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## BRISTOL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### FALL NEWSLETTER

Vol. 4; Vol. 10, Issue 3 – September, 2025 – November, 2025

## From the President's Desk

It's almost that time! I don't know about you but I'm more than ready for the cool breezes of Fall. This year so far has been challenging to us in many ways. While we have been thrilled to welcome many new members, this year some of our longtime volunteers and members passed way. May they rest in peace—they will be greatly missed and long remembered.

Outside the building, we continue to participate at the Farmers Market, and the Mum Festival is coming quickly. We will host the Mum Festival Photo Contest once again in the Arts & Culture Tent with several categories for participants to choose from. Inside the building, the Gaming Club that meets once a month on Saturday has both young and old enjoying our building. They are even hosting a gaming convention in November!

The month of October brings the West Cemetery Lantern Tour. And, for those who do not wish to walk the cemetery, we have added a dress rehearsal at BHS on Thursday evening. You can come and enjoy the program in comfort. The dress rehearsal even features a question-and-answer portion! The Federal Hill Walking Tour will also be held again this fall. October seems like a great time for a fall walk around Federal Hill.

Our daily *In Retrospect* feature has been extremely popular and generated many comments from an amazing number of people! With this year's series almost over, work has already begun on something different for next year's daily entries. The holidays will be upon us shortly and the Builders of Bristol Room will soon be transformed into The White Elephant Christmas Bazaar. The Friday after Thanksgiving, it will open to the public from 10am to 2pm and will be open on every Wednesday and Saturday during regular Museum Hours. And don't forget the Holiday Craft Fair on Saturday, December 6th from 10am to 4pm.

We've gotten you to almost the end of the year, and I didn't even touch on the great programs we will be having on our Third Thursdays—be sure to look inside to what Ellie and the program committee have scheduled and come and enjoy! Summer is over . . . it's time for settling in for local flavor, enjoying hometown histories, and friends!

Thank you,  
*Noreen Zurell, President*

## BHS ANNUAL DINNER RECAP

The 2025 Annual Dinner was a lovely celebration of both the Society and the Bristol community as a whole. Members and friends were able to catch up over drinks. The excellent meal was provided by JR and Leanne Rusgrove from Parkside Restaurant. Our intrepid bartender was again Courtney Laudati. Scholarship winner Luke Viens appeared via recorded message to read his winning essay about New Departure because he was traveling. Luke will be attending American University this year.

Holly Bouchard accepted the Community Service Award on behalf of the Friends of the Library. The Friends are responsible behind the scenes for many of the extras and programming so many of us in Bristol enjoy at our public library! They are also responsible for the event-of-the-season author luncheons that have brought authors like Amor Towles, Chris Bohjain, and Lisa Scottoline to Bristol.

This year's Volunteer of the Year Award went to the inimitable Marilyn Simmons, who from the moment she joined has made us better, more visible, and 1000 times funnier. Her efforts help shape the Historical Society every day.

This year we also honored Ron Tessman for his contributions to Bristol history. Ron estimates that he has taken about 300,000 photos of Bristol over the years - a remarkable gift, both to those of us who enjoy them now, and to historians of the future. We are grateful to Ron for sharing his talents with present and future members of Bristol's community.



Marilyn Simmons (right)



Ron Tessman

## MEMBERSHIP NEWS

### NEW MEMBERS

Mathew Biadun, Mary Grace Boyd, Michael Boyd, Catherine Elliott, Danielle Johnson, Joyce Ann Ptak, Ronald Tessman

### RECENT PASSINGS

Bob Kelly, Pat Thompson, Michael Jefferson

### *MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL INFORMATION*

Membership renewal starts June 1st and runs through June 30th. New annual memberships take effect July 1st. If you haven't renewed your membership this will be your last newsletter.

Membership forms can be downloaded from our website and sent in with a check or can be paid online with your credit card. There are instructions to walk you through the process or stop by BHS either Wednesday or Saturday between 10am and 2pm to renew. Please consider renewing—you won't want to miss any great programs or new events coming up! We look forward to seeing you!

### PROGRAMMING RECAP OF SUMMER PROGRAMS

In place of the regular Third Thursday programs for June, a Scavenger Hunt was held June 20th and June 21st. The Scavenger Hunt included museums and cultural institutions, public spaces and memorials, churches, historic buildings, businesses, restaurants, bars and coffee houses, bonus locations, public art and bonus point challenges. Our co-sponsor, The New Cambridge Project, located at 139 Center Street, was the site for the return of the finished hunts. The top three teams were the Skolcats, Two Holes and a Pole, and Mike & Grace.

Past President Maya Bringe's presentation on the Know Nothings in Bristol was well received by all those in attendance on Thursday, July 17th. The audience learned how the Know Nothings grew out of conspiracy theories, became the American Party, and flourished in the mid-1850's and how the Irish, although they endured suspicion and discrimination during the 1850s, survived and even thrived in later American decades.

Bob Adamczyk was the presenter for our Third Thursday, August 21st. The focus of the program was the Flood of 1955, which occurred 70 years ago. This memory of the flood's devastation in Bristol and Forestville was revisited with the screening of several photos donated to our collection by individuals over the years. After the screening, Bob spoke of Bristol's recovery from that point to June 24, 1957, when the Central Street bridge reopened and Bristol celebrated with a block party. To conclude the evening the audience shared their personal experiences and stories.



## FALL THIRD THURSDAY PROGRAMS

Our **September 18th Third Thursday program at 7pm** will feature Adam Paul Heller of Norfolk, CT, one of only a handful of artisans in the country who still creates handcrafted gravestones. His story, "Monumental Devotion" by Janet Reynolds appeared in the October 2023 issue of Connecticut Magazine. Adam's program will focus on the historic evolution of headstone designs based on cultural changes and preferences.

As October is National Stamp Collecting Month, Steve Vastola's **October 16th Third Thursday program** will focus on the cancelled postage stamps that speared on the Peck letters. In the nineteenth century, the Peck family were prolific letter writers. Letters in general are considered primary source documents that historians and researchers covet access to. The Bristol Historical Society is lucky enough to have in its collection a handful of these letters penned by members of the Peck family, and what we can learn from them is absolutely fascinating. Steve will also take a look at the envelopes these letters traveled in, which tell their own stories. Topics touched on during this presentation will include the Lincoln candidacy, the Civil war, international treaties, how the mail moved in the 1860s, and Pre-empire Germany.

On **November 20th** our Third Thursday programs for 2025 will conclude. The speaker for the evening will be former Bristol resident, Matthew Crowley. His presentation will be on the copper mines of Bristol. George Bartholomew attempted to mine the copper ore deposits of Northeast Bristol and sold half of his shares to Andrew J. Miller, who managed the mine. The mine required dozens of unskilled workers and provided work for new Irish Americans. In 1850 it was the first industry in Bristol to recruit Irish workers. There were 100 men employed, and their presence prompted the first Catholic religious observance in 1847, when Rev. Luke Daly came to hear confessions and celebrate Mass. The Irish Americans represented the beginning of an ethnically diverse community, part of Bristol's emergence into modern industrial society. Copies of Matthew's book, *Miners and Grass Hands*, will be available for purchase.

For all fall programs, doors open at 6:30PM. Programs are free to members with a suggested \$5 donation for non-members. Additional parking is available behind the building.

## 2025 ANNUAL APPEAL

The 2025-2026 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 conserve artifacts in our collection of the, 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 city's past for current and future residents of Bristol.

## FALL FEDERAL HILL WALKING TOUR

A Federal Hill Walking Tour is scheduled for **Sunday, October 12th from 1 to 3pm.**

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.

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.

## BHS GAMING CLUB NEWS

Join us on **September 20th from 11am to 2pm**, and the **1st weekend in November** for the convention!

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!

Here is the Big News:

The BHS Gaming Club is sponsoring our first gaming convention at the building.

Join us at The Bristol Historical Society. Sponsored by Ribhian Games & the BHS Gaming Club.

Gaming will include: D&D, Burn 2D6, Ribhian Games Heptaverse 2d10 System, Delta Green, Mothership & Board Games! The convention is open to the public, and open to everyone of all ages and experience!

Sign up here: <https://tabletop.events/conventions/dire-consequences-returns->

## COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE

The Collections Committee recently acquired a former member's dollhouse with all its furnishings. Rita Elliott, one of our active member/volunteers recently passed, and the family donated her beautiful dollhouse to us for us to display. We have also received additional items from the Barnes Company and a beautiful painting of Wallace Barnes.



## 2025 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 Friday and Saturday, October 3 & 4. Tours take about 35-40 minutes to complete. The rain date for cemetery tours is Sunday, October 5.



On Thursday, October 2, there will be a dress rehearsal at the Summer Street building for anyone who has ever wanted to come to the tour without walking through the cemetery.

More details and sign up information is currently available on our website. Watch Facebook and your email to our friends and members. You can also sign up by emailing [president@bristolhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:president@bristolhistoricalsociety.org). Reservations for the dress rehearsal can be made by calling the office at 860-583-6309.





## HOLIDAY CRAFT FAIR

Our 19th Annual Holiday Craft Fair will be **Saturday, December 6th from 10am to 4pm** this year. Admission is FREE. The fair features an array of creative crafters, vendors, a bake sale, and a "White Elephant" Boutique, where gently used holiday items are available for purchase.

As you prepare to deck the halls and unpack your tree trimmings and ornaments, we ask that you keep The Historical Society in mind . . . If you discover any unwanted or extra Christmas-related items, please consider donating them for resale at our fair. Donations can be dropped off during open hours on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 10am to 2 pm.

We also gratefully accept donations of baked good for the bake sale. Those items can be dropped off at BHS on Friday, Dec. 5th from 10am to 12 noon and 6pm to 8pm, or on Saturday, Dec. 6th from 8am to 10am.

Thank you for your perennial support. It makes our annual fair a success and supports the endeavors of The Bristol Historical Society throughout the year!

Mary Houle, Holiday Fair Chairperson

*Our Christmas Boutique will have a Black Friday Preview Sale on Friday, November 28th from 10am to 2pm. The Boutique will continue to be open after the Holiday Fair on Wed., Dec. 10, Sat., Dec. 13, Wed., Dec. 17 and Sat., Dec. 20 from 10am to 2pm.*

## MUM FESTIVAL PHOTO 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. A jury of local professional photographers will do the judging. The photos will be on display during the festival hours; Friday, September 26, 5:00 – 9:00 pm, Saturday, September 27, 12:00 – 9:00pm and Sunday, September 28, 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 form please see the Mum Festival Photo Contest event on our website ([bristolhistoricalsociety.org](http://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).

# BRISTOL SPORTS HALL OF FAME

The Bristol Sports Hall of Fame annual induction ceremony will be held on Friday, Nov. 21 at the DoubleTree in Bristol. The Class of 2025 includes, Brian Archibald, Gretchen Chaisson, Tom Dickau, Andrew Freimuth, John Greenleaf, David Hernandez, and Bryant Lishness.

Tickets for the induction are \$50 and can be purchased by contacting Pat Parente at 860-919-8087. Tickets may also be purchased online at bshof.org.

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The Bristol Sports Hall of Fame annual scholarship golf tournament was held on Monday, July 21, at Chippanee Country Club on a beautiful summer day. The HOF thanks all past inductees and friends of the hall for their support of the tourney by either playing, buying a ball for the closest-to-the-pin contest, or sponsoring a tee sign.

Melissa Beale was the winner of the closest-to-pin contest and received a \$1,000 cash prize. Brian Archibald came in second place and won \$200 in pro shop credit, while Mike Lantiere came in third and received \$100 in cash.

During the tourney, Gail Ericson was the ladies' closest to the pin winner, and Jim Ziogas was the men's closest to the pin winner. Nicole Urso was the ladies' long drive winner while Ben Palozza was the men's long drive winner.

The team of Bob Freimuth, Brian Rooney, Pat Hall, and Bunty Ray was the low team gross winners, while the team of Jack Krampitz, Tim Barrette, Mike Barrette, and Kyle Phelan came in second.

The team of Scott Fields, Tony Gagliardi, Colin Lombardi, and Brian Archibald was the low team net winners. While the team of Greg Fradette, Mark Ziogas, Mike Middletown, and Gary Soucy came in second.

The HOF is very appreciative of golf tournament co-chairs Don Soucy and Chris D'Amato for all their hard work to make the tourney successful. Special thanks also to Nicole Urso, Hal Kilby, and Jack Hines, as well as all other directors who contributed in some way.





## MEMORIAL MILITARY MUSEUM

**2025: The Year of the Woman** programs featured a series of three spring programs and will conclude the year with two additional fall programs.

**Bristol Salutes the Wallace Barnes Company Through the Letters of Lillian O'Connell** will be on **Saturday, October 25, 1:00 pm**. Beginning with the first war orders, Associated Springs went into full war production eventually tripling its payroll from 2,000 to more than 6,000 employees. Springs and steel were needed for trucks, Jeeps, airplanes, grenade launchers, aerial bombs, machine guns, land mines, antiaircraft cannons. Yet the 1,166 employees in service were not forgotten. Fuller Barnes instructed employee Lillian O'Connell to "be closer in touch with [service members] while [they] are away." The live reading from the "Dear Girls and Boys" will give a personal view about "news from the plants, news about your friends at home, news about your friends in the service."

The Memorial Military Museum will host a **luncheon for WWII Women Veteran Families on Sunday, November 8, at 1:00**. The luncheon will be a recreation of a 1943 event hosted by Bristol Nurses War Council.

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This year the Memorial Military Museum unveiled a special commemorative medallion honoring both male and female veterans. The medallion is a meaningful way to show support by remembering those who served. This distinctive medallion, priced at \$20, captures the spirit of military service making it a cherished keepsake for families and collectors alike.



## **Bristol Historical Society Reminds Members of Charitable Giving Opportunities**

The Bristol Historical Society is almost at the 25-year mark of its occupancy of the City's first Bristol High School, and then later known as the Freshman Building. The renovation and re-use of this significant structure would not have been possible without the support of the membership – the vast majority of which faithfully continued to pay dues during the first years of renovations when the BHS hosted no programs or events. In the last 23 years, the BHS has also benefited from a \$200,000 grant from DECD to kick it all off and an aggressive grant-writing program. Over \$1.3 million has been invested in life safety, fire, ADA, roof, repointing and the lovely aesthetic interior renovation that has allowed us to rent the Main Event Room for a host of events, adding to our revenue stream.

While the Board of Directors recognizes this effort, the forecast for the future means that there is always an emphasis on encouraging giving during our Annual Campaign, to solicit one-time gifts, to ask members to include us in their estate planning and wills, and/or to name the BHS in IRA distributions, life insurance policies or donor-advised funds, based on what type of tax benefit or deduction would be beneficial.

For those of you who have made pre-arrangements, please consider telling your family that you would like to direct memorial donations to the Bristol Historical Society. And, please remember that we are available for rent for all kinds of events from bridal and baby showers to birthday parties, class reunions and post-funeral receptions.

As we come to the close of another year, we thank you for your continued financial support and encourage you to ask your financial planner or tax preparer if any of these options may work for you.

