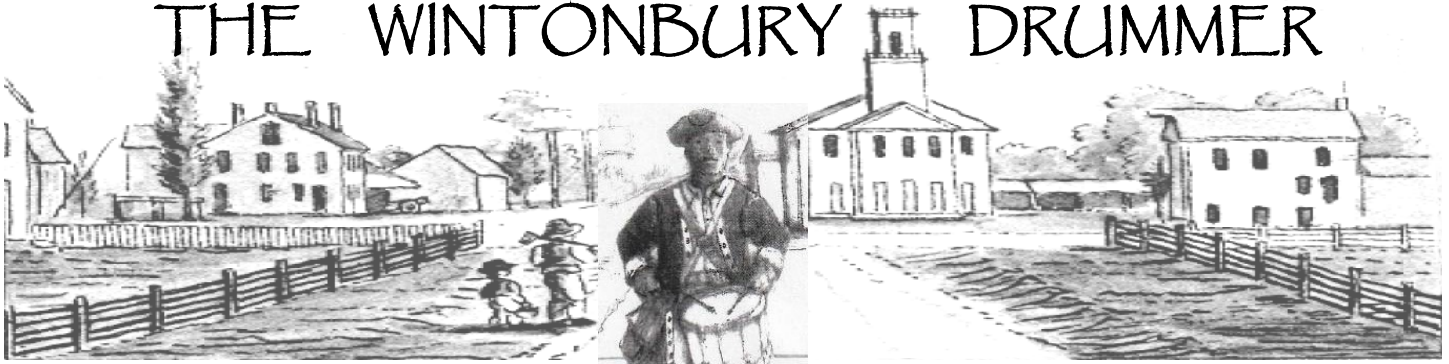


THE WINTONBURY DRUMMER



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



CONNECTICUT, COLOR, AND THE CIVIL WAR

A free program by John Mills

Wednesday, June 5, 6:00 P.M.

Wood Human Services Center, 330 Park Avenue

During his presentation, John Mills will delve into the lives and experiences of some of the men who enlisted in Connecticut's 29th and 30th Colored Regiments in the 1860s and provide a perspective on our State at the time. Mills will also discuss his research into past enslaved individuals in Connecticut, highlighting their experiences and his work to acknowledge them.



John Mills. Courtesy photo

Bloomfield native John Mills is a trained genealogist, independent scholar, descendant of the enslaved, and founder of the Alex Breanne Corporation, a Connecticut-based non-profit (named after his daughter). Alex Breanne Corporation focuses on research, interrogation and presentation of lesser-known stories representing the life experiences of the American enslaved, presented from an African American perspective. John focuses on unearthing little-known people and stories, then injecting them into the landscape of the communities where they lived and worked through art, monuments and honorary street names. John's goal is to remember the forgotten, as well as to apply critical thinking to our history as a means to find solutions to the many ripple effects today.

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS HIGHLIGHTS

The Board of Directors met viz Zoom on April 1 with sixteen people present and again on May 6 with fifteen present. President John Cappadona encouraged members to participate in Bloomfield's Community Cleanup Day on April 27 and Juneteenth events on June 19. There was discussion of needed repairs on the Old Farm School roof. Contractor Kevin Leacock gave a favorable bid on the job, but a decision was postponed one month to sort out the details. As to opening the School to the public from May 19 into October, Mary Laiuppa, who will set up a schedule, asked for volunteers from the membership.

The Board is looking into Constant Contact, a web service that would enable us to send out attractively-designed mass emails. Khalid Williams will be sharing his experience with Constant Contact and helping us implement a free trial if we decide to do so. The Board discussed updating our website to make it easier for people to join and/or donate online. Further, we will try in the future to acknowledge all donations with emailed and/or written responses which mention our status as a 501(c)(3) organization.

A training session in using TheirStory, an interviewing tool recommended by Fiona Vernal, was held on May 20. Also, the Carmen Arace Grade 7 local history project was successfully completed (see pages 5-6).

Note: Sadly, longtime WHS Director Homer Guilmartin died on May 15. He will be remembered in the September issue.

LEAVING A LEGACY

The Wintonbury Historical Society is a nonprofit organization dependent on the generosity of people who value history and Bloomfield history in particular. You can make a difference by (1) setting aside a gift in your will to the Society, (2) naming the Society as beneficiary of an insurance policy, (3) remembering loved ones with gifts to the Society in their honor, and (4) naming the Society as beneficiary of an IRA or 401K.

ATTENTION!!!

The Wintonbury Drummer invites readers to contribute articles, personal reminiscences, book reviews, photographs, etc. Material for publication in the September issue should be received by August 2, 2024. Thank you.

The Wintonbury Drummer

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UPDATE ON LEMUEL HAYNES (1753-1833)

By David Roones

After Prof. John Saillant’s webinar on Lemuel Haynes on February 1, 2024, I was asked to do more research on this man who was born to a Black father and a white mother in 1753 in what is now West Hartford. I read the Rev. Timothy M. Cooley’s biography, *Sketches of the Life of the Rev. Lemuel Haynes, A.M.*, published in 1837 and reprinted in 1838, 1839, and 1969. Cooley was pastor of the First Church Congregational in Granville, Massachusetts, from 1795-1859. Haynes served The Second Church of Christ Congregational there from 1781-1786. On pages 62-63, the author confirms that Haynes was taught Greek at the Wintonbury Congregational Church by the Rev. William Bradford, an Assistant to Rev. Hezekiah Bissell, the first pastor there. On page 63, Cooley states, “He in a few months became a thorough Greek scholar. As a critic of the Septuagint and the Greek Testament, he possessed great skill.” Haynes taught school in Wintonbury to pay for his tutoring. He was licensed to preach on November 29, 1780, in Wintonbury, and chose as his sermon text Psalm 96:1 in the Septuagint: “The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice” (page 63; it’s Psalm 97:1 in modern English versions).



Frontispiece of 1837's *Sketches of the Life and Character of the Rev. Lemuel Haynes, A.M.* From Wikipedia

I searched ancestry.com, and learned that William Bradford was born on March 4, 1745, in Canterbury, Connecticut. He died there on March 31, 1808. On page 68 of Cooley’s biography, he printed the text of a sermon that Haynes wrote in 1776 when he was a layman in Granville, Massachusetts. The sermon so impressed Haynes’s adoptive father (Bradford) that he kept it. It was passed down to the Rev. Ebenezer Bradford of Rowley, Massachusetts, who passed it down to his son, the Rev. James Bradford, of Sheffield, Massachusetts. A search of ancestry.com revealed that Ebenezer Bradford, born May 29, 1746, in Canterbury, Connecticut, was the brother of Wintonbury’s William Bradford. It is probable that William was so impressed by his pupil that he encouraged his brother to preserve many of Lemuel’s early writings.

The Wintonbury Historical Society bought a used copy of Richard Newman’s *Lemuel Haynes: A Bio-Bibliography* (1984). From it I learned that Lemuel was famous and highly respected in his day. The churches he served grew under his leadership even though he was a Black man serving white congregations. His sermons were published in (continued—>)



Lemuel Haynes home
South Granville, New York
Photo from Wikipedia

newspapers in America and England. Biographies and many articles were written about him in periodicals and books. In 1975, his home in South Granville, New York, was designated a National Historical Landmark. There's an historical marker in West Rutland, VT, dedicated to him. In 2023, West Hartford dedicated a bench and bronze plaque in memory of its native son. ***Wouldn't it be great if Bloomfield created a memorial to this great preacher who studied here and taught in our schools? Send your ideas to us by letter or email using the addresses found in this newsletter.***

Editor's note: Lemuel Haynes also appears in issues of *The Wintonbury Drummer* for January 2011, June 2014, April 2021, and September 2022.



WHO WAS WHO IN 1949: SNAPSHOTS OF CHARTER MEMBERS

Wintonbury Historical Society, 75 years: 1949-2024

● **Dora P. Bingham** was the first secretary of the Historical Society. She worked at the Connecticut Bank and Trust Company on Park Avenue from its opening in 1956 until her retirement in 1973. She was clerk of the First Congregational Church for seventeen years. She and her husband Leslie were divorced in 1964. She died in September 1980 at age 76 and was buried in Mountain View Cemetery. Dora and Leslie had two children, Arthur B. Bingham and Marjorie E. Bingham. Leslie retired in 1963 after thirty-five years at the Manufacturer's Association of Connecticut (now CBIA). He edited the Association's monthly publication ("Connecticut Industry") and wrote numerous historical reviews of Connecticut businesses. In 1966 he returned to Ohio, where he died in 1984 at age 86.

● **Mildred Guilmartin Peck** (1904-1959) graduated from New Britain State Teachers College, was active in the community, and taught in the Bloomfield schools for several years. In 1940 she married E. Newton Peck (1897-1964). They had one son, Jonathan, and lived at 898 Mountain Road. They were members of the Bloomfield Federated Church. Newton was a World War I veteran and worked at Colt Patent Firearms. They are buried in West Hartford's North Cemetery in the Peck family plot. (Note: Mildred's brother Frank was featured in the September 2021 *Wintonbury Drummer*.)

● **Harold Woodford's** interest in Bloomfield history came naturally, for his family figured prominently in it, his father George having held town offices and served in the General Assembly in Hartford, his grandfather Lester having farmed 120 acres, and the house on School Street having been home to five generations. Harold Lester Woodford (1898-1974) attended Connecticut Agriculture College and was in the R.O.T.C. during World War I. In 1926, he married Gertrude Morey, from Bantam, and they raised three daughters on the School Street farm. Harold and Gertrude were buried in the family plot in the Latimer Hill Cemetery. (See Lucy Woodford Wirsul, *Not Lost - Gone Before: A History of Latimer Hill Cemetery*.)

Seventh Graders Tackle Town History

By Ronald Marchetti

Photos by Diane Crook, CAMS Librarian

Not every seventh grader thinks about history. Yet at Carmen Arace Middle School, that opportunity came up in Heather Calabro's Social Studies classes. And it wasn't just history, it was Bloomfield history. Last week, at the conclusion of the unit, nine students presented their research reports to members of the Wintonbury Historical Society.



Left to right: Students Aiden Kelly, Josiah Laurencin, Elijah Harris, Olivia Smith, Nilaya Hicks, Justice Welsh, Amari Marquis, Kenny McKoy, (with teachers Susan Eady and Heather Calabro and Historical Society members).

Ms. Calabro had approached WHS to ask if the society could provide materials and advice that would allow her to create a unit about Bloomfield's early history in her class. After an eager exchange of materials and ideas, Ms. Calabro produced a program to introduce historic Bloomfield that fit perfectly with the interests and abilities of her students.

The students were furnished a template to organize their research into a menu of topics that Ms. Calabro provided. Topics of research included historic persons, including Oliver Filley, Lemuel Haynes, and Francis Gillette, plus instrumental sites in town such as the location of Wintonbury Parish's first residence, the town center, Copaco, and Penwood Park, which gave the students insight into the past.

To enhance the relevance and accessibility of the research, each student created an interactive computer map of the town, coordinated with the persons and events studied. A click on each spot on the map opened a window with thumbnails of information to instruct the viewer of its importance. In addition, each student created a checklist of details that were novel to them, including new vocabulary that they encountered, plus concepts of social and commercial development that spanned the years.



John Cappadona and Nilaya Hicks

To celebrate the efforts and success of the program, Ms. Calabro organized a program that brought together nine students with several WHS Board Members, the school Principal, and Mayor Danielle Wong. The group met in the school's library on April 23, at 11:30. At this gathering, each student was paired with a visitor and, one-on-one, they presented their projects. Beyond the benefit of the research, the presentation itself provided students with an opportunity to engage in public speaking. Every adult came away with respect and admiration for the work the students had done.

The town of Bloomfield traces its history to the formation of Wintonbury Parish in 1736. Since then, innumerable persons and events have transformed the nascent outpost, comprised of the fringes of Windsor, Farmington, and Simsbury, into today's vibrant, eclectic community.

(continued—>)

It is easy for the historic roots of a community to fade into the background, even when residents are surrounded by surviving examples of the past. The Wintonbury Historical Society boasts a trove of artifacts and information, available to the public. But members of its Board of Directors began to wonder how to engage the young people in town, those whose future will eventually become Bloomfield's history, with an acquaintance with its history.

For several years, third graders from the Metacomet School had walked to the Old Farm School to experience first-hand the sensations of what it must have been like for "scholars," as students were then called, to attend class in the one-room building, constructed of brick in 1796. The children learned about the old-fashioned educational traditions from past President Richard Pierce, and they got to ring the schoolhouse's original bell! Don and Jan Baker, Society members, arrived in meticulously accurate period dress, and they brought antique clothes for the children to try on. The experience was instructive and fun.



John Cappadona, Ruthanne Marchetti, and Olivia Smith

The Covid epidemic brought an end to these excursions. Subsequently, some Society Board members approached the Bloomfield Board of Education with offers of assistance to educators to access historical resources to be incorporated into a current class that focused on Bloomfield history. The resulting collaboration brought forth a prospective curriculum, although complicating circumstances have forestalled its implementation.

Into the gap stepped Heather Calabro and her students. Each student, using their Chromebook, displayed the fruits of their research. Mayor Danielle Wong sat with one; WHS members sat with others. After the presentations, The Wintonbury Historical Society provided each student with a one-year membership in the Society. President John Cappadona and Vice-President Ruthanne Marchetti distributed certificates of honor and a book of Bloomfield reminiscences called "The Good Old Days," written by forty-one town residents. Students receiving certificates on April 23 were Madilyn Beswick, Elijah Harris, Nilaya Hicks, Aiden Kelly, Josiah Laurencin, Amari Marquis, Kenny McKoy, Olivia Smith, and Justice Welsh.



Elijah Harris and Don Baker

Ms. Calabro deserves the credit for the creation and the success of this program. Her creativity and commitment made possible this important integration of Bloomfield history in the educational experience of the town's young students. She plans to continue the program next year. A grant has already been applied for that would provide bus transportation for those students to take a field trip to the various sites marked on their maps.

In Memoriam

The Drummer just learned of the September 2023 passing of Society member Jean C. Buscarello, 95, longtime resident of Cliffmount Drive and Seabury. She leaves behind her four children and eight grandchildren. Over the years she had been active in the Historical Society and in the Connecticut Rose Society. A member of First Congregational Church for over sixty years, she was a Deacon and had participated in the Women's Guild and taught Sunday School and more. She was buried alongside her husband, Frank, in Dyer Cemetery, Canton, in her family's plot.

ARACE STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN CONNECTICUT HISTORY DAY

Reprinted from The Bloomfield Messenger, March 8, 2024



Front: Alyvia King, Aleka Kirton, and Deanna Spears
Bloomfield Messenger photo

Students from the Gifted and Talented Program at Carmen Arace Intermediate and Middle Schools participated in the 2024 Connecticut History Day Regional contest on March 2 at the University of Connecticut. Open to Grades 6-12, Connecticut History Day encourages exploration of local, state, national and world history. Students conduct extensive research on their selected topics using libraries, archives, museums, and oral history interviews. The theme of this year's contest was Turning Points in History.

Alyvia King, Aleka Kirton, and Deanna Spears

studied Horace Wells, a Connecticut dentist who discovered anesthesia. **Daniell Allen, Javen Gamble, and Lenny Reyes** analyzed the effects of the 9/11 World Trade Center attacks on air travel. **Genesis Rosetta, Ashawana Weir, and Dakota Williams** researched the migration of Serbian refugees following the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. **Aashiya Mendez** investigated how King Henry VIII broke England away from the Catholic Church so that he could remarry.

JAMAICANS IN BLOOMFIELD'S HISTORY: PUTTING DOWN ROOTS

Kenneth Bennett, Sr. observed his one hundredth birthday in August two years ago with a big reception at the West Indian Social Club in Hartford. You can visit that reception any time by going to YouTube and looking up the video made by Bennett's daughter Joyce. It was a grand affair, with birthday wishes brought by numerous people, including Bloomfield residents Suzette DeBeatham Brown, Syd Schulman, Danielle Wong, Bobby Gibson, and Hugh Freeney. Archbishop Leroy Bailey, Jr., gave the blessing. Bennett wore a gold jacket befitting the occasion.



Kenneth Bennett
as a young man

As mentioned in the April issue of *The Wintonbury Drummer*, in 1970 Bennett was one of the first Jamaicans to move to Bloomfield. During the years since then he served the town on the Town Council, the Commission on Human Rights, the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission, and as a Justice of the Peace. The State of Connecticut recognized him for his continuous service at the polls. In 2022 he was awarded Jamaica's Badge of Honour for Meritorious Service for his contribution to the Jamaican diaspora. (continued—>)

WHAT IS HISTORY DAY?

National History Day provides an annual opportunity for middle and high school students to build their thinking skills within the context of historical research. According to William Bevacqua, president of The Connecticut Democracy Center, Connecticut History Day (an affiliate of the national organization) helps participants "learn important skills such as seeking out primary sources (bypassing intermediaries, filters, and commentary), evaluating the quality and point of view of a source, considering a subject from multiple perspectives, and thinking critically to draw conclusions about what they have learned. Mastering and employing these four skills is to be a sophisticated, responsible consumer of the news." All of us, at every age, need such skills. "Together they help protect us from disinformation and other manipulations that undermine our collective efforts to make good public policy and solve community problems."

Source: William Bevacqua, "Helping youth cross the media highway," *The Hartford Courant*, April 13, 2024, Section 2, page 3

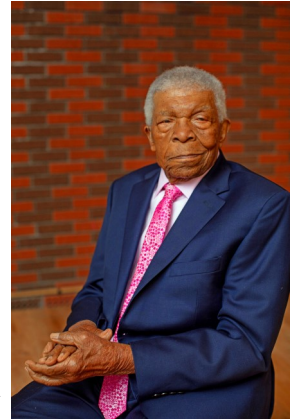
Kenneth and Eva Bennett were both active in the community. Eva, who died in 2006, operated her own catering business. She was also a Justice of the Peace and worked at the polls on election day. She served on the Town Council for over twenty years and found time to volunteer for numerous other organizations. A life member of the West Indian Social Club, she was also an active member of Horace Bushnell Congregational Church (today's Liberty Christian Center). Eva was born in North Carolina and earned her bachelor's degree at North Carolina Central University before moving to Hartford, where she met and married Kenneth.

Kenneth Bennett was born in Main Ridge, Parish of Clarendon, Jamaica. At age 20, in 1943, he became a trail blazer. He moved to the United States during World War II, one of four thousand Caribbean/Jamaican men recruited to fill jobs left vacant by American men who had joined the military. (See sidebar.) After working at a factory in New York, he came to Hartford, worked in tobacco, and then secured a job as machinist with Stanadyne. "This is one of the best decisions I ever made," said Bennett. "I was able to come to the United States under contract, earn a living, and send money back home!"

The Bennett family includes nine children and numerous grand and great-grandchildren. Kenneth and Eva have served Hartford and Bloomfield for over seventy years. He is a Grand Inspector General 33rd Degree Mason in the Prince Hall Masonic Affiliation, a founder and life member of the West Indian Social Club, and a member of First Cathedral. At home he is not only a singer and a gardener, but, most importantly, a nurturing father

You can move to a town and do little there except sleep. Or you can choose, as the Bennetts did, to put down roots and become part of the fabric of the community, until you develop a feeling of belonging, of home.

**Thanks to Joyce Bennett and Kenneth Bennett Jr. for supplying much of this material, including photographs. Also cited is Eva Bennett's obituary, published in *The Hartford Courant* on August 7, 2006.



Kenneth Bennett,
Age 100, 2022.

Four Thousand Recruits

During World War II, with so many American men entering the armed forces and war production increasing, the United States developed a labor shortage. President Franklin D. Roosevelt established the War Manpower Commission to assure that workers could be found. Mr. Roosevelt added, "It is the duty of employers and labor organizers to provide for the full participation of all workers without discrimination because of race, creed, color, or national origin."¹

At that time, Jamaica was a British Colony; and, pursuant to a contract negotiated between Prime Minister Winston Churchill and President Roosevelt, West Indians were invited to come to America legally and earn a living wage. This was historic and a first: a U.S. non-discriminatory contract for a black man requiring there be no persecution of any kind, civil or criminal, toward West Indians.

Four thousand first-generation West Indians were recruited under the War Manpower Commission, including Bloomfield's Kenneth Bennett. They boarded two military ships, the USNS Shank and the USS George Washington, and traveled from the Caribbean west through the Gulf of Mexico, five nights and four days, because of the war, arriving at a military camp in *Fort Pontchartrain, Louisiana*.

1. Cited by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History. Much of this material was supplied by the Bennett family.