

Greenwich Historical Society

Explore our colorful past



news+programs

may | june 2014

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 1, 2 and 3 pm

Closed Monday and Tuesday

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

DIRECTIONS

Off I-95 at exit 4. Visit
www.greenwichhistory.org
for details.

Volunteers Receive High Praise at Annual Recognition Event

On April 3, 2014, volunteers were celebrated for their many valuable contributions to the Greenwich Historical Society at a beautiful cocktail reception at the The Field Club of Greenwich where John Dixon was named Volunteer of the Year. John spearheaded the Greenwich Historical Society's inaugural Preservation Awards programs and then went on to become a member of our Buildings and Grounds Committee and our Master Planning Task Force where he oversaw the selection of architects to study the Historical Society's long-term facilities needs. He was cited for his ongoing, generous service and his invaluable professional counsel to the board and executive director.

Also recognized for Antiquarius leadership roles were Ashley Allan for chairing the 2012 and 2013 Holiday Boutique, Sandra Morgan and Laird Morgan Tolan for chairing the 2013 House Tour, and Katie Nogaki and Kathryn Stewart, for serving as 2013 House Tour Hostesses, an effort that required securing and organizing 100 volunteers to man (or in this case "woman") the five Holiday House Tour homes. Retiring board member Aris Crist was also acknowledged for his service as a trustee.

We are deeply grateful to every single one of our terrific volunteers for their dedication, creativity and hard work. You are the heart of the Greenwich Historical Society, and we can't thank you enough!



Carol Dixon,
Volunteer of the Year John Dixon,
Board Chairman Davide Strackbein,
David Scott Parker



Katie Nogaki, Director of
Development Anne Bradner,
2013 Holiday Boutique Cochair
Ashley Allan, 2013 Holiday House
Tour Cochair Laird Morgan Tolan



Outgoing Trustee
Aris Crist and Executive
Director Debra Mecky



Meriwether Schmid and
Millie George



Trustee David Ormsby,
Lindsay Ormsby, Trustee David
Brownwood, Trustee Fraser Beede
and Ron Strackbein



Landmarks Recognition
Program Chairman
Jack Morris and
Docent Harry Sakamaki

The Library and Archives: Education and Inspiration

You already know that our Library and Archives sits center stage in the interpretation of Greenwich history through photographs, maps, books, diaries, ephemera and more. What you may not know is that in addition to those following purely “scholarly” pursuits, local organizations frequently call upon us to provide information to assist in the development of communications, special occasions and fundraising events. The results are often surprising to researchers who no longer have historic materials in their own institutional files. Two recent requests



Benedict Hospital Building under construction, early 1920s

perfectly illustrate the unique position we hold as our community’s collective memory.

Last year, Riverside Yacht Club was looking for images and ephemera for their anniversary celebration. We were able to unearth wonderful period photographs to enhance the celebration of the club’s long history, even uncovering a 1929 “Water Sports Day” program from our Family Collection.

Kim Harke Suchon (also a past Historical Society volunteer) works at the Greenwich Hospital Foundation and was interested in finding materials relating to hospital philanthropy. Archivist Christopher Shields was able to share the wonderful George Wharton Edwards-designed cover from *The MerryWhirl of 1920*, fundraiser program (see *Time Travel* article), along with examples of the photographs, postcards and nursing school materials in our collection. According to Kim, not only were the materials helpful, but they will also serve as inspiration for future projects.



Riverside Yacht Club's first clubhouse, circa 1889

Looking to learn more about your own organization’s history? The Greenwich Historical Society Library and Archives are open to the public Wednesdays from 10:00 am to 12:30 pm and 1:00 to 4:00 pm or by appointment. Contact archivist Christopher Shields at cshields@greenwichhistory.org or call 203-869-6899, Ext. 23.

Time Travel: The MerryWhirl of 1920

Pictured here is the front cover of a souvenir program for “The MerryWhirl of 1920,” an entertainment extravaganza (known as a “kirmess”) presented to raise funds for Greenwich Hospital. The beautiful illustration is by artist George Wharton Edwards, a painter and illustrator who was a member of the Cos Cob art colony and a Greenwich resident. This original artwork was auctioned off near the end of the three-day event.

Although the term “kirmess,” defined as an entertainment event intended as a fundraiser for a charity, has largely fallen out of use, newspaper articles from the late 19th and early 20th centuries feature many mentions of these popular spectacles. It was apparently a word that was well known during that period.

The executive committee of the Kirmess Association, which organized the event, was composed of the wives of prominent and influential men in the community. Other notable men and women served as actors and actresses in the featured theatrical offerings.

The introduction to the program

highlights the important role of Greenwich Hospital in answering the healthcare needs of all residents, but noted the financial burden placed on the institution by its service to the poor. “The greater the service and success of a hospital, the greater is the burden of expense as the money paid by patients (excepting for the private rooms) is scarcely a third of the cost of their care.” Financier, philanthropist and avid yachtsman E.C. Benedict had donated the new hospital building to meet the needs of the town just three years earlier in 1917.

The MerryWhirl consisted of four performances held in the Havemeyer Auditorium (the building that now houses the Board of Education) and featured a Roman pageant with local participants portraying the Emperor, Empress, Juno, Venus and Mark Antony. There was also an “Egyptian episode” featuring Cleopatra and an “Oriental episode” with the Prince and Princess of Persia. Joining these depictions from antiquity was a performance with a decidedly more “modern” (and local) flavor: the wedding of General Israel Putnam.



Cover of MerryWhirl program

The amount of money raised is not clear, but another elaborate fundraising event was held the following year on the grounds of the late E.C. Benedict’s Indian Harbor estate. That event featured a Venetian fête and a circus from Coney Island’s Luna Park. A newspaper account of the event says that the circus animals and props arrived by steamboat from the city.

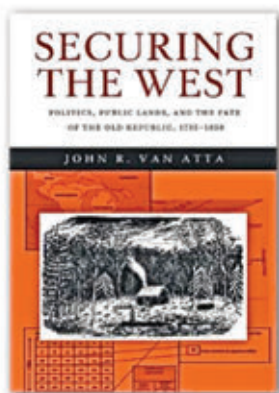
The kirmess returned to the Havemeyer Auditorium in 1922 billed as “The Greenwich Follies.”

—Christopher Shields, Archivist
Greenwich Historical Society

Securing the West:

Politics, Public Lands, and the Fate of the Old Republic

Book Talk by
Dr. John Van Atta



In his recently published book *Securing the West*, John R. Van Atta examines the visions of the founding generation and the increasing influence of ideological

differences in the years after the peace treaty that ended the Mexican War. Americans generally expected the country to grow westward, but they held strongly differing opinions on the details. What part should Congress play in this development? How much should public land cost? What of the families and businesses left behind, and how would society's institutions be established in the West? What of the premature settlers, the "squatters" who challenged the rule of law while epitomizing democratic daring?

Dr. Van Atta draws upon a range of sources known to have influenced the public discourse, including congressional debates, committee reports and correspondence; editorial writings by the famous and unknown; and news coverage in various widely circulated newspapers and magazines of the period.

Van Atta teaches history and constitutional law at the Brunswick School in Greenwich, Connecticut. He is author of *The Wolf by the Ears: The Missouri Crisis, 1819–1821*, forthcoming from Johns Hopkins. Books will be available for sale and signing.

Tuesday, May 27, 2014, 7:00 to 8:30 pm

Vanderbilt Education Center

Members: \$10; nonmembers: \$15

Country Homes in the Gilded Age: Greenwich's Great Estates: 1880–1930

Lecture by Davidde Strackbein

From 1880 to 1930, Greenwich made the transition from a small farming community to a summer retreat for New York's legendary tycoons. "Boss" William Tweed, William Rockefeller, Henry O. Havemeyer and E.C. "Commodore" Benedict were just a few of the storied businessmen who created grand country retreats in Greenwich. New families, along with retainers and staff, arrived on their well-tailored coattails, followed by small armies of gardeners, masons and maintenance crews. New recreational and social events were soon established, including the pursuit of pleasure yachting and "gentleman's" farming.

Lecturer Davidde Strackbein, chairman



of the board of the Greenwich Historical Society, will focus on the extraordinary estates built in Greenwich during this era. Her talk, accompanied by images of interior and exterior views,

gardens, family portraits and more, will also concentrate on how these lavish homes and the way of life associated with them forever changed the face of Greenwich.

Wednesday, May 7, 2014, 7:00 to 8:00 pm
The Storehouse Gallery will open at 6:00 pm to allow for a pre-lecture viewing of the exhibition.

Vanderbilt Education Center
Members: \$10; nonmembers: \$15

To register, visit www.greenwichhistory.org or call 203-869-6899, Ext. 10.

Summer Garden to Preview Fall WWI Exhibition

Make a point of visiting Bush-Holley Historic Site this summer to see the War Garden, which will preview this fall's exhibition *Greenwich Faces the Great War*. War Gardens (similar to the more familiar Victory Gardens planted during WWII) were cultivated to maximize agricultural production. During the First World War, in addition to planting individual backyard gardens, Greenwich residents established community gardens on tracts of land provided by great estate owners in public spaces such as Bruce Park and even in schoolyards.

Drawn from information based on the MacRae family diaries and correspondence,

the garden at Bush-Holley Historic Site will be designed by former Green Team leader Joan Faust and will suggest the garden the MacRae family tended during the war years.

New volunteer Jenevieve Hughes will oversee the care of the WWI garden throughout the summer. Jenevieve is completing her graduate thesis for a masters in art history from Southern Connecticut State University and currently interns at the New York Botanical Garden, where she is



creating interpretive materials for their upcoming 2014 summer exhibition and annual poetry walk.

Our yearly vegetable garden is always a source of pleasure (and sometimes supper) for staff and visitors alike. Be sure not to miss it when you visit.

Festa Al Fresco

Good Food, Good Company, Fun for the Whole Family

Join us for the second annual Festa Al Fresco, a potluck supper to celebrate the history and community of Italian immigrants who settled in Greenwich in the early 20th century. You bring your favorite family dish to share (enough to

serve 6–8), and we'll supply the wine, musical entertainment and crafts for kids. Demonstrate your culinary skills in one of four categories: antipasti/appetizers, pasta/main dish, sides/salads, or desserts. Mangiamo!



Guests chow down at last year's Festa

*Sunday, June 29, 2014,
4:00 to 7:00 pm*

Bush-Holley Historic Site

*Adults: Members: \$10;
nonmembers: \$15;
Kids 6 to 12: \$5;
kids under 6 are free*

*Reservations required; visit
www.greenwichhistory.org
or call 203-869-6899,
Ext. 10. Please let us know
what you plan to bring when
you reserve.*

CT Open House Day

The Historical Society is once again participating in the Connecticut Office of Tourism's 10th annual CT Open House Day with free admission and a free Collage Workshop led by artist Carol Nipomnich Dixon.

Open to all ages, the workshop will focus on creating two-dimensional collages crafted from papers, fabrics, photographs, found objects and natural materials such as dried grasses, twigs, leaves or petals. All materials will be provided, but you may also bring favorite photos, newspaper articles or other items.

Whether you plan to create a work of art that is a personal expression, a representation of a historical or family event, or an imaginary vision, Ms. Dixon will provide guidance on how to juxtapose color, texture and imagery to transform

your materials into a distinctly new and personal visual statement.

The 10th annual CT Open House Day is a statewide event designed to showcase Connecticut's diverse offerings of history, art and tourism.

Invite family and friends to visit Bush-Holley Historic Site! Support the arts and history in our backyard by acting as a Connecticut cultural ambassador on this day, designed

to celebrate Connecticut's cultural treasures.

Saturday, June 14, 2014

Storehouse Gallery open noon to 4:00 pm

*Docent-led tours of Bush-Holley House:
1:00 pm, 2:00 pm and 3:00 pm*

Collage Workshop will take place in the Vanderbilt Education Center from noon to 2:00 pm. All ages are welcome.

Admission, including the Collage Workshop, is free to all.



Two Gilded Ages: Is History Repeating Itself?

Lecture by Dr. Jackson Lears

For some years, historians have called the period between the late 1980s and the 2010s a second Gilded Age, sharing many similarities with the 1880s through the 1910s.



Both eras were characterized by unregulated economic expansion, flagrant corruption on Wall Street, growing class divisions, the concentration of wealth within a conspicuously consuming elite and a series of imperial adventures (or misadventures) abroad.

Dr. Jackson Lears will examine the parallels and differences between the two eras to explain why the growth of inequality 100 years ago provoked widespread demands for reform among the populace (and even the well-to-do) while contemporary comment on the situation is largely absent.

Lears was educated at the University of Virginia, the University of North Carolina and Yale University, where he received a Ph.D. in American studies in 1979. He has taught at Yale University, the University of Missouri and New York University, and is now Board of Governors Professor of History at Rutgers University and Editor in Chief of the quarterly review *Raritan*. He is the author of *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (nominated for a National Book Critics Circle Award in 1981) and *Fables of Abundance: a Cultural History of Advertising in America*, which won the Los Angeles Times Book Award for History in 1995.

Q&A to follow. Refreshments will be served.

Tuesday, June 10, 2014; 7:00 to 8:00 pm

The Storehouse Gallery will open at 6:00 pm to allow for a pre-lecture viewing of the exhibition.

Book sale and signing from 8:00 to 8:30 pm

Vanderbilt Education Center

Members: \$10; nonmembers: \$15

To register, visit www.greenwichhistory.org or call 203-869-6899, Ext. 10.

History on Wheels



The Greenwich Historical Society is once again teaming up with the Greenwich Point Conservancy to provide a historical bike tour of Greenwich Point as part of the annual Experience the Sound event.

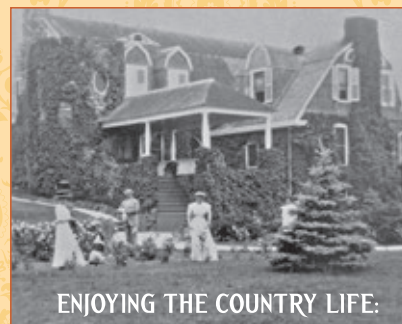
Join us to explore the rich history of Greenwich Point, looking at everything from its geology to the many features that make it the beloved town park it is today. Participants will meet at the first parking lot on the right after entering the park. As the group travels around the Point, they will stop to hear stories, take a closer look at some of the ruins and see vintage photos from the Historical Society's collection. There will also be a scavenger hunt for children.

Participants must bring their own bike and helmet. A water bottle is highly recommended.

Saturday, June 21, 2014, 1:30 to 3:00 pm

No reservations required.

Participation is free, but a park or guest pass is required for entry to Greenwich Point. All ages are welcome, but children must be able to ride a bike.



GREENWICH'S GREAT ESTATES

ON DISPLAY APRIL 9 ~ AUGUST 31, 2014

Save the Dates:

Now through August 31

Enjoying the Country Life:
Greenwich Great Estates Exhibition

May 7

Country Homes in the Gilded Age:
Greenwich's Great Estates: 1880-1930
Lecture by Davidde Strackbein

May 27

*Securing the West: Politics, Public Lands,
and the Fate of the Old Republic*
Book Talk by Dr. John Van Atta

June through October

WWI War Garden at
Bush-Holley Historic Site

June 10

Two Gilded Ages: Is History Repeating Itself?
Lecture by Dr. Jackson Lears

June 14

CT Open House Day/Free Collage Workshop

June 21

History on Wheels Bike Tour

June 29

Festa Al Fresco

July 7–11, July 14–18

History and Art Camp:
Senior Historians Sessions (Grades 4-7)

July 21–25, July 28–August 1

History and Art Camp:
Junior Historians Sessions (Grades 1-3 or 4)

news

New Faces at Greenwich Historical Society

Victoria Ambrose recently joined the Greenwich Historical Society part-time in the Library and Archives under the direction of Christopher Shields. She is working with our photograph collection, entering metadata for historic photos into the new CONTENTdm digital asset management system. Her duties will include categorizing photos by key descriptors so that researchers—both on-site and online—can quickly locate images relating to the subject they are studying.

Victoria received her master's degree in information and digital asset management from Columbia University in 2012 and has worked extensively with the libraries at the New Canaan and Wilton historical societies. Victoria also has a law degree from Fordham University.

Three new docents also came on board in March to round out the team that mans the Storehouse Gallery and provides tours of Bush-Holley House for all ages and interests.

Grace White Lohr has a background in

education and has been a special needs aide at Riverside, New Lebanon, International School at Dundee and Western Middle School here in Greenwich. She has also taught at the Boys and Girls Club, the Carver Center in Port Chester and as a private tutor. In addition to her education experience, Grace has undergraduate degrees in psychology and sociology and was admitted to the New York Bar in 1981.

Gayle Piersol is a professional painter and actress. She has taught classes in studio art and is in the process of creating her own social media company. A local resident, she has a great appreciation for art and history.

David Silverglade has a background in anthropology and archeology with an M.S. in education from the University of Bridgeport. He was the president of the Easton (Connecticut) Historical Society from 2004 to 2010 and has experience as a museum docent and administrator as well as an archeologist and customer service manager. As a new resident of Greenwich,

he is eager to learn about our local history.

We are delighted to welcome so many talented and enthusiastic individuals to the Greenwich Historical Society staff.

Places Still Available for History & Art Camp



There's still time to sign

your favorite kids up for this unique summer art

and history program that features hands-on activities, games, field trips, storytelling, arts and crafts—all connected with the story of Bush-Holley Historic Site. Visit www.greenwichhistory.org/camp.php to download an application. For more information, please contact Camp Director LoriBeth Talbot at 203-869-6899, Ext. 31. Some scholarships available.