



BRISTOL HISTORICAL SOCIETY
SPRING NEWSLETTER
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From the President's Desk

www.bristolhistoricalsociety.org

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Things are beginning to melt outside and it's starting to feel more like Spring! It's always quiet in January around the Historical Society, but things start to pick back up in February. Visitors last month were treated to a glimpse of summer as we have a unique item on loan from John Norton and his family—a rug depicting scenes from Lake Compounce done by his mother Nancy Norton. It's only here for a year, so please stop by and see it.

Much as our Collections department works very hard on our displays and we love to have people come look at them, we also love helping with family and historical research. We have a few things in the works to make that even easier, but for now, know that our library is open and we have a lot of resources for those doing research: Lisa Doyle-Bell, head of our genealogical committee has been updating our Ancestry account with family trees of prominent Bristol citizens; we have many years of the Bristol Press in bound volumes and more on microfilm; and decades of yearbooks and a bevy of photos and materials are in our library for visitors to see. We'd love to have you come in for a visit and then decide to delve deeper into Bristol's history.

We look forward to seeing even more of you as programs start up again in March, beginning with a panel discussion about the Bristol Girls Club, which has played a huge role in so many Bristol women's lives. We hope to see you there - we'd love to hear your reminiscences about the Girls Club as well!

In the meantime, I wish you a happy Spring!

Maya Bringe, President

DON'T MISS IT! OUR ANNUAL TAG SALE! ***SAVE THE DATE!!***

The annual tag sale is scheduled for Friday May 31, from 9am to 1pm and Saturday June 1, from 9am to 12pm. The Society is now accepting any donations of items from members and others. Please deliver items during our hours of operation on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 10am to 2pm. We will be calling our volunteers to work on the Tag Sale to help set up and pricing of items. If you signed up to be on the committee, expect a call soon!

BHS ANNUAL APPEAL CAMPAIGN

The 2023–2024 Annual Campaign is well underway! If you have not already, please consider donating this year. Annual Campaign funds allow us to bring programs and events to the public throughout the year, to preserve artifacts in our collection of the city's history, and to maintain the largest artifact in our collection: Bristol's first public high school, which remains the oldest municipal building in the city still open to the public. With your support, we can continue to preserve the past for current and future residents of Bristol. Donations can be made at www.bristolhistoricalsociety.org and are tax deductible.

BHS ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting for the Society will be held at **6 pm, Wednesday, May 22, 2024**. Voting will take place for the following offices:

President
First Vice President
Director of the Board (multiple openings)

All members can make nominations for these positions during the nomination period which begins on **Friday, April 5, 2024**, and closes **Monday, April 22, 2024**. Nomination forms will be available by email, in the office during open office hours, or on our website (www.bristolhistoricalsociety.org). Candidates must be members in good standing and must have been members for one (1) year to be considered. At the close of the nomination period, the committee will confirm with nominees that they are willing to serve and publish member nominations and its own slate of candidates by **April 29, 2024**.

Recently, the membership voted to make it possible to vote in these elections by mail or in person, so watch for a mail-in ballot or make plans to attend the annual meeting!

If you have any questions about the election process, please contact Steve Vastola (veeeman@sbcglobal.net). The full set of bylaws with the latest amendments is available at www.bristolhistoricalsociety.org and in the office at the Society at 98 Summer Street.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Mary Ann Miecznikowski, Nancy Oparowski, The Rosado Family, Scott, Eva, Anthonie, Andrew, Adrianna, Michael Roy, John Schissler and Bill Selna.

RECENT PASSINGS:

Mary Stokosa

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL INFORMATION

Membership renewal starts June 1st and runs through June 30th. This year we will be mailing out the renewals to you at the end of May. Please remember: if you want your membership card mailed back to you, please include a STAMP with your renewal check. Because of high postage rates we do not mail back your membership cards unless you send us a stamp. We will, however, include your card in the Annual Appeal mailing which is made in the fall.

PROGRAMMING NEWS

Our 2024 year of programming began on Saturday, February 3rd at the Bristol Public Library as we celebrated Black History Month. We partnered with the library in bringing a special program which saw a large audience in attendance. The movie *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* was shown with a discussion that followed.

Without Lacks's knowledge, medical breakthroughs were made when her cells were used to create the first immortal human cell line (HELA) in the early 1950's. This is a case with social and bioethical concerns for every generation.

The scholarship pasta fundraiser was again held at the Parkside Restaurant on February 15th as 44 hungry members and guests enjoyed the evening. A silent auction and a 50/50 raffle highlighted the evening. The winners were: Barbara Barry, Mary Houle, Bob Adamczyk, Joann Vastola and Lee McFadden. George Sobestanovich was the 50/50 winner.

Thank you to all who attended and to those individuals who made a contribution to the Scholarship Fund. You can still support our yearly \$1500 scholarship to a college-bound Bristol student online at bristolhistoricalsociety.org/bhs-scholarship-fund/ or by sending a donation to BHS, PO Box 1393, Bristol CT 06011-1393.

UPCOMING THIRD THURSDAY PROGRAMS

March – Bristol Girls Club

We begin our Third Thursday series for 2024 on **Thursday, March 21st** with a discussion on the Bristol Girls Club in celebration of Women's History Month.

Join us to learn the club's history and the experiences of former members Karen Pescarmona and Susan Sadecki along with former instructors Patti Kalat and Noreen Zurell. Come share your Girls Club experience and reconnect with former members and instructors!

Did the Girls Club ever publish a cookbook? If so, we would love to have a copy for our collection.

April – The Barnes Family

April 18th is the next Third Thursday program. Our guest speaker will be Christina Volpe, curator of the Barnes Museum in Southington.

May – The Rockwell Family

Mark your calendar for Thursday, **May 16th** for the next Third Thursday Program.

Sheila Orefice, well known for her programs at the Bristol Public Library, will be our guest speaker. Her topic will be the Rockwell Family. Stay tuned for publicity regarding the program.

NOTE: The Third Thursday programs are free for members and with a \$5 fee for non-members. Additional parking is available behind the building along with handicapped accessibility. Refreshments will be served.

BHS GAMING CLUB

The first two monthly meetings of the BHS gaming club have been a success! There is more than just Dungeons and Dragons happening at our club! We started January off with some exciting Star Wars roleplaying, and February saw the group trying their hand at a locally created game—**Burn 2d6**—Myths and Magic!

Stop by on **Saturday, March 23** from 11am to 2pm for a session of **Burn 2d6**, run by the designer of the game himself, Kevin Borrup! Experience this quick, rules-light, fast-paced roleplaying game as envisioned by the guy who created it!

Club Information:

Do you love role-playing games or are you curious about them? Do you have kids that want to play Dungeons & Dragons or other role-playing games? Spend a Saturday immersed in a different world at the Historical Society, on **Saturday, March 23** from 11am to 2 pm. All ages welcome! Free to play or just come learn more about gaming at the BHS gaming club. Additional parking is behind the building and the museum will be open so you can learn a little about Bristol history while you're here! For more information or to register, email president@bristolhistoricalsociety.org

POTLUCK GAME DAYS

January Game Day was a great success! Lots of great items for the potluck and the games were intense! Scrabble in one corner, chess in another with the youngest player knocking competitors out left and right! Then there were those that enjoyed the food and slow, cozy games. A good time was had by all. We scheduled another one for February which saw slightly fewer come for games and snacks—no potluck this time. Still, we had some newcomers and a few new contests. Jenga proved challenging for a few as did the domino train. Still, Scrabble had its corner and other board gamers enjoyed having others to play with.

With nice weather around the corner, we will probably not schedule another 'family game day' for a while. But keep watch—you never know when one will pop up!

COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE

For one year (2024) a hooked rug—a view of Lake Compounce—made by Nancy Norton is on display in our Builders of Bristol Room. The piece is on loan from John Norton and family who want to share it with others in Bristol.



LETTERS FROM THE PAST

Among the many interesting objects in the Bristol Historical Society collection are letters from Bristol residents, some in extraordinary places. This a letter Milton Mozart Woodford (father-in-law of Louis Lee Beach, DDS) to his wife about his ship's brush with a reef during his service in the Civil War.

At Sea Oct 20th, 1861

My Dear Lina,

After being onboard ship for ten days we have finally got under way. Yesterday morning at daylight, I went on deck and found the fleet had begun to move. First a Man of War started out, then a gunboat, then another and another until it seemed as though there was no end to them. About ten o'clock they had all started but our ship and two others, and three or four gunboats, then it was time for us, so we got up anchor and started off in the wake to those that had gone before. The two steamships left about the same time and soon passed us as we had a large ship in tow, the gunboats bring up the rear. About ten o'clock PM we passed Cape Henry Light, and we could look out on the Atlantic and see the fleet stretching away before us as far as the eye could reach. The ships move in two lines and each one has its position and must keep it if possible. The gunboats go outside and around the line of ships. The weather is fine, and we are getting along very nicely. This morning when I went on deck the sun was shing brightly. We are out of sight of land, and it is a splendid sight to see the great ships plough and plunge through the foaming "white-caps". The water is a very dark blue and the tops of the waves white as the sun shines on them in the morning, it is beautiful! I wish you could see it! The wind is coming up this afternoon, I guess we shall get shaken up sometime tonight.

Thursday Oct 31st This morning we had a little excitement just to keep up our spirits. About three o'clock a gunboat ran across our bows and sent up rockets, Just then the pilot boat saw breakers directly ahead only a few rods off, We were in a rather unpleasant position, If we went forward , we should strike on the rocks; and if we stopped the ship that we were towing would run into us, But no time must be lost a the Captain rang the bell to "stop her" and "back her" which was done; but when we stopped . the ship astern didn't and when nearly to us she rose up on a big wave and with the bow sprit reaching way over our deck coming crashing down onto us, carrying away one of our smokestacks, smashing one of the surf boats and the railing of the ship and breaking things generally. Quite a number of the men were on deck, asleep around the stacks and they began to think they were come for. Things looked rather squally for a while but we soon got clear of the ship and went on our way rejoicing, minus one smoke stack and one boat, but thankfully there were no holes in our hull. There is a report that one steamer had run in among the breakers, but I hope it was not so

The captain says it is Diamond Reef off Cape Hatteras that we came so near It is a great question where we are going. Some think New Orleans, some to one place and some to another, but no one knows, unless it is some of the high officers, but we can all guess and I guess we shan't go below Florida. Time will tell. You have probably heard by this time that we have started, and now you will be all anxiety to hear what our port is. I wish I could think loud enough as you could hear. You would know where and how I am every hour when I am awake, and some hours when I am asleep. I hope when you do here, it may be good news.

MEMORIAL MILITARY MUSEUM

Students and teachers from St. Joseph School listened to World War II Navy Armed Guard veteran Dick Fitz and retired U.S. Army Colonel Peter Mack discuss their service on January 31st. The program was attended by 72 students, in the fifth through eighth grades. Mr. Fitz, 98, spoke about his dangerous missions protecting Liberty Ships as they delivered supplies all over the world to American Armed Forces and to allied countries. Colonel Mack served two tours of duty in Iraq from 2004 to 2005 and from 2009 to 2010, evacuating injured soldiers and performing reconnaissance. The students listened intently to the details and asked insightful questions. At the end of the program, Mr. Fitz said it was a “great honor” to talk to the children. After meeting and hearing from two veterans, children who had family members who served in the military left wanting to know their stories too.

The museum has established a committee to research “Bristol Women Who Served in the Military.” The extensive initial research has focused on the 113 WWII Bristol service women. Yet by asking questions of friends and museum visitors, we have also learned names and details about Civil War and WWI nurses.

Dates in 2024 to Honor Military Women: Memorial Day: May 27
National Women Veterans Day: June 12
Armed Forces Day: June 29
Veterans Day: November 11

In WWI, Navy Nurse Corps had 1400 nurses on active duty. 19 died, half from influenza.

In WWII, 350,000 women served with the Armed Forces. U.S. Navy Nurse Corps 11,000 women and 57,000 in the Army Nurse Corps. As many as 543 died in war-related incidents including 16 nurses.

In Korea, 3,000 Army nurses, 4000 Navy nurses and hundreds of Air Force nurses saw action. Sixteen nurses lost their lives.

In Vietnam, nearly 10,000 women served, of which 90% were volunteer nurses. Eight American military women were killed.

Numbers inform; stories honor. We have just begun this project. Please, contact the museum to share the names of women who served in any time period.

We can also share a book we recommend: “The Angels of Bataan and Corregidor,” about 77 American military nurses who were taken prisoners of war by the Japanese.



BRISTOL SPORTS HALL OF FAME

The Bristol Sports Hall of Fame will host a Bristol Sports trivia night contest on **Wednesday, May 8** at the Bristol Historical Society starting at 7pm. Doors will open at 6:30 pm.

Teams of up to four will be allowed. Advanced sign up is encouraged by contacting Dave Mills at 860-930-8369 or at dajomills@yahoo.com. Or by contacting Bob Freimuth at 860-978-7517 or at robfreim@yahoo.com. Individuals may also sign up and will be assigned to a team.

This is a free event. Prizes will be awarded, and refreshments will be served.

Save The Date:

The BSHOF annual scholarship golf tournament will be held on **Monday, July 29** at Pequabuck Golf Course. For more information, please contact Don Soucy at 860-384-0256 or at drs.1947@yahoo.com or John Colapietro at 860-681-6003 or at john-hingestar@comcast.net.

SCHOLARSHIP INFORMATION

Do you know a college-bound Bristol senior with an interest in history? The Historical Society gives a scholarship each year of \$1500 to a Bristol resident heading to a two- or four-year college/university. Applicants in one of the local high schools can find the application in their guidance offices and those who do not attend a local high school can find the application online at our website at:

bristolhistoricalsociety.org/bhs-scholarship-fund/

Applicants are not required to have an interest in pursuing history in the future, but must have a minimum of a 3.0 average for 7 semesters. Applicants will be asked to write an essay based on a historical topic in one of the Society's annual ornaments. Ornaments can be viewed at the Society during our open hours Wednesday and Saturday from 10am to 2pm or call 860-583-6309 to arrange a time to see the ornament collection. Applications will be due **April 5th**.