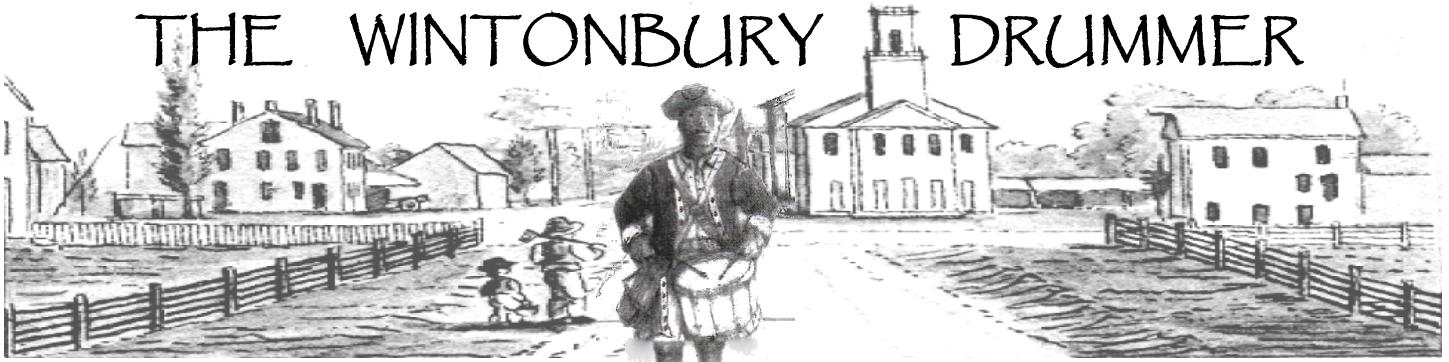


THE WINTONBURY DRUMMER



NEWSLETTER OF THE WINTONBURY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
BLOOMFIELD, CONNECTICUT • FEBRUARY 2024

HAYNES BIOGRAPHER TO SPEAK FEBRUARY 1

At 7:00 P.M on Thursday, February 1, via Zoom, the Society's program on Lemuel Haynes will be presented by Professor John Sailant of Western Michigan University, author of *Black Puritan, Black Republican: The Life and Thought of Lemuel Haynes*. A copy of this book has been donated to the Gabriel History Center by David Roones. **The Zoom link will be emailed to the Society's mailing list.**



Lemuel Haynes
File photo

In the June 2014 *Drummer*, Curator and Past President Fannie Gabriel wrote: "Lemuel Haynes, who studied for the ministry around 1780 under Wintonbury Parish's Hezekiah Bissell, went on to a productive career as a Congregationalist pastor. In doing some further research I found that he lived for a time in Granville, NY, which is on the Vermont border. This information was provided by former WHS president Lee Comar, who lives in Granville. The Lemuel Haynes homestead in Granville, which is in private hands, is still in good condition." [Editor's Note: Haynes lived in two Granvilles. As a child he grew up in Granville, Massachusetts. After his studies in Bloomfield and subsequent ordination in 1785, he pastored in Torrington CT for two years, Rutland VT for thirty years, Manchester VT for three years, and South Granville NY for the final eleven years of his life, dying there at age eighty.]



The Haynes Homestead, Granville NY
File photo

In February 2011 Society member Billie Anthony presented a program on Haynes, as reported in the January *Drummer* for that year. Haynes also appeared in the April 2021 issue of the *Drummer*, where Fred Hesketh's article on Black history in Bloomfield was reprinted, and in the September 2022 issue, which included a comprehensive summary of Haynes' life and career.

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS HIGHLIGHTS

The Board met on November 6 via Zoom with nineteen people present. Website problems have been dealt with by Dan Uitti and Janis Langston. David Roones announced that the Oral History Project (partnered with the Bloomfield Humanities Committee) has received a \$5,000 grant from the Duncaster Foundation to help fund a display next year.

The Board met on December 4 by Zoom with seventeen people present. President John Cappadona reported that contractor Tony Indino has put a tarp on the roof of the Southwest District School to weatherproof it until new shingles can be applied. The Society has obtained a grant to fund its participation in TheirStory along with the Windsor Historical Society and the Wood Library of South Windsor. (See the November *Drummer* for more information.) A problem with receiving telephone messages has been corrected by upgrading to Comcast Business so that messages may be accessed remotely. We have also taken out a Zoom subscription so that we are not reliant on the Library.

Ron and Ruthanne Marchetti, together with Donna Wnuck and Don and Janet Baker, have met with two Carmen Arace teachers, Andrew Taylor and Heather Calabro, regarding setting up a local history unit for seventh graders. About ninety students would take part.

A committee consisting of Tobie Katz, Wendy Wolcott, Diana Barnard, Ruthanne Marchetti, and Marilyn Johnston has started the planning process for celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Society next year.

The Board met again on January 8 with twenty people present. Our auditor gave her report. Building and garden maintenance were discussed along with our grant application to enable restoring the windows of the Old Farm School.



Business member: Many Rivers Community
Acupuncture, 3 Barnard Lane

ATTENTION!!!

The Wintonbury Drummer invites readers to contribute articles, personal reminiscences, book reviews, photographs, etc. Material for publication in the April issue should be received by March 1, 2024. Thank you.

The Wintonbury Drummer

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Mother Fannie Irene Pittman

by Halesteen Graham Days

On November 5, 2023, a group of family and friends gathered at Faith Congregational Church on Main Street in Hartford to celebrate Fannie Irene Pittman's 100th birthday. Mrs. Pittman, fondly referred to as Irene, turned 100 years old on November 7, 2023.

The Church Service was dedicated to Mrs. Pittman, followed by a banquet in the Faith Congregation Fellowship Hall. Many people came to pay homage to this amazing matriarch, including her sister Jessie Willis, son Kyle Lopes, daughter Kimberly Sales, granddaughter Nykesha Sales (UCONN women's basketball star), grandson Brooks Sales (BHS basketball coach), cousins Deborah Barrows and Monique Biggs and Judge Greg Davis, State Senator Doug McCrory, State Representative Bobby Gibson, former Probate Judge David Baram, representatives from the NAACP, Prince Hall Order of the Eastern Star, Bloomfield Red Hats Society, and many friends who have known and loved Mrs. Pittman over the years.



Irene Pittman at 100
Courtesy photo

To know Mrs. Pittman is to love, honor and respect her. During her lifetime she has witnessed many changes in America, from the Great Depression, the New Deal, World War II, the Korean War, Jim Crow, the Cold War, the Civil Rights Movement, the Hippies, women's liberation, the election of the first African American President, and everything in between. She grew up in a changing world, and through these experiences she has evolved, too. Today under her humble demeanor, she is an alert, politically conscious, spunky African American woman who knows what she wants and how to go about getting it. She diligently goes to the hairdresser and to have her nails done every two weeks.

Fannie Irene Pittman was born November 7, 1923, in Eufaula, Alabama to Jeffie Lee Willis and Laura Ann Reed Willis. She migrated to Hartford, Connecticut with her mother and father in January 1924 during the great African American migration from the South. She did not have a birth certificate, only a family Bible that recorded her birth. Mrs. Pittman is the oldest of two children. She had a brother, Johnnie Emanuel Willis who died at a young age. Her mother died in 1930, leaving her to be raised by her father, who eventually married Mozelle Williams. Through this union two boys and two girls were born, all of whom are deceased except sister Jessie, who currently resides in Bloomfield. Mrs. Pittman's parents, like most southern African American parents, strongly believed in the value of education and encouraged their children to go to school.

Mrs. Pittman traveled through life with the spiritual faith, determination, and tenacity to find a way or make a way. Her story is the story of the African American experience in America. She spent her early years in East Hartford, before moving to Hartford on Flower Street. Her father was a Trustee at Mother Bethel AME Church on Winthrop Street in Hartford. In 1953, under the leadership of Rev. Dr. James A. Wright, Mother Bethel AME Church and Talcott Street Congregational Church merged to form Faith (continued—>)

Congregational Church, where Mrs. Pittman remains a dedicated member. The Church was the center of spiritual, social, and political activism, which she embraced. She has a Bible in every room of her home in Bloomfield and reads the Bible daily.

She attended West Middle School and Hartford High School. She stopped school for a while but eventually went back and finished high school. During World War II she worked at Pratt & Whitney building airplane engines. After the War, it was difficult for her to find a job, and she was repeatedly told “you are overqualified.”

Mrs. Pittman applied to schools in Connecticut but was not admitted. She took equivalency tests five times in Connecticut and was told she had failed the test. She then falsely claimed residency in Springfield, Massachusetts where her journey would take her to Springfield Trade School to become a Licensed Practical Nurse. While at Springfield Trade School she submitted a term paper which initially was graded “A,” but later the grade was changed to a “D.” As a result, Mrs. Pittman lost her scholarship and was not able to continue her studies at Springfield Trade. She later applied, was accepted, and attended the University of Bridgeport.



Family members with Irene Pittman at her 100th birthday celebration

Photo by Halesteen Graham Days

It took Mrs. Pittman twelve years of night school to earn a certificate as a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN). After graduating from nursing school, she worked at McCook Hospital, a city hospital (which later became the University of Connecticut Medical Center), Connecticut Valley Hospital in Middletown, and as a public health nurse in Bloomfield and surrounding towns. Throughout her career she has juggled the roles of mother, doting grandmother, political and community activist, health care professional, and spiritual leader.

Mrs. Pittman has lived in the same neighborhood in Bloomfield, Connecticut for over sixty years. When she moved to Bloomfield it was still a sleepy, New England farming town. She moved to Bloomfield to give her children a better life. She had three children, Beverly, Kimberly, and Kyle. Beverly died in 2017. Everything she did during her life was for the benefit of her family and her community.

The Bloomfield neighborhood where Mrs. Pittman lived was diverse with most of the homeowners white. Mrs. Pittman believes she paid more for her home than she would have paid if she was white. According to Mrs. Pittman, “The whites and blacks argued and fought all the time.” The whites wanted the blacks to move out of the neighborhood, but that didn’t happen. Today, the neighborhood is primarily African American and Caribbean.

Mrs. Pittman has been a soldier for social justice her entire life. She is a leader and activist in the Greater Hartford area and has founded and shaped many community organizations. She has been a lifetime member of the Greater Hartford NAACP since she was 19 years old, has served as the Secretary of the Urban League under the leadership of Mr. William (Bill) Brown, has been a dedicated member and leader of the Prince Hall Order of the Eastern Star, was the first African American President of the Bloomfield Women’s Club, and was a founding member of the Keney Links, a Hartford women’s golf club. She has tutored and mentored students in the Bloomfield School System and was recognized (continued—>)

by Nutmeg Big Brothers Big Sisters for her thirty plus years of service as a senior mentor in its Foster Grandparent's Program. She is a past member of the Bloomfield Commission on Aging, a long-time former member of the Bloomfield Democratic Town Committee, and a long-time past member of the Bloomfield Plan and Zoning Commission.

I guess you are wondering, as I have, where Mrs. Pitman gets all her energy. During the past century, she has lived a life of continued purpose, service, and commitment. God bless Mrs. Pittman.



Irene Pittman, 94, tutors Marlon Britton, 10, in math.
Hartford Courant photo

Note: On the Talcott Street Congregational Church, see the February 2023 *Drummer*, page 1, for a snapshot of its pastor, James W. C. Pennington.

HONOR ROLL OF YEAR-END DONORS

Albert, Dori-Ann and Roger
Bernstein, Sara, and Joseph Shortall
Cappadona, John and Rise
Dickinson, Robert L.
Gough, Kevin, and Paul Jones
Grisevich, George W.
Guilmartin, Homer
Hubbs, Dennis and Donna
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Johnston, Marilyn and Ray
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Kline, Nancy, and Jim Trail
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Nielsen, Donna
Pepin, Cathrine
Peterson, Michelle and Knute
Pierce, Richard and Jean
Schmoll, Ralph and Louise
Schulman, Sydney
Seidell, John E.
Smith, Robert and Sharon
Thompson, William and Shirley
Tinto, Gail D.
Weissenburger, William and Lois-Ann
Wolcott, Wendy
Zyla, Barbara

GOOD READS FROM THE EDITOR

● *How the Word is Passed: A Reckoning with the History of Slavery Across America* (2021) by Clint Smith is the second of two books recommended by the Hidden Histories Project (*Drummer*, September 2023, pages 6-7, and November, page 8). Smith takes us to different sites around the country. I liked his statement, "I think that history is the story of the past, using all the available facts, and that nostalgia is a fantasy about the past using no facts, and somewhere in between is memory" (p. 268).

● Another fascinating book is *The Last Slave Ship* by Ben Raines (2022), which I found by browsing the shelves at BPL. After a long search, Raines found the remains of America's last slave ship, the Clothilde, sunken in a Louisiana swamp. He includes penetrating looks at slavery, the slave trade, and the people involved in both Africa and the United States.



Board of Directors Photograph

by Janis Langston, December, 11 2023

Standing, left to right: Wendy Wolcott, David Roones, Libbie Merrow, Marilyn Johnston, Ron Marchetti, Dick Hughes

Seated, left to right: Tobi Katz, John Cappadona, Allison Wilkos, Ruthann Marchetti, Dick Pierce

Missing: Bill Weissenburger, Susan Vancour, Homer Guilmartin, Mara Whitman, Khalid Williams, Paula Baram, Halesteen Graham Days, Mary Laiuppa

IN MEMORIAM

ELINOR TINTO. Elinor (Breining) Tinto, 99, of Bloomfield and Green Valley, Arizona, beloved wife and best friend for 62 years of the late John E. Tinto, passed away peacefully on Tuesday, November 14, 2023. She was a Bloomfield native and the mother of longtime Society member Gail Tinto.



Courtesy photo

As a girl, Elinor Breining lived with her parents on the corner of Park Avenue and School Street. Her grandparents lived next door, and she spent time with them helping her grandfather with the cows and watching while he made wine. Her grandmother was an excellent cook, and Elinor regretted that she never got her hot potato salad recipe. She went to elementary and high schools in Bloomfield. During World War II, she was a plane spotter on Avon Mountain with her parents, although she hated climbing up into the fire tower. After the war in 1948 she married the love of her life, John Tinto, whose family also lived in the Park Avenue/School Street neighborhood. Eventually they moved to their own home on Sunset Lane off Terry Plains Road. Elinor worked at the Hartford Insurance Company for a while until she became pregnant. Later, she went to work at the Bloomfield Post Office as a window clerk. She also handled claims on items that were damaged during shipping. At the Sunset Lane house she had several flower gardens and helped her husband with the extensive vegetable garden. She had a lifelong love for flowers and was able to make even the most decrepit, dead-looking plants come back to life. She and John moved to Green Valley, AZ in 1982 to spend their retirement years in peacefulness and sunshine.

Elinor came back to town at the tender age of 93 and lived at Duncaster Retirement Community for the last seven years of her life. At the celebration of her life held at Duncaster, people from different areas—nurses, doctors, aides, kitchen staff, heads of departments, housekeepers, transportation people—approached her daughter with an Elinor story to tell: a kindness that she had done for them, how she always remembered their name, knew about them and their lives. She had a skill to draw people out, one to be admired.

IN MEMORIAM

DONALD MOORE. Longtime Society member Donald Moore passed away on November 20, 2023, at the age of 80. He leaves behind his wife Amy, five children, four stepchildren, nine grandchildren, his brother, and his former spouse, Sandra.

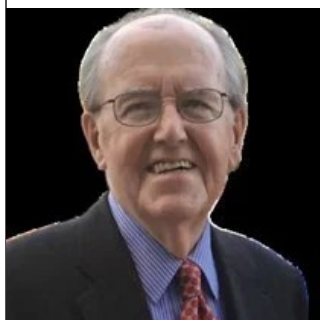
After his father's death, he took over his family's business, Moore's Sawmill, Inc. The mill was founded in the 1870s and is the oldest family-owned business and the longest continuously operating business in Bloomfield. Don was proud to say that the Moore family represented eight generations to have lived on the same piece of property in Bloomfield, and six generations to have owned or operated the sawmill to the present day. Moore's Sawmill had been a major part of the community for over 100 years when the business suffered a huge loss from a fire in 2007. Bloomfield residents and friends of the family rallied together to raise funds to help them rebuild. The fire destroyed the 4,000-square-foot building that had housed a wood-planing shop, storage for kiln-dried lumber and offices. Don was seen on TV that evening stating that the mill would be open for business the next day and it was.

Don had a passion for folk music and played the mountain dulcimer and autoharp. He was co-founder of Connecticut's Nutmeg Dulcimer Festival. Don was founder and director of the Dulcimer Folk Association (DF#A), a group of players that has gathered at least twice monthly in the Hartford area for many years. DF#A was known for performing benefit concerts. He performed and recorded CDs with the group, "Circle of Friends." He regularly attended folk festivals throughout the Northeast. For many years, Don published a monthly ten-page newsletter about dulcimer playing. He was particularly proud of his collection of instruments made from lumber that had passed through his sawmill.



Obituary photo

--adapted from www.carmonfuneralhome.com/obituaries
See also www.dulcimerfolkct.org



Obituary photo

EDMUND CURRAN. Society member Edmund T. Curran, age 86, of Bloomfield, died Friday, December 30, 2023. He is survived by his children, Kathleen Curran, Elizabeth Curran, and Edmund T. Curran Jr, and his wife Lauren, and his grandchildren. He was predeceased by his high-school sweetheart and wife of 57 years; Patricia (Doyle) Curran; his parents Edmund and Lila Rose Curran and his brother Leo Curran.

Born in Bridgeport, Ed went on to graduate from Yale College and Yale University School of Law. He practiced law in Hartford, retiring in 2002. He was active in Bloomfield politics, serving on various committees and the Town Council in the 1970s and 80s, including several terms as Deputy Mayor. He also was financial custodian of church and home as a member of the Sacred Heart Church finance committee and his homeowners' association. Ed was a storyteller, a wordsmith, a historian, a singer of Irish rebel music and lover of Irish history.

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75th Anniversary!

The 1910 will of Levi Latimer provided a gift “to be used in founding an historical society in connection with Prosser Public Library, in which shall be gathered interesting and historical relics of Bloomfield and the people who have lived there, and the careful preservation of the same.” By mid-century that gift had grown to over \$2,600.

The Wintonbury Historical Society of Bloomfield was founded in 1949 through the efforts of Dr. Eugene Bestor and Mr. Jack O. Hoover with the aid of the Latimer bequest. The Society did not have a home of its own until 2010 when it opened its new museum and library building at 153 School Street in Bloomfield, adjacent to the 1796 Old Farm School. Since that time Society members have been busy centralizing the scattered collection in one place, arranging things, and cataloging them.

Achievements of the Society include the moving and restoration of the 1796 Old Farm School, and the listing on the National Register of Historic Places of the Old Farm School, the 1834 Francis Gillette House, the 1858 Southwest District School, and the 1834 Captain Oliver Filley House.

In this 75th anniversary year, new and exciting projects, such as Mosaic Oral History and Old Farm School restoration, are in the works.

The human mind seems to require a usable past because historical memory is a key to self-identity, a way of comprehending one's place in the stream of time, and a means of making some sense of humankind's long story. —*History on Trial: Culture Wars and the Teaching of the Past*, by Gary B. Nash, Charlotte Crabtree, and Ross E. Dunn (1997), page 8.