

WHS newsletter

WESTPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Keeping Westport's History Alive

May, 2004

“Westport by the Sea” - Making a Big Splash!



At ocean resorts where the water was shallow, modest women undressed in little houses on wheels which were then drawn out into deep water by horses and hauled back to shore when the bathing was finished.

Summer is on its way and about to make a big splash at the Westport Historical Society with the opening

of its new exhibition: *Westport by the Sea*. The show opens on cue on Memorial Day, Monday, May 31 - right after Westport's annual parade and program on Veterans Green.

Westport by the Sea highlights the town's seaside treasures - Longshore Country Club, Compo Beach, Old Mill Beach and Compo Cove, Sherwood Island State Park, Burying Hill Park and Beachside Avenue.

Photographs and Paintings

Curated by town historian, Allen Raymond, the exhibit features the history of each exquisite site, complemented by old photographs from the WHS archives. Paintings, including one of *Allen's Clam House* by Hardie Gramatky, are on loan from the Westport Schools Permanent Art

Collection. Additional artworks by local artists Al Willmott, Howard Munce, Robert Lambdin, Ward Brackett and more will be on view.

Since his arrival in Westport in 1973, famed photographer Larry Silver has documented Westport's changing beach scene. Selections from his vast black and white collection will be a part of this exhibit. Additionally, Peter Barlow's study of Bell Light #24 off Cockenoe Island and a selection of Andrea Maritzer Fine's seasonal beach scenes will be included.

Beachwear, Findings from Under the Sand, and Sea Sounds

A seaside exhibit must include a selection of beachwear, and *Westport by the Sea* will feature swimming costumes and summer clothing from the Society's Betty Sheffer Costume Collection, as well as memorabilia from the Adirondack-style log chalets originally built at Longshore by Col. Patrick Powers in 1930.

Appealing especially to children will be the exhibit of lost items discovered sweeping the beach with a metal detector. Visitors who close their eyes will think they might be at the shore as

—continued on Page 2

What's Inside:

Meet Denise Torv	P. 2
Youth Will Be Served	P. 4
Kids and Family Fun	P. 5
Longshore Club Park	P. 6
Mollie Donovan Honored	P. 7
Works by Enid Munroe	P. 7
The “Remarkable” Man at WHS ...	P. 8

ANNUAL HIDDEN GARDEN TOUR

The Best Ever!
~ Page 3 ~

The expanded GARDEN MARKET

~ Page 7 ~

TICKET INFORMATION

~ Page 8 ~



whs Newsletter

President **Executive Director**
Joni Andrews *Denise Torv*

Editor: **Associate Director**
Carol Young *Katie Otey*

Editorial Committee:
Mollie Donovan, Andrea Maritzer
Fine, Woody Klein, Carol Randel,
Pat McCormack, Dan Woog

Contributing Artists:
Kassie Foss, Howard Munce

Contributing Photographers:
Skip Crane, Andrea Maritzer
Fine, Wally Woods, Carol Young

Contributing Writers:
Mollie Donovan, Linda Adelman
Woody Klein, Barbara Raymond
Sarah Shaw, Dan Woog

Graphic Design:
Imagination Unlimited

“Westport By The Sea”

—continued

they hear those sounds heard so often down by the water - a special work of WHS member Martin West, producer of the documentary *A Gathering of Glory!*

A Family Event

"Serving lemonade and cookies following the Town's Memorial Day Parade has been a Society tradition since 1987, but this year we plan to extend this weekend's fun into the summer months," said Denise Torv, WHS Executive Director. "Family events such as an ice cream social, with hot dogs and popcorn, or a beach party- maybe even a Barbershop Quartet to welcome visitors to the exhibit are some of the treats we have in store."

**Stay tuned —
 It's Summer in
 Westport!**



Denise Torv as our new Executive Director. Denise has an MA in history and 20 years experience in print and radio journalism and community relations for non-profit cultural and educational institutions. She has

Message from the President

A Warm Welcome to Denise Torv

The Executive Committee is delighted to announce the selection of

extensive experience working with non-profits and volunteers, serving as Executive Director of First Night since 2001. Denise worked for many years with national museums in Sydney, Australia, creating museums within historic buildings. Denise's talents and enthusiasm are a natural fit for our program needs, and we are most pleased to welcome her to the Westport Historical Society.

—*Joni Andrews*

Message from the Executive Director

When you think of the Westport Historical Society, think treasures.

When you hear the words “historical society” what comes to mind? An old building? Old artifacts in dusty exhibition areas? History that never seems to venture beyond the last two centuries? If you’ve visited the Westport Historical Society lately, you’ll know that we are none of the above – except for the old building, one of our town’s most significant landmarks.

When you think of the Westport Historical Society, think treasures. Because that is what we have right in the heart of downtown Westport. The WHS is the guardian of thousands of items that were held in the hands or worn on the bodies of, or worked with or played with by men, women and children over the past 200 years. These treasures speak to the way people lived, worked, learned and enjoyed themselves. They are a touchstone to the heritage of the area

we call “home.” Right now, the Victorian Dining



Room is in the process of coming to life to complement the Victorian Parlor, the Victorian Kitchen and the Victorian Bedroom. Stop by, take in the scene and visit the Society’s Remarkable Book and Gift Shop. . . and bring home a treasure of your own.

Keep your eyes open for *Westport by the Sea*, our Summer Exhibition that will certainly enhance the season in Westport this year. Don’t miss it and don’t miss our many other activities and programs. There are new surprises for you at your Westport Historical Society.

—*Denise Torv*

**The Westport Historical Society
 would like to thank the following sponsors of the
 2004 Annual Hidden Garden Tour: People’s Wealth
 Management & Trust and Izzo & Sons Country Gardens.**

WHS Presents the Annual Hidden Garden Tour and Garden Market

by Linda Adelman and Sarah Shaw



The owners of five spectacular gardens will graciously open their properties to the public as the WHS hosts its 13th Annual Hidden Garden Tour.

On Sunday, June 6, this year's inviting gardens, cloistered away from the beaten path, will offer gardeners new ideas and inspiration, and casual observers will have a relaxing day enjoying the beauty of these impressive properties.

Exquisite Tapestry

The first garden, Exquisite Tapestry, offers a rare opportunity to visit the park-like grounds of a beautiful rambling Connecticut home where the artist/owner has expressed her creativity for over 40 years. Mature flowering shrubs frame a vignette of an outstanding collection of specimen conifers, whose texture and color provide winter interest and perfectly juxtapose the serenity of a pond surrounded by sweeping lawns. Over a dozen cultivars of Japanese maple trees are scattered throughout the property. Abundant perennials add colorful interest to the pool area, and a small knot garden establishes intimacy at the front entryway.

Flourishing Fantasies

A tiny parcel of land could not limit the vision and imagination of the individual who created this garden, which has been featured in *Home*

Magazine. Roses selected for color and fragrance, flowerbeds lined with antique bricks, garden ornaments, overflowing window boxes and containers, and ornamental flowering trees radiate charm wherever you look. Boxwood hedges, topiaries, perennials, and a raised bed of herbs spill beyond

boundaries, and with the collaborative enthusiasm of the neighbor next door, two small plots of land have become an intimate oasis of fantasy and beauty.

Shoreline Sublime

A softly curving driveway, under a canopy of exquisitely pruned mature trees, reflects the stately beauty and serenity of this distinguished estate. An entry garden brimming with roses, alliums, perennials, and shrubs invites attentive strolling. Evergreens provide the background for a quiet shade garden of ginger, hostas and ferns bordering a stone path that leads to a pool. Dramatic over-scaled pots of uniquely planted flowers frame the most breathtaking expansive views of Long Island Sound.

Yesterday Revealed

Next, you'll see a 130-year-old Victorian home, with three authentic barns gracing a portion of what was once the site of extensive farmland. Several themed gardens add to the historic ambiance through the use of heirloom peonies, old-fashioned hydrangeas, lilacs, forsythia, lamb's ear and ferns. Roses cascade in profusion along a fence surrounding the pool, and a

gazebo is bathed in wisteria and blackberries. Daffodils, iris, Montauk daisies, climbing hydrangea, a beautiful crabapple tree and ornamental grasses provide color throughout the season. A fenced vegetable garden elicits thoughts of days gone by.

Boundless Beauty

At our last garden, evergreens and mature rhododendrons offer glimpses of a classic colonial home, creating a sense of mystery and desire to know what lies beyond. Both owners of this historic property have expressed their passion in different natures. One tends a meandering garden abundantly planted with shade loving perennials that leads to a sunny opening, revealing a pool. The other's interest lies within a meticulous vegetable garden, tucked behind beautiful stone walls, offering a bountiful harvest of tomatoes, fresh herbs, squash and other vegetables. The view from a uniquely stepped patio leads beyond fruit trees, beyond the pool, barn and vegetable garden to a refreshing vista of open fields of grasses.

For Ticket Information, see Page 8.

The Garden Market

On the day of the tour, the grounds of WHS and Veterans Green will be transformed into a Garden Market where vendors and craftspeople will offer home and garden items for sale. In addition, many local businesses have generously donated impressive items for the Garden Raffle. Refreshments will be served, and box lunches will be available at the Garden Café.

See Page 7 for details.

Youth Will Be Served by Dan Woog

*If the WHS needs a new slogan, try this—
“It’s not your father’s Westport Historical Society.”*

Many of the Snuglis and strollers seen on Main Street are making their way to Avery Place. No, infants and toddlers aren’t enrolling as WHS members. But their parents are—and the youthful infusion blends well with the men and women who have served the organization for so long.

Jennings Trail

Pam Troy-Kopack’s story is typical. As president of the Westport Young Women’s League, she worked on our Jennings Trail project. When her own third-grade children took the tour, she saw their excitement at learning about Westport history, and “teaching” it to their parents.

“Jennings Trail is a neat introduction to Westport for kids, and the Historical Society is a great way for ‘transplants’ like me to learn about the town too,” the 13-year Westporter says. She now heads up the Jennings Trail program, and works with “a lot of wonderful people of all ages.”

Family “apples-and-trees”

Local artist Katherine Ross’s connection with the Society began when she painted the apples and leaves mural for



Illustration by Howard Munce

Don’t miss out on Scout badge opportunities at WHS—from Eagle Scouts to Brownies, we’ll help tailor a program to help earn credits toward Scout badges—and have a lot of fun along the way! Call 222-1424 for further information.

the Family Tree with Miggs Burroughs. “It’s important we all connect with our roots, no matter what our age,” she says. “I’d like to see even younger people get involved.”

House Renovations for Our Younger Neighbors

Hilary Stevens chaired the Holiday House Tour, serves on the executive committee and created the Old House School lectures. “A lot of people in their 30s have just bought houses here, and are fixing them up,” she says. “The Old House School brought them in. Hopefully as we do more for them, they’ll do more for us.”

Innovative High School Junior Board Members

One of our youngest members is Erin Bliss. As the daughter of a past president, Cheryl Bliss, she helped with the archives and costume department. That sparked a passion that brought her to the board, representing Staples High School. She is also co-chairman of costumes and textiles, and has created programs for younger children.

Erin points out the benefits of introducing young people to the WHS: “They get hands-on experience, and the Society gets a new point of view.”

That’s true of the new generation of Westporters who are discovering the Historical Society, of course. But Erin is already looking beyond them, to the next generation of members.

Westport author and Staples graduate Dan Woog is writing a history of Staples High School. It will be published next year.

NEW MEMBERS

January 2004

Fredi Bremond
Randy Henkels
Catherine Ryan
David B. Press

February 2004

Jon Boer
Rebecca Howe
Mrs. Richard Freeman
Rose DiMartino
Eleanor Dann
Sally Kranz
Gerald Held
Jacqueline Gordon
Gloria Moldow

March 2004

Mark Yurkin & Wendy Van Wie
Cheryl Moore
Mar William Jennings
Margaret Zellers
Amy Atamian

April 2004

Elaine Arnow
Stephen Jacques
Alice Lamberson
Ronald & Teresa Stephens
Denise Torv
Mr. & Mrs. Barry Blake



Special thanks to the Sloat family who opened their historic home (the Schlaet Estate) to the public and raised \$500 toward the WHS Youth Education Fund. Seen above are Sloat family volunteers (l-r): Chloe, Sea, Solomon and Micah.

KIDS AND FAMILY FUN AT WHS

SLC Preserving the Town Hall Heritage Tree Collection



Left photo l-r: Erin Bliss (Key Club volunteer), Lindsay Landan, Holly Landan, Austin Quinn and Alex Vornie.

Traditionally, middle schoolers in our Service Learning Club have decorated the "Heritage Tree" at Westport Town Hall. The Heritage Tree is adorned with one-of-a-kind ornaments made by Westport artists each of which conveys some aspect of our history or our culture.

This year's SLC members have gone one step further. They are repairing, photographing and cataloging the original ornaments - a first!

WANTED: SERVICE LEARNING CLUB LEADER

SLC middle schoolers meet once a week at WHS from 3:00 to 5:00 pm. on a weekday afternoon. Club activities can be anything related to the cultural and natural history of Westport, student advice on programs younger children would enjoy, or special requests from Andrea Maritzer Fine, Denise Torv or archivists. The students are eager to **learn** and to **serve**. Please call 222-1424 if you are willing to commit to this rewarding experience.

'Minds in Motion' at BMS



At "Minds in Motion" programs in March, second and third graders learned how settlers made use of our natural resources. On the covers of the books they took home, children created seashell collages reminiscent of the shell collage in the Wheeler House parlor. Hunter Mason (l) and Sage Murray (r) enjoy choosing their own shells.



Pam Troy-Kopack

We are very fortunate indeed to have Pam Troy-Kopack head up this year's May **Jennings Trail** program in which over 400 third graders participate. For more on Pam, see column one of "Youth Will Be Served" on Page 4.

Designing Architectural Façades



Third grade Brownies (Troop #589 - Coleytown El) earn their Architecture badges at WHS. Above l to r: Elizabeth Friel, Sydney Schmerzler; Bridget Johnson, Claire Carroll, Barbara Foster; Gabriella Rizak, Tessa Zimmerman and Michaela MacDonald. Background upper left: scout leader Heather Friel.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Westport Historical Society is an educational organization dedicated to preserving, presenting and celebrating the history of Westport, CT. It is committed to increasing awareness of the importance of preserving our town's heritage and its historic buildings and landmarks.

Longshore Club Park — One of Westport's Wonders by Woody Klein

It Took 'Daring and Courage' to Purchase Private Property for the Public Good



"SUMMER AT LONGSHORE," Westport, CT from an original watercolor by Kassie Foss. Courtesy of the Onion Hill Press, L.L.C.

The dateline, WESTPORT, Conn.—has been seen in national newspapers for decades—we are, after all, a hub of culture, the arts, and a showcase for quality suburban living—but none was quite as dramatic as the headline on the top of the front page of *The New York Times* on July 25, 1960, which read: WESTPORT'S RESIDENTS OWN LUXURIOUS COUNTRY CLUB. The story began: "Imagine a luxurious country club overlooking Long Island Sound with dues of \$10 a year for a family. Well, this community [Westport] has one."

It was After the War and the Town was Growing

The story behind this remarkable story began during the administration of First Selectman Herb Baldwin, who was first elected in 1957 and served four two-year terms thereafter. "It was a very exciting time because it was after the war and the town was growing like crazy," recalls Allen Raymond, a member of Baldwin's "Kitchen Cabinet" and now Town Historian.

"The most exciting thing during Baldwin's reign was when we learned the Longshore Club Park might be for sale."

Negotiations with the owner took four-and-a-half months. The Town, represented by Julian Brodie, agreed to a remarkably low price of \$1,925,000 for

the purchase price of the 191-acre facility. Subsequently, the Representative Town Meeting, in a 34-0 vote on February 14, 1960, and some 700 spectators gave the RTM a hearty ovation for the unprecedented acquisition. It was so unusual, in fact, that there were kudos from all quarters. One of the least likely—and most flattering—comments came on September 10, 1960, from the trade magazine, *Editor & Publisher*, which closely followed the newspaper industry across America. "It took daring and courage. . . . It took leadership and confident fellowship. It took understanding of trends, conditions and needs. It took a quality of thinking that is satisfied only by follow-up in action. Westport is proving that the town and its citizens have these qualities."

A First of a Kind

Today's Living Magazine was equally enthusiastic. A huge headline proclaimed: "A Suburban Town Buys a Country Club." Its story began:

"For a little community deep in the heart of Exurbia, Westport, Connecticut, has just done an amazing thing, never before attempted in Fairfield County. For that matter, it's probably never before been attempted in such a lavish scale anyplace in the country.

"At a cost of almost \$2 million, the 21,000-pop. Town has bought one of the plushest country clubs in the East. And we mean *plush*. Besides an 18-hole golf course, there are tennis courts, beach, swimming pool, cabanas, ample boating facilities and luxurious dining, living and social accommodations."

Other Towns Seek Advice

Two years later, in the June 1962 issue of *Suburbia Today*, Brodie wrote: "When we started this venture, we got in touch with the National Recreation Association to get the figures, policies, and other data of towns that had attempted to buy and transform a private club. We were told the Association's records showed no precedent for such an undertaking. In fact, we were urged to tell the Association all about the idea and to let it know how we came out, as undoubtedly other towns would want to know. It turns out the Association was right, Towns all over the area—and as far west as Utah—have been pressing for information and advice. Our advice is always the same: do it by all means—if you have the strength!"

Woody Klein, a WHS director-at-large, is author of "Westport, Connecticut, The Story of a New England Town's Rise to Prominence" sponsored by the Historical Society.

Look for more memorabilia on Longshore at our summer exhibit *Westport By the Sea*.

Mollie Donovan Receives Honors

by Wally Woods



Mollie Donovan (left) and Westport's First Selectwoman Diane Goss Farrell (right).

Mollie Donovan is a Westport whirlwind, simultaneously working on a great number of artistic projects around Town. But we at the Westport Historical Society are the luckiest to have had her dedication here over many years of our growth and development. She was part of the original team that enabled the Society to

acquire Wheeler House back in 1981, and has been a very active volunteer ever since. During the last few years, she has been curator of numerous outstanding exhibits, and most recently she has been Chairwoman of the WHS Programs and Exhibits Committee.

On April 7, 2004, Mollie was honored as the WHS Volunteer of the Year during the National Volunteer Week 2004 Recognition Reception at the Dolce Conference Center in Norwalk, sponsored by the Voluntary Action Center of Mid-Fairfield County. Seventy-two volunteers from as many separate organizations were so honored, all receiving certificates from the mayor or first selectman of their respective home towns of Norwalk, Wilton, Weston and Westport. Congressman Chris Shays addressed the guests, praising them for their selflessness and dedication.

The Garden Market by Linda Adelman and Sarah Shaw

This year's Garden Market on Sunday, June 6 will be our most spectacular ever, with new vendors and a wider variety of items for the home and garden devotee.

The market will feature garden ornaments from RF Steelworks; a fabulous range of glass and pottery from Simon Pearce; herbal oils, seasonings, jams and mustards from Buttersweet Herb Farm; creative furniture from Marvin Gardens & Steel Statements, and unique accessories for the home and garden from Millie Rae. For those who enjoy bringing a little of the outside inside the home there will be a range of container gardens from Twombly Nursery, botanical embroidered linens from the Boxwood Design Studio



and beautiful lavender sachets by Cynthia Alexander.

For unique accessories either for yourself or to give as a gift, Nikki Bates will be presenting her jewelry made from semi-precious stones. Or, if fresh water pearls are your thing, be sure to visit Lady Ming. To complete the line-up of unique and interesting jewelry, Lynne Ostilly will be participating with her jewelry collection as well as a range of African baskets. From baskets to bags you can find travel accessories available from

IN THE LITTLE GALLERY

Enid Munroe, author of *An Artist in the Garden*, garden writer and longtime artist, will present her *Textile Series* in the Little Gallery at Wheeler House starting Memorial Day, Monday, May 31 following the town parade and program at Veterans Green.

In this series, the subject matter is cloth in various arrangements of colors, forms, shapes and patterns. "I love the contrast of trompe l'oeil technique and the abstract quality of the subject matter," said the artist. "Renaissance paintings are all about beauty, motion and color of clothes, and architectural details were often the substance of the paintings. Artists' fascination with fabrics continued into the twentieth century and ended with John Singer Sargent's beautiful portraits—think of the *Wyndham Sisters* painted in 1899 which is all about white, gossamer satins and tulle and the architectural details of a fashionable London drawing room."

Munroe has focused on the fabrics and made them the singular subject of her paintings.

Don't miss *Textile Series*—an exhibit with a different twist.

Catch All, and tote bags, personal accessories and unusual floor mats by Amy Z.

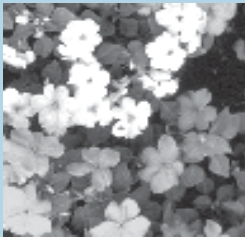
For the little ones in your life there are handmade accessories from Kiss That Frog, a delightful range of fabric mobiles and animals from Sha d' Lei and stunning baby blankets from Charlie & Grace. Greeting cards will be available from Lizzy Cards and Tickeddyboo Cards and Gifts to accompany your purchases.

Annual Hidden Garden Tour Ticket Information

SUNDAY, JUNE 6TH
10:00 am to 5:00 pm

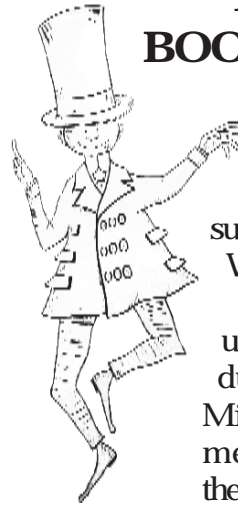
**TICKETS FOR THE TOUR AND THE
BOX LUNCH ARE AVAILABLE NOW.**

Please email gardentour@westporthistory.org, call 203-222-1424, or visit www.westporthistory.org for more information and to print a ticket form.



Members: \$22
Non-members: \$30
Day of tour: \$35

THE REMARKABLE BOOK AND GIFT SHOP



The Westport Historical Society Gift Shop is *the place to go* to find gifts for your summer guests that are specific to Westport.

The shop also offers many usual items such as antique reproductions of iron penny banks, Milton Bond prints, and an assortment of decorative summer-themed "book clocks" for children.

SUMMER HOURS

Tuesday-Friday • 10 am to 4 pm
Saturday • 12 Noon to 3 pm
Sunday & Monday • **CLOSED**



Westport Historical Society

KEEPING WESTPORT'S HISTORY ALIVE

25 Avery Place
Westport, CT 06880
(203) 222-1424
www.westporthistory.org

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Westport, CT 06880
PERMIT No. 69