

An Exhibition You Don't Want to Miss!

The Westport Historical Society continues its year-long celebration of Westport's 175th birthday as a town with the opening of two new exhibits featuring our community's artist colony:

The Sketch Class:

A Westport Tradition &

Art from the Heart:

A Glimpse into the Lives of Naiad & Walter Einsel

on view until April 30, 2011

Both exhibits feature artists who have lived and worked here and in our surrounding towns – whose talents and creativity helped give our communities their reputation as thriving arts colonies.

The Sketch Class: A Westport Tradition takes a look back at an event that takes place wherever a group of artists reside and work. The sketch class is not really a class – but a gathering of artists and hopefuls who like to draw or paint from live models.

These get-togethers take place in studios, basements, playrooms or any enclosure large enough to accommodate a raised model stand, several easels and chairs, lights and an assort-



ment of odd props for those who wish to compose objects into their renderings.

"Being an artist is a solitary vocation," says artist Howard Munce, the exhibit's co-curator. "It's the camaraderie. Every hamlet where there are artists has at least one sketch class where they can come together. A good example is the Westport art colony. Since its beginnings in the 1900s it has supported at least one sketch class that met periodically to work from a live model. One such sketch class, attended by local illustrators was held at Walker's Frame Shop located near Klein's on Main Street."

Models usually hold their poses for a half hour with a fifteen-minute break, so that they can regain their equilibrium and circulation. Soft music, coffee and a snack are part of the ambience. The rest period also allows anyone interested to take a look at what others are doing and check to see how their talents compare. Apart from the camaraderie and

the serious intensity of the sessions, one is constantly reminded that when faced with the intricacies and subtleties of the human body, the old song's assurance that the hip bone's connected to the thigh bone is more easily sung than it is to draw.

The Art from the Heart exhibit in the Little

Gallery at WHS features the art of Naiad and Walter Einsel. During their forty-seven years together, they created and exchanged unique gifts of art; drawings, collages, sculptures



and poems – expressing their love and admiration for each other in the form of Valentines and other anniversary missives. Many of these exquisite handmade creations will be on display. Although Naiad has kept her hand in the art world, she has spent time creating an extraordinary book also titled *Art from the Heart* as a tribute to Walter and to their enduring love. Copies of the book are available in the WHS Gift Shop.

President's Message



Over and over again, as I ask members of our WHS Board and Advisory Council WHY they joined the WHS and why they have made such a large and

long-term commitment of time and service, I have been struck by the immediacy and uniformity of their answer: "The people".

Yes, Wheeler House and our Bradley-Wheeler cobblestone barn are wonderful. Yes, we have fabulous exhibits, programs, tours and fundraisers. Yes, we have our unique Museum of Westport History, vintage room displays, a great Gift Shop, fascinating Collections of costumes, artifacts and oral histories and Westport's only secure, underground, climate-controlled, fireproof Archive. Any one of these may attract a first-time visitor, but it's a friend's invitation that prompts them to join, and—lucky for us—it's the delight of congenial collaboration on worthy projects with new-found friends that prompts them to stay...And stay...And stay!

At this year's Annual Meeting on Jan. 30, we took a moment to recognize three of our MVPs (Most Valuable PEOPLE). I am posting their Award cita-

tions below. Next time you see them, be sure to thank them. Meanwhile, see our Annual Report at www.westporthistory.org/annualreport to learn what they, our amazing Staff and our other VVs (Very Valuable Volunteers) have been doing for us ALL. Maybe it will inspire YOU to become a more active member? Let us know!

The Board of Directors, Membership & Staff of the Westport Historical Society hereby proudly salute and offer profound gratitude to:

Volunteer of the Decade, 2000-2010, Mollie Donovan, "The VOICE" of the Westport Historical Society, whose THREE decades of exemplary and tireless leadership, loyalty, vision, creativity and passion, for the acquisition of Wheeler House in 1980, for the development of a Heritage Tree decorated with ornaments by famed local artists, for serial involvement in WHS book and video projects, and for conceiving, developing, mounting and promoting over 50 Exhibits (3 per year, "the FACE" of the WHS), all to celebrate the story—and especially the arts story—of Westport, Connecticut for everyone in Our Favorite Town to enjoy.

Volunteer of the Year, 2010, Elliott Netherton, Senior V.P. Finance, C.F.O. and Financial Guardian of the Westport

Historical Society, whose sixteen years of exemplary and tireless fiscal, investment and fundraising leadership, integrity and prudence, on behalf of the Membership, Endowment and Assets of the non-profit Westport Historical Society, through growth and adversity, challenges and opportunities, created the foundation for this year's remarkable recovery and progress toward improved revenues and returns, and a brighter future for our Society, and its historic buildings, archive, collections, programs and exhibits, for everyone in Our Favorite Town to enjoy.

Ellen Naftalin, Exhibits Director Extraordinaire, whose six years of tireless service to the development, mounting, opening, closing and dismounting of Exhibits, and creation of adjunct Programs, working with staff, volunteers, myriad guest curators and assorted contractors, at Wheeler House, has known no limits for the hour of day, night or dinner, and has charted new frontiers in the realms of patience and civility, all while triumphantly delivering untold joy to thousands of visitors for whom Exhibits and Programs are the face and the essence of our organization, for everyone in Our Favorite Town to enjoy.

Dorothy E. Curran, President

The Great Long Lots: WHY?

Local Puritans use Common Law Deeds to Defy the Restored British Monarchy

Restoration Politics in Puritan Lands

In 1671, when western Westport still was Fairfield, the colonial Connecticut Town of Fairfield allocated numerous acres of land, comprising almost 60 square miles of uncut woodlands, to a few heads of families. Even in today's terms this was an enormous dividend to those individuals. That act seems to have been done in a great hurry. Prior to 1662, new arrivals into Fairfield were given land in an orderly

manner, based on need and good standing. But events in Britain changed the mindset and raised alarm within the community of the Puritan fathers in Fairfield.

Those events included the restoration of the English monarchy under Charles II in 1660. First, Charles II's government began to challenge grants of land previously made in the colonies under Oliver Cromwell's government. Those challenges alone raised tremendous anxiety to the previously unchallenged and pre-

viously self-governing Puritan communities.

In 1664, Charles also granted a patent of jurisdictional rights over the lands between the Connecticut and Delaware rivers to his brother, James, the Duke of York. "Acknowledgement of this grant meant that all undivided lands in Connecticut west of the Connecticut River would become the Duke of York's to do with as he please." (*Weston, Farnham p. 29*). Over the next 10 years the local governments of the plantations

and colonies of Connecticut did everything that they could to keep the land out of the hands of the Duke, who became James II, last Catholic King of England, replacing Charles II upon his natural death.

Challenging monarchical authority, the Town of Fairfield gave to a select few nearly one third of what is today Westport and Fairfield and nearly all of what is Weston and Easton. That very hurried distribution or "dividend" of property established our great Long Lots.

Boundaries.

Based on Jim Hoe's 1975 work ("Who Owned Your Land 200 Years Ago?", *The Weston Forum*, April 9-April 15, 1975, p. 3), the lots were narrow strips of land. They began at today's Long Lots road or its extensions and ran northerly ("eleven o'clock from North). The eastern extensions were: Hull's Farm Road, Brookside Drive, Fairfield Woods Road and Wilson Street. The eastern most boundary paralleled the Stratford Town line.

To the west, the Long Lots Road extension ran along a line approximating today's Post Road to the Saugatuck River, the 1670 western boundary between Fairfield and Norwalk. To the north, the lots extended to the Cross Highway in Redding. That places the boundaries of the grants approximately 10 miles to the Northwest. In contemporary terms, the northern boundary ran from west to east, extending from Old Redding Rd., Diamond Hill Rd., Great Pasture Rd., Cross Highway (Redding), to Church Hill Road.

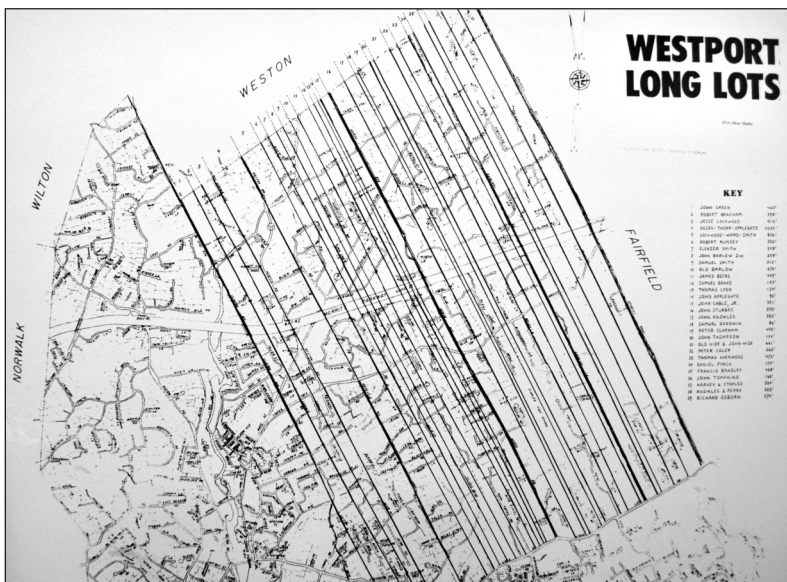
Lot Dimensions.

The 1670 and 1671 town meeting sessions did not determine the exact size of individual lot parcels, but legislated basic principles for the "dividend." After the initial appropriation they dele-

gated the allocation calculation to others.

Grants were based on the value and size of the estate of individual Fairfield freemen, with additional value awarded to families with more members. Lot widths varied from 50 feet to 1,155 feet and extended nearly 10 miles, from Long Lots Road and extensions to what today is Cross Highway in Redding. Therefore some individuals received small amounts that could not be easily farmed, and others received enormous acreage.

The names of the original Long Lots owner families remain with us today, including: Gray, Bradley, Burr, Banks,



Wakeman, Hull, Jennings, Osborn, Sherwood, Barlow, Lockwood, Cole, Frost, Wheeler, Lyon and many others.

Some agriculture occurred on the larger and more clearly defined lots. Common local lore reports that the land required tremendous clearing. Often the land was sold and resold, such that tracing the land ownership requires weeks of research. Some owners gave or sold plots to sons and daughters, who were expected to clear the land and build homesteads or farms. The trees that were cut were often sold as commercial lumber. The unusable wood was processed into charcoal. In addition to the agricultural use of the land, new forms of agricultural commerce furnished additional earnings for some of the occupants.

The further north that the new owners farmed the more independent they became, forming new communities including Weston and Easton. Those individuals even today refer to themselves as "Outlivers." They were removed from the Town of Fairfield politics and social life, and eventually much later they would separate even from their original families.

Roads in the Long Lots.

In 1671 there were no significant roads in that enormous section of land. So, the town fathers voted and approved of the allocation of land for roads. This they did without much consideration of how the roads would affect future land claims, but they nevertheless proceeded.

They did not name the roads. They enumerated the west to east passageways as nine cross highways. Today we know them as: the Cross Highway in Westport, Coleytown-Catamount Roads in Westport, Kettle Creek-Cartbridge Roads, Norfield-Steephill Roads, Lord's Highway, Godfrey Road, an unknown and

un-built road that was intended to run along today's Weston-Ridgefield boundary, Giles Hill road in Redding and the last is the Cross Highway road in Redding. The latter delineates the northern boundary of the Fairfield Long Lots.

The north-south roads were also ordered after the initial 1671 allocation. At specified intervals several 66 foot wide "highways" (4 Rods) were approved. We know these roads today as Park Avenue in Bridgeport, Weston Road and Georgetown Road, North Avenue and Fanton Hill Road, Gilbert's Highway, Eleven O'clock Road and Davis Hill Road.

Most were physically constructed over time in the 18th century. Some were not completed. Many were divert-

ed and no longer correspond to a South to North direction. All caused great distress for the town. The surveys to record them needed to be done and re-done. Often the roads crossed into and separated property boundaries and required negotiation to resolve. As one could imagine, roads often must give way to natural obstacles and need to work-around steep inclines, streams, valleys and hills. So, we see that some roads today simply end or divert severely. But they are still with us today, much as our Puritan grandfathers legislated.

Common Lands.

In addition to roads, the town fathers voted to establish two common parcels. The first, Half-Mile Common, was one-half mile wide, and ran from the Norwalk boundary east to Stratford. Its northern border was approximately Long Lots Road and extensions. The southern border is no longer visible and can only be accurately drawn to scale

one half mile to the South of that road, extending parallel from the same west and east borders.

The other common, one mile in width, was called the Mile Common. It ran eleven o'clock, from north to south, from Long Lots Road to Cross Highway in Redding. The two commons intersected at Long Lots and formed an inverted T. The Mile Common bisected the massive Long Lots parcel into West and East portions, one mile apart.

In 1672 the town voted to create the road that we now call Long Lots Road, because the lack of a good border road caused confusion and legal disagreement even as early as 1672. To resolve some of those disagreements, part of Half-Mile Common was divided among some litigants. Later, over time, the common lands were allocated to other Fairfield freemen, in part to resolve other claims and lack of survey precision. Only in 1682 was a survey of the

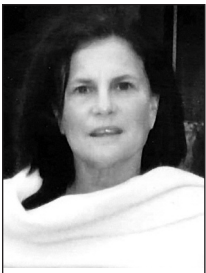
lot fronts completed. And even then, the survey was inaccurate and subject to criticism and legal dispute.

Impact.

According to George Penfield Jennings in his book, Greens Farms Connecticut: the Old West Parish of Fairfield, "Many of these family possessions have come down through the centuries to the present day. However, this plan worked against later settlers, especially the poorer ones, who often could not buy a home site..." (Jennings, Greens Farms...p. 16).

In the 21st century we drive across Long Lots Road. Some of our children attend Long Lots School. We go about our daily business while right in our midst lies an incredible story of Puritan and British Restoration history, one that has impacted our town to his very day!

From the Executive Director's desk...



Collaboration and community building is the theme of the New Year at the Westport Historical Society. There is something in the saying "strength in numbers," and our organization thrives on more involvement and increased participation. Time constraints prevent us from doing everything we might like to do and prioritizing is important. However, our member-supported organization is vibrant and growing; finding the right mix of programming and opportunities for our members to be involved is always the challenge. However, I like to think that where there's a will, there's a way and there are many ways you can be a part of the work we do.

If you've got time available during the week, you can greet visitors who come to see our gallery exhibits or to shop at our Remarkable Gift Shop. If talking about history is your thing, we'd love to give you all the background information you would need to be a Wheeler House and Cobblestone Barn tour guide. If you have time on Saturday afternoons, we'd love to have you join us as a greeter or guide. We also take groups on tours of Main Street and we can always use additional guides for these walking tours.

If you're interested in meeting a great group of people and having a lot of fun at the same time then consider joining

our Hidden Garden Tour committee which is currently meeting to plan for the spectacular self guided garden tour scheduled for Sunday, June 12th. Everyone is welcome and gardening experience is not required. A variety of skills make this event one of the most highly regarded community events in Westport. If you'd like to share those skills with us, we'd love to have you on board.

Public Relations comes to mind immediately and if anyone can help us spread the word, please let me know.

Maybe you are an artist, singer, dancer, chef, writer or historian who likes to share your passion with other people. We have a wonderful gallery space to offer presentations on many different topics. Our youth programs are very popular and we love to have guests come and talk to the children about a variety of subjects that tie in with our weekly theme. Building a community and bringing people together is what the Historical Society is working toward in its programming and special events.

To give real service one must add something that cannot be bought or measured, and that is sincerity and integrity. Thank you for being a part of the Westport Historical Society family.

Blessings and great joy,
Susan Gold

Westport Barn Survey: Putting Westport Barns on the Map

Even today, barns and stone walls define our Connecticut landscape and set it apart from farm communities anywhere else in America. They help explain the struggle to survive that drove many early settlers west or to alternate careers in maritime trading, the railroad or manufacturing. Farms here were smaller and less mechanized than later farms in the Midwest. Since barn architecture changed over time, there are English-style barn types (gable roof, eaves-side entry) built in 18th and 19th century Connecticut that are unknown in later Midwest settlements (where gambrel roof barns are more common).

Since this past November, 2010, after receiving special training from the CT Trust for Historic Preservation's State-Wide, Town-by-Town Windshield Survey of Barns, the Westport Historical Society's own Barn Survey Team, volunteers operating in pairs, have been driving up and down every street in town, counting barns and "suspected barns". Without intruding on private property (unless the owners volunteer their permission), the Team's goal has been to find and document barns (including photos), then verify, classify and count how many of them—buildings once used for agriculture or to house carriages or farm equipment—are still standing. The work continues, but—so far, right here in Westport—we have spotted between 200 and 300!

Once the WHS Survey Team has gathered barn photos, locations and field data, we upload results to www.connecticutbarns.org. Some of these barns may be eligible for CT Trust preservation assessment or assistance grants. All will be marked on a large **2011 Map of Westport Barns** to be exhibited at the WHS's upcoming "Back to Our Roots" Exhibit, starting Memorial weekend and running through August.

Prior to this survey, there was no easy way to count Westport's barns. According to WHS house historian, Bob

Weingarten, property transfer/deed information often omits mention of barns or simply lists them as "outbuildings". Some barns converted to houses only have anecdotal evidence of their pre-residential use. Newer barns—unless they have an agricultural use—don't count.

Why, you may wonder, are old barns so important? Yes, barns and stone walls add a unique character to the New England landscape. Yes, they are living artifacts of Westport's past as a farming community. Barn construction styles provide insights about the people and activity that shaped life here, including the builder's country of origin and the type of crop grown. For example, our own WHS Bradley-Wheeler hept/octagonal cobblestone barn may have been used for the storage of hops, an ingredient in the making of beer! More commonly, Westport still has onion barns, horse barns, dairy barns, carriage barns and even a couple of corn cribs. Most date to the 19th century, but some are older, and—because techniques were evolving—construction styles help to determine date. Many have been adapted to other uses, ranging from residences to guest houses to garages, but that, too, is part of the story.

And, yes, in Westport, barns hold special interest because, as farms were abandoned in the early 20th century, they often were purchased by the artists flocking to town from New York City. Many of these artists had grown up on Midwest farms, so they knew the value of barns and converted them to studios. Thanks to this adaptive use, the barns were preserved, which may help explain why—and where—Westport today still has so many barns.

Where are Westport's remaining barns? There still are barns in every part

of Westport, but some may be surprised to learn that most of them are south of the Post Road, in the most populous and "improved" sections of town. Joni Andrews and Peter Jennings found about forty altogether in Greens Farms, including two properties with three barns each. In the area bounded by the Post Road East, Sherwood Island Connector, the Saugatuck River and the Sound, Jack Fanning and I have found nearly 100, of which forty, including the landmark Gault barns, stand on and around South Compo Road. (A number of artists, musicians and writers favored this area near the beach, trolley and train station, which once was thick with onion farms.) West of the river, Katie Chase and Andrea Cross have found another forty. In the rest of town, Larry Untermeyer, Sal Porio, Linda Gramatky-Smith, Ed Gerber,

Maggie Feczko, Betsy Wacker, Mary Lee Clayton and Lorraine Feliciano have noted over sixty more.

And, finally, yes, little by little, Westport continues to lose its barns. Some, like the red barn



scheduled for demolition at 7 North Avenue, are familiar landmarks. Here's an example of one we would have missed, except for a call-in by owner, Martha Durham. From Hillspoint Road, it looks like a 2-car garage. However, this photo from the side yard shows that it truly once was a small barn, complete with hayloft, probably for horses and a wagon or carriage. An unfortunate accident involving a neighbor's car has forced the Town to condemn the structure for demolition.

If you have a barn that should be added to the Westport Survey, please contact us at the WHS, and be sure to add a visit to this summer's "Back to Our Roots" exhibit to your calendar. Meanwhile, follow our progress at www.connecticutbarns.org.

—Dorothy E. Curran



Westport Historical Society
Get Connected.

25 Avery Place
Westport, CT 06880

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Westport, CT
06880
Permit No. 69

Special Kudos to Our Members:

Events Coming Up at WHS

(For Event Details:
Visit www.westporthistory.org)

April 2: Frames: Then and Now with Troy Amuso, owner of Troy Fine Art Services at 2pm

April 5: Sketch Class with Elizabeth & Howard. Experience drawing a live model in the gallery at 2pm

April 16 -20: April Vacation Fun Days For Children ages 5-10

April 27: Bus Tour of Significant Places in Westport

May 30: Back To Our Roots Exhibit Opening After the Memorial Day Parade

June 4: Toast the Tour Party for the Hidden Garden Tour

June 12: Hidden Garden Tour To Celebrate Back To Our Roots Exhibit

Special Thanks

Special thanks to Ellen Mahony, M.D. LLC, board-certified plastic surgeon and one of our valued sponsors for the January 30, 2011 Opening Reception for The Sketch Class and Art from the Heart exhibits! To learn more about Dr. Mahony's practice, her academic, surgical and therapeutic background and the cosmetic procedures she provides, call 203-221-0102 or log onto www.drellenmahony.com

To learn more about how your business or professional practice can support the WHS as a sponsor, call Susan Gold, WHS Executive Director, at 203.222.1424.

Save The Dates

**The 20th Annual Hidden Garden Tour
Sunday, June 12 • 10am -5pm**

Stroll Exquisite Private Landscaped Gardens

**Garden Marketplace On Veterans
Green • 9am - 5pm**

Discover A Trove Of Garden And Home Treasures At Our Beautiful Marketplace

**Toast The Tour Wine Tasting Party
Saturday, June 4 • 5pm -9pm
In the beautiful new Dragone Classic
Motorcars showroom**

Kudos to our honorable legal counsel Ken Bernhard who is receiving the Westport First Award, a wonderful recognition of his dedication and commitment to the community