



Windsor: Bridging Centuries, Bridging Cultures

Erin Stevic, *Exhibit Designer*

In September 1633, men from the Plymouth Colony and their Algonquin allies sailed up the Connecticut River. Their destination was the mouth of the Farmington River, where the Englishmen built a trading post and Windsor took shape.

How Windsor grew from wilderness outpost to twenty-first century suburb is the subject of the Windsor Historical Society's new permanent exhibition, *Windsor: Bridging Centuries, Bridging Cultures*, which opens in September 2011. Covering four centuries and two galleries, the show features objects from the Society's collections along with several pieces borrowed from other institutions. Text and interactive displays will address a range of historical themes, pose questions about the past, and bring Windsor's story into the present.

By 2008 the original Windsor history exhibition was showing its age. The walls and raisers were scuffed. Paneling on the old exhibit cases was delaminating and bowing. Light-sensitive objects like textiles and photographs had been on display for too long and needed to be rotated out of the gallery. With the Windsor Historical Society's 90th birthday coming up in 2011, the staff felt it was time to give the permanent exhibition an overhaul, update, and enlargement.

The Society received a planning grant from the Connecticut Humanities Council to design the new exhibition. Planning started in February 2009 when the staff invited museum professionals, historians, and educators to a brainstorming session. The group

Come celebrate the Society's 90th Birthday with the free opening of *Windsor: Bridging Centuries, Bridging Cultures*. Tuesday, September 27th, 5-7pm. Refreshments will be served.

toured the original exhibition, visited collections storage, and talked with the staff. They encouraged the Society to build an exhibition focusing on Windsor as both a unique community and one representative of the Connecticut River Valley. With so much material to cover, they recommended dividing the exhibition into two sections, with a colonial gallery focusing on Windsor's early history and a second gallery discussing the nineteenth century to the present.



The Society's South Gallery under construction for the *Windsor: Bridging Centuries, Bridging Cultures* exhibition

The Society also surveyed its members to learn what they wanted in a permanent exhibition. Survey questions included what historical themes and interactive activities they found most interesting. The responses spoke to Windsor's human side. The daily lives of Windsor's people, whether English founders or Baby Boomers, caught their attention. They found scandals fascinating, citing the colonial witch trails and Amy Archer-Gilligan murder trial as top favorites. Migration, both in and out of Windsor, also piqued their excitement. Whether sensational or ordinary, people were the common thread. These findings encouraged the staff to populate the exhibition with written reminiscences, oral histories, portraits, and personal objects.

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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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Director's Message

Christine Ermenc



This September, the Society celebrates its 90th birthday. Looking back at our first annual report in September 1922, then-President George Crosby chronicled a busy first year of activities for the Society. Membership had grown to 276 individuals. Collections of books and historical objects had been donated, but without a building these were stored in private homes. Signboards had been placed at the Hartford and Windsor Locks borders along Route 159, and temporary markers had been installed at historic sites around town. The Windsor Council of Young People's Societies and the Junior Chautauqua had donated funds for a "community house." Membership meetings were held. A group of dedicated and motivated people had embarked on the business of building our organization.

Ninety years later, people of all ages are still working together to keep the Society strong and community-spirited. Our membership stands at roughly 1,400 individuals and collections objects continue to pour in. Volunteers worked throughout the summer to place signs produced by the Windsor 375th Committee on historic homes around town. Public programs offered over the summer included a genealogy series and a bicycle tour. Starting this month, twenty high school juniors in an advanced-placement art class will start work on an exhibition involving historic Windsor bridges and buildings. Their exhibition will open here in January 2012. We will mark the Society's 90th birthday this month with the opening of a brand-new exhibition, *Windsor: Bridging Centuries, Bridging Cultures*. This exhibition could not have happened without the support of so many of you.

The Connecticut Humanities Council contributed \$100,000 in two separate grants for exhibition planning and implementation. The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving contributed \$150,000 over three years to support the work of our librarian and educator at a critical time in the exhibition's development. Windsor Federal Savings, Rabbett Insurance Agency, and Alstom Power contributed over \$20,000. Carmon Funeral Homes, Vantis Life, and Griffin Land contributed \$4,000 more. Several generous private donors sent \$1,000 checks. A friend of Windsor Historical Society well into his nineties stretched his budget to contribute \$500 commemorating women founders of Windsor, in particular Priscilla Grant. "You'd have thought Windsor was founded by a bunch of bachelors" he wrote, referring to traditional town histories. Another member on a fixed income in upstate New York who raised ten children and ran a farm sent \$25 with apologies that it could not be more. A just-married young woman who interned with us for many years as a home-schooled teenager sent \$15. These gifts, large and small, have paved the way towards the opening of an exhibition that will connect thousands of visitors of all ages with our community's history over the next ten years.

Please come to our exhibition opening on September 27th from 5 - 7 p.m. and let's celebrate Windsor history together. I am proud of what we have been able to accomplish in 90 years and am so grateful to the many hands working in concert over this time span that have made our achievements possible.

Pearls of Memory

Barbara Goodwin, *Librarian*

Do you remember the homework assignments you wrote for your English teacher that began with the prompt “I remember when...”? In the WHS library collections, these reminiscences are pearls of memory that evoke the sights and sounds of days in Windsor’s past. Many of the most engaging stories bring interesting local characters back to life, conjure the remembered atmosphere of a local landmark, or describe tasks once done by hand which have been replaced by “new-fangled” technologies.

The Society’s new exhibition, *Windsor: Bridging Centuries, Bridging Cultures*, will feature an interactive listening station. Visitors will be able to hear short excerpts from reminiscences and oral histories in our collection. Selections will include topics such as working tobacco, sulky racing at Sage Park track, and life during the Great Depression. The audio clips will complement and add richness to the thematic elements of the exhibition. Excerpted here are just a couple of the vignettes that may become part of the listening station:

The Horseradish Man

Every two weeks the horseradish man came. He came on foot carrying a large wooden bucket filled with horseradish and a long-handled spoon to scoop it out. He came around the house shouting “horseradish.” He always wore a coat which was much too large for him. In fact, he looked as if someone had dropped him into a suit made for a much larger man. His shirt was collarless and open at the neck and none too clean. A nondescript, battered old hat set on his head, almost resting on his ears. He was a testy old fellow with a tongue as biting as his horseradish. No one knew where he came from, but it was thought that he lived in a sparsely settled section west of town. After dishing out two scoops of horseradish into the bowl that Mama held, he took his money and left, muttering as he went around the house.¹

¹Eilene Buchanan Gianetti. “The People Who Came to Our House” (WHS Collection 1988.15.1)

Bart’s Back Then

It was a white-washed, adobe-like structure then, sitting on a narrow, unlikely shelf of landfill that dropped off steeply into the wetlands next to the iron bridge on Palisado Avenue. It was a seed pod, still a beginning in 1948-49, when I moonlighted at Bart’s while attending school and got to know Bart himself fairly well. He was a good and fair boss, amiable and unpretentious. And he became one of the very few people of the period to leave an indelible mark on the landscape. He was relatively young then, hirsute, ruddy-faced, square-shouldered, and fitted with a commanding presence. It was a challenging experience for him, I thought then, striking out in his middle-age to get into the fast-food business. But there was an urgency in him to be an entrepreneur, and that he became...Bart foresaw in those rebuilding years after World War II that the nation was going to move on wheels and fast foods would feed and console them in passing. He was right on the button; lines formed as soon as he opened and remain so to this day.²



Bart’s Restaurant in the 1950’s WHS Collection 2011.1.4

Do these stories make you nostalgic? Bart Dillon and the Old Horseradish Man each come to life in a brief paragraph! Visit the exhibition and hear stories about eel fishing in the Farmington River, jouncing on benches in the back of a pickup truck on the way to the tobacco fields, lawn parties on Cook Hill, and much more. And while you are reminiscing, write up some of your own memories and send them to us. We are particularly interested in stories from the latter half of the 20th century so that in the future others will be able to recall the people and events of this period of Windsor history.

²Warren Giffin. *Windsor Storytellers: A Chronicle of 20th Century Life in Windsor*, 1999

Windsor's Red Cloak

Erin Stevic, *Exhibit Designer* & Christina Vida, *Curator*

Do you ever wonder how objects end up in museum exhibitions? The cloak that is on view in *Windsor: Bridging Centuries, Bridging Cultures* is a fitting object to discuss the daily life of young Windsor ladies. The wool cloak undoubtedly provided protection against the harsh New England winters, but its bright red color was also a fashion statement and a sign of the owner's wealth. The red dye was an expensive import from Europe and a sign of luxury. As an artifact from the late 1700s or early 1800s, it speaks volumes. But how did it end up in the Society's exhibition?

The cloak was passed down in the family of Windsor-native Sarah Rowland Dudley (1815-1880). Sarah inherited the stately brick Chaffee House on the Palisado Green, and it was in this house that she likely packed a wooden trunk full of family heirlooms including this cloak. After Sarah's death, four more generations of women treasured these items until March 2009 when they arrived at the Society in a box. The red cloak had long-since been retired from active service, but it had been a favorite for games of dress up and had ripped seams, frayed trim, insect damage, and layers of dirt from years of use and neglect.

To address the cloak's condition, exhibit designer Erin Stevic took the cloak to the Williamstown Art Conservation Center in Williamstown, Massachusetts in June 2010. There, the conservators cleaned the cloak's fabric using a special vacuum cleaner with a HEPA filter. After cleaning the cloak, they mended seams, patched holes with custom dyed silk, and reattached the trim. Conservators also constructed a custom mount for the cloak so that it could be safely shown while on exhibition. Cleaned and restored to its former glory, the cloak can now effectively convey its early history of helping young women stay warm in the winter while also displaying their keen fashion taste.

The cloak's two-hundred-year journey has ended at the Windsor Historical Society. But will only be on view for a year, so make sure you see it now before it goes back into storage!



Red Hooded Cloak, wool, silk, linen, 1790-1810
WHS Collection 2009.17.1

WAYS TO GIVE

The success of Windsor Historical Society depends on the generosity of people like you. It is from past support that we have become the organization you know today. We welcome your gift of membership and your gifts to annual and year-end appeals.

Please also consider a planned gift such as a bequest in your will, or something as simple as adding Windsor Historical Society as a beneficiary to your life insurance policy. If there's a special place in your heart for our public programs, our library, our grounds, our buildings, or a particular staff position, you may dedicate your planned gift to this area. Planned gifts ensure that you and the things you care most about are long remembered. To discuss these and other planned giving opportunities, contact Executive Director Christine Ermenc at 860-688-3813 or cermenc@windsorhistoricalsociety.org.

The Windsor Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

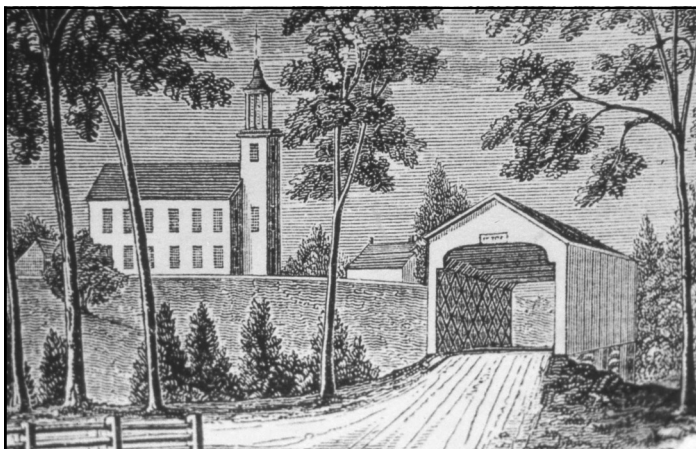
A Behind-the-Scenes Tour of the New Exhibition

Erin Stevic, *Exhibit Designer*

Windsor: Bridging Centuries, Bridging Cultures begins in the North Gallery with early Windsor, 1633 to 1825. A large view of the Connecticut River by local photographer Len Hellerman opens the gallery, and images of the river connect themes throughout the space.

Building Windsor is also a reoccurring topic in the gallery. Building the town required physical, social, and economic construction. The show explores these early developments, starting with “Windsor’s Native Peoples,” “Windsor’s English Founders,” and “Early English Settlement.” A subsection on Windsor’s early woodworkers displays rare examples of seventeenth-century Windsor furniture. The “Daily Life” section reveals how early settlers shaped and were shaped by Windsor. Sections on trade with the West Indies, Slavery, and the American Revolution dig deeper into the definitions of freedom at home and abroad.

The South Gallery follows Windsor from a nineteenth-century agricultural town to modern suburb. Transportation was central to that transformation. Maps and accounts of Windsor’s canal, railroad, and trolleys demonstrate how Windsor’s access to transportation helped the town succeed in an ever-changing world.



South View of Congregational Church, Windsor. Woodblock print. John Warner Barber. *Connecticut Historical Collections*, 1836



Tobacco workers, c. 1900, WHS Collection 1954.2.8.13

Between 1890 and 1940 Windsor’s population tripled. European laborers came to work in Windsor’s mills. Farming and suburbanization brought African American, Afro-Caribbean, and other groups into town. Windsor’s population became so diverse that one resident compared his 1930’s neighborhood to the United Nations! Photographs and personal accounts throughout the gallery explore how these newcomers got along with each other, adapted to existing traditions and contributed to the community.

Tobacco became a Windsor cash crop around 1900 and remains an iconic product of the Connecticut River Valley. Tobacco cultivation is a long, hot and delicate task. Visitors can experience work “under the tents” by touching tent cloth, measuring up to a full-grown plant, and stringing a tobacco lath.

The twentieth-century section of the gallery includes an audio booth where visitors can listen to clips from oral histories and written reminiscences. Stories ranging from Windsor’s traveling “Horseradish Man” to a returning World War II airman’s special “welcome back” flight over Windsor are available. The section also investigates life in Windsor during two World Wars, the Great Depression, and the post-World War II economic boom.

The “Windsor Today” section brings visitors into the twenty-first century. Here visitors test their knowledge of Windsor trivia and learn about other historic Windsor sites, walking tours, and activities. Rather than an end to the exhibition, this area is a jumping off point for discussion and discovery.

Windsor Remembers

Connie Thomas, *Administrative Assistant*

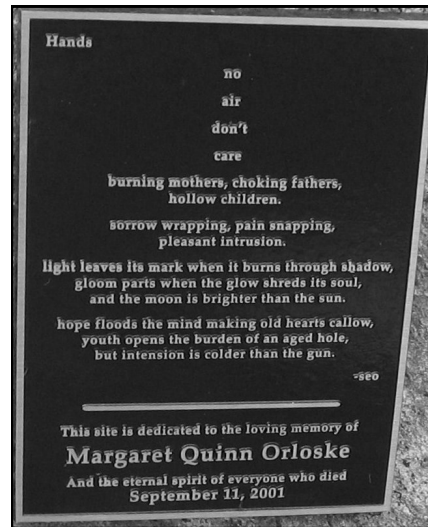
Most of us remember what we were doing, and where we were when we heard about the terrorists attacks on our country on September 11, 2001. The effects of that shocking day still reverberate on a personal level and throughout the town. So how does Windsor remember? What has the town done with its grief and shock over the past ten years?

To my knowledge, there are two memorials. One is a small garden and plaque created in memory of Margaret Orloske who lost her life in the New York City towers. It is in the Settlement Hill development across from the Oliver Ellsworth Homestead. The second is a metal sculpture created by students at Windsor High School and local artist Lon Pelton in 2004. The project started as a classroom challenge by teacher Diane Peskurich in 2003. The resulting monument, "To Those Who Were" ended with a May 21, 2004, dedication ceremony attended by then-governor John Rowland.

The sculpture measures six by five feet and consists of the ends of two oil-tank bottoms welded together to create a thin cylinder. The outline of the Twin Towers is cut through the metal cylinder, and the students and others perforated it with 3000 tiny holes as they spoke the name of a person lost that day. Each hole sparkles as night stars thanks to the sculpture's interior lighting. Art student Patrick Daly designed a plaque entitled "Embrace" for the sculpture. You can see it at the www.VoicesOfSeptember11.org website.



Windsor High School students and Lon Pelton (second from left), John Rowland (second from right) and Diane Peskurich. WHS Collections 2011.2.1



Margaret Orloske memorial, detail. WHS Collections 2008.10.46

Thanks to Sarah, Lon, our local high school, the Orloske family, and others, we are one of over 150 Connecticut towns that visually honors the many lives lost that day and the families who love them.

Bridging Centuries

Continued from page 1

Not all Windsor stories are happy. The death of Native

Americans from European diseases, the enslavement of African men and women, and the losses associated with war are a few tragedies that touched Windsor. Scandals, while intriguing from a distance, also have sad consequences. The exhibition honors the people involved in these events with the respect they deserve.

In 2010 the Connecticut Humanities Council awarded the Society an implementation grant to complete the exhibition, and construction has been underway for the past year. The most difficult part of the process has been fitting 400 years into 1200 square feet. The exhibition cannot tell every story, but it can guide visitors to the Society's historic houses, library, archives, online resources, and public programming where they can dig deeper into their personal interests.

Interactive maps and hands-on activities in the galleries will also help visitors connect with the past. Three touch-screen computers investigate details in maps, photographs and artwork. An oral history audio center brings twentieth-century stories to life. A changing display case spices up the permanent show with objects that will periodically change.

After extensive planning, we are excited to see *Windsor: Bridging Centuries, Bridging Cultures* open. We hope that the show inspires visitors to learn more about Windsor's past and make some history of their own.

Thank You from the Exhibition Designer



Working on *Windsor: Bridging Centuries, Bridging Cultures* has been a privilege and a challenge. After serving as the Windsor Historical Society's curator for four years, I moved back to my home state of Ohio in 2009, and I have been working for the Society remotely for over two years.

Every few months, I have returned to Windsor for a week of intense work and meetings. Ruth and Barry Budlong, Nancy Von Hollen, and Robert and Dorothy McAllister opened their homes to me. Their hospitality made this exhibition possible and I cannot thank them enough for making me feel at home.

My colleagues have been patient and supportive throughout this process. I thank them for moral support, technical know-how, brainstorming, moving objects, painting, building, researching, editing, public relations, and so much more.

I am both happy to finish the show and sad to say my final goodbye to Windsor. Connecticut's First Town will always hold a special place in my heart. I hope that the exhibition touches our visitors and reflects the importance of this very special place.

-Erin Stevic

You can save a tree and receive this newsletter digitally by contacting JAlberti@WindsorHistoricalSociety.org

Volunteers

We are so grateful to all our volunteers. Between our volunteers, staff, and donors, we are able to do so much more and even surprise ourselves!

Collections: Becky Hendricks

Education: Jay Davenport, Carolyn Doyle, Edie O'Donnell and Jim Trocchi.

Front Desk: Marilyn Boehm, Pat Congelosi, Carolyn Doyle, Bill Harris, Coralee Jones, Mary Ann Makismoski, Dottie McAllister, Marion Neilson, Willa Nemetz, Libby Parker, Mary Ransom and Jim Trocchi.

Grounds: Ruth Fahrbach, Charlie Goodwin, Gordon and Betsey Kenneson, Willa Nemetz, and Jim Trocchi.

Legal: Kevin Ferrigno of Reid & Reige, PC

Library: Elaine Brophy, Bev Garvan, Bill Harris, Sara Hawran, Chelsea Jenkins, Dottie McAllister, Sandy McGraw, Marion Nielsen, and Jim Trocchi.

And thank you to the Windsor Garden Club, the homeowners who opened their gardens to the public, and all the volunteers from the Windsor Garden Club and the Windsor Historical Society for their help in making the 2011 Garden Show a success.

Want to volunteer at the Society? Want to learn more about historic Windsor, our historic houses and our library? Come to our guide training sessions and become an important part of the Society. September 21 & 28th and October 5th & 12th. 10am - Noon. Preregister by the preceding Monday by calling the Society at 860/688-3813 Free to WHS guides and prospective guides; otherwise \$6/adults, \$5/ Seniors/ Students and \$4/members per session.

Upcoming Programs at Windsor Historical Society

Unless stated otherwise, all held at 96 Palisado Avenue (Rt. 159), Windsor, CT, costing \$6/adults; \$5/seniors/students; \$4/Society members. For more information call 860/688-3813 or <http://windsorhistoricalsociety.org>.

Thursday, September 15 7 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

TIMELY TOPICS: Day Hill Road's Great Pond Redevelopment

Developer David Winstanley, Town Manager Peter Souza, and Keith Knauerhase and Donell Jackson from ABB will discuss the planned development projects and development initiatives in Windsor.

Wednesday, September 21 & 28, October 5 & 12

GUIDE TRAINING: FOUR SESSIONS 10 a.m. – noon

Orientation to the Society and Historic District, the *Windsor: Bridging Centuries*, *Bridging Cultures* exhibit, the Strong and Chaffee Houses, and the Society's library and facilities. FREE to WHS guides and prospective guides.

Tuesday, September 27 5 p.m. – 7 p.m.

FREE EXHIBITION OPENING: *Windsor: Bridging Centuries, Bridging Cultures*

Meet people, explore places, and encounter events from Windsor's long and fascinating past.

Tuesday, October 4 7 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

LECTURE: Windsor's Anniversary - The 1633 Setting for the Plymouth Trading Post



**Windsor
Historical Society**

96 Palisado Avenue, Windsor, Connecticut 06095

Al Boehm discusses his research on the Windsor Exchange Club's phone book cover art in 2008, which reveals a landscape based on native Algonquian practices.

Tuesday, October 25 9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.,
11 a.m. – noon, 7 p.m. – 8 p.m.

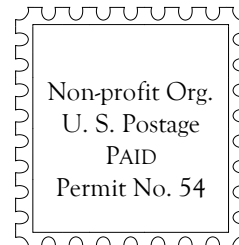
AMERICAN HISTORY MAGIC-LANTERN SHOW

Travel back in time with the boisterous fun of America's only Victorian magic-lantern show. The on-screen history is dramatized in stories, comedy, and songs by a live showman and singer/pianist. Morning performances open to public and school audiences; evening for adults and families. Reservations necessary; first come, first served.

Saturday, November 5 10 a.m.—11:30 a.m.

LECTURE: Researching the History of Your House

Marian Pierre-Louis will introduce where to find the deeds to your house, how to chain a deed, and how to locate other sources of information. Historian Beverly Garvan will also be on hand to answer questions and in collaboration with Marian will present a local case study. Appropriate for both beginners and more experienced researchers.



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