

# Historical Society of East Hartford

Newsletter, March 2024



PO Box 380166,  
East Hartford, CT, 06138-0166  
Office phone # 860-568-8342

## President's Message

Welcome to Springtime!

**The Historical Society is celebrating its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year having been founded in 1964.**

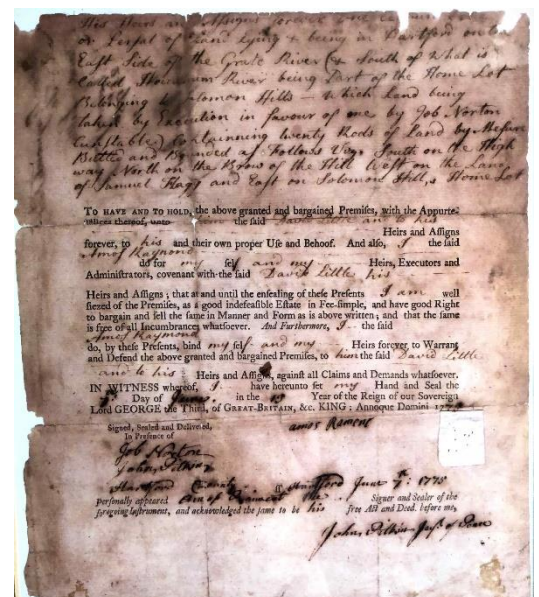
We are planning some form of birthday recognition for members later this year. It will be announced in our May newsletter. One of its biggest achievements over the past 60 years was the preservation and restoration of the Huguenot House at East Hartford's Martin Park. The museum opening for the 2024 season is on **Connecticut Open House Day, Saturday, June 8<sup>th</sup>.**

**On Sunday, June 2<sup>nd</sup> we will again participate in Connecticut Trails Day.**

In driving down Silver Lane the other day, I couldn't help noticing the demolition of Silver Lane Plaza. What had become a blemish to the town will hold new promise if current plans come to fulfillment. Many of us old timers still remember when the prime tenant was J. M. Fields. This discount department store had more affordable merchandise than the large department stores in downtown Hartford.

One of the most important functions of any historical society is the care and management of its collections. Our team who handles this is called "The Committee for the Recording and Organization of the Society Collections" as outlined in our By Laws. Sometimes they go by their acronym name, the CROC team. We have three long-time members; Jeff, Karen and Ruthie, who have devoted countless hours of their time upstairs at the Brewer House to making this happen. There is now a new volunteer member, Kathy, to help us out. Because space is so limited, having some guidance from an outside professional might be beneficial. We have applied for and been awarded a Collections and Assessment Grant that allows for a half day site visit for an assessment on our collection care and management.

I usually get at least one telephone call a week about potential donations to add to our collections. We can't accept everything and focus mostly on items with ties to East Hartford. Several months ago, a Risley family descendant from Maine wanted to donate an original deed for property first purchased here in the 1640s by Richard Risley, one of the founders of Hartford. The location was near Willow Brook in the Hockanum section of town. The deed was dated June 1775 from Amos Raymond to David Little and we were pleased to accept this gift. Some of our older Historical Society members may recall the David Little Tavern on Silver Lane that was disassembled due to a state road widening project. It was an historical 18<sup>th</sup> century structure worthy of preservation and stored at Public Works for over 30 years. But sadly, the structure was eventually discarded. Ownership of the Tavern changed hands several times and the Connecticut Science Museum had plans for it. But when the decision was made to build their Museum on the Hartford side riverbank instead of East Hartford, that ended interest. Not all attempts at preservation end successfully.



Craig Johnson, President

## Because March is Women's History Month

By Ruth S. Brown

The women's right to vote in March of 1912, was supported when a group of young women that boarded an East Hartford trolley wearing purple and green ribbons and carrying signs saying "Votes for Women".

In 1917 Mrs. Mary Christiansen Hart of Millwood Rd, in East Hartford was Hartford's First Women Gate Keeper. She is pictured in an article on the front page of the Hartford Courant, August 29, 1917 titled "Woman taking Man's Place is Ready for "scrap"; Mrs. Mary Hart "takes Office"; she Likes her job, but finds it "kinder slow" at Times".

In May of 1920 a large rally was held at St. John's Hall to support the call for a special session of the Connecticut legislature to ratify the National Suffrage Amendment.

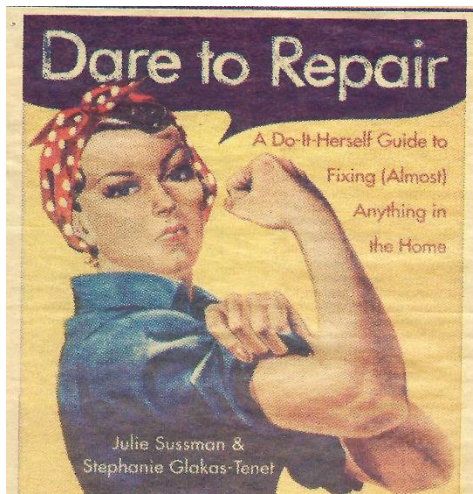
In that year the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment finally enabled women to votes.

Sarah Lahey; principal of the Union School, became the first woman in East Hartford to vote on other than school affairs. Also, school teacher Margaret O'Connell was the second. At that same election Louise R. Finn and Josephine Bryant became the first women to hold town offices, both serving on the school committee.

Prior to the 1920 presidential election. 350 of the 420 new voters that came forward were women.

A note to our faithful members who belong to the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR); did you know that our East Hartford lady Anna M. Olmsted was the first regent of the Martha Pitkin Wolcott Chapter, which was organized in 1898, and that she held that position for 21 years.

Anna is memorialized on the Olmsted obelisk at Center Cemetery



And as mentioned in the Journal Inquirer this past week –

March 21<sup>st</sup> was Rosie the Riveter Day!

This picture became known during the labor shortages prior to and during the WWII – jobs that were filled by WOMEN....

This particular photo I have copied here is one that means a lot to me personally as it was given to me from our former Town Historian: Doris Sussman. Doris was not only one of those ladies but the Mary Christiansen Hart, mentioned above, was a relative of hers. During a trying time when I had some difficulties via my husband was in the hospital; and I had to handle doing some repairs on my own, she sent this to me with a very supportive letter. I since always had it hung in my office as a reminder to keep going!

**Reminder that June 8<sup>th</sup> is OPEN HOUSE DAY for historical buildings around the state.**

**We need more volunteers to help support our openings for the summer schedule.  
Our Treasurer has relocated to another state so if we are also need to fill that position.**

Besides the Brewer House (which open year-round)  
We will be adding the Martin Park buildings to our schedule.

- 1) We need help to get the properties cleaned up
- 2) We need “hosts” to be available to oversee tours and visitors to the site for the Huguenot House and the Blacksmith Shop – presently the School House is still waiting for repairs.

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The Selden Brewer House, located at 167 Main Street, East Hartford, invites you to have a free tour of this lovely home.

Tours are every Saturday, from 10:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M.

The house is on the National Registry of Historic Sites, and is well worth a visit. Come see the simple elegance of a prominent 19th and 20th century East Hartford family. Check for the OPEN flag upon your arrival, and come on in.

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We appreciate your support through your membership dues!

As prices rise, we have decided to keep our dues low!

Membership Dues for the year- Sept 1-Aug 31 2024.

**You can pay in person any Saturday from 10-1 at the Brewer House, 165 Main Street.**

Or mail your check to:

**Historical Society of East Hartford**

**PO Box 380166,**

**East Hartford, CT, 06138-0166**

**Please include the following information with your membership check:**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ TOWN \_\_\_\_\_

STATE \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

For Newsletter mailing:

Can we send by email? Y \_\_\_ N \_\_\_

or if you do not have email we will send a hard copy - Postal Delivery Y \_\_\_ N \_\_\_

Membership annual dues are as follows please circle the one you choose:

\$20 Individual      \$10 Student      \$50 Patrons      \$25 Family/one address      \$250 Lifetime member

AMT ENCLOSED: \_\_\_\_\_