



Windsor Historical Society

News



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June 2010

Going Digital: Upcoming On-line Exhibition

Childhood in Windsor: 1860 - 1920

Julia Baldini, Museum Educator

It's no surprise that people are taking to the web in large numbers these days. One can read a portion of *The History of Ancient Windsor* by Henry Stiles on Googlebooks from anywhere in the world. On our Facebook page, visitors R.S.V.P. to programs and connect with online friends from all over the country. Every day, citizens act as journalists from the comfort of their own blogs. And don't think we haven't noticed! Connecting with our members and the community outside of our physical campus on Palisado Green is a reality that we frequently discuss in staff meetings.

A portion of the money we received from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving's Strategic Technology Program will be spent on updating our website. In addition to a site makeover and simpler navigation, we're also interested in providing more content and interpretation through on-line exhibitions. As an educator I've always had a personal interest in adolescence and childhood. In researching Windsor's transition from a rural village community to a Hartford suburb, I wanted to spotlight the first generations to experience the effect of the fight for progressive laws and the leisure lifestyles brought about by the Industrial Revolution. The on-line exhibition will explore childhood in Windsor from the 1860's through the 1910's. The exhibition and website won't be up and running for a couple of months, but we thought we'd share some of our finds with you before that time arrives.

Would you like to save a tree and receive this newsletter electronically? If so, contact JAlberti@WindsorHistoricalSociety.org.



Whitall, Tatum & Co. Glass Nursing Bottle.
WHS Collections. 1994.017.001

Glass Nursing Bottle

This glass nursing bottle was donated to the Society in 1994 with little accompanying information. The front of the bottle has a raised insignia stamped "Acme Nursing" which stumped Society volunteers as no one could determine which company had made the bottle. After searching through various hobbyist collections on-line, I found an exact copy of our bottle on a blog about infant feeding devices, this one displayed in the Memorial Room of the Woodward Biomedical Library at the University of British Columbia. After confirming with that library's curator that the nursing bottle with its mystery insignia were produced by Whitall, Tatum & Co. from Millville, New Jersey our research quickly proceeded. The first U.S. made glass nursing bottle was patented in 1841. The bottle we owned in our collection was made sometime between 1879 and the early 1910's and was quite common for its time. These bottles were often referred to as "turtle" nursing bottles due to their shape and were made from two pieces of hand-blown glass beaded together, they held about 8 ounces of fluids.

Dunham Mill Employee Photograph

At about the same time that the government and educators were calling for universal education, concern for the safety and well-being of young

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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 Message

Christine Ermenc, Executive Director



When Historical Documents are Sensitive

The historical community in Connecticut has been watching with great interest as a legal tussle has played out over access to records of 130 Civil War veterans treated at the Connecticut Valley Hospital. Was a common physical condition termed "soldier's heart" in the 19th century analogous to what physicians today call post-traumatic stress disorder?

Connecticut's Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services argued that the records should be restricted on the basis of a 1969 state statute establishing psychiatrist-patient privilege. A lawyer representing a graduate student in the history department of Central Connecticut State University argued that the documents should be released under the Freedom of Information Act, further arguing that the psychiatrist-patient privilege statute was not intended to be applied retroactively. The State Supreme Court recently ruled that the veteran records are part of the public record and has ordered that they be made available to researchers.

The release of each decade of census data is always impatiently awaited by genealogists and historians. This year, most of us have completed information for the United States Census that will remain confidential until seventy years from now. While many historical researchers would prefer instant access, it is widely recognized that some census data is sensitive and that the likelihood of census information hurting or embarrassing descendants two or three generations later is slim.

The Association of College and Research Libraries and the Society of American Archivists has issued a joint statement on public access to research materials in libraries and archives like the Society's. The document states,

"It is the responsibility of a repository to make available original research materials in its possession on equal terms of access. (...) Nevertheless, a repository must fulfill legal and institutional obligations to protect confidentiality...."

How does all of this apply to an institution like ours? Educator Julia Baldini is developing an online exhibition for the public and for use in classrooms. The Society has a few of Windsor's early 20th century Poor Farm and Social Service records in our archival collections and these provide a fascinating window into stressors facing families in the early 20th century. Children might be removed from their homes because of alcohol problems in a family or because of a "disorderly household." While I can joke today that my own household might fit into the latter category with the demands of my job, and dust-balls under the beds, I

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children working in factories, mills, machine shops and farms became a public issue. In New England, children as young as six years old were legally employed in many dangerous and hazardous industrial situations to help support their families. In 1890, Windsor's School Visitor's Report stated that of the 586 students who should be registered for school, only 314 were attending regularly. The others were found working in various businesses around town or performing work at home. This 1890s photograph of workers standing outside the Dunham Mill in Poquonock provides proof of the School Visitor's Report's claim. The Dunham Mill was built in the 1860s and was first used as a woolen mill, later as an underwear and yarn mill. The building was taken down in 1933.



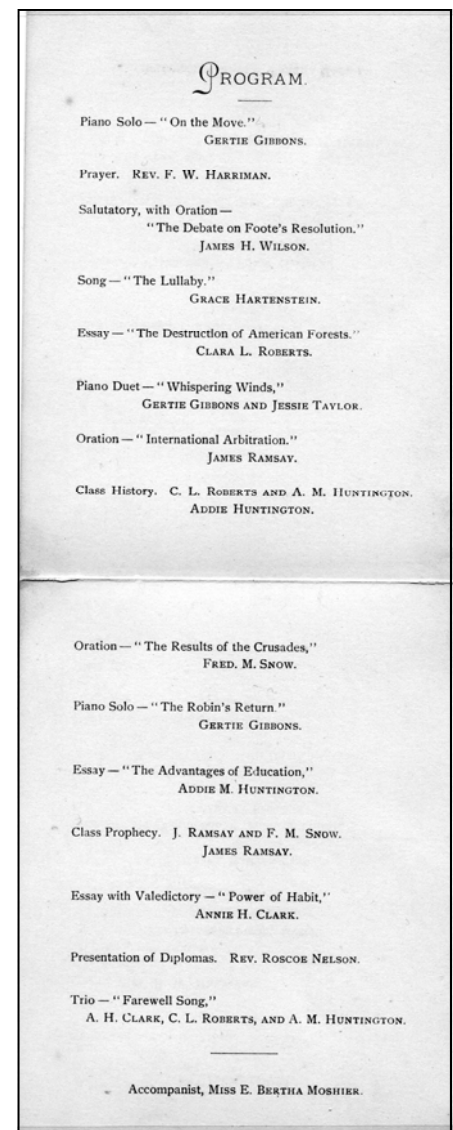
Dunham Mills Employees, c. 1890s.
WHS Collections. 2000.030.153

1894 Poquonock High School Graduation Program

What is most remarkable about this simple graduation program pictured here is that the Class of 1894 was one of only two classes to graduate from Poquonock High School. The school opened in 1891 to offer advanced courses to students from the Poquonock and Rainbow villages of Windsor. At a celebration in the Town Hall in 1894, the school graduated six students: Annie Holcomb Clark, Addie May Huntington, Clara Louise Roberts, James Ramsay, Fred Manly Snow and James Holbrod Wilson.

Each student participated in the ceremony through a presentation of song or essay. The expansion of the street rail into Rainbow and Poquonock in 1895 connected Windsor Center with its outer villages. At the end of the 1895 school year, Poquonock High School closed and the Poquonock Grammar School opened in its place. Students who passed the entrance exam into high school now attended Roger Ludlow School in Windsor Center. The Hartford Street Railway offered discount tickets for students traveling to school; however the burden of transportation costs fell to families to pay.

There is still a lot more work to be done on the exhibit, including finalizing object labels and creating lesson plans for students and teachers that connect the exhibition with school curriculum themes. It has been both fascinating and eye-opening to finger through manuscript collections, town documents, newspapers, trade cards, family genealogies, photographs and objects that the Society has collected over the past eighty-nine years. And don't worry. You won't miss the exhibition's opening if it occurs between newsletters. We'll send out a Facebook invitation and e-blast when the new website and exhibition are up and running.



1894 Poquonock High School
Graduation Program.
WHS Collections. 1994.41.2

January 27 *My birthday day*

Barbara Goodwin, Librarian

One spring day in 2009, a man approached the docent's desk in the Windsor Historical Society's lobby offering a small, scuffed and worn brown object in the palm of his outstretched hand. Would the Society like to have it? The docent started to explain the donation procedure, but her voice faded off as the man began to tell the story of the little diary.

He was riding his bike to middle school back in 1982 or 1983 when he noticed the dark object in the grass. Picking it up, he saw that it was a little book – a little pencil-inscribed diary for the year 1860. He and his parents enlisted family friends, the Windsor police, and even an article in the *Journal Inquirer* in order to find its rightful owner, all to no avail. So the diary had resided, nearly forgotten, in his parents' safe deposit box for the past 25 years. The WHS staff examined the diary and found numerous entries that persuaded them of its probable Windsor provenance, and so it was accepted.



1860 Diary. WHS Collections 2009.28.1

Library volunteer Sandy McGraw eagerly volunteered to transcribe the diary, thinking that the short entries might yield interesting tidbits about the author's life in Windsor and, with a lot of luck, might offer clues to his identity. Week by week Sandy struggled to decipher the tiny penciled notes which offered a phrase or sentence or two per day. The writer appeared to be a young man who was attending school in East Windsor part of the year and working many hours a week doing the typical farm chores of the season. He also found some time for fun and spent Sundays at church.

Friday January 27 My birthday. Came home with Wolcott after school.

Sunday January 29 Attended meeting all day. Went to meeting in the eve.

Tuesday February 21 Went to Hartford on the [train] cars. Attended exhibition of the Windsor Arts Union in the art house. Crowded. Passed off exceedingly well.

Friday March 2 Very Pleasant day. Bluebirds here & making music. Could not [be] on the river. Ice cleared out in the night. River rising.

Monday April 23 Worked heaping manure & carting it on to tobacco land. Fred Drake worked for me. I grafted some pear scions.

Monday May 7 Cherry trees in full bloom. Plowed turf in the meadow. Had Uncle Leavitt's cattle.

Wednesday June 6 Finished stripping tobacco. Attended Mrs. L. G. Hayden's funeral in afternoon.

Thursday June 28 Commenced mowing in the meadow. Cut $\frac{3}{4}$ of corn with machine. Raked & cached it up at night.

Wednesday July 18 A total eclipse of the sun. Plowed out tobacco in morning. Dr. Pierson's funeral in the afternoon.

Friday July 27 I went up to Hartford & up to the locks [Windsor Locks] at night. Great time in Hartford among the Wide-Awakes.

Thursday August 9 Cousins Sarah, Mary & Nellie & myself went to Hartford to see the Japanese burlesque.

Wednesday September 19 Picking up apples & digging potatoes. I raked weeds for Uncle Leavitt & for myself.

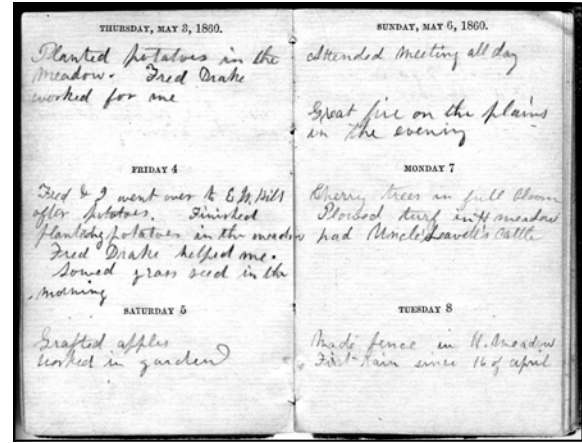
Thursday November 1 Made cider. Finished picking corn.

Tuesday November 6 Presidential Election day. Republicans carried this town by 2 majority. Lincoln 204 votes, Douglas 45, Breckinridge 202, Bell 5. Went to Hartford in evening. Had a great time.

Monday December 17 South Carolina declared herself out of the Union. Terrible times.

Sandy also kept a running list of any names which were mentioned and local events which might be confirmed through other sources. It was enticing to find so many familiar Windsor surnames – Hayden, Ellsworth, Loomis, Phelps – and occasionally a

relationship, "Had Uncle Leavitt's cattle," "... went up to the Locks to Aunt Julia's & brought Emily home," and "I went over to Uncle Erastus' in the evening," and the names of friends and fellow students. Searching the 1860 census to find a last name for Uncle Erastus and Uncle Leavitt led us to the Ellsworth family. Then we turned to the genealogies in Henry Stiles' *The History of Ancient Windsor* - could we find a nephew whose birthday was January 27? Indeed there was: David Josiah Ellsworth, born January 27, 1840.



This was very exciting because in our research library there is additional information about David Ellsworth. He was a prosperous and innovative Windsor farmer with property on upper Palisado Avenue. He was instrumental in the establishment of the Windsor Creamery, a charter member of the Windsor Historical Society, keenly interested in politics, wrote letters to the *Hartford Courant*, and was an authority on local history. Our library files contain some of the papers that he read before members of the Society, including one about the Blizzard of 1888.

One of the lines in his 1932 obituary stated, "He kept a diary for many years which has proved of much value in determining dates of events 60 or 70 years ago." This sent the WHS staff searching, with precarious hopes, through the uncataloged collections for other unidentified diaries. There were loud shouts of excitement when five more worn and nondescript pocket diaries were found for the years 1857, 1858, 1859, 1863 and 1876; and yet again when each of these were opened and revealed that tell-tale entry on January 27th - "My birthday."

Pleasure and satisfaction are often derived from the fleeting events of life - the joy on a child's face or a fragrant lilac bush. But they also occur more frequently than you might imagine here at WHS, sparked by the enormous power of everyday objects from the past to touch the heart of visitors, volunteers, and staff.

Visit the WHS library to see these little diaries and to read the transcript of the 1860 entries.

Volunteers

Educators: Carolyn Doyle, Carlton Parkinson, Heather Renaud, Jan Stevens. **Exhibition opening helpers:** Betsey Blaisdell, Bev Garvan, Coralee Jones, Dorothy McAllister, Margaret Quigley. **Front desk and administration:** Bill Allen, Pat Congelosi, Carolyn Doyle, Bill Harris, Coralee Jones, Dee Jubrey, Sue Lescher, Mary Ann Maksimoski, Dorothy McAllister, Steve McGoldrick, Yvonne McGregor, Willa Nemetz, Elizabeth Parker, Carlton Parkinson, Margaret Quigley, Mary Ransom, Dorothy Simon, Jim Trocchi. **Grounds:** Windsor Garden Club and Windsor Civitans. **Legal counsel:** Kevin Ferrigno of Reid & Riege, PC. **Library:** Iva Allison, Theresa Brennan, Elaine Brophy, Bev Garvan, Bill Harris, Coralee Jones, Delia Jubrey, Mary Ann Maksimoski, Sandy McGraw, Willa Nemetz, Shirley Quintero, Susan Smoktunowicz.

Continued from page 2, Director's Report

certainly would not want my friends and neighbors knowing that my children had once been removed from our home, even if this had happened fifty years ago and there were extenuating circumstances.

So, what is an acceptable time horizon for non-restricted access to information in sensitive documents? For the State of Indiana, it is seventy-five years. For the Connecticut Historical Society, it is 100 years. Our solution to the Town Farm records dilemma? The documents will be included in Julia's online exhibition but with names and other identifying information blanked out. We will continue to work on establishing our own institutional policy for access to sensitive documents.

Twenty years later

Connie Thomas, Administrative Assistant

Twenty years ago this month I left the for-profit world in Hartford and started something new: museum work in my own town. Director Bob Silliman showed me around the Society's new Mills Building, which was having finishing touches done on a multi-million dollar building project; and he opened the storage room doors displaying a luscious collection of household objects from 200 years ago. I was awed, transported, and knew this job offer would match my needs and dreams. And it really has! I followed him around the buildings, listened to him talk to workmen and visitors, and helped plan the grand opening for the new building. The opening came and went, and I settled into a routine that has unexpectedly lasted these twenty years. So, what stands out after two decades? Visitors and staff, of course.

What's that noise?

I heard it from the office. We had five visitors from Idaho poring through our books looking for their Windsor ancestors and talking softly to one another. But there was something else going on. I walked into the library, and a man was lying on the floor near the library table snoring loudly! His family quickly dismissed him saying he had been driving for a long, long time. Maybe all the way from Idaho?

Kissing

A lovely lady brought in photographs of her ancestors and their farm. She had no relatives interested enough to keep these beloved family mementoes, so she reluctantly concluded they needed to be kept safe in our museum. Before she handed them over to me, she lightly kissed each photo goodbye. At that point I understood the depth of our museum's responsibility to anyone donating objects. Frequently they are handing over a piece of their heart. We take our promise to care for their donations very seriously. Back then it would have surprised me and our Board to learn of the time and expense the Society would eventually dedicate toward collections care.

That first year another lady from the Northwest was so excited to finally be in this quaint, New England town called Windsor where so many of her ancestors originated that she just kissed me on my cheek. Now, that degree of gratitude had never happened to me in the for-profit sector! Recently a Georgia native visiting

the library asked me about a particular relative. I pivoted to the 1869 map displayed on the library wall and pointed out her ancestor's name and farm location. She almost hyperventilated! Tears welled up in her eyes when she explained that this genealogy "bug" had bitten her right in our library. She was amazed that this lost ancestor was peeking over her shoulder as she pored over our family histories at the library table. A for-profit salary doesn't compensate nearly as much as the satisfaction I feel when our library collection helps someone hit the genealogical jackpot!

The blind Virginian

Some years ago I greeted an elderly lady with a soft, Virginian accent as she stepped out of our elevator guided by her daughter-in-law. I showed them our library, took down some books for them, and returned to the office. In a while I could hear the daughter-in-law reading to the blind Virginian who stopped her and recited the family tree verbatim just as it appears in Henry Stiles' *History of Ancient Windsor*. When she could still see, this lady had memorized this treasured information. I realized again how meaningful our Society's collections are to people from all over the country and from all walks of life.

Out of the blue

This morning our librarian and I discussed how, from the moment we open the door in the morning, we don't know what's going to happen that day. Years ago I got a phone call from a California art museum asking if we wanted Isaac Hayden's (1748-1827) Revolutionary War musket (1993.97.1). Most certainly we did! Another day a gentleman knocked on our door. After a quick gallop from the office, down the stairs, and to the front door, the man softly announced he thought his New Hampshire museum might have Windsor's Daniel Bissell (1754-1824) Purple Heart, one of the first Badges of Military Merit issued by George Washington. It was my turn to nearly hyperventilate! As it turned out, Daniel's Purple Heart perished in a 1813 New York house fire; but a potential lead like this is always worth the research.

Here's the conclusion, for now

I'm not planning on leaving anytime soon. I don't spring up and down the stairs to answer the door as quickly as I did twenty years ago, but I've garnered a wealth of information which I love to share. Twenty years ago we had two paid staff and many volunteers. In good economic years we've employed up to seven staff people. The museum is growing and fulfilling some of

the dreams this once all-volunteer organization wished for. It has been a privilege to watch and help make those dreams come true. Lastly, I want to thank my hard-working husband Ron for continuing to labor in the for-profit world, enabling me to enjoy a job that doesn't reward me with a pension but provides weekly contentment.



Left to right: Mary Ransom, Ron and Connie Thomas

Spring Internship at the Society

Theresa Brennan, Intern

My name is Theresa Brennan. I am currently a junior at Central Connecticut State University. I have just been accepted into the education department there and have hopes of becoming a history teacher, grades six through twelve. Originally, I thought that an internship at the Windsor Historical Society would help me become a better teacher. In doing extensive research and becoming more familiar with artifacts and primary sources, I hoped to allow students to see how interesting history can be, and ultimately become a more creative teacher.

Before the internship, I wasn't sure what exactly a profession in public history entailed. I hoped that working at WHS would enrich my knowledge about Connecticut history, which could be a tool for me in a classroom setting. I knew what a museum educator was, but I had no idea how rewarding the job could be. I worked primarily as a museum education intern, researching women's history in Windsor. By interning at WHS, I now know how important community outreach programs are and how much a classroom of children can learn by being able to see artifacts and participating in activities such as building a militia tent, touring the Strong House, and examining the gravestones at Palisado Cemetery. The staff always had fun and enriching lesson plans that I know I will take with me to my classroom someday.

After searching historical records for three months, I found that there were truly remarkable women who were a part of the Windsor community. Sergeant Dorothy Yavener was one such woman. In order to do extensive research on Yavener, I used library resources such as the 1920 Census, the *Tunxis* yearbook, and numerous articles from the *Hartford Courant*. Yavener was honored as being the first Windsor WAC to be decorated with the Bronze Star overseas (Italy) for meritorious achievement in the performance of services during the periods May 1944 to May 1945. The other woman that I was spellbound by was Ethna Beulah Winston. After graduating from John Fitch High School, Winston went on to study at the Hartford School of Religious Education, Miner Teacher College, Howard University, and Columbia University. She went from being a social worker to a professor and dean of education at Tougaloo College, Clark College, and Atlanta University. She was later appointed the Director of Education at South Carolina State University. Her biggest accomplishment came when she was elected as a member of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences and was the only "negro woman" member of the American Education Research Association. I found most of my research on Winston in the *Hartford Courant*. Winston's life story was also cross-referenced and put into the African American history folder at WHS.

It was refreshing to work with the staff at WHS. Whether it was finding resources in the library or finding the best way to teach children an activity during a field trip, the staff was always there to help me achieve my goals as a student and encourage others through history. I do not think that I could have been given a better opportunity than interning at Windsor Historical Society. I learned techniques to get children engaged in the activities, how to conduct better research, and work with a team. This internship has reaffirmed my love of history and my yearning to learn more about our state's history. I only hope that I have helped the Society learn more about the women of Windsor.



Theresa Brennan

Upcoming Events at Windsor Historical Society

All programs are held at 96 Palisado Avenue (Rt. 159), Windsor, CT, unless stated otherwise.
For more information, call 860/688-3813, see <http://windsorhistoricalsociety.org> or visit our Facebook page.
Programs fees offset program costs, but we turn nobody away for lack of funds.

Saturday, June 5 10 a.m. - noon
HISTORIC WINDSOR BIKE TOUR
Our Society Educator, Julia Baldini, will lead you on a ten-mile bike tour through the Historic District and Windsor Center. **Reservations required** by June 4.
COST: \$6/adults; \$5/seniors and students; \$4/Society members.

Tuesday, June 8 7 p.m. - 9 p.m.
VISIONS OF WINDSOR PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST
Your vote is needed for the best five-minute PowerPoint show of Windsor landscapes, buildings, wildlife, and people by local photographers. First prize, \$150; second prize, \$100; and third prize, \$50. Photographers **need to register** with the Society by June 1. COST: \$6/adults; \$5/seniors and students; \$4/Society members.

Tuesday, June 15 7 p.m. - 8 p.m.
ANNUAL MEETING AND LEN HELLERMAN SLIDE SHOW
Following our short annual meeting, watch Len's 45-minute show of Windsor's back woods, byways, and well-traveled paths from the comfort of your chair.
COST: \$6/adults; \$5/seniors & students; Society members, free.

Saturday, July 10 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.
WINDSOR GARDEN GETAWAY
Enjoy the beauty of some of Windsor's private gardens. Tickets and maps available at the Society and from Windsor Garden Club members.
COST: \$10 in advance; \$15 day of event.

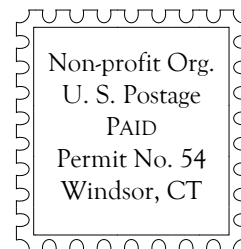
Every Tuesdays in July 7 p.m. - 9 p.m.
THIRD ANNUAL GENEALOGY SERIES
Learn the basics about conducting genealogical research and then delve into using online resources, placing your heritage in historical perspective, and more. Our library will open at 6 p.m. for program attendees.
COST: \$15/person or \$50/series.

Saturday, September 11 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
PATRIOTS' DAY HOUSE TOUR
Enjoy a selection of Windsor homes. Costumed members of the Windsor Jesters theater group will greet you at each property and tell you a little about the times in which the house was built.
COST: \$20 in advance; \$25 day of tour.



**Windsor
Historical Society**

96 Palisado Avenue, Windsor, Connecticut 06095



Grounds Volunteers: Bill Newport, Bruce Keeler, Dave Gillette, Walt Stefanow, and Ruth Fahrbach.

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