

Historical Society of East Hartford

Newsletter, January 2024

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President's Message

I want to wish a Happy New Year 2024 to all Historical Society members and their families. I am hoping that everyone had a wonderful Holiday Season. On December 4th we once again hosted another Holiday Fest social at the Selden Brewer House. I want to personally thank our dedicated volunteers who helped organize this event and who worked so diligently to put up the beautiful holiday decorations. It was very well attended. Also at the Brewer House, the Autumn Tea event we had in November was a success.

During the Winter season we do not hold that many events due to possible inclement weather, the cold and early darkness. We want to remind our members that the Brewer House is usually open on Saturday mornings between 10am and 1pm. If you have friends or visiting family from out-of-town who have an appreciation for historical buildings, please stop by and visit. At the Martin Park site where our museum buildings are located, all is quiet. The Town has installed a new barrier gate and fence to close off the entrance to the back of the park for the off season. The small parking lot opposite the Huguenot House is still open. I know it has taken a long time, but for the 1821 Goodwin Schoolhouse, the contract has been approved by the town and the roof replacement should be completed later this Winter season. So, in June when we reopen our museum again, tours should be available at all three buildings.

Looking ahead to the Spring, we want to again host guest speakers who offer interesting programs as we once did at the Raymond Library and the Brewer House. Instead of scheduling programs during evening hours after historical society meetings, we are looking at using weekend afternoons for programs and Wednesday afternoons for our monthly meetings. The programs will be announced in the newsletter, on our Facebook page and on our website whenever it is updated and working again.

I would also like to mention that our long-time board member Ruthie Brown was honored by the Ruth Wyllys Chapter of the DAR in November. Ruthie was presented their National Historic Preservation medal which she is very proud of, for her work over the years of historic cemetery preservation. Ruthie was very pleased to see DAR members (and HSEH members) Karen Johnson and Sue Kies also at the tea to support her.

Craig Johnson, President

We are looking for a member to help with updating our website page.

If interested please send an email to Steve at micomiconal605@yahoo.com
or call him at 860-528-4989...

OR stop by the Brewer House on Tuesday or Saturday mornings between 10 A.M. to 1:00 P.M.

We are always in need of volunteers and members to lend us a hand with making
our ideas come to life.

We are also still trying to establish a junior chapter of the HSEH at East Hartford High School,
Stay well and prosper; Steven Strange, Vice-president

We welcome any thoughts or ideas from the membership on how we might increase our support throughout the town.

Connections to the upcoming 250th Revolutionary era celebration....

Captain Stephen Buckland whose large family gave its name to the area now best known as Buckland Hills in now Manchester and South Windsor. He and 5 brothers all went to fight for their home. He left the Artillery and became the captain of a privateer that on April 2, 1782 was captured by the British brig, **Perseverance**. He and his crew were placed in the British prison ship, **Jersey**.

Does anyone out there recognize these people or this house?

I would say that the 2 people standing are brother and sister, and assume that the lady sitting is the gentleman's wife.

If you do have any information, please do contact us as we not have information on these pictures. This spring Ruthie will be sorting through a box of donated old photographs, but she has no idea of the history behind many of them.

If you would like to help or make an appointment to look them over, please do contact us.



From Alan Brewer:

This chair has been in the Brewer Family for 163 years, 75 of those years in my immediate family.

The Historical Society of East Hartford just had it re-upholstered (*thank you Custom Shop of Glastonbury*) is back in the Selden Brewer House where it originated from. Also, the foot stool that goes with the chair was re-upholstered by my wife Linda a few years ago is with it. **Come check it out and the rest of the Selden Brewer House on Saturdays 10am-1pm."**



Back in Time – Old Burnside Avenue

The street know today as Burnside Avenue was officially laid out as early as 1722, the Burnside district has encompassed an entire area of that town. The district was originally called Scotland, having derived its name form the large influx of Scottish immigrants who settled the area. The Scotland district, which describes the northeast section of town, was known for its paper mills, the first of which dates to 1639 and includes the Hockanum River in the vicinity of Forbes Street.

Burnside Avenue was originally called Bidwell Lane, named for the Bidwell family who first owned the land. John Bidwell, one of the earliest ancestors, owned and operated a tan yard in Hartford. The Bidwell's were not the only people to work in the paper mills and, as newcomers settled the area, they, too, joined in the enterprise.

Among them were the Goodwins, Forbes and Hammers.

Around 1860, the Scotland area changed its name to Burnside so as not to confuse itself with another town in Connecticut with the same name. Burn, the Scottish word for river, provided the basis for the new name.

Since the street's incorporation, many buildings have been torn down and replaced with newer structures.

One such example is the Bigelow House, (torn down in 1970), and named for William Bigelow, a prominent businessman who owned a considerable amount of land in the area. The house once stood on the southside of Burnside Avenue, on the corner of Main Street, next to where St. John's Episcopal Church is now.

Tobacco was a later enterprise of the Burnside areas. During the early part of the twentieth century, William Huntting operated a tobacco farm on the northside of Burnside Avenue, close to Main Street.

Tobacco, however, was particularly prone to fire and, in 1906, Huntting's tobacco warehouse burned, costing a total of \$175,000 in damages. In 1920, Huntting's warehouse was again besieged by fire, this time causing \$1,000,000 worth of damage.

As one looks at Burnside Avenue today, they can hardly imagine that once trolley tracks lined the middle of the street. In 1911, Burnside Avenue had to be widened to accommodate the trolley cars. Many of the residents responded to this gesture with opposition because the trees lining the street would have to be removed. They also resented the increase in automobile traffic which the wider street would promote.

The trolley cars were a major source of transportation for at least half a century. They were crucial in carrying passengers from East Hartford to Manchester, and in carrying freight to the mills. Gradually however, the automobile became a more popular industrial and farm necessity.

Finally, the trolley cars reached a stage where they were more of an impediment to automobile traffic than an asset to transportation and, by the late 1950's, when the street was repaved, the tracks were removed, covering the last remnants of that era.

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: _____