



BRISTOL HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
SPRING NEWSLETTER  
Vol. 11, Issue 2 – April, 2026 – June, 2026

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## From the President's Desk

### Welcome Spring!

www.bristolhistoricalsociety.org  
P.O. Box 1393 / 98 Summer Street  
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I'm sure many of you feel the same way hoping that winter is finally over! The renovations to the lobby have been completed and it looks great! We are ready to welcome everyone back with a full schedule of exciting programs.

During the month of February, we had some interesting visitors. Six members of the Farmington Senior Center Men's Club stopped by for a tour of our museum. Bob Adamczyk gave them a tour they won't forget, and they left knowing a lot more about Bristol. Shortly after that, "The Antique Detective" came by to tape a segment at our museum for her show which is featured on YouTube. It turned out very well. The program is here (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J7ri-dN7Ie8&list=PL9zqeVMluSQEoMFSir6oBsyyRvZ14fsyU&index=1>) but be sure to check out all of The Antique Detective content on YouTube for other local antique stores and museums.

The Scholarship Pasta Fundraiser will be this month. The reservation form can be found at the end of this newsletter. Please consider joining us if you haven't before. It's always a great meal at Parkside Restaurant, and helping a Bristol senior going to college is what it is all about.

We will end the month of April with a Cemetery Tour of the Lewis Street Cemetery – a very old and interesting cemetery. Have you been keeping up with the daily "In Retrospect: Bristol Storefronts"? There is a new one emailed out and posted every day on Facebook. They seem to be a favorite of many.

As we move from spring into the summer months, there will be more events celebrating our country's 250th anniversary scheduled for everyone to enjoy. We look forward to seeing you at one of them!

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Noreen Zurell

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Lisa Doyle-Bell

Second Vice President:

Rit Carter

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Pam Wilson

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Jason Messier

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Carol Denehy

Bristol Sports Hall of Fame

Eleanor Wilson

Past President:

Maya Bringe

Development:

Ellen Zoppo-Sassu

Historian:

Eleanor Wilson

Newsletter Editor:

Noreen Zurell

Thank you,  
*Noreen Zurell, President*

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## BHS ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting for the Society will be held at **6pm, Wednesday, May 27, 2026**. 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 10, 2026**, and closes **Monday, April 27, 2026**. Nomination forms will be available by email, in the office during open office hours, or on our website ([www.bristolhistoricalsociety.org](http://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 May 6, 2026.

Watch your mailboxes for a mail-in ballot or make plans to attend the annual meeting!

If you have any questions about the election process, please contact [maya.bringe@gmail.com](mailto:maya.bringe@gmail.com). The full set of bylaws is available at [www.bristolhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.bristolhistoricalsociety.org) and in the office at the Society at 98 Summer Street.

## SAVE THE DATE - ANNUAL TAG SALE

Don't Miss Our Annual Tag Sale!

**Friday June 5th: 9am to 2pm.**

**Saturday June 6th: 10am to 2pm.**

New this year: A boutique section featuring collectibles, and new unused items.

We will also be holding a bake sale during the tag sale!

Donated items for this year's tag sale will be gratefully accepted no later than Saturday May 30th.

The proceeds from this sale aid in funding our historic building! As always, thank you for your continued support!

## 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. Membership cards for annual memberships are always mailed in the fall mailing. However, when you come to any event, please ask in the office because your card should be available after your renewal has been received.

## MEMBERSHIP NEWS

### NEW MEMBERS

Membership remains the same, but watch your mailbox for renewal forms!

### RECENT PASSINGS

Kit Critchley

## PROGRAMMING RECAP OF WINTER PROGRAMS

While we don't have a January program, our 2026 programming year got off to its start with "Love Gone Wrong," a special February Friday the 13th program which was well attended and brought several new people into our building. Maya Bringe and Bob Adamczyk presented stories of some romantic scandals that popped up from time to time in Bristol's history. For example, there were runaway brides, public affairs, partner swapping, and more.

There is another Friday the 13th in November of this year. Stay tuned, maybe another program??

Our March 19th Third Thursday program featured the Dirty Blue Shirts and their program "The Web They Wove." These costumed historians shared stories of the women who waged war on multiple fronts as well as what they wore as their worlds were turned upside down. A very interesting program to mark America 250! Although the ladies performed at the Bristol Public Library in February, we still drew a moderate audience.

## INTO THE RIVER UPDATE

Following the publication of *Into the River: The Story of Bristol's 1896 Railroad Bridge Disaster* in *The Bristol Edition*, efforts to commemorate the victims of the 1896 disaster are now underway. Plans are currently in progress to install a memorial marker honoring the six men who lost their lives. The Forestville Village Association has voted to support the project by assisting in identifying an appropriate location and contributing half of the funding for the marker.

In addition to the memorial, upcoming presentations will share the story and research behind the project. A program titled *Into the River* will be held on Friday, June 11, at the New Britain Public Library. A second presentation in Bristol is scheduled for November, with additional details to be provided in the next newsletter.

Project updates, research highlights, and presentation information are also available on the *Into the River* Facebook page.

<https://bristoledition.org/blog/2026/02/06/into-the-river-the-story-of-bridstols-1896-railroad-bridge-disaster/>

## APRIL - JUNE PROGRAMS

The April Third Thursday program has a new twist this year: We have decided to hold our annual Pasta Dinner Scholarship on **Thursday, April 16th at Parkside Restaurant from 5-7 PM**. We won't need to worry about the weather or a snow date! Perhaps this change will draw more members or the public to attend, so mark your calendar and see the attached reservation form to be returned by April 13th. The scholarship will be awarded at our annual dinner on August 5, 2026.

Please join us at the Lewis Street (Old North) Cemetery on **Saturday, April 25<sup>th</sup> from 1-4 PM**.

The BHS and the Bristol Cemetery Commission will host a self-guided tour. There will be guides available if you need help to find those historic Revolutionary War graves and other Bristol residents.

With your \$10 entry fee each person will receive a booklet of biographical information.

The Third Thursday programs for **May 21st** and **June 18th** will be presented by the Memorial Military Museum at 7PM. Catherine Schilling will speak about her research and the discovery of a Bristol connection to the U. S. Military Cemetery in Margraten, Netherlands. Among the 8,301 graves of American soldiers are at least two Bristol servicemen. The Foundation of Adopting Graves American Cemetery Margraten formed in February 1945 as a Dutch expression of gratitude to their American liberators. To qualify, each volunteer agrees to adopt and regularly visit a grave and remain in contact with the soldiers next of kin in the U.S. By the second postwar Memorial Day in 1946, 100% of the nearly 18,000 graves had been adopted. Even today 80 years later, there is a waiting list of 700 Dutch citizens hoping to become adopters. Learn about the amazing results of this connection at our May program.

Carol Denehy will present her program on **Thursday, June 18th, also at 7PM** on the Wallace Barnes Company and a presentation of Lillian O'Connell's letters. The Wallace Barnes Company played a large role in the war effort, both in the significance of their springs to the war effort and because of the 365 of their employees who entered the armed forces, with 8 giving their lives in that effort. During the war, Fuller Barnes's secretary, Lillian O'Connell, sent many letters to each and every employee serving, updating them with the news back here and reports from their employees on the home front. The Memorial Military Museum was recently gifted a bound volume of all of these letters, and some of these will be read at the program. Learn more about the role of Wallace Barnes during the war and the remarkable effort of Lillian O'Connell to remain in touch with the company's service members.

Come and learn more about Bristol's history with these 2 interesting presentations. Programs are free to BHS members with a suggested \$5 donation for nonmembers. Refreshments will be served. Doors open at 6:30 PM and additional parking is available behind the building.

## COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE

Recent additions to the collection include a beautiful sign from the Crocodile Club at Lake Compounce, a ledger from the Bristol Community Chest from the 1920s, and photos of Bristol Hospital and the nursing program from Bristol Hospital. Thank you to all that have donated these and other remarkable items for preservation!

## BHS GAMING CLUB NEWS

Free all-ages role playing game club!

Play in one of our games, or bring your game and friends to our tables!

D&D, Burn 2d6, Enclave, Call of Cthulhu - we've got a table for everyone! If you need a space to host your own game - this is it!

We are always looking for more Dungeon Masters and players! Contact Jay @ 860-841-1141 or [jaymess@rocketmail.com](mailto:jaymess@rocketmail.com) for more info, or to arrange a new game!

Do you love role-playing games or are 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. All ages welcome! Free to play or just come learn more about gaming at the BHS gaming club. Additional parking is in back and the museum will be open so you can learn a little about Bristol while you're here!

Upcoming Game Days:

**May 4th 5-7 pm at Worthwhile Reads**

**May 16th 10-2**

**June 20th 10-2**

## BRISTOL'S AMERICA250 COMMITTEE

Here are some of the events that are planned this quarter to celebrate the Semiquincentennial year:

- April 7, 6:30 pm The Amistad Story: Connecticut's Role in the Fight for Freedom presented by Discovering Amistad at the Bristol Public Library.
- April 11, Saturday 7:30 pm Concert by the Nutmeg Symphony Orchestra and the Bristol Chorale. This will feature music from American Composers. Free, but please reserve a ticket at [www.NutmegSymphony.org](http://www.NutmegSymphony.org).
- April 25, Saturday 1-4 pm Self-guided tour of Lewis Street (Old North) Cemetery. Guides will be on site to add info and help visitors find sites.
- April 30, 6:30 pm Plantscape 1776: Historical Plants and Transplants presented by Master Gardener Susan Eisenhandler at the Bristol Public Library.
- May 13 - September 6, The American Clock & Watch Museum will display timepieces that show how American clock and watch makers have commemorated the signing of the Declaration of Independence.
- May 28, Thursday, 6:30 pm, America 250: Liberty to Legacy-Exploring 1776 and Hamilton presented by Michael Langlois of Oratory Arts at the Bristol Public Library.
- June 12, Thursday, 6-8 pm, American Clock & Watch Museum, Sip & Craft Night. Paint and decorate your own wood caddy for the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday. \$20 per person includes craft supplies, drinks, and snacks.
- June 14, Sunday, 1-4 pm, Celebrating America250, Federal Hill Green. Celebrate our country's birthday with reenactors, performers, activities, and the state's first troubadour who has written a song about Bristol and its history. Admission is free.
- June 14, Sunday 5 pm, Bristol Brass and Wind Ensemble, Prospect Methodist Church, free
- June 27, 6:30 pm Bell City Night with the Bristol Blues, Muzzy Field. Come celebrate the history of Bristol!
- June 30, Tuesday, 6:30 pm, America 250: Arlington National Cemetery: An Historical Overview presented by author Cynthia Parzych at the Bristol Library

# BRISTOL SPORTS HALL OF FAME

The Bristol Sports Hall of Fame annual Jack Hines/Scholar Athlete Program was held on Sunday, March 29 at the DoubleTree in Bristol with 350 people in attendance. 135 student athletes were honored not only for their athletic accomplishments, but for their academic achievements as well.

At the program, six \$2000 scholarships were awarded to 2 students from each of the three local high schools.

BC/Alfred & Trudy Greenleaf Memorial Scholarship.....	Lily Kirk
BC/Leary Family Scholarship.....	Julia Pikiell
BE/Christopher Calnan Memorial Scholarship.....	Corinne Sutula
BE/Christopher Calnan Memorial Scholarship.....	Kaelyn Gonzalez
St. Paul/Roberge Family Scholarship.....	Amelia Jennings
St. Paul/Brian Farrell Sr. Memorial Scholarship.....	Charles Pankenier

Also at the program, D J Green and Ryan Cook received the Joe McGinn Award.

The BSHOF annual scholarship golf tournament will be held on **Monday, July 20** at Pequabuck Golf Course. Special closet-to-pin golf balls can be purchased for \$50. First place receives \$1000 cash, second place winner receives a round of golf with carts for four, and third place receives \$100 cash. More information about golf ball purchase and other tournament info can be obtained by contacting Don Soucy at 860-384-0256 or at [drs.1947@yahoo.com](mailto:drs.1947@yahoo.com).



## LEWIS STREET CEMETERY TOUR

Step back in time and explore the Lewis Street (Old North) Cemetery on Lewis Street (opposite Lexington Street). Lewis Street Cemetery is the final resting place for many of Bristol's Revolutionary War soldiers. Learn about them and some of other notable Bristol residents buried there.

The tour is self guided and a booklet will be provided with information about the gravesites. Guides will be on hand to fill in details, provide extra information, and help visitors find their way around the site.

Admission is \$10 and includes the booklet. The event will be from **1 to 4pm, Saturday, April 25**.

# MEMORIAL MILITARY MUSEUM

A chance discovery of a box of World War II military photographs in a Berlin, CT, thrift store led to an unexpected international collaboration. Efforts to identify the soldiers in the images connected Memorial Military Museum member Cat Schilling with a Dutch WWII remembrance project. After World War II, the citizens of the small town of Margraten have dedicated themselves to honor the over 10,000 servicemen buried in the nearby Netherlands American Cemetery and Memorial. Residents adopted graves and descendants continue to care for them, adding photos and information about the servicemen where possible. Learn the remarkable story of the Bristol men, Hedvig Jussila and John Victor Quinto, buried in this cemetery and how Cat Schilling's collaboration with the overseas group allowed Jusilla's son to see his father's face for the first time and brought an image for Quinto to the Netherlands. Join us on **May 21st, 7:00 pm**, at the Bristol Historical Society for "Crossing Oceans: A Journey of Two Men Across Time, Distance and Generations."

"Dear Boys and Girls" began the first letter that Miss Lillian O'Connell wrote in November 1943 to employees who left the Bristol Divisions of Associated Spring Corporation to enter the military service. She continued that greeting in the over 100 handwritten letters beautifully composed to "boys and girls" who appreciated receiving them. For the next three years, 400 mimeographed copies were printed monthly and then mailed to men and women serving all over the world. Fuller Barnes had chosen Miss O'Connell as she wrote in that first letter "to be in closer touch with all of you . . . containing news from all the different departments in the plants, news about your friends at home, news of your friends in the service . . . news of the company activities, all the items you would stand around and gab during the noon hour or around the pie wagon when we were all here together." Lillian spent endless hours reading the military letters, piecing their news with hometown and factory news to write with such joy, humor, insight, seriousness that writers and recipients so far away must have felt that they were still all together. Please join us when we present a video based on Lillian's letters on **June 18th, 7:00 pm**.



Netherlands American Cemetery



Lillian O'Connell chats with service members





BRISTOL  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY

SCHOLARSHIP FUNDRAISER  
PASTA SUPPER RESERVATION FORM  
THURSDAY, APRIL 16, 2026  
5-7PM  
PARKSIDE RESTAURANT  
224 N MAIN ST, BRISTOL, CT

PRE-PAID RESERVATIONS REQUIRED BY APRIL 13. ABSOLUTELY NO WALK-INS!!

ADULTS - \$30.00  
CHILDREN (UNDER AGE 10) - \$20.00

MENU: Pasta, sausage, meatballs, chicken, salad, bread and dessert

Please cut off below and send to Bristol Historical Society, PO Box 1393, Bristol, CT. 06011-1393  
with your check to reserve your reservation. (860-583-6309)

RESERVATION FORM

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
PHONE NO. \_\_\_\_\_

Option #1. Indoor Seating: # \_\_\_\_\_ persons @ \$30.00 ea. = Total \_\_\_\_\_  
# \_\_\_\_\_ children under 10 @ \$20.00 ea. = Total \_\_\_\_\_  
Gluten Free: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Option #2. Take-out orders: # \_\_\_\_\_ persons @ \$30.00 ea. = Total \_\_\_\_\_  
# \_\_\_\_\_ children under 10 @ \$20.00 ea. = Total \_\_\_\_\_  
Gluten Free: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE INDICATE TIME FOR PICK-UP: (5:30PM or 6:00PM) \_\_\_\_\_

If you cannot attend, please consider making a donation. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO:  
BRISTOL HISTORICAL SOCIETY, PO BOX 1393; BRISTOL, CT 06011-1393 (860-583-6309)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!