



Windsor Historical Society

News



Volume 28, No. 3

A quarterly publication of the Windsor Historical Society of Windsor, Connecticut

September 2010

Come to the House Tour!

Saturday, September 11 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Step Into Eight *Doorways To Our Patriotic Past!*

Connie Thomas, Administrative Assistant

Warm up your car and pick up your friends for a day of touring beautiful homes in Windsor. The Windsor Jesters theater group will greet you at the door as well as portray and share details of early homeowners. Volunteers inside the homes will point out significant architectural features. Research for these homes was conducted by Ruth Budlong, Beverly Garvan, Sandra Morrow, Willa Nemetz, Shirley Quintero, and Lodia Vola.



John and Sarah Strong House
96 Palisado Avenue



1174 Windsor Avenue

1174 Windsor Avenue

Step into this mid-18th century, saltbox-style home and hear Harriet Loomis (1784-1876) describe how the Revolutionary War created hardships for Windsor citizens. Enjoy exposed beams, wide floor boards, and wood paneling.



1194 Windsor Avenue

1194 Windsor Avenue

Come meet Erastus Case (1847-1918), a homeopathic physician, who built this lovely, Colonial-revival home with its classical portico and palladian window around 1900. He kept an office in Hartford. One day while descending from the trolley in front of his home, he was hit by a touring car and sustained extensive bruising but no broken bones. He considered the advent of automobiles a mixed blessing!



1195 Windsor Avenue

1195 Windsor Avenue

There have been school houses in the Stony Hill area since 1778. Cora Alford will tell you about them and her tenure as a teacher here in 1899. Of the 38 pupils registered at the school, only 62% attended regularly, much to the consternation of the Board of School Visitors. Pupils would skip school to attend to farm tasks. Cora earned about \$324 per 36-week school year and left after two years. When the Town of Windsor decommissioned the school in 1969, local citizens didn't want to lose the building so the Friends of Stony Hill School was formed. Led by preservationist Bob Geisel, the group raised funds and restored the school.

Stony Hill School

(Continued on page 3)

WINDSOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Our Mission

The Windsor Historical Society aims to inspire public awareness and appreciation of the diverse peoples, places, and events that contribute to Windsor's evolving history. We preserve and interpret Windsor's historical record through active collecting, research, exhibitions, programs, and communications in the belief that an understanding of history can provide individuals and communities with connections to the past, a sense of belonging in the present, and responsibility for the future.

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Open Tuesday - Saturday
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Closed major holidays

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Director's Message

Christine Ermenc, Executive Director



Strategic Planning

It's whirlwind times we live in, don't you think? Technologies shift and swiftly become obsolete, historical research is rapidly becoming more digitally based, and Windsor's population continues to diversify. The Society is changing too. Ten years ago this month I was brand new at my post. Administrative Assistant Connie Thomas, Curator Elaine Olson, and a host of dedicated and talented volunteers including former Director Bob Silliman helped me come up to speed. Not all of us had computers or telephones at our desks, let alone access to internet communications and research.

Within a year or two, the Society embarked on a round of strategic planning. We developed a mission statement for the Society (see top of masthead). From this statement arose goals. We sought to open our doors wider to the greater Windsor community with a "mosaic of programs" connecting people through their common interest in history. We realized that good publicity was key to attracting visitors to our site and helping them see history as interesting, relevant, and fun. We felt our collections, facilities, and grounds needed more attention. Of course this meant we had to strengthen our financial base and make our organizational systems and procedures as efficient as possible while at the same time trying hard not to lose all of the joys of a less formalized working environment.

In the past seven years, we have accomplished much but not all of what we set out to do in our strategic plan. We've gone through several cycles of economic boom and bust. Our town celebrated its 375th birthday in 2008. We are creeping ever closer to addressing the structural and interpretive needs of our historic Strong House, a process that may cost close to half a million dollars. How do we prepare? Educator Julia Baldini worked hard to strengthen the Society's relationships with schools and teachers. Her grant funding ended in August, but there is still much work to be done connecting younger audiences with Windsor history. Are we harnessing social media effectively in furthering our mission? How can we continue to attract members and volunteers? It's time to start planning again and lift our heads high enough above the whirlwind of everyday activities to see the forest, not just the trees!

Thanks to a \$13,000 Technical Assistance grant from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, we have engaged consultants Deidre Tavera and Bruce Putterman to help us formulate a new strategic plan to guide us through the next few years and shape the future of the Society. If you have interest in participating, please contact me or Strategic Planning Chair Bill Harris. The year 2011 marks our 90th anniversary as an organization. Strategic planning will ensure that the Society reaches its 100th birthday as a healthy and vibrant organization, one that effectively connects people of all ages with the history of our town.

(Continued from page one, House Tour)

380 Broad Street

Speaking of erratic attendance, **Windsor's future School Superintendent Daniel Howard (1864-1967) grew up attending school "from time to time."** Curious and intelligent, he was largely self-taught and obtained a masters degree from Brown University in 1898. Daniel and his wife Sarah built this thirteen-room, American foursquare house around 1920 and both lived out their lives here. He loved local history and wrote *A New History of Old Windsor* in 1935 as well as organizing the town's 300th anniversary in 1933. Subsequent owners have been careful to preserve the architectural integrity of the home.



Daniel Howard, c. 1898
WHS Collections
2010.1.42

390 Broad Street



Watercolor by
Fanny Bissell.
WHS Collections
1964.18.1

This 17th-century saltbox house with seven working fireplaces was owned by Deacon John Moore (1614-1677) of the prolific family of woodworkers. One of his talented descendants was Fanny Loomis Bissell (1798-1862), a self-taught artist who lived in this home and created floral watercolor drawings now in the Society's library. The current owners are gourmet cooks. Be sure to notice their kitchen and the way modern appliances have been designed to blend in with the architecture.

85 Preston Street

Normand and Natalie Brainard constructed this California-style bungalow in 1922. Normand lived here for 61 years until his death at the age of 98 in 1983! Their son Richard (1919-1995) will share his life story with you when you enter the home. **Richard's grandfather Edwin Brainard was Connecticut's Lieutenant Governor in the 1920s and Richard enjoyed a privileged lifestyle graduating from Loomis Institute and Yale University.** The current owners have carefully updated and extended the house by artfully melding the new with the old. Enjoy the paneling, built-in architectural details, and porches which add gracious living space to the house.

40 Pleasant Street

William Shelton (1805-1860) had this eight-room, Federal/Greek Revival transitional home constructed in 1830 of brick from **William Mack's newly opened brick yard at the east end of the street.** At the rear of his lawn was an industrial area along the Mill Brook that comprised his hat-making business. Many of his business records exist in the Society's archives. Most of the beautiful antique furniture throughout the home was retrieved from the attic and barn and restored.



William Shelton
WHS Collections 1997.20.2



101 Hayden Station Road

101 Hayden Station Road

This 1500 square-foot bungalow was built in 1928 from a Montgomery Ward catalog kit called **Wardway Homes.** Did you know that the word "bungalow" originated in India from the Hindi word "Bengali" or "house in the Bengal style"? Bessie Allen Foye (1889-1993) lived in this house most of her very long adult life. She died at the age of 104 years. Imagine the times she witnessed as she lived through two world wars, the Korean and Vietnam wars, the assassination of presidents McKinley and Kennedy, the advent of automobiles, Prohibition in the 1920s, and the Great Depression in the 1930s. This home is decorated with Stickley Craftsman décor and furnishings including lighting and bathroom fixtures, a 1928 telephone, and Japanese grass-cloth wallpapers.

Buy your \$20 tickets at the Society, Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. or from our website, www.WindsorHistoricalSociety.org. Tickets are also available at Ashley's Distinctive Jewelry at 555 Day Hill Road, Bart's Drive-In/Beanery Bistro at 55 Palisado Avenue, and Bill Selig Jewelers at 161 Broad Street. If you wait until the day of the tour, the cost will be \$25. There's a \$2 postage fee to mail tickets and a tour brochure with a map.

The Mills on Mill Brook

Beverly Garvan, Historian, and Barbara Goodwin, Librarian



A Sawmill on Mill Brook. Artwork by Don Lang, 1964.
WHS Collections 2010.1.14

Mill Brook today flows gently and quietly through Windsor, but it was once the busiest industrial area of town. In the early days, before the larger mills came to the Farmington and Connecticut Rivers, the small mills along the local streams were an important part of the town's local economy. The brook's source is Barber's Pond, which is partly in Windsor and partly in Bloomfield. It meanders across Bloomfield Avenue and flows down through the meadows south of Pigeon Hill Road. It then runs southeasterly through what is today the Tradition Golf Course. At this point it goes under Poquonock Avenue, originally known as "Mill Road," and then empties into the Farmington River near Bart's Drive-In (you all know where that is!). A gently flowing stream like this was a natural to dam up and create ponds with waterwheels for power.

Lloyd Fowles, former chairman of the history department at Loomis School, spent many hours researching the mills on Mill Brook. In 1964 he presented a lecture on the topic to the Windsor Historical Society members. His talk was recorded and is the basis for much of the information in this article. The transcript is in the library's Oral History Collection.

At Barber's Pond there was a good-sized dammed up pond. There was said to have been a sawmill on the

site, but unfortunately nothing is known about who ran it. In the early 1900's this same pond was used as the town water source. It was necessary to build a forebay or small reservoir with a 108,000 gallon capacity at the corner of Mountain Road and Bloomfield Avenue to hold the water pumped from Barber's Pond. Later on a standpipe was built close to the pumping station; it was demolished in 1953. The town began purchasing water from the Hartford Water Bureau (later the Metropolitan District) in 1925 because Barber's Pond had been condemned.

In the Burns' family pasture just west of I-91 between exits 37 and 38, there was a dam approximately 15 feet high which held back another good-sized body of water. There might have been two waterwheels there. It is thought to have had a paper mill on it, but it is not known who operated the paper mill. Mr. Fowles believed this mill burned down just before the Civil War. The chimney and foundations remained there for many years, and he had measured them to be about 40 by 50 feet. Until recently you could still see this site from I-91 with cows roaming around the pasture. Now it is all overgrown along the highway and this scenic view is lost.

On the east side of I-91, where the brook runs along the golf course, there was another dam and a pond with an undershot wheel that powered an 18th century stave mill. It is likely that thousands of barrel staves were fashioned here to be made into barrels for storing and shipping food and other products. Then just below were another dam and another pond which had a sluiceway running along the western side. A sawmill was situated here with an overshot waterwheel. The water went over the wheel and then came back into the brook. This larger pond was known as the Warham Mill Pond. The sawmill was operated by the Barber brothers, Nathaniel Hayden Barber and John Henry Barber, probably in the first half of the 19th century.

At this point the brook split in two with one stream running under the grist mill and one running to the north of it, both passing under Poquonock Avenue. It rejoined itself beyond the grist mill. Just north of the split is where the Windsor Canning Company was located. It was established in 1894 by Horace Ellsworth, R. N. Fitzgerald, and H. Sidney Hayden. The plant was used seasonally for the canning of

tomatoes, apples, squash and pumpkins. Immense quantities were put up during the season which lasted from the middle of August to the middle of December. Most of the products were packed under private labels.

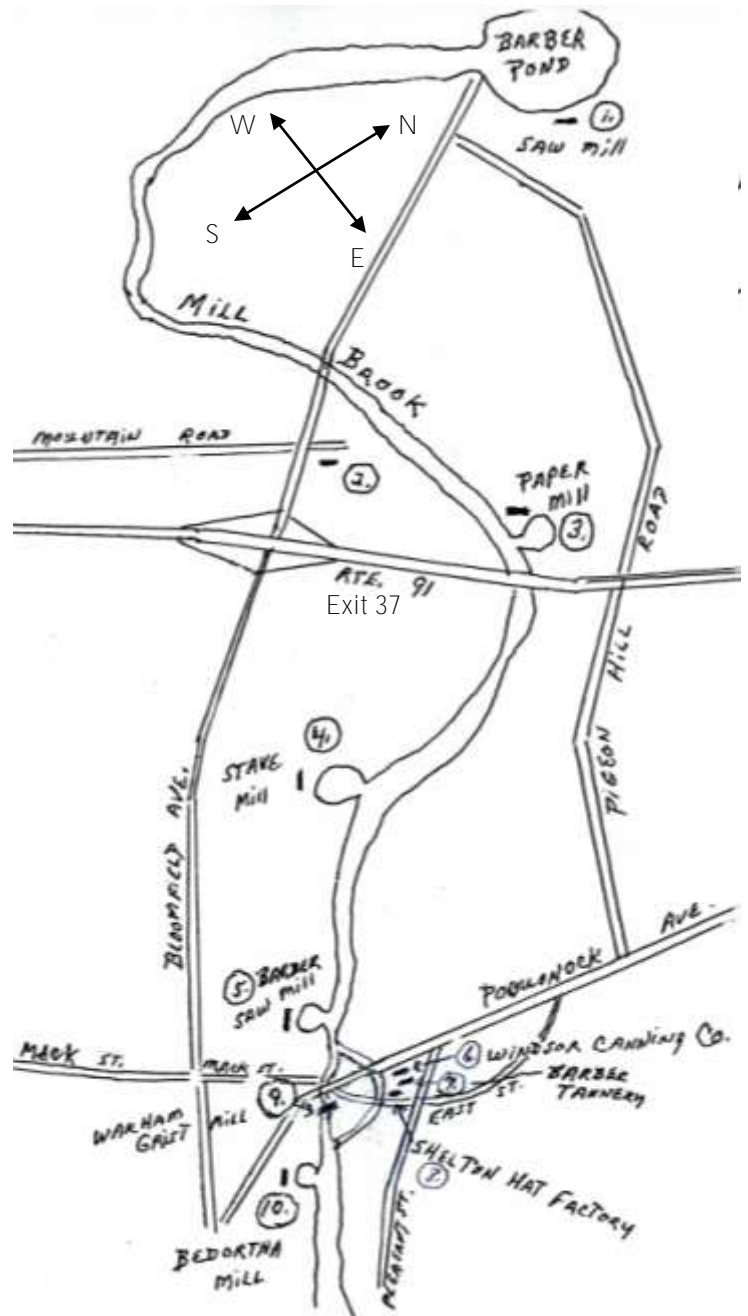
The cannery was built near the site of an earlier business, a tannery. This was run by Jerijah Barber Sr. and later by his son Capt. Jerijah Barber Jr. during the latter half of the 18th century. The Barber millstone can be seen in the courtyard of the Society's museum. The millstone was used to crush oak or hemlock bark to produce the tannic acid necessary for processing leather. The Society also has account books from their tannery business and other ledgers which show that the Barber family was into a little bit of everything: tanning, brick making, shoemaking, sawing lumber and, last but not least, supplying their neighbors with moonshine from their cider mill.

Just south of the cannery was William Shelton's hat mill. His brick house (which will be shown on the Society's September 11, 2010 house tour) stands on the corner of East Street and Pleasant Street. During the 1830's Shelton was in partnership with Walter Pease Jr. They made hats of wool, sheep skins, muskrat, rabbit, mink and beaver in a manufacturing shop on the property behind his house near Mill Brook. They also had a retail store in Hartford.

The original Warham Mill stood on what is now the corner of East Street and Poquonock Avenue. This mill was established in 1640 when the town gifted it to Rev. John Warham, the first minister to the Windsor church. Tradition says it was the first grist mill in Connecticut. It also is the basis for the name of this old brook; it is probably the oldest "Mill Brook" in the state. John Warham wore two hats -- on Sundays he supplied his flock with spiritual food and during the week material food.

Moving easterly down the stream you will find the site of the last mill on the brook, Bedortha's Mill. This was established about 1870 by Lawrence Bedortha and was in operation for nearly a century. It was originally a wheelwright shop, but then it changed to the manufacture of levels and cutting tools for cigars. The buildings were demolished in 1963, the last remnants of all the small mills which had existed along the brook.

Today as Mill Brook flows gently down to the Farmington River, it is almost a forgotten brook. However, it saw a lot of history along its banks during the nearly two centuries that it was the hub of Windsor's economic life.



The Mills on Mill Brook
Map created by Beverly Garvan, 2010
(map is not to scale)

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Barber's Pond | 6. Windsor Canning Co. |
| 2. Forebay and standpipe | 7. Barber tannery |
| 3. Paper mill | 8. Shelton hat factory |
| 4. Stave mill | 9. Warham gristmill |
| 5. Barber sawmill | 10. Bedortha mill |

The Filley Records

Susan Smoktunowicz, Volunteer, and Barbara Goodwin, Librarian

It is always a pleasure for a historian or genealogist to find documents which add detail and dimension to the individuals and communities being studied and which fill in the gaps between the official records. The *Filley Records* are such a document.

Between December 1781 and May 1884, Horace, Horace, and William Filley, three generations of the Filley family in Windsor, Connecticut, are credited with keeping a chronological record of those who died in their community. While many of the entries contain only the name and date, others offer a richness of detail that may include age, race, cause, circumstances, and place of death. Henry Stiles, in his two-volume work *The History of Ancient Windsor*, references the manuscript *Memoirs of John Filley, 4th* which he consulted as the source of some of his Filley family genealogy. John Filley, 4th (1767-1832), Horace Filley (1779-1857), Horace H. Filley (1809-1884), and William H. Filley (1844-1919) comprise a direct line of descent and provide a plausible provenance for the *Filley Records*. When the *Filley Records* are used alongside Henry Stiles' book, *Cemetery Inscriptions in Windsor Connecticut*, and other materials, a broader picture of individuals, their lives and circumstances can be drawn.

The *Filley Records* have long interested the genealogists and historians focused on the Town of Windsor. The May 1993 *Windsor Historical Society Newsletter* introduces us to the *Filley Records* and some of the more richly detailed circumstances surrounding the deaths of Windsor's residents. The September 1999 *Newsletter* highlighted residents of African-American descent identified in the records. Copies of these articles can be found on the Society's website in the Newsletter Archives under the Research Library tab at <http://www.windsorhistoricalsociety.org>.

For those of us who like to research in person from original records, we can find the original unpublished manuscript of the *Filley Records* in the Archives of the Connecticut State Library in Hartford. To access this manuscript, one must apply for an Archives Card.

See the CSL web site www.cslib.org for more details. CSL staff retrieves manuscripts three times each day on Tuesdays through Fridays and once on Saturdays. The call number of the manuscript is 974.62 W76fi.

A WHS staff member recently made the trip to Hartford to examine this resource. The *Filley Records* volume is about 4" x 6" in size and bound in rich brown leather with decorative stitching. The neatly inked entries were inscribed on the light green, lined paper pages by a variety of hands for over one hundred years. Additional pages at the front of the book document the donation of the original volume to the State Library in 1929 by Miss Mary C. Welch, Regent of Windsor's Abigail Wolcott Ellsworth Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Interestingly, one of the chapter's most esteemed early members was Anna Maria Benton, niece of John Filley, 4th and the person who provided the manuscript to Henry Stiles.

For those of us who cannot make a trip into Hartford to use the original, a transcription of the *Filley Records* is available. In the 1920's, Katherine Barker Drake, a member of the Abigail Wolcott Ellsworth Chapter, NSDAR copied the *Filley Records* from the original manuscript. The Chapter included her transcription as an appendix in the 1929 edition of its book *Cemetery Inscriptions in Windsor Connecticut*. The second edition of this book, released in 2000 contains an all-name index to both the cemetery inscriptions and the *Filley Records*. The Windsor Historical Society has a copy of this indexed version in its library. Copies may also be purchased for \$30 from the Abigail Wolcott Ellsworth Chapter through its Regent, Beth Witham, 18 Chelsea Lane, Windsor. A full-text copy of the original 1929 publication (no index) is also available online by using the Title Search feature in the library catalog at

We are now able to offer a free wireless connection to the Internet for library visitors using their own laptop computers.

Transitions

Christine Ermenc,
Executive Director

It is with mixed emotions that we announce the departure of WHS Educator Julia Baldini who is leaving her position to become Program Coordinator at the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center in Hartford. Julia has been a real contributor in her two-and-a-half years at the Society initiating bicycle tours, summer camp programs, an institutional FaceBook page, and improvements to our website. Her work with the Windsor Conversations on Race group has resulted in strategic new partnerships and collaborative programming for the Society.



Julia Baldini

From the moment Julia arrived, she engaged Windsor teachers and listened carefully to how they wanted Windsor history materials presented to their students. The Society had school programs already, but after listening to teachers bound by the objectives of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Julia developed new programs and modified existing programs to make them more interactive and more closely aligned with the school curriculum and state standards.

Julia's position was grant funded by the Heritage Advancement program of the Greater Hartford Arts Council, the Connecticut Humanities Council, and supported by the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving and you, our members. While we will miss Julia's passion for history and fitting history to the needs of audiences of all ages, we are truly happy for her as she takes up her new position. We feel fortunate to have an inside ally at one of the premier historic house museums of the region as we begin to contemplate restoration of the Strong House.

You can save a tree and receive this newsletter digitally. Let us know how you'd like to receive it at jalberti@WindsorHistoricalSociety.org.

Volunteers

Front desk and administrative: Bill Allen, Marsha Anderson, Marilyn Boehm, Marie Bruhn, Doris Butler, Barbara Byczkiewicz, Pat Congelosi, Carolyn Doyle, Bev Garvan, Bill Harris, Cora Lee Jones, Dee Jubrey, Sue Lescher, Mary Ann Maksimoski, Steve McGoldrick, Yvonne McGregor, Josephine Mitchell, Willa Nemetz, Libby Parker, Carlton Parkinson, Mary Ransom, Dottie Simon, Ron Thomas, Jim Trocchi. Garden tour: Diane Cameron, Ruth Fahrback, Marilyn Boehm, Shirley Quintero, Patty Day, Janice Provost, Sandy McGraw, Dee Jubrey, Ed Paquette, Claudette Johnson; Legal counsel: Kevin Ferrigno of Reid & Reige, PC; Library: Elaine Brophy, Marie Bruhn, Carolyn Doyle, Beverly Garvan, Sara Hawran, Sandy McGraw, Shirley Quintero, Susan Smoktunowicz, Colette Yeich; Soldering: Lon Pelton.



Volunteers Needed

More volunteers are needed to help us manage our front desk, conduct school tours, and do traveling-trunk shows for groups. Interested? Curious?

We are offering training sessions on Wednesdays from 10 a.m. until noon on September 15, 22, and 29. We will walk you around our property and into the two historic houses, explain front-desk procedures, how to relate to our visitors, navigating the research library, and lend you a copy of our **Interpreter's Manual**. We'll ask you to shadow with an experienced volunteer until you feel comfortable conducting your own tours.

Please RSVP at info@WindsorHistoricalSociety.org or call Connie at 860/688-3813, ext. 102.

Upcoming Events at Windsor Historical Society

All programs are held at 96 Palisado Avenue (Rt. 159), Windsor, CT, unless stated otherwise.
For more information and reservations, call 860/688-3813 or see <http://windsorhistoricalsociety.org>.

Saturday, September 11 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
HOUSE TOUR: Visit eight Windsor homes at this Society fundraiser. Tickets include a map and house descriptions.
COST: \$20 in advance; \$25 day of the tour.

Tuesday, September 28 7 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
LECTURE: THE STORY BEHIND THE 1633 PLYMOUTH TRADING POST. Al Boehm explains an amazing and unpredictable set of events during the 1630's as Windsor is first settled as a trading post and rapidly grows into a town within a colony. Birthday cake will be served! COST: \$6/adults; \$5/seniors & students; \$4/Society members.

Tuesday, October 19 7 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
LECTURE: NEW ENGLAND'S OTHER WITCH HUNT. State Historian Walter Woodward will tell us how Connecticut put seven people to death, including two from Windsor, years before the Salem, MA, witch trials. COST: \$6/adults; \$5/seniors & students; \$4/Society members.

Saturday, October 30 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.
GENEALOGY ROAD SHOW: Consult with professional genealogists who can answer your family-history questions. A certified graphoanalyst can analyze your ancestor's (or

your) handwriting. Reserve a 30-minute slot by October 29.
COST: \$6/adults; \$5/seniors & students; \$4/Society members.

Saturday, November 6 3:30 p.m. - 5 p.m.
TEA PARTY: Tea and Victorian Lady performance with Kandie Carle. Location to be determined. Make your reservation by 11/5.
COST: \$10.

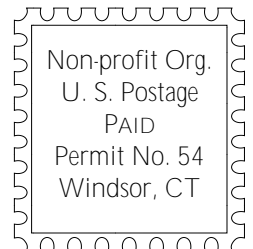
Tuesday, November 9 7 p.m. - 8 p.m.
MIRACLES OF PHOTOSHOP: Len Hellerman will demonstrate how this software can turn your photographs from flat to fabulous! COST: \$6/adults; \$5/seniors & students; \$4/Society members.

Friday, November 19 6:30 p.m. - 10 p.m.
AUCTION: Enjoy our wines, sweets, and hors d'oeuvres as you select the ideal holiday gift or getaway as well as some "feel good" offerings. COST: \$25. Held at Birch Meadow Banquet Facility, 76 East Dudley Town Road, Bloomfield, CT.



**Windsor
Historical Society**

96 Palisado Avenue, Windsor, Connecticut 06095



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



The Founders Monument on Palisado Green, 80 Years Old