

# Historical Society of East Hartford

Newsletter, January 2025



PO Box 380166,  
East Hartford, CT, 06138-

## President's Message

Happy New Year 2025 to all Historical Society members and their families!

During the Town Holiday Fest in December, we once again welcomed visitors to the Selden Brewer House, and were very pleased with the good attendance. Director Alan Brewer did his usual visitor tours focusing on the history and the generations of his ancestors who lived in the house at its original site on High Street. Other board members were on board to visit and supply many tasty goodies to the table.

I want to thank our dedicated volunteers, especially Director Sue Kies who organized this event and the Autumn Tea that was held in November; another positive event that helped us gain new members.

**It has taken a long time, but the Town-owned 1821 Goodwin Schoolhouse in Martin Park has a new roof.**



The Historical Society is grateful to Steve Bielitz of Glastonbury Restoration, LLC and to Jessica Carrero, the Operations Project Manager at the Mayor's office who were successful in working out the details to finally make it happen.

Looking ahead to the new year, we plan to sponsor some more programs and host guest speakers. The programs will be announced in the newsletter, on our Facebook page and by e-mail.

Vice President and Program Chair Ruthie Brown organized a very interesting program that was offered on November 21<sup>st</sup> at the Raymond Library entitled "Before Salem" by author Richard S. Ross. It was very well attended, and it covered Connecticut's 17<sup>th</sup> century witch persecutions. More interesting programs of historical interest will be announced during the year.

*Craig Johnson, President*

Like Craig said we are looking forward to a new year with more programs and events. Lectures on various local historical topics and families, a joint exhibit venture with the local library and hopefully other organizations within the town, and a White Elephant Sale. -

No, we will not be selling any Elephants but in the day that was term used to share or sell off used items, to make space for "other" things in the homestead. These items are not of historical provenance as much as gifts donated to the Historical Society over the years to help raise Funds.

**AND THAT WE SHALL DO THIS SPRING**

*Ruthie Shapleigh-Brown, Vice President*

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**Our History is Vanishing .. from the EH Gazette Sept. 1970**

*From Ruthie -I found this article in one of the Restoration for the Huguenot House binders, and it made me wonder how much has changed since. Where does East Hartford stand presently with protecting its history. (from article)*

It starts out with **“There isn’t a thing left in this town! All our historical buildings are vanishing!”** “...how many historical structures are left? ....” can you name more than one?”

“In 1968 the then 200-year-old house was donated to the historical society and moved to Martin Park as an effort to admire and respect our history. (*The Huguenot House is now well over 200 years Old.*)

The East Hartford Historical Society has worked since then to raise funding for the move, restoration, and upkeep of the house interior. The town is responsible for the exterior upkeep, and yes being historical it is not a simple job.”

Now in 2025 it is time once again to raise awareness and help procure funds to get the buildings at Martin Park repaired and protected!

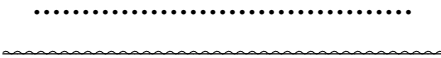


Here is a July 1971 Letter – regarding donations to Huguenot House Fund Raiser request: I found it interesting as it mentions family connections. Many supporters of that time gave with earnest to save what appears now to be the oldest house still existent in East Hartford.

From Mrs. Hugh C. – Irene Merriman Pullen

My sisters Charlotte M. Robertson who lives in South Glastonbury and Helen M. Catlett, who lives in The Highlands in East Hartford are very pleased with restoration of the Huguenot House.

Parents Charles & Lizzie Ranney Merriman were both born in East Hartford.  
Mother went to school in the House and I think her teacher was a Miss Loomis.  
Father at age 21 was Post Master in East Hartford and deeply involved in the community.  
Perhaps the Wm Bemont who built the house might have been one of our ancestors as my grandfather was Joseph Merriman and he had three wives. Clara, Maud, and Gertrude Bemont  
1 -& 2 were Beaumont sisters - 3 was a cousin of theirs also named Bemont.  
It appears that different families chose to change the spelling to suit themselves.



**From a 1930's newspaper:**

*Thinking of getting an electric car*---- In 1895 East Hartford had the only horse car remaining in operation in the area. In 1893 the trees along the center of Burnside Avenue were cut down to make way for trolley tracks. Horses proved impractical and electricity took over completely.  
By 1908 the total of 428 electric cars had passed through Church Corners daily.

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The Historical Society of East Hartford would like to start the new year off by acknowledging our new members. Below is listed those who have recently joined the Society, and we are very grateful for your added support and interest. This support means a lot to us as it is through your support that we can preserve our town's history.

**Welcome Aboard!**

Timothy & Ana Alstrum  
Lou & Janice Bongiovanni  
Helene Brown & Taryn Wilcox  
Dorothy Carey  
Kathy Cattanach  
Henry & Elaine Genga

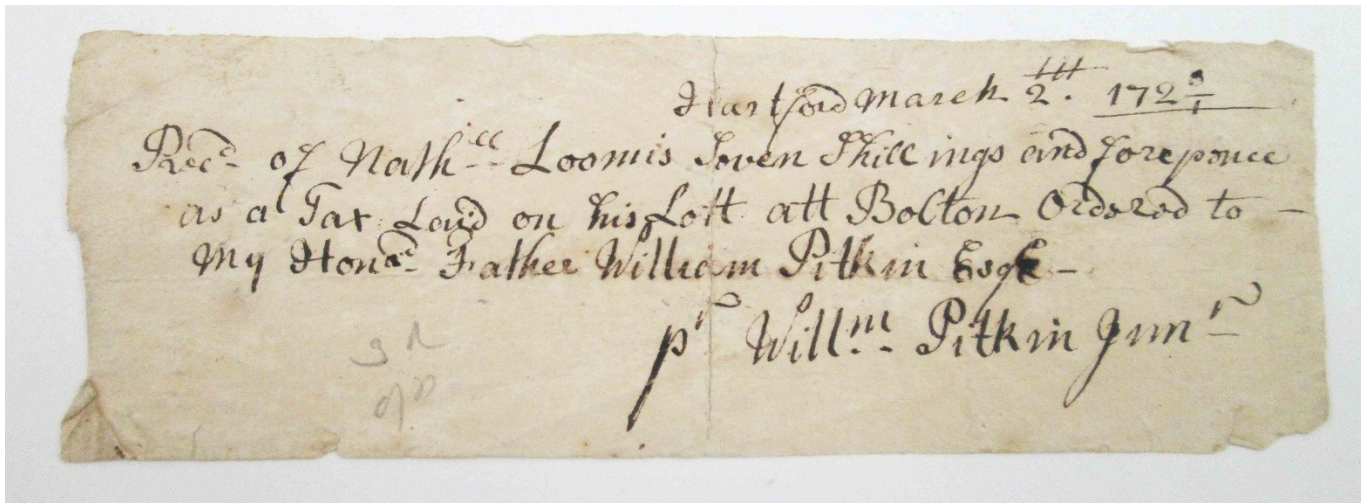
Sandra T. Gingras  
S "Lady" K. Diann Grindle  
Michael MacDonald  
Jean M. McAllister  
Barbara Ryan  
Carrie E. Vibert

**Thank you all of you for your recent memberships and renewals  
and a very Happy New Year to everyone!!**

Gaining new memberships is very important to any non- profit organization.  
If anyone would like to join our Historical Society of East Hartford the form is posted on the last page of this newsletter. Please consider becoming a member and helping us remain the active organization we have been since 1964. Renewals of current memberships will begin again as of September 1, 2025.  
Judy Hillmann, Membership Chairman  
Historical Society of East Hartford







Here is a Winter puzzle for you... Just what does this 1720/1 receipt SAY?

What exactly is William Pitkin Junior paying for?

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A bit from a 1940 Hartford Courant Magazine via a lengthy article titled  
“When the French Money Showered East Hartford”

“Today Silver Lane is a modern throughfare lined with middle class homes. Residents hear the drone of airplanes being tested in the nearby Pratt and Whitney plant. But the meadows where the troops camped are still there and, not much changed after all these years. (*compared to now ?*) As mentioned above, the Pitkin house, where Rochambeau stayed, and the Forbes home, where the silver was stored before the pay-off, are still standing. (*not there anymore*) Descendants of some of the families who lived there at the time of the French encampment still reside on the lane. Mrs. Fred Smith of 241 Silver Lane, formerly Miss Grace Roberts, is the great-great-granddaughter of George Roberts who helped quarter the French officers. Not long ago, Mrs. Smith acquired the old Pitkin property from her father, William Roberts, who lives on Main Street, just around the corner of the Lane. She has plans for restoring the place in keeping with its romantic history. Mrs. Smith is also related to the Pitkin family who played host to Rochambeau.”

*There more of course also about the Warren House that once was the old Forbes House.*

“Mrs. Forbes daughter, Betty Forbes and Beverly Westbrook, whose mother was Ella Warren, unveiled the plaque in honor of the encampment in 1928. They were truly representative of the families who played host to the army from France. This plaque, set in a boulder surrounded by evergreen trees, stands just off the road in the grass, at the corner of Silver Lane and Lawrence Streets. “

From East Hartford Historical Society collections. R.S. Brown

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We appreciate your support through your membership dues! As prices rise, we have decided to keep our dues low! Membership renewals for the upcoming year are now through Sept.1, 2025

**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, 860-568-8342  
East Hartford, CT, 06138-0166**

Any questions or inquiring to make a visit to research some information? - call us at 860-568-8342. This is the number at the Brewer House office– please leave a message and someone will get back to you.

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

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

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

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

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

**For Newsletter mailing- which is Jan. March, May, July, Sept. Nov. :**

Can we send by email? Y\_\_\_N\_\_\_ or if you do not have email Postal Delivery Hard Copy 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: \_\_\_\_\_