



BRISTOL HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
FALL NEWSLETTER  
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*From the President's Desk*

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[www.bristolhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.bristolhistoricalsociety.org)  
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Noreen Zurell

It's a good day today. The sun is out, and the kids are getting ready to return to school tomorrow! The official sign that 'summer is over' and we're on our way to fall. I'm sure there will be many who will agree with me that this summer truly went by way too fast! And have you accomplished anything from your wish list or bucket list yet this year? So many things seem to get in the way along the way. Well, as we too fall in that same category, we have however managed to complete the Principal's Office/school resource exhibit. Come in and enjoy remembering days of old as you look thru the memorabilia found there.

I would like to take a moment to welcome our new Executive Board members: Noreen Zurell, President, Lisa Doyle-Bell, First Vice President, Rit Carter, Second Vice President, Jason Messier, Treasurer, and Board Directors include Joe Pinette and Jackie Vigue. Please congratulate them on their new roles if you see them. I would also like to take a moment to thank our outgoing Board members: Past President Maya Bringe, past First Vice President Steve Vastola, and outgoing Board members Bob Adamczyk, and Karen Pescarmona. The contributions made by this group of dedicated historians will certainly continue and we look forward to finding creative ways to fulfill our mission of preserving Bristol history and bringing it to current and future members of this community.

As I start my new role as your President, I am excited to hopefully bring new ideas to light and to also encourage younger adults and youth to learn more about Bristol's history.

Thank you,

Noreen Zurell, President

## ANNUAL APPEAL

The 2024–2025 Annual Campaign is coming soon and will appear in mailboxes late this fall. Please consider donating this year. Annual Campaign funds allow us to bring programs and events to the public throughout the year, to add artifacts to our collection of the city's history, and to maintain 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.

## **BHS ANNUAL DINNER RECAP**

The 2024 Annual Dinner was a celebration of Bristol's history and community. Everyone was able to catch up, bid on silent auction items, and have a wonderful meal, catered by the Rusgroves of Main Street Pint & Plate. Everyone enjoyed a competitive but good-natured round of Bristol Trivia – congratulations to winners Tom Dickau and Karen Pescarmona. Our 2024 Scholarship winner, Brianna Wood, read her winning essay about the Manross Branch of the Bristol Public library and touched on the many contributions of the Manross family. Past president Maya Bringe won the Volunteer of the Year Award, thanking all of those who had contributed their time and efforts for helping her during her tenure as President. Mary Etter of BARC spoke about her organization, which was the winner 2024 Community Service Award winner. Thanks to all who volunteered to make the evening a success!

### **2024 BHS SCHOLARSHIP WINNER OF THE YEAR**



### **2024 BHS VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR**



### **BHS COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD**

Every year the Historical Society presents a Community Service Award to a deserving nonprofit working to make Bristol a better place. This year's recipient was The Bristol Adult Resource Center, often known around town as BARC. Past president, Maya Bringe presented the award, noting that while many people first encounter BARC at the Hidden Café, the organization's reach has been broad and profound in the over 65 years that it has served the Bristol community. Providing services for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities that range from residential living service to job training and placement to providing a community and recreational activities, BARC has transformed the lives of their clients and their families while always remaining focused on providing the greatest quality of life and support for self-efficacy for those they serve. Executive Director, Mary Etter accepted the award and shared a glimpse into BARC's future plans, including a move of some operations to downtown and the upcoming unveiling of a new logo. We look forward to hearing more about BARC's success in



## **MEMBERSHIP NEWS**

### ***WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!***

Barbara Acampora, Carrie Bartucca, Michael Brauer, Katherine Carter, Marge Funk, Jan Gatzuras, Elizabeth McCabe, Lee McFadden, James O'Brien, Stephen & Lori Preleski, and Catherine Schilling.

### ***RECENT PASSINGS:***

Ann Gudegast, Bernadette Richard.

## ***MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL INFORMATION***

Membership renewal starts June 1<sup>st</sup> and runs through June 30<sup>th</sup>. New annual membership takes effect July 1<sup>st</sup>. If you haven't renewed your membership this will be your last newsletter. Membership forms can be downloaded from our website and can also be paid online with your credit card. There are instructions to walk you thru the process or stop by BHS either Wednesday or Saturday between 10am and 2pm to fill one out. Please consider renewing your membership. You won't want to miss any great programs or new events coming up! We look forward to seeing you!

## **PROGRAMMING**

### **RECAP OF BHS SUMMER PROGRAMS**

The Bristol Historical Society participated in the twentieth CT Open House Day on Saturday, June 8<sup>th</sup> with the grand opening of the former Principal's Office, featuring items from Bristol schools. This new exhibit is now open during our regular open hours on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 10–2PM.

A Walking Tour of the Federal Hill was held on Sunday, June 23<sup>rd</sup> with over 20 walkers taking part. The tour showcased historical homes and other buildings. Keep the date of Sunday, October 20<sup>th</sup> open and join us for another walking tour.

Our summer Third Thursday programs began with Kate Kelly, "the Photo Angel" on June 27<sup>th</sup>. Her presentation focused on her work reuniting long lost photos with the relatives of the subjects.

July's program on the 18<sup>th</sup> was presented by James Battaglio, a former Hartford times reporter, who spoke about the tragic price of Hartford's circus fire of July 6, 1944, this year being the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary. At the end of Mr. Battaglio's presentation, Bob Adamczyk spoke of those Bristol residents who attended the circus on that tragic day. Bristol lost one resident, Mrs. Marion Blanchard LeVasseur. For those who subscribe to the Hartford Courant, her son Jerry who survived the fire, was featured in the issue of July 6, 2024.

The summer programs came to an end on Thursday, August 15<sup>th</sup> with Bob Adamczyk's program "A Session with Sessions Trunk." Bob shared some history about the Sessions Family, important Builders of Bristol, with photos that haven't been seen in decades.

Stay tuned for a special Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> (September 13) program.

## **THIRD THURSDAY FALL PROGRAMS**

Our September 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday program welcomes Tom Dickau who will conclude the 4<sup>th</sup> installment of the “Bristol/Forestville Recycled: Then and Now” on September 19<sup>th</sup>.

Moving forward to October 17<sup>th</sup>, Rit Carter will give us an insight to Bristol in the days of the Great Depression (1929-1939). Most of our current BHS memberships were too young to understand or know what was really happening in Bristol. Come and find out!

Our final 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday program for the 2024 year will conclude on November 21<sup>st</sup> with the history of the Bristol Boys Club.

All programs are free to BHS members with a suggested donation of \$5. For non-members. Doors open at 6:30pm. Additional parking is available in the rear of the building and refreshments will be served.

Thank you to all who have attended our programs throughout the year, as well as the support of my Program Committee and the Board of Directors.

If you have any program suggestions for 2025, please contact a committee member, a Board member or myself.

Eleanor Wilson, Program Chair.

## **BRISTOL HISTORICAL SOCIETY GAMING CLUB NEWS**

Join us on September 21<sup>st</sup> from 11am to 1pm for the next monthly meeting of the Bristol Historical Society Gaming Club!

We are currently featuring Dungeons & Dragons and the locally designed favorite Burn 2D6. Open to all ages and experience levels.

Please contact Jay Messier at 860-841-1141 or [jaymess@rocketmail.com](mailto:jaymess@rocketmail.com) for more information!

## **CARO GRAY PORTRAIT**

When Bingham School closed, the Historical Society received memorabilia from the school including the portrait of long-time teacher and principal Miss Caro Gray (1911–1947). The collection committee is seeking donations to restore the portrait of this educator. If you attended or taught at Bingham or would like to contribute to the restoration of the portrait any amount would be appreciated. Checks made out to BHS can be mailed to us at P.O. Box 1393, Bristol, Conn. 06011–1393. Please note “Caro Gray Fund” in the memo line of your check.

## **BRISTOL HISTORICAL SOCIETY HOLIDAY CRAFT FAIR**

The 2024 BHS Holiday Craft Fair will be Saturday, December 7<sup>th</sup> from 10am to 4pm. This annual event is great way to usher in the holidays. There will be 20+ crafters/vendors, a bake sale, and our popular Christmas Boutique.

The Christmas Boutique will have a preview sale on Black Friday, the day following Thanksgiving Day from 10am to 2pm.

There are vendor slots available, but they fill quickly. If you, a friend, or family member would like to learn more or obtain an application, please contact Mary Houle at 860-582-7784. We always welcome any gently used Christmas-themed items that can be added to the Christmas Boutique inventory. Donations may be dropped off at BHS during our open hours on Wed. and Sat. from 10am until 2pm. (At this time, we can't accept artificial trees due to space constraints.) Your patronage and assistance are greatly appreciated, and we look forward to another successful event this year. Mark your calendar and plan to attend our fair, a traditional favorite at BHS.

## **SEPTEMBER'S FRIDAY THE 13<sup>TH</sup> PROGRAM**

Last year, we featured a special "Friday the 13th" program to showcase some of the fun, slightly less serious items we had run across in our research, and we've decided to bring the concept back in September. In honor of the October West Cemetery tour, presenter Maya Bringe will feature some stories from Bristol's cemeteries that don't make the cemetery tour, either because they are literally off the beaten path, more infamous than famous, or otherwise are never going to make the regular tour.

Learn a little bit more about some also-ran cemetery tour entries on Friday, September 13<sup>th</sup>, enjoy some refreshments, and learn where some of the other bodies are buried at 7pm. This program is free to BHS members, with a \$5 suggested donation for non-members. Doors open at 6:30pm and there is additional parking in the rear of the building. Volunteers will be taking registrations for the October West Cemetery Lantern Tours as well, for those interested in attending that event.

## **2024 WEST CEMETERY LANTERN TOUR**

The West Cemetery Lantern Tour is returning this fall! The Historical Society is proud to co-sponsor this event with the Bristol Cemetery Commission. For those who have not attended in previous years, during this evening guided walk-through West Cemetery, you will be introduced to some notable and intriguing cemetery "residents" (portrayed by very-much-still-alive local actors!) who will share some of their history with attendees. This is a fun way to spend an evening and learn a little Bristol history. Tours will take place on Saturday and Sunday, October 5 & 6. On Friday, October 4, there will be a dress rehearsal at 7pm at the Summer Street building for anyone who has ever wanted to come to the tour without walking through the cemetery.

Details will be available shortly on our website, Facebook, and in emails to our friends and members.

Tours take about 35-40 minutes to complete, and sign-ups will be available online and by email.

## MUM FESTIVAL PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST

As part of the Mum Festival season of events, the Bristol Historical Society is excited to host a photo contest as part of this year's Festival. Photos will be on display for visitors' viewing pleasure in the Marquee Tent on the festival grounds. Photo judging will be done by a jury of local professional photographers. The photos will be on display during the festival hours; Friday, 5:00 – 9:00 pm, Saturday, 12:00 – 9:00pm and Sunday, 12:00 - 2:00pm. Awards will be presented Sunday at 12 noon. Entrants are encouraged to collect their photos between 2 and 5pm on Sunday but may also retrieve them from the Bristol Historical Society later in the week during its open hours, or by appointment. ***For more details and an entrance please see the Mum Festival Photo Contest event on our website (bristolhistoricalsociety.org) under the Events tab.*** There are two divisions, Youth (0 to 17) and Adult (18 and up) and seven categories to choose from. 1) Portraits (formal and informal), 2) Architecture, landscapes and seascapes, 3) Action (sports, kids at play, etc., anything with movement.), 4) Agriculture and animals, 5) Photos from previous Mum Festivals, 6) Candid and 7) Miscellaneous. For any questions, please call or text Steve Vastola at 860-944-6567 or email him at [Activities@BristolHistoricalSociety.org](mailto:Activities@BristolHistoricalSociety.org).

## FALL FEDERAL HILL WALKING TOUR

This summer, the Society held a walking tour through Federal Hill. We were thrilled with the way it turned out, but we have to admit – it sure was hot that day! We promised several people who emailed or commented on the event that we would hold it again on a cooler day, so plan on October 20 for the second chance for this event.

Join us for a walk around Federal Hill for a tour of some historic homes and other buildings, with a nod to a couple places that "used to be." Discover a little more about some of the graceful homes, churches, and the green that give Federal Hill some of its character and their history. Tours leave from the Bristol Historical Society building at 1pm, 1:30pm, 2pm, and 2:30 beginning in the front parking lot. Come inside before and/or after for water, lemonade and a look at the exhibits.

Each tour participant will receive a booklet with information about the sights so they can recreate the tour on their own.

No registration is required. Parking is available in the rear lot. Suggested donation for the event is \$5 for BHS member and children under 14 and \$10 for nonmembers.

The walk will be about 35 to 40 minutes long. Provisions can be made for those who want to join us on the Federal Hill Green and skip the hill.

## BRISTOL SPORTS HALL OF FAME

The annual BSHOF scholarship golf tournament was held on July 22 at Pequabuck Golf Course. 96 golfers teed it up to help raise funds to support the \$12,000 in scholarships the HOF awards each year to local high school students. Golf results:

- Ladies' closet to pin..... Beth Laferty
  - Men's closet to pin..... Brian Rooney
  - Ladies' longest drive..... Gail Ericson
  - Men's longest drive.....Bill McNamara
  - Senior men's longest drive.....Bill Greger
  - Gross team winner.....Brian Fries, Nate Fries, Tim Pikiell, Joey Pikiell
  - Net team winner.....Jack Krampitz, Kyle Phelan, Tim Barrette, Mike Barrette
- Closest to pin contest:
- First place.....Tom Barnes
  - Second place.....Dave Mills
  - Third place..... Dennis Siegmann

***The BSHOF 2024 Induction Ceremony will be held on Friday, Nov. 22 at the DoubleTree in Bristol. This years' inductees include Jeff Bashaw, Russ Carter, Bob Fallon, Taylor Losey, Bunty Ray, Beth Rotko, Rick Schmaltz, and Cliff Snow III. Tickets are \$50 each and can be purchased on the HOF website at bshof.org or by calling Pat Parente at 860-919-8087. No tickets will be sold at the door.***



## MEMORIAL MILITARY MUSEUM

### Bristol Women in World War II

Among the hundreds of Forestville residents who answered the call to service during WWII were women from “the Village.” One life-long resident was Harriet C. Steed, who resided for 89 years on 68 Kenney Street. She chose to leave home to serve in the Army Nurse Corps, 109 U.S. Medical Evacuation Unit where she was a captain. Following D-Day, Capt. Steed was in one of the three Medical Evacuation units that moved undercover every three days following the troops as they fought their way across France. After each move, they set up the entire unit to treat the wounded from the nearby battle and then evacuated the soldiers to hospitals. After the war, Capt. Steed told her family that “nurses did everything but operate.” Her niece described Capt. Steed as “a stoic and quiet person...a courageous woman in the WWII fight for freedom.” Capt. Harriet Steed will be one of the women honored and celebrated in a 2025 exhibit and programs.

