

# Greenwich Historical Society

Explore our colorful past



news+programs

may | june 2015

## GREENWICH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

is dedicated to promoting Greenwich's unique and colorful past. Our Archives actively chronicle the life of our town for future generations, our programs and exhibitions help people of all ages better understand their connection to history, and our preservation efforts safeguard an architectural heritage that includes the National Historic Landmark Bush-Holley House, the site of the Cos Cob art colony.

## BUSH-HOLLEY HISTORIC SITE

is a member of the Connecticut Art Trail, a partnership of 17 world-class museums and historic sites across the state. Discover collections rich in history and heritage, including European masterpieces, American Impressionism, ancient art and contemporary culture.

## HOURS

### Storehouse Gallery

Open Wednesday through Sunday,  
12–4 pm

### Docent-led tours of Bush-Holley House

Wednesday through Sunday,  
1, 2 and 3 pm

### Library and Archives

Wednesdays, 10 am–12:30 pm  
and 1 pm–4 pm, or by appointment

## ADMISSION

\$10 for adults

\$8 for seniors and students

Admission always free to members.

Free to the public the first Wednesday of every month.

## CONTACT US

Greenwich Historical Society

39 Strickland Road

Cos Cob, CT 06807

203-869-6899

[www.greenwichhistory.org](http://www.greenwichhistory.org)

## DIRECTIONS

Off I-95 at exit 4. Visit

[www.greenwichhistory.org](http://www.greenwichhistory.org) for details.

## Greenwich Historical Society Receives Chamber of Commerce Nonprofit Leadership Award

**W**e are extremely proud to announce that the Greenwich Historical Society was this year's recipient of the Chamber of

Commerce's Nonprofit Leadership Award. The award is presented to a nonprofit organization (or individual) in Greenwich that has made a significant difference in the betterment of the community. Per Marcia O'Kane, Chamber President, "We are thrilled to announce the selection of the

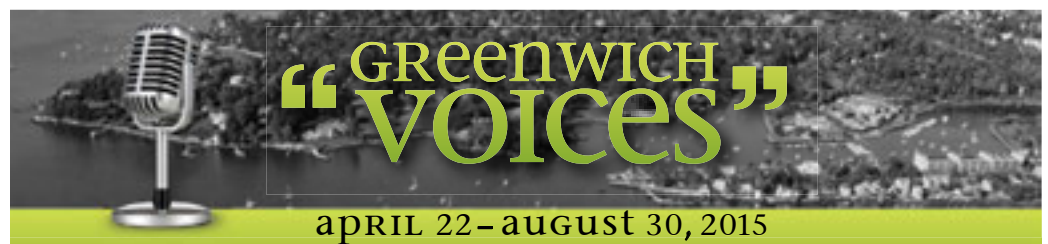
Historical Society as this year's winner. The Chamber holds this annual event to honor heroes who have significantly enhanced the town's overall quality of life, and this year we had many quality nominations. Once we considered its immediate and ongoing impact on the community and the importance of preserving town history, the Historical Society immediately rose to the top. The timing was perfect, since we are all very proud of the events that will honor Greenwich's 375th anniversary and the Historical Society's

ongoing education and preservation programs."

Acknowledging the award, Board Chairman Davidde Strackbein noted, "On behalf of the Board of Trustees of the Greenwich Historical Society and our incredibly hardworking staff, I would like to extend our appreciation to the Greenwich Chamber of Commerce for selecting our organization as the winner of the Chamber's coveted 2015 Nonprofit Leadership Award.

"We are elated and very proud to receive the honor, which the Greenwich Chamber has bestowed upon our 84-year-old local Historical Society. It means a great deal to us to receive such recognition from a broad spectrum of successful Greenwich businesses, because it represents a respected seal of approval and endorsement of our organization and its mission to collect, preserve and disseminate the history of our town."

Our thanks to the Greenwich Chamber of Commerce for this distinguished honor.



GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY A GIFT FROM RUSS AND DEBBIE REYNOLDS

## Add your voice to the exhibition

Record *your* responses to questions about life in Greenwich.

Recording sessions on May 9, June 13, July 11 and August 8, noon to 3:30 pm.

## Town Sponsors 375th Birthday with Events and Programs

**O**n New Year's Day at 1:00 pm, bells rang throughout Greenwich to mark the beginning of a yearlong series of programs and town-sponsored events honoring our town's 375th anniversary and its rich history and cultural heritage. Many exciting town-wide activities are being planned in honor of the event, including Independence Day fireworks (July 3), a reading of the Declaration of American Independence at Town Hall (July 4), a Founder's Day Celebration (July 18) and the 375th Anniversary Gala Parade (September 27). From May 1–July 31, 2015, resident docents will lead a series of walking, bicycle and minibus history tours of multicultural neighborhoods, and if you visit Town Hall, make sure to check out display cases devoted to these unique communities. Our own Davidde Strackbein is heading up the 375th Event Committee, so you can be sure all these activities will be fun, fascinating and educational.

For program information and updates, visit [www.greenwich375.org](http://www.greenwich375.org).

## Story Barn: *Only in Greenwich!*

**A** unique way to experience oral tradition, Story Barn is all about the stories you won't read on the front page of the *Greenwich Time*. Performances take place in a cabaret-like setting where storytellers present five-minute takes on a particular topic based on personal experiences (no notes allowed). This time around, with our town's 375th anniversary in mind, stories will focus on our beloved (and sometimes eccentric) community. Do Greenwich residents really live in parallel universes? Are there things that happen "only in Greenwich"? What makes Greenwich, Greenwich? Find out as our storytellers examine life in this unique community. The event will be emceed by program founder and talented comedienne Bonnie Levison, who, among her many accomplishments, works with themoth.org and is a cofounder of the Nantucket Comedy Festival. Reserve early; this event always plays to a packed house!

Do you have a good Greenwich story? Please contact Anna Greco at [agreco@greenwichhistory.org](mailto:agreco@greenwichhistory.org) or call 203-869-6899, Ext. 31.

Thursday, May 21, 2015. Doors open at 6:30 pm; show starts at 7:00 pm.

Tickets are \$15 for members; \$20 for nonmembers.

Beer, wine and light snacks will be served.



Cover of *The Greenwich Social Review*, October 1949



Vintage Postcard of Innis Arden, Estate of J. Kennedy Tod

## History on Wheels

**W**ith Greenwich Cove as the backdrop, we will once again participate in Experience the Sound, a yearly celebration at Greenwich Point that showcases local organizations and educational institutions that care for and promote coastal marine life, nature, outdoor recreational pursuits, town history and the environment. This year's History on Wheels program will be linked to the celebration of Greenwich's 375th birthday and will focus on key events in the history of the Point, including current initiatives by the Greenwich Point Conservancy to restore public buildings and native habitats.

Participants will meet at the first parking lot on the right after entering the park. The group will then cycle around the Point, stopping at various locations to hear stories, take a closer look at some of the ruins and see vintage photos from the Historical Society's collection. Participants must bring their own bikes and helmets, and a water bottle is highly recommended. There will be an activity with prizes for children.

Sunday, June 21, 2015, 1:30 to 2:15 pm

Greenwich Point

The program is free, and no park pass is required.

## Support the Annual Fund

**O**ne of the most important things your contributions sustain is a unique partnership with Hamilton Avenue School. Your gifts to the annual campaign and the Greenwich Historic Trust enable students—many who may never have had the opportunity to visit a museum—to tour Bush-Holley House and to study local history through art instruction and classroom enrichment activities. Your contributions also support our Patriots vs. Loyalists program, in which local fifth to eighth graders use primary source documents from the Library and Archives to prepare and engage in a mock debate about the issues leading up to the American Revolution. Please support the annual campaign either online or in the enclosed envelope. Your gifts make it possible for us to offer students unique experiences that shape future citizens and nurture a lifelong appreciation of art and history.



## Celebrate CT Open House Day 2015 at the Greenwich Historical Society

This year's celebration of Connecticut's cultural abundance at Bush-Holley Historic Site will feature a drop-in collage workshop, a "letterboxing" scavenger hunt and a museum shop tent sale offering gifts and books for all ages and interests at very special prices.

Artist Carol Nipomnich Dixon will lead a workshop on creating two-dimensional collages crafted from papers, fabrics,



photographs, found objects and natural materials. All materials will be provided, but participants are encouraged to bring

copies of favorite photos, newspaper articles or other items to incorporate into their work. Ms. Dixon will provide guidance on how to juxtapose color, texture and imagery to transform materials into distinctly new and personal visual statements. The drop-in workshop will take place in the Vanderbilt Education Center from noon to 2:00 pm, and all ages are welcome.

Letterboxing began in 1854 when a hiking guide left a bottle with his calling card in it by Duck's Pool in Dartmoor in southern England. Now, instead of a card, you will most likely discover a rubber stamp, a stamp pad and a logbook in the letterbox. For our hunt, you'll begin at the Storehouse Gallery to receive clues and a personal log, and then range over Bush-Holley Historic Site to find our very own hidden letterbox.

Finally, in case you work up an appetite from all this activity, the popular Valencia Lucheria food truck will be parked on premises for your dining convenience. Known for its fabulous "Nuevo Latino" cuisine, Valencia Lucheria has received accolades from food critics of every stripe and has won "Best of Fairfield County" awards in a number of categories.

CT Open House Day is a statewide event created to encourage Connecticut residents to serve as local ambassadors for the state's cultural treasures. Gather up friends and family of all ages and head for Bush-Holley Historic Site, Greenwich's only National Historic Landmark, for a fun, creative



*Carol Nipomnich Dixon working with young collage artists*

and educational afternoon. In addition to the programs described above, family-friendly tours of Bush-Holley House will take place at 1:00, 2:00 and 3:00 pm, and the Storehouse Gallery, featuring the exhibition *Greenwich Voices*, will be open from noon to 4:00 pm.

*June 13, 2015, Noon to 4:00 pm*

*Bush-Holley Historic Site*

*Admission and programs are free to all visitors. No reservations required.*

## Spring Fling at French Farm

Don't miss this fun-filled afternoon for the entire family including sheep-shearing, spinning and beekeeping demonstrations, an heirloom vegetable plant sale and music by popular bluegrass/swing band Too Blue (from 1:00 to 3:00 pm). Stroll the magnificent gardens where the exquisite peonies will be in bloom, visit the farm animals and learn about the exotic inhabitants of the chicken coop. Refreshments will be available for purchase from popular food truck Melt Mobile. Bring a picnic blanket and enjoy a rare chance to explore a living work of art like no other, right in your own backyard.

*Sunday, May 17, 2015,  
12:30–3:30 pm (rain or shine)*

*French Farm, 516 Lake Avenue,  
Greenwich, CT. On-street  
parking only.*

*Members: \$10 for adults;  
\$5 for children.  
Nonmembers: \$15 for adults;  
\$10 for children.  
Reservations required.*



## High School Performers Offer Colonial Music Program

We are pleased to announce that a very generous group of local high school musicians will stage a tea and Colonial musicale focusing on pieces dating from 1600 to 1800 to benefit the Greenwich Historical Society. The program will feature a string group (two violins and a cello), a pianist and a mezzo-soprano. Two of the performers are members of the prestigious Tri-M Music Honors Society at Greenwich High School, an international honors music program for middle and high school students.

The group consists of violinist and violist Sara Hagstrom, a senior at Greenwich High School; Brianna Tam, cellist, a senior at Greenwich High School, winner of the American Chamber Orchestra chamber competition and former member of the New York Youth Symphony; violinist Mercedes Horner, a senior at Greenwich High School, Tri-M member and this year's winner of the electronic category of Greenwich High School's Composer Showcase; pianist Alex Gibbons, a junior at Brunswick; and Bizz Fretty, a junior at Greenwich High School, involved in the choral department and member of the Tri-M Music Honor Society.

Tea and refreshments will be served in the education classroom prior to the performance.

*Sunday, May 3, 2015*

*Tea and refreshments: 2:30 to 3:00 pm; performance: 3:00 to 4:00 pm*

*Vanderbilt Education Center*

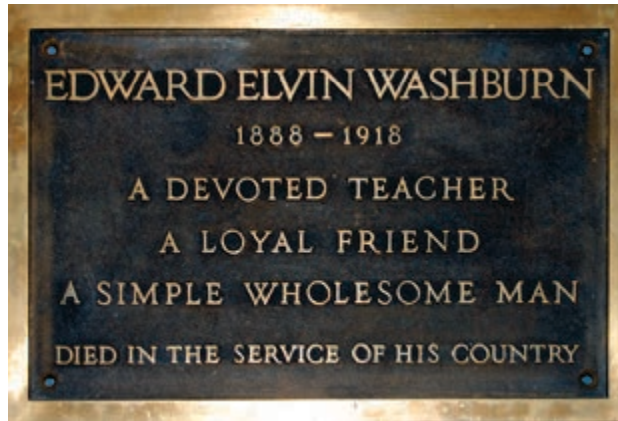
*Members: \$10; nonmembers: \$15*

The last in a series of essays featured in conjunction with Greenwich Faces the Great War

# A Forgotten Soldier in a Forgotten War

By Peter Berg and Karen Frederick

**A**mong the soldiers who should be honored on Memorial Day is Edward Elvin Washburn. In 2006 a custodian found this brass plaque in the basement of a former high school building in Greenwich. The plaque was put on display in the Greenwich High School Media Center with the following information:



Memorial Plaque. Brass. Courtesy Greenwich High School.

*...Although it was determined that Mr. Washburn died in military service on October 17, 1918 in Cleveland, Ohio, it has never been established that he was a Greenwich teacher. ...The GHS community hopes its placement here might aid in the search for information regarding Mr. Washburn and the provenance of this plaque. At the very least it serves as a memorial of this teacher's call to duty and his ultimate sacrifice.*

A little more than nine years after the plaque was found and 96 years after the death of Edward Elvin Washburn, Peter Berg has uncovered information about this man and his life.

Edward was born on April 13, 1888, in China, Maine, the fourth of six children of Edith Elvin Crosby Washburn and Willis Wendell Washburn. His father's careers included harness maker, insurance

salesman, postmaster, town clerk and justice of the peace.

He attended Higgins Classical Institute, a prep school in Charleston affiliated with Colby College, graduating in 1907. He then enrolled in Colby College where he played varsity baseball and was class marshal, cheerleader for two years and on the Oracle Board. He graduated in 1912.

He was hired by Greenwich High School as a chemistry teacher, eventually becoming head of the Science Department. In addition, he coached the boys' baseball, football and basketball teams as well as being active in the high school dancing class.

In February 1917 the Connecticut General Assembly directed then-Governor Marcus H. Holcomb "to procure certain information relative to the resources of the State," especially about "men and materials available for use in the event of war." This military census, along with Washburn's State of Connecticut Military Service Record and his registration card, provides more information. He was single and lived at 59 Mason Street. He stood 5' 8¼" tall, had brown hair and blue eyes, was bald, had a ruptured ligament in his right leg, water on the knee and bad eyes; he did not claim any military exemption from the draft. Under Fraternal Orders, he listed "Masonic and Zeta Psi Fraternity." Under Previous Military Service or Training, he wrote "Local Greenwich, Conn. state police or home guard." He could ride a horse, handle a team, drive an automobile, ride a motorcycle, handle a power boat, had a little experience with electrical machinery and was a fair swimmer.

He was inducted as a private into the Army on July 24, 1918, and was assigned to the Chemical Warfare Service (CWS) unit. The CWS was established to develop and produce asphyxiating gases. A secret plant located in Willoughby, Ohio, 20 miles east of Cleveland, was established for its production. This was

Class Picture. The Colby Oracle, 1912. Courtesy Colby College.

EDWARD ELVIN WASHBURN, Z Ψ  
Higgins Classical Institute, '07; Varsity Baseball, 2, 3, 4; Class Baseball, 1, 2; Class Marshal, 3; Cheer Leader, 3, 4; First Prize Freshman Reading, 1; ORACLE Board, 3; Wearer of the "C."  
"Smut" has never hid his candle under a bushel. He stepped, or rather jumped, into the lime-light as the Freshman who blew the horn in the Freshman-Sophomore Baseball game and he has been in it ever since. He is a chemist, a member of the Cheese Orchestra, and general agent for "Wear-Ever" Aluminum Utensils. Eva Allen says he will succeed in his chosen work. Let us hope so.



Karen Frederick is the Curator of Collections and Exhibitions Coordinator at the Greenwich Historical Society. The full version of her article with references can be read on the Historical Society's website: [www.greenwichhistory.org](http://www.greenwichhistory.org).



where Washburn was sent.

The December 20, 1918, edition of the *Greenwich News and Graphic* reported the official results of the influenza epidemic in Army camps and military centers in the United States. From September 13, the date of the outbreak, to December 1, there had been approximately 17,000 deaths from influenza ("Spanish Flu") and pneumonia. One of these was Edward Washburn. He died on October 17, at the age of 30, less than a month before the War ended on November 11. Washburn was the first casualty of World War I from central Maine.



*Greenwich High School Football Team, 1915. Courtesy Greenwich High School.*

On October 25, 1918, the *Greenwich News and Graphic* printed the following:

*Resolved—that the Committee place on record the expression of its deep sorrow for the untimely death of Edward E. Washburn, who was an officient [sic] and loved teacher in the Greenwich High School for three years; who in that brief time had earned the respect and esteem of the community; and who entered with enthusiasm the military service of his country, in which he gave high promise of creditable achievement—a good citizen, a model teacher, a patriotic soldier.*

On December 18, 1918, a service flag containing 118 stars was dedicated at the high school. Of those stars, 117 were blue. There was one gold star for Corporal Edward E. Washburn, "the former head of the Science Department, who died in the service." Washburn's name does not appear on a brass plaque at Town Hall because, although he was a Greenwich resident who died in the military service, he did not die in combat or overseas.

*The Greenwich Historical Society thanks Peter Berg for his research on this forgotten soldier.*

## In Memoriam

On October 17, 1918, in Cleveland, Ohio, occurred the death of Edward Elvin Washburn, for several years a teacher in the Greenwich High School, and for one year the head of the Science Department.

Mr. Washburn, at the time of his death, was a Corporal in the Gas Defense of the Chemical Warfare Service, in Cleveland. In July he was sent, with other drafted men from Greenwich, to Camp Devens, where he was in the Infantry. Later he was transferred to the Gas Department. About a week before his death, Mr. Washburn had a mild case of Spanish Influenza, which developed into pneumonia. The disease did not assume an alarming form at first, but within a day or two it proved to be fatal. The body was taken to his home in China, Maine, where a military service was held.

It is impossible in a memorial of this kind to do adequate justice to the honor and respect in which Mr. Washburn was held by faculty and students. For three years and a half, Mr. Washburn worked in unusual harmony with the other teachers and with the school. He coached the boys in base ball, football, and basket-ball, in addition to his regular duties. He was an active participator in the dancing class of the High School. He strove constantly to foster and increase school spirit. He was a personal friend of every student, never too busy or too tired to give additional help and encouragement, outside of school hours. In school he was an excellent and a very popular teacher.

It was with sincere regret that the faculty and pupils saw Mr. Washburn granted a leave of absence for the duration of the war; and it is difficult to picture their grief when word was received of his death. The Gold star on the school service flag will ever commemorate a soldier and teacher, respected, honored, and beloved. In deep reverence we cherish the memory of EDWARD WASHBURN.

*"With a cherry smile and a wave of the hand,  
He has wandered into an unknown land."*

*In Memoriam. The Green Witch, November 1918, Vol. 11, No. 9. Courtesy Greenwich High School.*

## Save the Dates:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>May 3</b><br>Colonial Musicale and Tea                          | <b>May 21</b><br>Story Barn: <i>Only in Greenwich</i> |
| <b>May 7</b><br>Historical Gardens and<br>Their Creators Symposium | <b>June 13</b><br>CT Open House                       |
| <b>May 17</b><br>Spring Fling at French Farm                       | <b>June 21</b><br>History on Wheels                   |



*The Greenwich Historical Society chronicles the past, but the future is in your hands. Please remember us in your estate plan so that future generations may continue to explore the ongoing story of our community.*

## news

### Symposium: Historical Gardens and Their Creators

The Greenwich Historical Society in partnership with Palladium Musicum, Inc. will offer a symposium on historical Greenwich gardens and their creators as a contribution to Greenwich's 375th anniversary celebration. The symposium will focus on two pioneering women landscape architects, Ellen Biddle Shipman (1869–1950) and Marian Cruger Coffin (1876–1957), both active in designing and developing gardens for many of the great estates of Greenwich, including J. Kennedy Tod's seaside garden, elements of which may still be seen at Greenwich Point.

The substantial contributions of these women in shaping the field of landscape architecture will be examined by two eminent experts: Judith B. Tankard, landscape historian and former lecturer, Landscape Institute at Harvard University, and author of *The Gardens of Ellen Biddle Shipman*, and Mac Griswold, journalist, cultural landscape historian and author of *The Golden Age of American Gardens*:



*The Coffin seaside garden designed for the J. Kennedy Tod Estate, 1920*

*Proud Owners, Private Estates, 1890–1940.*

The event will open with a reception and refreshments and will conclude with a book signing.

*May 7, 2015, 7:30 to 9:30 pm*

*Vanderbilt Education Center*

*Tickets are \$55.*

*For reservations and information, please call 203-661-6856 or email [apalladio@mac.com](mailto:apalladio@mac.com).*

## Calling All Young Friends!

On Tuesday, March 10th, over 20 young professionals gathered for a reception and curator-led tour of *Greenwich Faces the Great War*. Thanks go to our Young Friends Membership Committee—Mallory MacDonald Molenkamp, Lee Denslow and Scott Merrill—for organizing the evening. A special thank you to Betteridge Jewelers for underwriting the evening. Young Friends will meet for a reception and tour twice a year. If you are between 25–35 years old and interested in joining you can register online: [www.greenwichhistory.org/membership.php](http://www.greenwichhistory.org/membership.php).



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