

“The Crier” – September 2023

Newsletter of the [Waterford Historical Society, Inc.](http://www.waterfordhistoricalsociety.com)

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What a spring and summer we've had!

From “Art In Waterford” at the O’Neill, hosting elementary school field trips, presenting “Second Saturdays” and family-friendly programs on Jordan Green, these events have brought a greater awareness of and interest in the Waterford Historical Society, Inc. Our small, hard-working band of members are pleased to share news of this bustling season and invite more members to join the fun!

Here's what's been happening

“Second Saturdays” featuring the Dirty Blue Shirts living historians and other programs brought dozens of enthusiastic, including many first-time, visitors to Jordan Green. These events, supported in part by grants from the Connecticut Humanities and the Town of Waterford, were free, family-friendly, open to the public and included guided tours of the Society’s historic buildings. Donations to the Waterford Historical Society have been a bit more generous of late, demonstrating growing public appreciation for our wholesome, hometown activities like the following:



May 2 and 3: Field Trips for 3rd and 5th Grade Students Collaborating with the Waterford Public Schools, Society members and the Dirty Blue Shirts presented field trips to Jordan Green. For three hours, students rotated among eight locations to learn historic information: hearing about the first town library, using herbs from the garden, reading 19th century books, cooking over a fireplace, working at the blacksmith forge, harvesting and preserving food for the winter, playing old-fashioned games and

using various farm tools. The Society received thank-you notes from Great Neck School fifth-graders showing their excitement and appreciation. The Waterford schools superintendent has asked us to plan field trips for our Town’s 3d and 5th graders every spring hereafter . . . AND they will fund these educational trips!

May 15: “Owls Among Us” drew an enthusiastic crowd of 50+ outside Stacy Barn to meet “Clyde” the barred owl while Waterford resident Gwen Rice of Freedom First Wildlife Rehab, an owl and raptor rehabilitator, shared information about owls found in our local area and answered questions.





May 25-29: “Art In Waterford” at the O’Neill Theater Center

featured famous Waterford residents Rufus and Margot Rose and their marionettes. Over five days, from the exciting opening reception to the last ticket drawing on Monday afternoon, a steady stream of folks strolled the impressive historic theater grounds, took in the juried contemporary art exhibit, delighted in seeing the marvelous Rose marionettes “up close” and took home a commemorative booklet chronicling the history of the Roses’ mastery of their craft. Sales of artwork, hand-forged items from the blacksmith shop and tickets to win paintings raised funds to complement the many donations made to the Society, making it our 5th and most successful Art In Waterford event!

June 10: A petting zoo with calves and baby goats from the non-profit women-owned rescue organization Thames Crest Farm drew lots of youngsters and parents - a reminder of the town’s vibrant agricultural past.

July 8: “1802: Celebrating an Independent Waterford” recreated an Independence Day for Connecticut’s 109th town, with homemade ice cream and games of shuttlecock.

August 5: “Summer at Sea: Waterford’s Maritime History” Living historians pictured at left



fascinated youngsters young and old with rope-making, canvas stitchery, and sounds of sea chanteys. A visiting blacksmith from Mystic Seaport displayed a harpoon that he had fashioned like those once used in whaling.

August 12: The Society participated in the **Waterford Town Parade** celebration, providing craft observation, blacksmith shop demonstrations, and historic building tours.

September 9: For the second year, “**Harvest to Hearth: Autumn in 1850s Waterford.**” Visitors experiences home cooking over the Beebe-Phillips hearth, toured the 1740’s schoolhouse, ambled up the hill to watch the blacksmiths at the forge, and went to Stacy Barn to give the antique

apple cider press a crank and enjoy fresh apple cider from Clyde’s Cider Mill.

Forging ahead, restoration and repairs, toppling apple trees, an unexpected gift, and a new fall/winter project!

Ralph Madara Blacksmith Shop popular, and always humming

The Ralph Madara Blacksmith Shop is open nearly every Saturday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., rain or shine, and welcomes observers. A core cadre of talented, experienced smiths also provides instruction and demonstrations for those aspiring to the craft. The blacksmiths produce numerous hand-forged steel items for sale at Society events and even do custom orders. Come see them at work!

Beebe-Phillips House and Jordan Schoolhouse restoration and repairs

In keeping with the Society's mission to protect, preserve and serve as caretakers of its properties, it enlisted the expertise of local historic restoration carpenter Paul McMasters to work on the Beebe-Phillips House. An attic vent window damaged in a windstorm was restored, exterior corner boards replaced, exterior window sashes repainted and reglazed, and the entrance stepstones were leveled to shed water away from the structure. The work was made possible thanks to a member's generous contribution to the Society. This fall, painting and repairs by McMasters to the Jordan Schoolhouse will also be accomplished with this funding. Please come by for a stroll on Jordan Green and view this good work being done to keep our properties in fine condition for years to come.

Heritage apple trees topple

A violent windstorm knocked down two heritage apple trees in the Celeste J. LeMare orchard behind Beebe-Phillips House this summer, causing one tree to lean precariously against the structure. Unfortunately, removal of the damaged trees was necessary and thanks are extended to the Town of Waterford's arborist for tending to the tragedy. Further pruning of the remaining precious trees will take place this fall to keep them healthy, and we hope, producing abundant fruit in the future.

The gift of a renowned local artist's oil painting



An oil painting, "The Violin and the Shell," was donated this summer to the Waterford Historical Society by a Massachusetts woman. This 2004 work by Waterford artist Nelson H. White, valued at \$16,000, now hangs in the Town's First Selectman's office, providing it with a safe and insured environment. Nelson White has shown his work in numerous galleries across the globe since the 1950s, from the United States to Italy and Russia in private and public collections and several museums. The

Society's strong relationship with the White family of artists makes this a very special gift!

The Waterford Historical Society's endowment grows

This fall, our President Kristen Widham will be sending all members a harvest letter in which she will describe how our Ways & Means Committee is meeting its financial obligations in improved ways. Once our endowment with the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut reaches \$200,000, our annual fixed costs (insurance, utilities, security system) can be met by the endowment's investments.

Double your dues or your donation!

Members, do you have an account with Charter Oak Federal Credit Union? Do you wish to pay your Waterford Historical Society 2023-2024 dues or make a donation to the Society? You can double them!

Charter Oak Federal Credit Union's annual Matching Gifts Program is once again under way through November 22, 2023. COFCU matches donations of \$25 or more -- up to \$500 -- from their member account holders like you to local nonprofit organizations like the Waterford Historical Society, Inc.

Imagine, a gift of \$25 to the Society would become \$50; \$100 to the Society becomes \$200, and becomes \$1000 with a \$500 donation! They will match the qualified charitable donation you make to the Society by Wednesday, November 22, 2023 (or until their 2023 Matching Gifts funding limit is met.)

This has been a wonderful source of funds for the Society in the past and a great motivator for our members who have a COFCU account: they pay their annual dues or make a donation to the Society and have that very same amount donated to us by Charter Oak. Even if you have already paid your dues to the Society, you can fill out their form and send it in to us now. We'll take care of the rest!

Here's the link to COFCU for guidelines and the necessary form:

<https://charteroak.org/community-giving/matching-gifts-program/>
<https://charteroak.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Guidelines-and-Form-2023.pdf>

And you can find the Waterford Historical Society Membership 2023-2024 Form here:

<https://www.waterfordcthistoricalsociety.org/membership-.html>

Thank you for your generosity and continued commitment to the Waterford Historical Society!

Slate of officers for 2023-2024; one slot open

At a special meeting on June 29, a members' quorum approved the slate of officers for 2023-2024: President, Kristen Widham; 1st Vice President, Holly Camerota; 2nd Vice President, Philip Medbery; Treasurer, Jeffrey Shallow; Assistant Treasurer, Mary Ann Richard; Corresponding Secretary, Debra Walters. Vacant: Recording Secretary.

We're still hoping that a few members will sign on as Recording Secretary (ies) and alternate to record the minutes at monthly meetings in September and October. Can you help? Only an hour or so of your time each month! Please write "yes" to waterfordcthistoricalsociety@gmail.com.

Collections Assessment Project: Members Meeting September 14

The next members meeting will be held in Stacy Barn, second level, on Thursday, September 14, beginning at 5:30 p.m. with social time; business meeting begins at 6 p.m. Do you like antiques? We received a Collections Assessment Grant from CT Humanities that resulted in a thorough report with instructions on how to catalog our extensive collections, something that has never been done before! We're looking for a few members to donate couple of hours a month to help with this fall/winter project. Can you help? RSVP waterfordcthistoricalsociety@gmail.com

MEMBERS MEETING, Thursday, September 14, 5:30-7 p.m., Stacy Barn