

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 mis-sives. 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

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.

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Westport, CT 06880

Non-Profit
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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