

The Wintonbury Drummer



Newsletter of the Wintonbury Historical Society

Bloomfield, Connecticut

February 2022

Ivoryton: Matching Girls and the Story of Ivory

Monday, March 14, 2:00 PM via Zoom

Presented by Susan Campbell

Hosted by Bloomfield Public Library

Women's History Month Program: At the vanguard of one part of the Second Industrial Revolution was a group of women in Connecticut known as matching girls, whose job was to match the thin strips of ivory that would be attached to wooden piano keys so that each key was the same color. At one point, half of American households owned a piano -- which could cost anywhere from \$300 to \$700, when the average factory worker's annual income was \$350. The matching girls bucked employment trends and social stigma and helped turn former farmlands in and around what is now Ivoryton into an industrial powerhouse. We look at the women and the difficult past of the ivory industry.

Susan Campbell is well-known to Hartford area audiences. She is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, a widely-read newspaper columnist, and the author of three books. She teaches at the University of New Haven and previously presented a Wintonbury Historical Society program in October 2020 on Isabella Beecher Hooker.

This is a Zoom program. To attend, please register ahead of time at <https://bplct.org>. Click on Event Calendar and register. The library will send you the necessary link.



Susan Campbell
University of New Haven photo

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BOARD HIGHLIGHTS

The Board of Directors met via Zoom at 3:00 on January 14 with eighteen people present. The meeting was hosted by the Bloomfield Public Library. It was reported that the Year-end Appeal had received gifts of \$3,670 from 45 donors. As a result of a grant application to Connecticut Humanities, we will receive \$5,700 for operating expenses. This may help with the approximate \$2,000 cost of replacing our dehumidification system in the basement. The Collections Committee's extensive report, including new acquisitions, was approved.

The question of transferring some of our collection to the proposed history room at the new Prosser Library was discussed at length, the meeting running until almost 5:00. Pros and cons were explored. The original intentions of Fannie Gabriel in donating funds for the History Center were described, and the group considered how Fannie would feel in today's changed situation. The subcommittee had visited other libraries to see their history rooms, and Avon was cited as the closest parallel to our situation. While respecting the different points of view expressed, the Board worked hard to reach a consensus. It was finally voted to send the following letter to the Bloomfield Public Library: "It is the intent of the Wintonbury Historical Society to transfer the majority of our paper collection, totaling approximately 160 linear feet, to the Bloomfield Public Libraries on the condition that a History Room will be built to house them."

OUR BUSINESS MEMBERS

Many Rivers Community Acupuncture, 3 Barnard Lane

Printmark Services, 21 Old Windsor Road

ATTENTION!

The Wintonbury Drummer invites readers to contribute articles, personal reminiscences, book reviews, photographs, etc. Materials for publication in the April issue should be received by March 7, 2022.

The Wintonbury Drummer

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STARS IN BLOOMFIELD'S CROWN

BLOOMFIELD MURAL CELEBRATES LOCAL TALENT

by Halesteen Graham Days

As you travel east on Park Avenue in Bloomfield, you will see a larger-than-life mural on the side of the Alvin and Beatrice Wood Human Services Center, which is the Racial Equity Mural, installed in 2021 to recognize and celebrate the end of slavery in the United States. Five individuals appear on the mural, three of whom are easily recognizable, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., former President Barack Obama, and current Vice President Kamala Harris. Some may not recognize the other two individuals, singer and actor Anika Noni Rose and retired football player Dwight Jason Freney, both Bloomfield natives. They are the stars in Bloomfield's crown.

As children, they both played in the Bloomfield parks and playgrounds, and Anika Noni Rose was a Girl Scout. Both Anika and Dwight were educated in Bloomfield schools and participated in school extracurricular activities, including the high school drama club and high school sports. They both played in Bloomfield school bands. Anika played the saxophone and trumpet. Dwight played the trombone. Like any other child growing up in Bloomfield, they were nurtured by the community. However, they could not foresee their future and the greatness they would one day achieve.

Anika Noni Rose: A Star is Born

Anika Noni (Swahili for "goodness and the gift of God") Rose. She is a multi-talented African American singer and actor who advocates for women in general, and specifically African American women. She is also one of the most talented and versatile individuals in entertainment today. She is best known as Disney's first African American Princess, Princess Tiana, who empowered little girls of all cultures. In 2011 Disney awarded Anika Noni Rose the Disney Legend Award.

Anika is the daughter and oldest child of Claudia and John Rose Jr. She was born September 6, 1972, and raised along with her younger brother on Crestview Drive and later Burnwood Drive in Bloomfield. As a child, she was a voracious reader, very ambitious, with a strong and determined personality. She attended The Artists Collective in Hartford and had a special mentoring relationship with Phyllis Hyman, the African American singer, songwriter, and actress. (2) During her freshman year in high school, she was cast in the musical *Fame* which caused her to seriously consider a career in entertainment.

After graduating from Bloomfield High School in 1990, she attended Florida A&M University, her grandmother's alma mater, and earned a bachelor's degree in theatre studies. She went on to the American Conservatory Theater (ACT) in San Francisco to study drama and completed her Master of Fine Arts degree in 1998. After developing and refining her skills at ACT, she moved to New York City to begin her career.

Ms. Rose's first break came in 2000 when she was cast as Dusty in the (continued on next page)

Broadway production of *Footloose*. In 2004 she earned a Tony Award for her role as Emma Thibodeaux in *Caroline, or Change* which launched her career. Anika has received numerous awards and accolades, such as the Obie and Disney Legend Awards. Despite her global success, she remains humble and still considers Bloomfield and the Greater Hartford area home. In 2018 she was inducted into the Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame.

Ms. Rose creates and inhabits believable, cohesive, and complete characters who engage with the story and world of her script. Her characters hook the audience and engage one's imagination. She seeks rich, meaningful, and challenging roles where she can superimpose her personality on the character. It is important to her that the character be "whole" and represents the realities of life. She spends a significant amount of time researching and developing authentic character traits and characteristics. For example, Anika spent three months in Botswana, Africa developing the cultural ways and local accent of the Botswana people to authenticate her character in *The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency*. She moves with ease across entertainment genres including music, theater, screen, and television.



Ms. Rose in *Carmen Jones*
New York Times photo

In her spare time, Anika enjoys the simple things in life, such as spending quality time with family and friends on Martha's Vineyard (her father's hometown). She has a close and nourishing relationship with her two nephews. Her hard work and perseverance are evident. When asked during my interview with John Rose, Jr., what attributes he would use to describe his daughter he replied, "I want people to know that she is a really good person and that she has not let stardom go to her head."

She was instrumental in having *The Princess and the Frog* shown first in the Hartford area before being released nationally. She wanted the children in her community to be proud of who they are, and as stated in her Juneteenth 2021 speech, when she returned to Bloomfield for the unveiling of the Racial Equity Mural, "I want them to know that they are me and I am them." She also honored her ancestors, advocated for keeping the Arts alive, and thanked the Bloomfield community for not forgetting her.

Ms. Rose currently resides in California. If you have not seen her work, I invite you to check her out on YouTube, Netflix or through other entertainment services.



A young Ms. Rose in Bloomfield
Family photo

Dwight Jason Freeney: The Making of a Sports Legend - Colts #93

Our second Bloomfield shining star is Dwight Freeney, born February 19, 1980, to Joy and Hugh Freeney. He was raised on Farmstead Circle in Bloomfield, along with his older brother. As a child he loved exploring insects, especially butterflies. Dwight was an inquisitive and disciplined child. He loved music and played the trombone in the middle school band. His favorite musician was Michael Jackson, and he loved hip hop. While growing up, Dwight attended Blue Hills Avenue New Testament Church of God, which was later renamed Rehoboth Church of God.

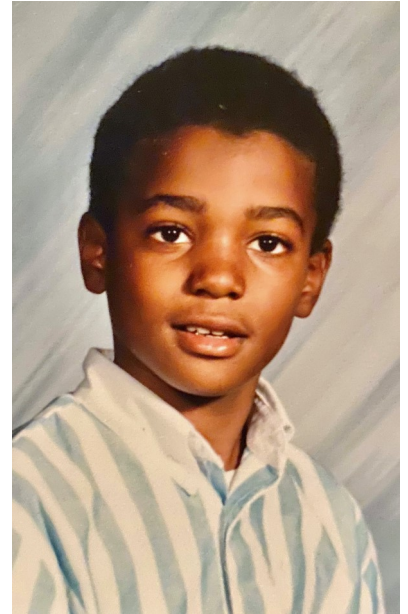
Dwight Freeney attended J. P. Vincent Elementary School, Carman Arace Middle School, and Bloomfield High School. He continuously exhibited strong leadership skills, first by forming a club with friends at J. P. Vincent Elementary School, and later as a leader amongst his friends. (continued on next page)

Mr. Freeney started his sports career playing soccer as a goalie. In his freshman year of high school, he served as water boy for the Bloomfield High School football team. During this time, he learned to play football and fell in love with the game. He started playing football during his sophomore year as a defensive end and tight end. Although Dwight enjoyed playing both defensive end and tight end positions, he became extremely good as a defensive end. Coach Jack Cochran recognized Dwight's athletic talents and provided many opportunities for him to excel during his junior and senior years. Dwight was a four-sports letterman in high school, earning four letters in baseball where he was coached by Alphonso Ford; four in basketball; three in football, where he was coached by Jack Cochran; and one in soccer. Freeney holds the record for sacks at Bloomfield High School and once held the record for most sacks in a high school career in Connecticut.

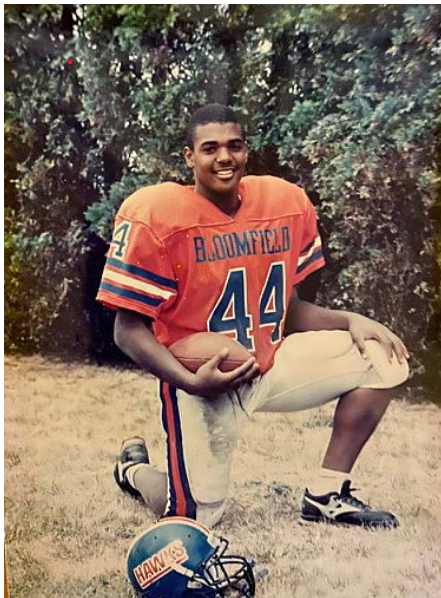
Upon graduation from Bloomfield High School in 1998, Dwight was offered full scholarships to six colleges. He selected Syracuse University based on a recommendation from Coach Jack Cochran, his mentor. Syracuse allowed Dwight to play defensive end during his freshman year. While in college, he excelled both academically on the Dean's List, and athletically on the gridiron. "Mr. Freeney set a school record with 17.5 sacks in his senior season and ranked second in school history with 34 career sacks." Freeney was clocked at 4 minutes and 40 seconds during the 40-yard dash. Even today this accomplishment remains one of the fastest ever recorded by a defensive lineman. He jumped 40-inch verticals. He earned All-American honors and graduated from Syracuse in 2001. Freeney was drafted by the Indianapolis Colts in the first round of the 2002 NFL draft.

He played eleven seasons with the Indianapolis Colts. Freeney left the Colts in 2013 as the all-time franchise leader in sacks with 107.5. Dwight Freeney developed a spin move which became his trademark pass rush move with 500-degree spins per second.

After playing with the Indianapolis Colts, he played with the San Diego Chargers (2013-2014), Arizona Cardinals (2015), Atlanta Falcons (2016), the Seattle Seahawks (2017) and the Detroit Lions (2017). On April 19, 2018, Dwight Freeney signed a ceremonial one-day contract with the Indianapolis Colts and announced his retirement.



Mr. Freeney as a boy
Family photo



Mr. Freeney on high school team
Family photo

So many honors and accolades have been bestowed upon Mr. Freeney. He was named to the 2000's All-Decade Team; three times Super Bowl champion, two with the Indianapolis Colts and one with the Atlanta Falcons; he played in seven Pro-Bowls and is currently in the Indianapolis Colts Hall of Fame. He retired as one of the greatest pass rushers and defensive players in NFL history. In 2019 he became the 16th member of the Colts Ring of Honor, becoming its first defensive member. He retired with 125.5 sacks and is a member of the 100 Sacks Club. In 2005 he was the American Football Conference Defensive Player of the Year. Of all the awards Dwight Freeney has earned, he is most proud of being honored on the Racial Equity Mural in Bloomfield. He will become eligible for the Football Hall of Fame in 2023.

Mr. Freeney currently lives in Florida with his wife and daughter. He enjoys spending quality time with his family. Although he has replaced the football with golf clubs, he will always love the game of football. He is also a gourmet chef. His favorite cuisine is Jamaican food based on his West Indian descent. He enjoys experimenting with different types of food and preparing them different ways. According to Dwight's mother Joy Freeney, "he would cook a dish three or four different ways just to see how the flavors and taste varied across the dishes." (continued on next page)



Freeneys sacks Tom Brady during Syracuse/Michigan game
Family photo

Anika Noni Rose and Dwight Jason Freeneys are two individuals to watch and who serve to encourage Bloomfield youth that, with perseverance and determination, anything is possible.

I would like to thank Joy and Hugh Freeneys and John Rose, Jr. for opening their homes to me and for taking time from their busy schedules to be interviewed so that I might get a better understanding of Anika Noni Rose and Dwight Jason Freeneys. They graciously shared their memories and some of the pictures of their children as shown in this article.



Sources: Interviews with John Rose, Jr. and with Joy and Hugh Freeneys, December 2021. Supplemental material from Wikipedia.

Anika Noni Rose's Roles

Stage:

2000: Footloose
2001: Eli's Coming
2001: Me and Mrs. Jones
2002: Caroline, or Change
2006: Dreamgirls
2008: Cat on A Hot Tin Roof
2010: For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enough
2014: Raisin in the Sun
2018: Carmen Jones

Television:

1999: King of the Bingo Game
2003: From Justin to Kelly
2004: Surviving Christmas
2008-2009: The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency
2010-2013: The Good Wife
2008: Just Add Water
2008: Razor
2011: Bag of Bones
2013: The Watsons Go to Birmingham
2013: Half a Yellow Sun
2016: Roots
2020: Little Fires Everywhere

Film:

2017-2018: Quad
2018: American Masters
2020: Jingle Jangle Christmas Journey
2016-2017: Power
2021: The Maid

Editorial: In Bloomfield We Can Do It

Two high school seniors, writing an opinion piece last fall in the *Courant*, made more sense than many of their elders. They wrote: "Many Americans continue to feel safer only in the company of others deemed 'like' themselves. Paired with America's ideological polarization, this urge to self-segregate could damage our society permanently. [. . .] America is at risk of fracturing, and we should consider carefully where this might lead. Safety in division is an illusion. Americans must pull back from this abyss. [. . .] Self-segregation with only like-minded people just pushes all of us further apart." Later the writers quote Civil Rights leader John Lewis's comment, "We all may have come here in different ships, but we're in the same boat now."

We who live in Bloomfield have reason to enthusiastically affirm these ideas. In other parts of America, many whites grow up never knowing a person of color. They become adults who unconsciously, often without malice, assume white superiority and live insulated lives. In such a milieu, injustice can go on festering and inflaming. In Bloomfield, that is less likely to happen. Our town isn't perfect, but we're trying. We have a healthy black majority. Our neighborhoods are racially mixed. Our town council leadership is black. We have opportunities to get to know one another and form relationships.

It's *relationship* that is the key to defeating injustice. Friendship with a person from a different ethnic group can give you warm feelings about the whole group. You may even find yourself developing such empathy that you think "us" instead of "them" when considering others. Bloomfieldians can do that. We can celebrate *our* history, *our* high school team, *our* young people who have gone on to make us proud, such as the two featured in this issue of the *Drummer*. People of all colors can, if they try, intentionally bridge diversity and get acquainted with others. The process may be difficult, sporadic, and sometimes messy; but don't give it up. Some of the nicest people you've ever known are waiting to meet you, right here in our own town.

RNP

Elijah Filley's Brick House

By Lydia Wadhams

Reprinted from *The Bloomfield ZIP—06002* for March 1977

Brick was used only rarely by early builders in Bloomfield, one of the first examples being the Old Farm School, built in 1796. In 1822 Lemuel Roberts built a fine brick house in the Center, now the home of Dr. and Mrs. McCrann. In 1801 Elijah Filley completed a brick edifice on Filley Street in what then must have seemed a quite remote section of town. For at least three generations this house remained in the Filley family, the last of the clan being Hattie Newton. It is now the home of Dwight and Harriet Burnham and their family. After some years of neglect this house has been completely restored, much of this having been done by the Paul Coons, interim owners.

A conventional colonial rounded top entrance doorway, with windows of elegant bulls-eye glass imported from England, leads into a hall with open stairway. To the right were originally two parlors, each with its fireplace but these rooms have been opened into a large, somewhat formal living room. To the left is the family sitting room with a most intricate and innovative mantle over its fireplace, with matching features in the wainscoting. Behind this room is the former "winter kitchen," now the dining room, with still another fireplace complete with Dutch oven. There are handmade hooks still in the ceiling, once used for drying herbs and vegetables.

A large room upstairs to the rear of the house containing a huge fireplace was originally a "smoke house" where the Filleys, as well as neighbors from far and near, brought hams and shoulders to be smoked for home use or for sale. In all there are nine fireplaces in the house, each of the four bedrooms equipped with its own. Five chimneys complete this early heating system. A little-known historical fact records that Abraham Lincoln spent the night in one of these bedrooms while on a political visit in Hartford, it being considered safer for him to be removed from possible danger in the city.

Editor's note: The Elijah Filley House, #85 Filley Street, is mentioned in *Over Tunxis Trails*, pages 23-24. It has been owned by the Pinney family for some years. According to neighbor Trish Forster it could be for sale to someone who would fix it up.



The Elijah Filley House today
R. Pierce photo

IN MEMORIAM

Nicholas Panke, member of the WHS Board of Directors, died on January 6 at age 84. He leaves his wife, Carol, two children, and four grandchildren. For over fifty years Nick was very active in town affairs, and his support of Historical Society events will be greatly missed.

John Murray, father of longtime Society member Mary Frances Murray, died on January 5 at age 94. He leaves his three children and two grandchildren. John was a member of Sacred Heart Church and volunteered for numerous church activities.



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Artful Gardens Tour	September	1 & 8
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Black History in Bloomfield, early	April	6-7
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Woodward, Walt	June	1

HONOR ROLL OF YEAR-END DONORS

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 Guilmartin, Homer F.
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 Healy, Lynne and Henry
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 Hughes, Richard and Beverly
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 Stockton, Marilyn D.
 Stout, John and Elizabeth
 Thompson, William and Shirley
 Weissenburger, William and Lois Ann
 Willoughby, Gordon and Dorothy
 Wolcott, Wendy, and Jeffrey Small
 Zyla, Barbara



Ubuntu is really quite a beautiful way of looking at things. It is the Zulu understanding that you are a person because of other people, and it is the reason for your helping others and others helping you. It's really a very old idea that started long before industrialization. Ubuntu is not a moral obligation; rather, it's a natural sense that we are all in this together, a sense of belonging to a community, that by doing for others, you help yourself. —from *Empty Hands: A Memoir: One Woman's Journey to Save Children Orphaned by AIDS in South Africa*. By Sister Abegail Ntleko. 2015. page 11.