those activities, in the words of Founders Observances Committee Chair Donna Holt Siemiatkoski, were intended to involve "descendants of Windsor's founders" in the town's celebration "and to commemorate the ideals of the founders, focusing attention upon the origins of the town."

That August, over thirty hikers made a commemorative trek from Dorchester, MA, to Windsor. As Donna described it, it recreated "the physical, emotional, and spiritual experiences of the first group of permanent settlers" and "each of the three dozen trekkers grew personally as a result."

On the last weekend of September, 1983, hundreds of townsfolk and descendants from across the country joined in a candlelight procession from the Founders Monument on Palisado Green to the First Church for a memorial service commemorating Windsor's Founders, filling the first floor and much of the balcony. As Donna recalled, "During the service the trekkers were recognized; some descendants were honored for being the oldest, youngest, and so forth." A business meeting followed at which those present voted into existence the Descendants of the Founders of Ancient Windsor.

For the past thirty years, DFAW has gathered in Windsor on the Saturday closest to September 26 for its annual "Founders Day Reunion," continuing many of the traditions begun on that first Founders Day including presentations on topics related Windsor's seventeenth and eighteenth century heritage.

This year, DFAW also celebrated its own heritage. The leaders whose vision helped "birth" the organization and those who made that idea viable by becoming Charter Members were acknowledged with special ribbons. On display were scrapbooks, photo albums, and a running "slide show" highlighting activities of the past 30 years; books authored by DFAW members and speakers; a



DFAW Charter members present at its 30th anniversary celebration on September 22 (left to right): Edwin Strickland, Richard Roberts, Mary Crittenden, Fred Sawyer, Gene Siemiatkoski, Margot Hosford, Robert Taylor, Joan Landers, Lorraine Clapp. Not shown: Steve Siemiatkoski.

Photo by Descendants of the Founders of Ancient Windsor

bulletin board listing Charter Members; and the walking stick used on the 1983 recreated trek. Many attendees stopped by the Windsor Historical Society table staffed by Barbara Goodwin.

Now with over 600 members nationwide, DFAW's purpose is to record and preserve the history and genealogy of the Founders of Ancient Windsor, their families, and their descendants. Founders are individuals (including some females) who appear on records pertaining to Windsor by the end of 1641, listed at www.societyct.org/windsor.htm. Members are not required to be descendants of a Founder; all those supportive of DFAW's purpose are invited to join.

DFAW gathers and verifies genealogical data encouraging active members with bloodline descent from one or more Founders to submit a Lineage Form complete with standard proofs of descent. Submissions are reviewed, verified and entered into a database. Once approved, DFAW issues a Certificate of Lineage.

Since 1983, DFAW has gathered much primary and published material on the Founding Families of Windsor, and its genealogical database is available at the Windsor Historical Society. DFAW's 12-page quarterly newsletter includes articles on new genealogical findings and upcoming meetings. Fall and Spring meetings feature a speaker, food, and the opportunity to share news with other Windsor descendants. DFAW also offers a "Cousin Exchange" to link members researching a specific Founder's line.

For more information visit www.facebook.com/DescendantsOfTheFoundersOfAncientWindsorInc or www.societyct.org/windsor.htm or contact: DFAW Membership Secretary, P. O. Box 39, Windsor, CT 06095, Email: DFAW1633@yahoo.com.

They Lived in Windsor

Barbara Goodwin, Librarian, and
Elaine Brophy, Volunteer

The First of June was Census Day for the 1890 US Federal Census, and within six weeks the *Hartford Courant* reported that there were 3,010 persons living in Windsor on that date. However, the unfortunate loss of the hundreds of cartons of detailed enumeration forms from this census has become a well-known, but frustrating, dilemma for historians and genealogists. (To read more about this story, see “The 1890 Census: First in the Path of the Firemen” in the March 2009 issue of the Society’s newsletter at www.windsorhistoricalsociety.org/nl_list.html.) Inspired and led by the efforts of volunteer Elaine Brophy, we are recreating this lost snapshot of Windsor near the turn of the century.

Why would we want to do this? In 1890 much of the town’s land was still being used for agricultural purposes, but the construction of the Windsor Locks Canal and the arrival of the railroad had stimulated a variety of new commercial and industrial businesses. These included textile and paper mills alongside the Farmington River, numerous brick yards, a creamery, cigar making, and industrial manufacturing. By compiling a comprehensive list of the residents of Windsor in 1890, we hope to bring to light not only those who were prominent or descendants of the old familiar names, but also the women and children, farm laborers and mill workers, immigrants and others who may have more recently settled in town. It became our goal to identify all those who *may* have been living here and to ascertain the aspects of their demographic information which would have been on the census forms: age, race, birthplace, occupation, and related family members.

It has been a fascinating, four-year-long project. By examining a variety of resources both here in the Society’s collections and in the wider community, we have identified 3,859 probable Windsorites to include on our Master Census List. The project has revealed the richness as well as some of the complexities, inconsistencies, and heartbreak inherent in working with archival records. For example, the clerk keeping the records at the Merwin Funeral Home had extraordinarily beautiful handwriting, but it took some time to learn to decipher the idiosyncrasies of her spelling and letter formation. The mother of John Parker’s three children is variously recorded as Estelle

Vietz, Stella L. Viets, and Lydia E. Viets. We were sobered to find that one couple had lost four young children to diphtheria just a few months before census day.

The complete project consists of the Master Census List and four supporting tables comprised of the more detailed information extracted from tax and voting lists, vital records, church and funeral home records. By working back and forth between the various sets of information, Elaine was able to combine most of the individuals into family units. Each entry in the Master Census List indicates where that name was found in the documentary sources.

We have pulled a few preliminary statistical figures from the databases. There were 296 farmers in Windsor in 1890 and over 1,200 cows. There were 23 brick makers and masons, 21 cigar makers, 10 blacksmiths, and at least 162 people employed at the paper and textile mills. An additional 174 laborers could have worked in the mills or on the farms. Of the 460 residents who were foreign born, about half or 240 were born in Ireland, and at least fifteen other countries are represented in the remaining half. 2,399 people were born in Connecticut and another 215 were born in the other New England states. At least 40 people were born south of the Mason-Dixon Line. The most common surname was Clark (60 individuals in eighteen households), closely followed by Griswold (56), Phelps (55), Loomis (56), Mack (54), and Babcock (44).

The editing and cross-checking phase of the project is nearly complete. We expect to publish *They Lived in Windsor: A Reconstruction of the 1890 Census for Windsor, Connecticut* in hard copy and on CD. We are aware that more resources could be consulted to augment and refine the lists further, but are confident that we have uncovered most of Windsor’s residents at that time. Contact Librarian Barbara Goodwin at the Society if you are interested in purchasing a copy when it is available.



A Poquonock family of the 1890s. Photo attributed to C.R. Hatheway. *WHS Collections* 2008.41.61

The Fyler Freeze-Up

Do you remember the great blizzard of 2013? How about the state shut-down of 1978? The Strong-Howard House has stood through them all, with some help from its friends.

Dorothy Blake (1898-1983) penned this poetic homage to the “Fyler House” after a particularly harsh blizzard in 1967.

Mrs. Blake was a member of the Society for fifty-five years and served as Chairman of the House and Grounds Committee for thirty-five years. “Mr. Ball” and “Margaret” refer to William Ball (1896-1990) and his wife, Margaret Ball (1899-1998), also long-time Society members and active volunteers. Many thanks are due to them and all the others who have kept our little red house on the Green standing these many years.

The Blizzard of Sixty-Seven had passed;
 The cold, biting snow had stopped falling at last;
 But the freezing cold wind had blown all through the
 night
 And the Flyer House pipes had been all frozen tight.
 I knew that I'd finally call Mr. Ball,
 And I knew that he wouldn't be happy at all.
 No paths had been shoveled – ten inches of snow
 And the temperature still was exceedingly low.
 Mr. Ball appeared, looking like Santa instead;
 His arms were quite full and his nose slightly red.
 He was carrying a heater and soon plugged it in
 As he said “I guess this is where we will begin.”
 He propped it up then with some boxes and books;
 He obviously didn't consider the looks.
 Then he left telling me he would come back again;
 And he asked me to take a quick look now and then.
 He came back again after paths had been made,
 This time Margaret came too – always ready to aid.
 Some thick insulation somewhere he had found,



Strong-Howard House, January 2011
 Photo by Christina Vida

And he bandaged the corner from roof-top to ground.

His wife held it tight while he fastened it there
 With a ladder, a shovel, two boards and a prayer.

“That isn't exactly our Fyler House style,”

I remarked. His reply? A frost-bitten smile.

Then he said, “Well, I guess now that we've done our
 best

We can go back home, Margaret. We both need a
 rest.”

Mr. Ball brought a much better heater next day;

“It won't take long,” he said, “So I might as well stay.”

We talked about clapboards and baseboards and leaks,

Genealogies, old mills and squirrels and antiques.

Four eyes never strayed from that confounded spout;

You'd think we expected pure gold to come out.

At last one drop came – sixteen hours too late;

Then two minutes longer we had to wait

Til the second drop formed and fell to the sink.

“Now,” said Mr. Ball, “We've got it, I think.”

He looked pretty tired, his head ached, and so

I said, “There's no reason why you shouldn't go.

You can't tell how long this dripping will last;

I'll watch it until it is running full blast.”

About two hours later a small stream appeared,

And in just a few minutes the pipes were both cleared;

But my foot was asleep and my eyes badly crossed;

My joints were all stiff and my key had been lost.

I was finally assembled, and then found my key.

My foot was still prickling; but when I could see

I dialed Mr. Ball to report, “All is well”;

And that ends my story – there's no more to tell.

And the Winner Is.....

Congratulations to the winners of our Significant
 Objects Writing Contest!

First prize went to **Cree Jenkins**, an eighth-
 grader at Sage Park Middle School in Windsor,
 for her fictional story about the nutmeg grater.

Second prize went to **Leigh-Ann Hammond**,
 of Hartford, for her piece on the 1798 map.

Third prize went to **Grace Birch**, also in eighth
 grade at Sage Park Middle School, for her story
 on the red-hooded cloak.

Visit our website or Facebook page to read their
 winning entries.

Volunteer Profile

Liz Henderson and Barbara Goodwin

We are featuring a profile of one of our volunteers in each newsletter issue. Our volunteers supplement and complement the work of our paid staff in so many ways. Volunteers present school programs, conduct tours for our guests, maintain our facilities and grounds, work with our curator and librarian, and help with house and garden tours and other fundraising events. It is a privilege and honor to work together to preserve and share Windsor's history.

Elaine Brophy

Elaine joined us in 1990 when she retired from her position as Librarian at Bloomfield High School. She put that experience to work right away as library assistant and later as the volunteer librarian, in charge of cataloging and ordering books, keeping the library in order, and coaching the many patrons who visit it.

She became interested in genealogy when she started helping her father with his own research. Elaine thinks of genealogy research as a treasure hunt: when you find another fact or detail, you feel as if you have won a prize! Her love of genealogy led her to take on the 1890 census project detailed in this newsletter. The lack of that census left a 20-year hole in Windsor's history and Elaine has dug deep to help fill it. She says, "Working on this project felt like doing a hundred family histories at one time."

Elaine enjoys helping library patrons and doing research, and she wants everyone to know what a wonderful resource this library is for the history and people of Windsor. In addition to genealogy, her hobbies include cross-stitch and travel.



Photo by Christina Vida

Volunteers

We are so grateful to all our volunteers. Between our volunteers, staff, and donors, we are able to do so much more and even surprise ourselves!

Collections: Dorothy Ball, Donna Baron, Marianne Curling, Kevin Ferrigno, Karen Parsons, Walt Stevenson, and Jim Trocchi.

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To be added to our newsletter email distribution, please send an email to jalberti@windsorhistoricalsociety.org. The next newsletter will come straight to your inbox.

Visiting the Museum

The museum is open Wednesdays through Saturdays with tours of the historic houses conducted at 11:00 am and 1:00 pm. Our admission fee is \$8 for adults, \$6 for students over age 12 years and seniors over 62 years. Society members, children under 12 years, teachers, and New England Museum Association members displaying a card are FREE.

Note that the Society will be closed Christmas Day, Wednesday, December 25; and New Year's Day, Wednesday, January 1.

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Upcoming Programs at Windsor Historical Society

We have a full slate of fascinating programs happening through the Winter and Spring.

Please see the enclosed flyer for a complete list of upcoming programs.

Flyer missing? Please visit our website: windsorhistoricalsociety.org or contact the Society at 860-688-3813 or info@windsorhistoricalsociety.org