

THE CRIER



OF THE WATERFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC., BOX 117 WATERFORD, CONNECTICUT 06385

Winter, 2024

Holly Anderson Camerota, Editor



February 22 Members' Meeting and Talk: "Researching Great Neck's pre-Civil War Slaves" Please join us at the Waterford Public Library meeting room for the 6 p.m. Members' Meeting, followed by 6:30 social time, then a 7 p.m. talk by John Morgan, self-described Archivist/Historian/"Their-storyan," cemetery secretary and caretaker of West Neck Cemetery on Great Neck Road in Waterford. John has been conducting a decade-long research project into the graves of two freed slaves there. He'll share his findings as he poses the question: "What did Mary Harkness's grandmother have to do with these mysterious freed slaves in the West Neck Cemetery?" The talk is free and open to the public.

Charles Sedell, 69, lead blacksmith

The Waterford Historical Society mourns the loss of Charles "Charlie" Sedell, former head blacksmith extraordinaire, who passed away on January 27, 2024 from ALS. Charlie was a guiding light and the fire behind the resurgence and operation of the Ralph Madara Blacksmith Shop, teaching numerous apprentices the art of smithing. Charlie produced beautiful hand-forged items, many sold to raise funds for the Society. A master of his craft, he also did custom work, and traveled to local venues with his portable forge to demonstrate his art. Charlie designed the handsome wrought-iron Society sign that stands proudly on Jordan Green, a testament to his skill and his dedication. As was his way, he unselfishly instructed and included others in its construction, thereby leaving a legacy not only for himself, but for them. His family asks that donations in Charlie's memory be made to the Waterford Historical Society. Checks may be mailed to Waterford Historical Society, Inc., Box 117, Waterford, CT 06385, or made at the website: waterfordcthistoricalsociety.org.



The Dirty Blue Shirts and Second Saturdays return for 2024

Second Saturday events are being planned once again with the troupe of living historians, The Dirty Blue Shirts, bringing history to life on Jordan Green and in our historic buildings. We're pleased to announce that the Society will receive later this year a Town of Waterford Social Services Grant of \$3000 to support such programs.:

March, 2024 - no events scheduled

Thursday, April 11 - Monthly Members' Meeting - 6 p.m.

Thursday, May 9 - "Tending our Buildings" (the annual clean-up) 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Thursday, May 9 - Monthly Members' Meeting - Stacy Barn/Miner Education Center - 6 p.m.

Saturday, May 11 - "Second Saturday"- "Common Threads" with the Dirty Blue Shirts - 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

The Society's endowment grows with significant gifts

The Society recently received significant gifts from individuals and a foundation totaling \$55,000. Since the August 2022 creation of an endowment fund managed by the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut, members' and others' generous contributions brought the fund's current value to over \$90,000, taking us closer to our \$200,000 goal! Annual interest realized from the fund will help to cover the ever-increasing costs of insurance, utilities, security systems and maintenance required to operate and preserve the Society's four buildings: the Beebe-Phillips House, Stacy Barn/Miner Education Center, the 1740 Jordan Schoolhouse and the Ralph Madara Blacksmith Shop. Your donations of cash or securities will help us reach the final goal. Thank you! President Kristen Widham, can answer any questions you might have: artinwaterford@gmail.com

A poignant, poetic tribute to a prominent New London church

On January 22, 2024, the First Congregational Church of New London collapsed, a great loss to the city and the region's history. In response to the tragic event, The Day newspaper asked readers to share personal stories related to the 170-year old church. The Society's first vice president and publicity chair, Holly Anderson Camerota, shared that her mother, Mary M. Anderson, a writer and poet, who lived in Waterford, worked as a part-time secretary at the church in 1960, and two years later with a partner started New London Stenographic and Mailing Service, in the heart of New London at 154 State Street. Her mother produced a monthly newsletter, "Typed Topics," not only to promote the business, but as a means to share bits of New London history and to include original poetry she was inspired to write about the city she had come to love. You can view the video of the church's demolition compiled by The Day in which Holly narrates two of her mother's original poems, "In Olde New London" and "First Church of Christ, Congregational," in a poignant tribute. https://youtu.be/yhlJXxNF10s?si=x-WDb0fh17_oIgI1

The Collections Assessment Project is underway

The Society wishes to publicly recognize and thank Waterford High School junior and Troop 36 Boy Scout Henry Roenke V. for creating a computer-related database for us as his required capstone project, so that we can document a first-ever inventory of the Society's collections! Following procedures detailed in the professional curator's Collections Assessment Report realized through our grant from CT Humanities, Roenke sat in the Jordan Schoolhouse with Deb Walters and Holly Camerota to photograph, then document the contents into the database. He also provided a tutorial and presentation to members of the Board so that we may continue this work on our own. Thank you, Henry! Holly and Deb are spending time this winter going through Society files to find documentation of donations made since its founding in 1967. The database will be searchable, and allow cross-referencing by date, donor, and object. Would you help us when the warm weather comes to help us photograph and catalog items in the Stacy Barn and Beebe-Phillips House? If you can type, you can help! And you'll have fun discovering the origin and value of the many treasures and antiquities the Society has in its possession. Email waterfordcthistoricalsociety@gmail.com.

See you on February 22nd!

Happy Valentine's Day!

This forged heart was crafted by Ralph Madara, the Society's former lead blacksmith for whom the blacksmith shop is named.

