

IMAGE COURTESY OF THE NEW BEDFORD WHALING MUSEUM

HARBINGER

NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTPORT HISTORICAL SOCIETY www.wpthistory.org
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Winter 2025

Dear Friends:

We are deeply grateful for your on-going support of the Westport Historical Society and hope that we may be deserving of your support as we anticipate an exciting new year.

Following a multi-year project to bring an 1840s schoolhouse into the 21st century and to prepare it for the century to come, we excitedly anticipate being “on the move” this coming year, both literally and figuratively, as we prepare to return to the Bell School and to realize the concept of a new Westport History Center, offering research facilities, display and interpretation of Westport’s heritage. Our reimagined HQ will be responsive to the needs of our community as well as meeting museum standards for the long-term care of our collection.

In the coming year, we’ll dig into the stories of Westport’s farming families, focusing on the 20th century, an era that began with 400 farms and ended with fewer than 30 farms. This project seeks to identify people, places, objects, images, and related materials to represent this significant shift in agricultural activities and to celebrate the surviving Westport farms (please contact us if you can contribute information). This is not just a story of potatoes, cows, turnips and chickens, but also a topic that connects people of diverse origins — Portuguese, French Canadian, Polish, Scots, and early English settlers — as well as highlighting an extraordinary example of a farm owned and operated by a Native American family throughout the 19th and most of the 20th century. Materials gathered during this project will be showcased in a summer exhibition at the Handy House.

During the coming winter months, an exhibition will mark the culmination of a year-long project to unfurl the stories of the women of Westport Point, home to a truly remarkable concentration of women from all walks of life.

We will step into the well-worn shoes of a 19th-century farmer and whaling agent Henry Smith, as our team of volunteers undertakes the task of transcribing his daily journal. The journal chronicles life and death in mid-19th century Westport, offering extraordinary insights into local people, places, and events. Volunteers are welcome!

This annual appeal is the foundation for our year to come and your participation is critical to our success. You can donate securely in memory of/in honor of an individual and set up recurring monthly donations using a credit card via our website. You have our heartfelt thanks for the support.

Thank you!



Emma and George Manchester, photo donated by Edith Camara



Hauling lobster gear with Richie Earle & Everett Mills - F/V Side Show 1975



Don't forget to save your Lees Market receipts. You can drop them off at Partners Store or mail them to the Westport Historical Society. Lees Market generously donates **1%** of the total receipt value.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

WINTER 2025

BOARD MEMBERS

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The mission of the Westport Historical Society is to engage the public in the exploration of the town's rich history and culture, to inspire a spirit of discovery through educational programs and encourage active participation in the preservation and interpretation of our past.

The Society collects and shares this history. Its goal is to foster the imaginative process of connecting to the past, making it relevant to our present and vital to the future of our community.

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Antiques Show and Tell with Stephen Fletcher

2 PM Saturday January 25, 2025 at the Westport Public Library, 408 Old County Road



You are invited to bring interesting antiques and curios to the library where antiques and Americana expert Stephen Fletcher will attempt to solve the mystery behind these treasures and will offer up informal, verbal appraisals! Stephen Fletcher, recently retired VP of Skinner Inc. and a resident of the Head of Westport and board member of the Westport Historical Society, has been a frequent guest on WGBH's "Antiques Roadshow." He is widely regarded as one of the world's foremost experts on early American furniture, American decorative arts and folk art. Suggested items include silverware, glass, clocks, folk art, paintings, small items of furniture, household/utilitarian items. No coins, stamps, modern firearms or jewelry. One item per person. \$10 per item appraised (bring cash/check on day of event). Reserve your appraisal spot in advance at www.wpthistory.org. All are welcome to watch and listen as Steve appraises each object. Suggested donation for general audience is \$5.

Captain Paul Cuffe, Yeoman - A Biography by Jeffrey A. Fortin

2 PM Saturday February 22, 2025 at the Westport Public Library, 408 Old County Road



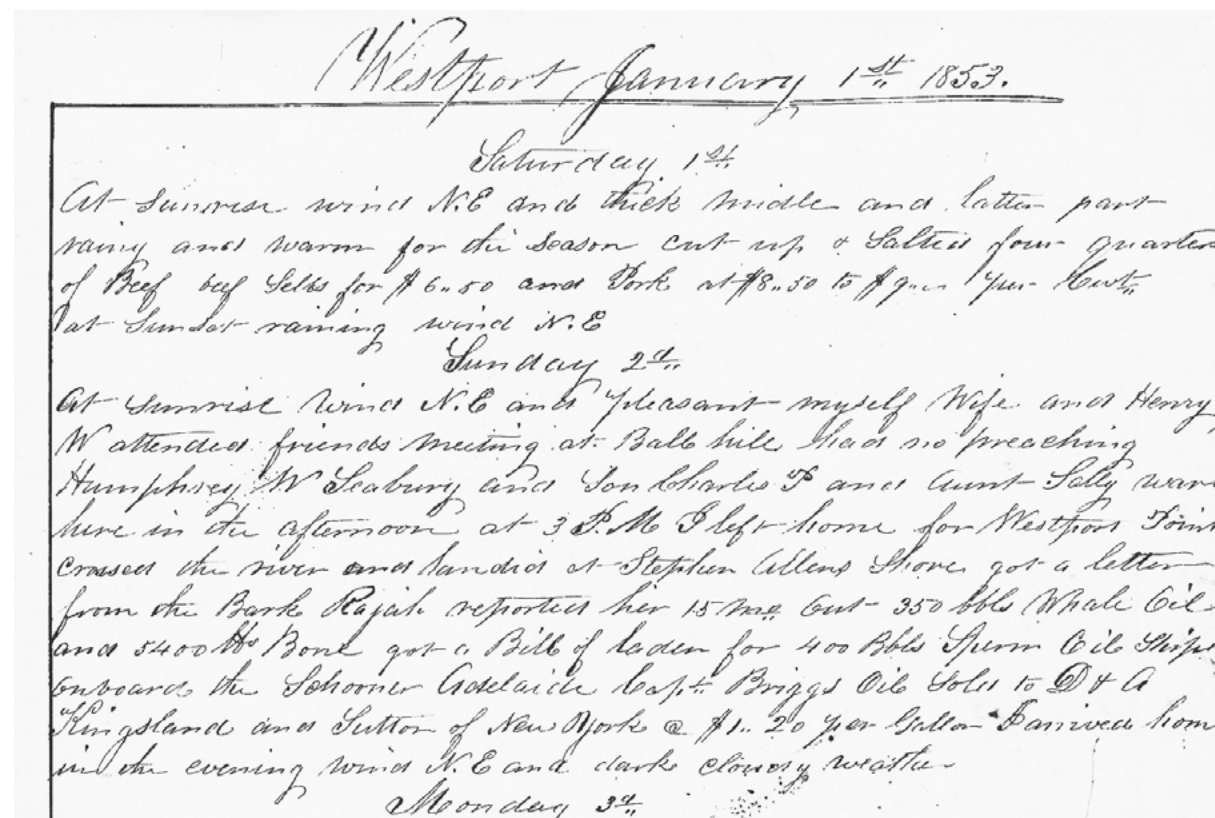
Meet the author of a new book on Paul Cuffe published by University of Massachusetts Press. Jeffrey A. Fortin has crafted a beautiful, moving portrait of this important maritime figure. Paul Cuffe is best understood as a member of the Black founding fathers—a group of pre-eminent African Americans who built institutions and movements during the first decades of the United States. Drawing on pamphlets, letters, and other documents, and painstakingly reconstructing his genealogy, Fortin vividly describes Cuffe's experiences and places them within the broader history of the Early Republic to help reveal the central role of African Americans in the founding of the United States. Fortin situates Cuffe within an Atlantic world where race and identity were fluid, and Africans and African Americans sought to build and govern a free Black nation in

West Africa. Jeffrey A. Fortin is associate professor of history at Emmanuel College. He is co-editor of Atlantic Biographies: Individuals and Peoples in the Atlantic World, and he has published numerous articles and chapters on the Black Atlantic. Suggested donation \$5.

Unfurled: Stories of the Women of Westport Point

March 2025 at the Westport Free Public Library

An exhibition to celebrate the culmination of a year-long project to unfurl the stories of the women of Westport Point, home to many truly remarkable women from all walks of life. Taken as a whole, these women represent a wide array of experiences: those who were professionally accomplished in their careers and became residents of the Point later in life; those who were summer residents of the Point; and those who had deep roots in the community, taking on roles within local organizations and as "caretakers" of the close-knit neighborhood. Many individuals derived inspiration from their surroundings, creating art, writing poetry and books, and recording personal memoirs about their life at the Point.



Are you looking for a challenging and educational volunteer opportunity?

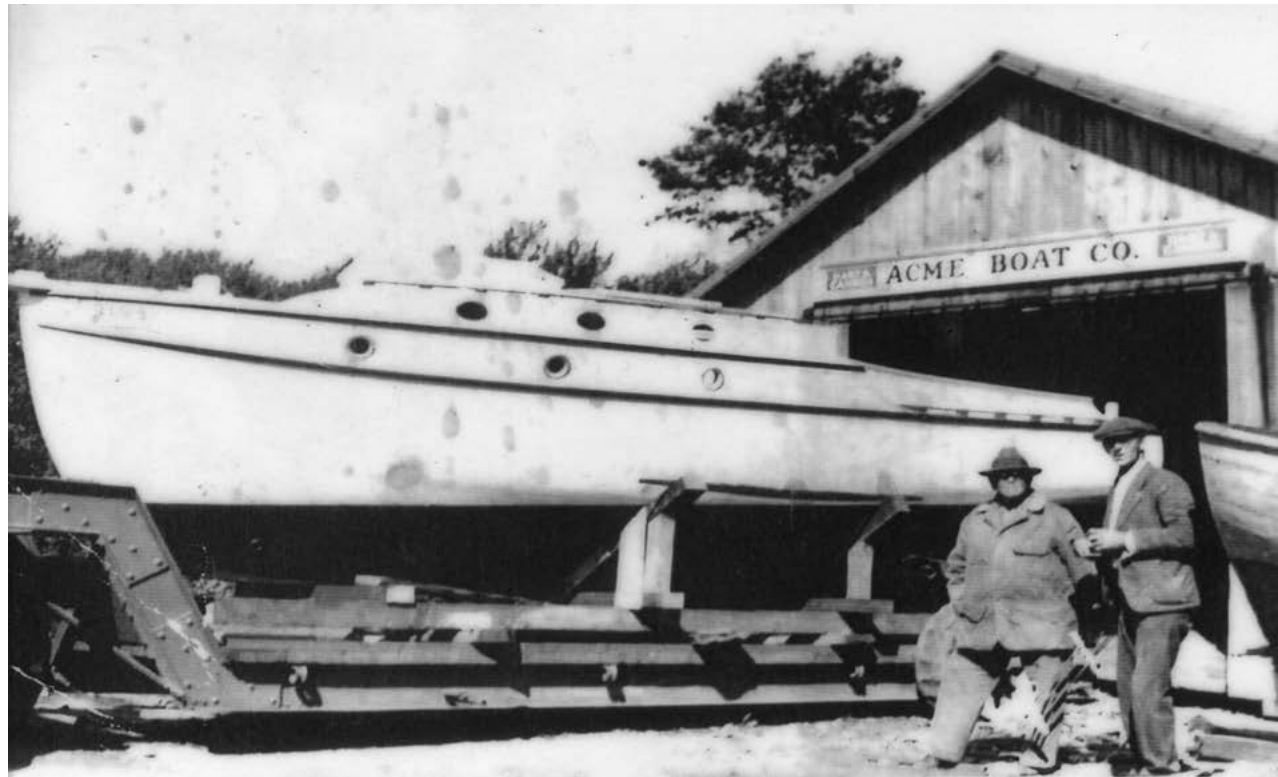
The Westport Historical Society seeks a team of volunteers to transcribe the contents of a 19th century journal written by Henry Smith. The handwritten, bound journal chronicles life and death in mid-19th century Westport, offering extraordinary insights into local people, places, and events. Volunteers will transcribe the handwritten pages of this journal and will explore the themes of local history that will be illuminated during this project.

In preparation for the effort to transcribe the contents, the journal has been digitized, making it far easier to access and share. Henry Smith's handwriting is neat and reasonably easy to read with a little practice. Volunteers must have access to a computer and be comfortable using Microsoft word (or equivalent). Digital and printed images of the journal pages will be shared and transcribing will be done at the volunteer's home. Local historians will be available to assist with questions at regularly scheduled in-person meetings.

Smith's journal will immerse volunteers in the daily activities of a well-to-do farmer and whaling agent of mid-19th century Westport. By the 1850s, Westport was fully established as a town of farmers, wealthy whaling masters and agents, world-travelling whaling crew members, and busy shipbuilders and outfitters.

The journal begins in January 1853 as Henry Smith and father-in-law Henry Wilcox set out to recruit a mate for the whaling ship Mexico traveling from Adamsville to Fall River. A winter storm sets in... and the rest of the story is yet to be transcribed! View a sample page at: wpthistory.org/2024/07/help-us-transcribe-the-journal-of-henry-smith/

This project is coordinated by the Westport Historical Society and the Westport Free Public Library. To sign up or for further information contact Jenny O'Neill, Westport Historical Society 508 636 6011, westporthistory@westporthistory.net or Robin Winters, Westport Free Public Library 508 636 1100, rwinters@sailsinc.org.



COLLECTIONS NEWS

The following are some highlights of recent donations. We are very grateful to all who have entrusted us with these gifts.

You can view these collections at: www.wpthistory.org/category/collection-spotlight/



History of Westport skiffs donated by Howie Gifford, 2024.023

The above image shows Fred Hart, a well-known boat builder in the 1930s, whose business Acme Boat Co. was located on Cornell Road. Despite having only one arm, Fred Hart could build a boat within one week. This image is part of a recent donation of materials relating to the history of Westport skiffs and boat builders such as Fred Hart, George Hart and Jim Vaughan as well as Scott Gifford's Macomber 15 skiff.

A collection of photographs of Westport Point, Horseneck Beach, and Remington's Clambake donated by Edith Camara, 2024.030.

View more images from the Edith Camara collection at:

<https://wpthistory.org/2024/08/edith-camara-collection/>

The image of the road to Horseneck beach (see top of page 5) includes the following handwritten note: "starting from where John Reed Road used to be before the State took over. A spot marked (X) was what we called "little beach" in those days and we always had to stop and stick our feet in the sand there before continuing on. My mother and I had many happy walks over this road, taking our "breakfast" to eat on the porch of cottage belonging to Miss Wyse or sometimes on the porch of the Scully house next door. We always started early to get there before the "morning look" was gone, as my mother used to say."

Group of girls at Westport Yacht Club, c. 1945

First row, left to right: Janet Pettingill, Norma Judson
Second row: Virginia Crapo, Jane Lees, Phoebe Ashley, Beverly Langill, Joanne Manchester, June Manchester, Catherine White, Edith Cabral

Photo donated by Edith Camara



Road to Horseneck c. 1945

WHAT'S NEW ON OUR WEBSITE

Life on the Westport River in the 1950s/1960s/1970s

An interview with Bob Pierce, Richie Earle, and Russell Walters, May 2024

<https://wpthistory.org/2024/05/bob-pierce-life-on-the-westport-river/>

A Conversation with Spencer Tripp, growing up on the Westport River in the 1940s and 1950s, eeling, trout fishing, lobstering, and hunting.

<https://wpthistory.org/westport-historical-society-programs/>

Westport Lobster Tales with Richie Earle, Russell Walters, Grant Moore, and David Borden

<https://wpthistory.org/westport-historical-society-programs/>



Bob Pierce



Lobster program presenters: Richie Earle, Russell Walters, Grant Moore, and David Borden



Spencer Tripp



Three women on fence outside
2041 Main Road, Westport Point

Donated by Edith Camara 2024.030.001

JOHN REED ROAD



PAVED BY POWER, POLITICS, (AND CLAMBAKES)

By Betty Slade

Next time you drive along John Reed Road to the beach, listen for the rumbling echoes of the agitated voices of Westporters from the 1890s who felt “swindled” by the man after whom the road is named, John M. Reed.

The layout of John Reed Road (originally known as Horse Neck or Horseneck Road) which connected the old Westport Point bridge to Horseneck Beach was drawn up in 1895 for the Town of Westport. (The plan for John Reed Road can be found on the town of Westport, Ma. Website, under Historical Documents, road layouts. It is dated 1895 and prepared by the commissioners of Bristol County).

It was scheduled to be built in 1896 by the town but it did not happen. The County Commissioners decided to have it built, but there was some disagreement on whom should be awarded the contract after Westport failed to build the road itself. Eventually John M. Reed got the contract despite the fact his bid was higher than another by \$20. Town Records show that the road was built by May 1897. On May 27, John M. Reed had a clambake for friends and political buddies at Manchester and Peckham’s Pavilion at Horseneck Beach to celebrate the completion of the road.

“In all about 80 sat down to the feast. Most of the men present were known to have a penchant for politics. The bulk of the clam eaters were Sanders men (the Republican candidate) and more than one suggestion was swapped as to how to overcome Hunt’s campaign.”

On June 2, Westport refused to pay the bill because the selectmen believed the road was not built to specifications. Local press reported: “The road is agitating many of the townspeople and Westporters are not satisfied with it. They claim not more than half the loam called for was put on the road.”

On August 10, The Board of Selectmen called a town meeting to discuss what they called a complete failure to build the road according to specifications. “At the town meeting Chairman Sherman made the statement that he was ready to place \$100 in the hands of the moderator, to be given to any person in Bristol county who could find 200 feet in any part of the road built in accordance with the specifications.”

Albert D. Manchester and John A. Macomber, 2nd, were appointed to investigate. Mr. Reed claimed it was a better road than called for in the specifications. Westport eventually paid the bill of \$ 8,704 for construction and, despite town-wide criticism of the road’s construction, John Reed successfully attached his name to the well-traveled road!

Who was John M. Reed?

John M. Reed was born on March 10, 1850 in Dartmouth, Mass. His parents were Allen Reed and Caroline Tripp Reed. John grew up in Dartmouth, lived in Fall River for a period, and worked as a laborer, farmer, ice dealer and teamster. He also dealt in buying and selling horses. He was identified as a contractor in a later census. He worked on many projects including in 1894 widening the Narrows Bridge and repairing the highway from Westport Factory Village to the Fall River line at the Narrows, in 1898 measuring Watuppa Pond, removing buildings, etc. He was an active republican politician serving as an alderman in Fall River Ward 6 and as an Assistant Bristol County commissioner. He was a postmaster in 1899.

John married Nancy Sadler from New Bedford in Dartmouth on October 5, 1873. They had one child survive them, Arthur M. Reed. John inherited 10 acres of land in Dartmouth from his father in 1880. He owned 80 acres of land near Westport Factory Village which he sold in October 1892. He also owned land north of what is now 1936 Main Road in Westport Point which he bought from Restcombe Macomber and sold to Andrew H. Sowle in 1898. He bought 8 acres of land at Horseneck Beach from T. B. Sherman in December, 1897.

He lived in North Westport on the shore of Lake Watuppa for the last 20 years of his life and had a grocery business near the Narrows, which his son operated. John died September 3, 1909 and he and his wife are buried in a Reed Lot at Linden Grove Cemetery in Westport.





Paul Cuffe sailing to Nantucket at dawn, *painting by Ray Shaw*

TWO RIVERS OF RESISTANCE

By David C. Cole¹

During the Revolutionary War the South Coasts of Massachusetts and Rhode Island were largely controlled by the British Navy which had local headquarters in Newport and patrolled the length of Buzzards Bay. The British assault on Dartmouth in September 1778, that included raids on settlements and harbors from Acushnet to Padanaram, devastated those areas and demonstrated their vulnerability.

Snuggled in between the Sakonnet River and Padanaram Harbor were two smaller rivers over which the British were never able to achieve dominance. Those rivers – the Westport or Acoaxet River and the Slocums or Paskamansett River - continued to serve as safe havens for private ships including privateers who harassed both the British Navy and British supply ships and smaller craft that carried supplies to Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard.

The Westport River, then called the Acoaxet, provided natural protection against large British naval vessels because of its narrow entry channel that required ships to make a U-turn in a narrow shallow passage between two shores that offered excellent sites for sharpshooters who could pick off any seaman on deck. Therefore big, deep draft square-rigged ships could not manage that passage. In fact, there is no record of any British naval vessel ever entering the Westport Harbor during the war. There are legends that some British naval ships lobbed cannon balls into what is now known as Westport Harbor, but none ever sailed through the channel into the harbor.

The Village of Westport Point came into existence in the 1770s as people from nearby towns in Rhode Island that fronted on the Sakonnet River – Tiverton and Little Compton - moved their ships, shops and homes to Westport Point to be out of range from British harassment and capture. Docks, boat yards and ten residences were built at the Point in that decade on what had previously been pastureland.²

The Slocums or Paskamansett River had a very different configuration and played a different role. It was relatively shallow and impossible for larger ships to enter. But it provided a safe channel for smaller sailing vessels such as shallops or small sloops to

sail upstream to the area around Russells Mills, load up with supplies and sail back out on moonless nights to proceed, undetected by British or privateer ships, and deliver supplies to Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket. Nantucket especially had a largely Quaker population, many of whom were opposed to war and therefore sought to remain neutral in the battle raging around them. The British sought to blockade them and disrupt their supply chains. The area around Russells Mills was also heavily populated by Quakers who were probably supportive of their friends on Nantucket. A most notable person who set out to penetrate this blockade was Paul Cuffe, a mixed African/Indigenous resident of Dartmouth who, in his teens had sailed on three whaling voyages and, on the last one in 1776, been captured by a British naval ship and imprisoned in a prison-ship in Brooklyn for three months. Paul Cuffe had probably become acquainted with whaling ship owners from Nantucket during those times and also became aware of the supply shortages the people of Nantucket were facing. After being released from the naval prison in New York in the fall of 1776, it seems reasonable to believe that Paul may have joined forces with his Indigenous brother-in-law, Michael Wainer, who had just moved in and set up a tannery business at Russells Mills. They may have been able to borrow a small sailing craft (probably a shallop that was not being utilized because of the war) and launch the Nantucket supply run. Shallops were popular vessels for such operations because of their reliance on leeboards rather than keels to make headway when sailing into the wind. Leeboards could easily be raised when entering shallow waters or running up on shores which helped them both to escape pursuing vessels and to deliver supplies to island residents.³

The activities in these two rivers – the Westport (Acoaxet) and Slocums – although not extensively recorded, provide important examples of resistance to British efforts to dominate and defeat the American colonists. This Slocum River to Nantucket supply run was carried out by persons of African and Indigenous origin. Both the refuge provided by the Westport River and the ability to run the blockades are examples of successful resistance and circumvention of British rule that were successful in serving American over British objectives.

Hypotheses Relating to the Wartime Roles of the Two Rivers

In developing our narrative about the possible roles of the Westport and Slocums Rivers in the Revolutionary War, there are very few specific references in the historic records or literature. Consequently, we have had to rely upon a number of hypotheses or informed guesses about what probably happened. We will here set out the main hypotheses that undergird our narrative.

For the Westport River, the unique configuration of the river mouth that would have made it so difficult and dangerous for sizeable naval ships of that time to navigate is the primary factor in hypothesizing that it provided a safe refuge for ships seeking to stay clear of British Naval vessels. As shown in the image below, the mouth of the river was very narrow, passing between two banks that offered favorable positions for defenders to fire upon any unwanted enemy ships. Also, the only favorable wind for a square-rigger would be from the southeast, but after passing the mouth, the ship would have had to turn sharply directly into the wind.

The following quote from a report of the Public Archaeology Laboratory supports this: “Westport Point was active during the Revolutionary War as one of the safest, most-protected harbors in the region. The high dunes at Horseneck Beach blocked the Point from view and the rocks and ledges in the harbor made navigation difficult to outsiders. At least one American vessel, the Union, was docked at Westport Point (Smith et al. 1976:8). The British referred to Westport Harbor as “the devil’s pocket hole,” a clear indication of its highly defensible position (Hall and Sowle 1914:21). Although British ships could not enter the harbor, there is some documentation that they shelled the Point from outside the dunes on at least one occasion (Ford 2022).”

It is not surprising that there are no records of British naval ships attempting such an entry into the Westport Harbor and only some vague reports of such ships sitting out in open water and lobbing cannonballs over the dunes into the small village at the Point.



Map of Westport, 1831

Although there are not many records of Privateers being based in the Westport harbor/estuary area, it seems likely that privateering ships from Westport and other South Coastal communities sought refuge in this harbor either to escape pursuit by enemy vessels or just to have a safe place to rest up for a while and take on supplies from the surrounding farms. Present day experience confirms that this large estuary could have held many ships especially when there was no bridge to Horseneck Beach that cut off much of the East Branch of the River.

The Privateers probably did not try to bring their prizes into this Acoaxet refuge but rather took them to places like New Bedford where there was easy access, ample dock space and storage facilities into which to offload their cargo. It was the large number of prize ships and offloaded cargo that inspired the massive British raid into Clark's Cove and the greater New Bedford area on September 6th, 1778 that destroyed many ships, warehouses, offices and residences.

Specific reference to privateers out of Acoaxet from this time include the following:

- Swallow – a privateer sloop out of Rhode Island, owner John Innis Clark of Providence.
- Two captains from the Head of Westport – Captain Peleg Peckham and Captain John Gifford – were also reportedly engaged in privateering, possibly out of Acoaxet.

For the Slocums River the evidence is also more circumstantial than specifically documented. We put together statements by two persons who were either directly involved at the time, or recorded stories of persons who were involved, to depict the situation, and then add our own observations based on experience of the circumstances today.

We begin with an excerpt from a Memorandum written many years later by William Rotch, Sr. a prominent Nantucket businessman, that describes the situation on Nantucket during the Revolutionary War:

“It was about the year 1778 when the current in the country was very strong against us. . . . The vessels we sent after provisions came back empty, and great suffering for want of food was likely to take place. The people who thought we ought to have joined in the War (not Friends) began to chide and murmur against me. They considered me the principal cause that we did not unite in the War, (which I knew was immeasurably the case), when we might have been plentifully supplied, but were now likely to starve; little

considering that if we had taken part, there was nothing but supernatural aid that could have prevented our destruction.”⁴

Next, we add a statement from Daniel Ricketson's *History of New Bedford* written in 1858, that describes Paul Cuffe's activities during this same period: ⁵

“At the age of twenty, Paul, in company with another brother of his, David, built a boat. They were to navigate her together; but it then being war time, and his brother having never been at sea, after having proceeded a part of the way on their voyage to Connecticut became so much alarmed for their safety that Paul was obliged to return with him. Soon after this Paul undertook a trip to Nantucket with a boat-load of produce, but in crossing Buzzard's Bay was seized by “refugee pirates,” who robbed him of his boat and cargo. Nothing daunted, in connection with his brother, before mentioned, they built another boat; and having procured a cargo upon his credit, Paul again started for Nantucket, and was again chased by pirates: but night coming, he escaped from them, but ran his boat upon a rock on one of the Elizabeth Islands, and so badly injured her as to render it necessary for him to return to his home on the Westport River. After having repaired his boat, he again set off for Nantucket, reaching there in safety this time, and disposed of his cargo to good advantage. On a subsequent voyage, however, he was again taken by the pirates and deprived of all except his boat. Still, he continued his trips to Nantucket until he had acquired enough to look for a more lucrative business. . . .

Having formed a connection with his brother-in-law, Michael Wainer, who had several sons well qualified for the sea service, four of whom afterwards became captains and first mates, they built a vessel of twenty-five tons and made two successful voyages to the Strait of Belle-Isle.”

William Rotch's memorandum, although perhaps written many years after the events therein described, nonetheless can be taken as reliable and accurate. The Ricketson report on Paul Cuffe's adventures, however, seems to call for some possible revisions or corrections.

First, with regard to the brother who helped Paul build his first ship to travel to Nantucket, we conjecture that it was more likely to have been his brother-in-law, Michael Wainer, than his brother, David. Michael and David were nearly the same age and 12 years older than Paul. Both had married in 1772, Michael to Paul's sister, Mary; David to Hope Page, an indigenous woman from Freetown. We have speculated elsewhere that David may have joined Hope in her family home in Freetown, and that Michael may have joined Mary and her family on their farm near the Head of Westport. In 1776, Michael and Mary Wainer purchased a property at Russells Mills next to the Slocums River where Michael established a tanning business. This was the same year that Paul was released from the British prison ship in Brooklyn, New York, and returned to the family farm.

If Paul, based on what he had learned from fellow-prisoners from Nantucket about supply shortages on blockaded Nantucket, was contemplating attempting to respond to those needs and opportunities, his most likely brotherly ally would have been Michael Wainer, who had experience as a sailor and had just established a business on a nearby river that provided the shortest water route to Nantucket.

As for the boat that Paul might have used to carry on these activities, we believe it was unlikely that he had to build a new boat as there were many small craft that were not venturing into open waters or carrying on normal business, such as fishing or hauling cargo, because of the British naval blockade. Paul would have become acquainted with many of the local white farm owners when caring for their sheep on Cuttyhunk and after he had come with his family to the farm



Probable route of Paul Cuffe sailing from Dartmouth to Nantucket

on Old County Road. Michael Wainer was also well-known in the area. If they informed local boat-owners that they were proposing to deliver supplies to the Quakers on Nantucket, those persons would more than likely have been willing to loan them their small sailing vessel that was sitting idle at their dock.

As for the home port of Paul's Nantucket ventures, we believe that it most likely was Russells Mills at the head of the Slocums River. While we know that Paul Cuffe's later shipbuilding activities were based on the Westport River, we do not have any specific references to where he based his mainland-based operations for supplying Nantucket. But, the fact that his brother-in-law, Michael Wainer, had a tannery at Russells Mills from 1776 to 1792, that the Slocums River provided a waterway that could be easily travelled by shallops and other smaller sailing vessels but not by larger naval vessels, and that it was the closest, most direct harbor for accessing Nantucket from the mainland, all lead us to believe that this was where Paul Cuffe based his operations. It may also have been one of the ports which some of the smaller sailing vessels from Nantucket tried to reach to bring back supplies to their beleaguered island home. Paul Cuffe's eventual success in making this run during the war, as chronicled by Ricketson, may have encouraged them, but they were probably much less familiar with the cuts through the Elizabeth Islands and hazards across Buzzards Bay than Paul Cuffe who had spent much of his boyhood exploring these waters.

Visit our website to read more about postwar activities on the Westport River and for further references.

¹ This paper has benefited from the comments of Richard Gifford and Betty Slade.

² See Cole and Gifford, 2020.

³ Both the Gosnold Expedition that visited Cuttyhunk in 1602 and the Mayflower Expedition of 1620 carried shallops on board their larger ships to be used for getting from ship to shore when they reached their destinations.

⁴ William Rotch, *Memorandum Written In His 80th Year, Boston, 1916*, quoted in Edouard A. Stackpole, *Nantucket in the American Revolution*. The Nantucket Historical Association, 1976. P. 52

⁵ Ricketson, Daniel. *The History of New Bedford, Bristol County, Massachusetts*. New Bedford, Published by the Author, 1858. Pp. 257-8.



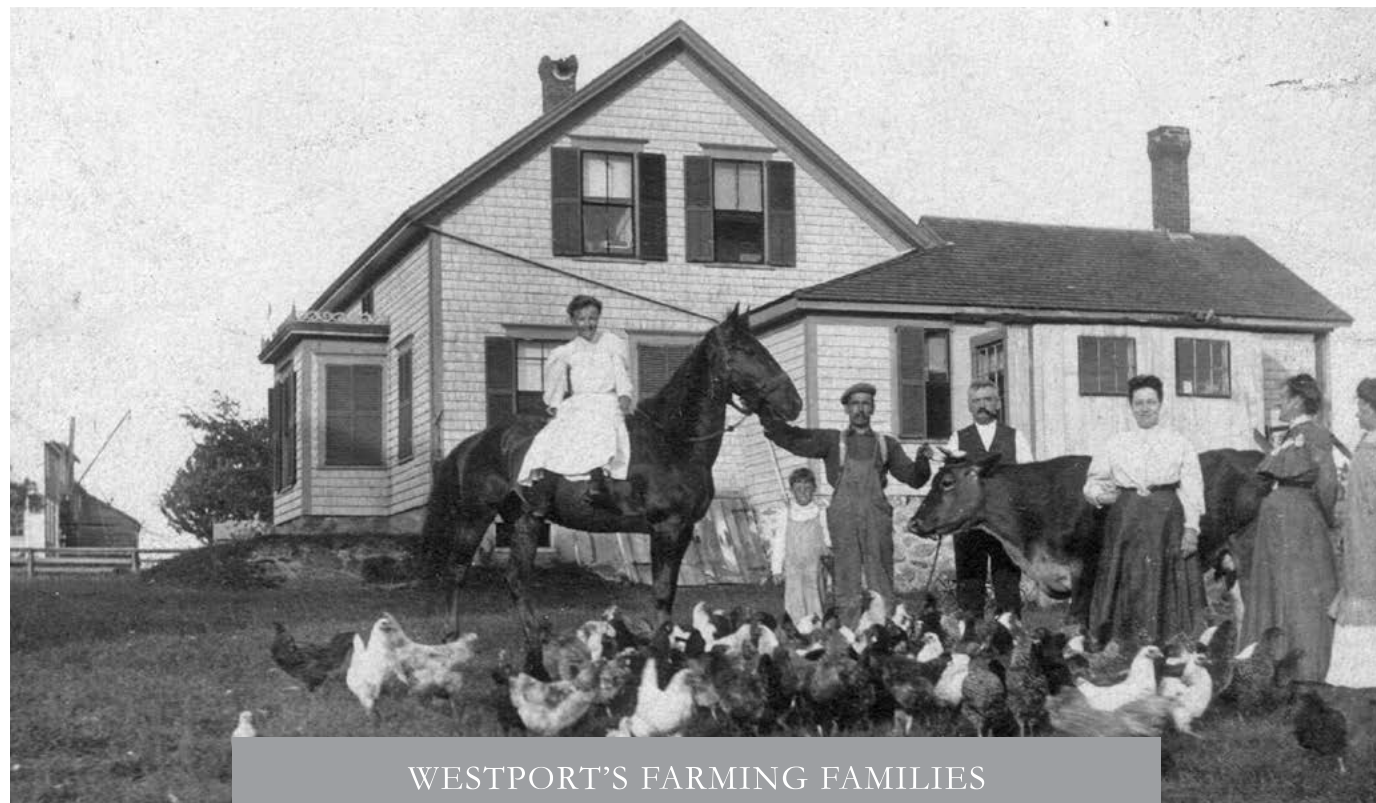
Extracts from the Journal of Henry Smith

Monday January 3, 1853

At sunrise wind NE and cloudy at 9 o'clock AM in company with H. Wilcox. Started off to look a mate for the Brig Mexico went by way of Hix Bridge and Adams Ville called on John Le Munion at his home about 1 1/2 miles from Adams Ville north. He does not feel disposed to go mate owing to poor health and other excuses his qualifications as an officer middling fair officer[?] and fair whalman rather easy and lack of ambition. Proceeded on north to Gideon Manchesters [?] to ship him for a mate but owing to other engagements would not ship. His qualifications steered a boat two voyages and part of another [?] good boat steerer would make a good watch man or for a mate for a small ship. From thence proceeded on by the way of Bliss Corner through Stafford Road to Fall River stopped at Mr Sissons on Main Street. He is a merchant tailor and sailor outfitter gained but little information from him. From Fall River we went by the way of Slades Ferry to Capt Job Collins about one mile south of Sommerset Village stayed at night with Captain Collins. He has a wife and three children two boys and a girl. At sunset winds NE and cloudy.

Tuesday January 4, 1853

At sunrise wind at NNE and cloudy, blowing a gale got breakfast and at 10 oclock AM harnessed our horse and started for home. Crossed Slades Ferry to Fall River stopped in the village about one hour at meridian commenced snowing moderately and blowing a heavy gale from NE by N. Left Fall River and went by the way of the narrows the watter flying across the road. Passed Davis Corner and turned down the factory road stopped at Peleg Tripp at the Factory. Tried to ship him for a mate but he chose not to go until spring, His qualifications fare. Was last 1st mate of the William and Eliza of New Bedford has good recommendations from her [?] would make a mate for a small ship. From Mr. Tripps we went by way of the Head of Westport to sister Hannah's about 1/4 mile north of the Head of the river found her quite smart[?] set up 20 minutes in 24 hours[?]. She has a fine boy 11 day old. At 3 o'clock started for home arrived home about sunset.

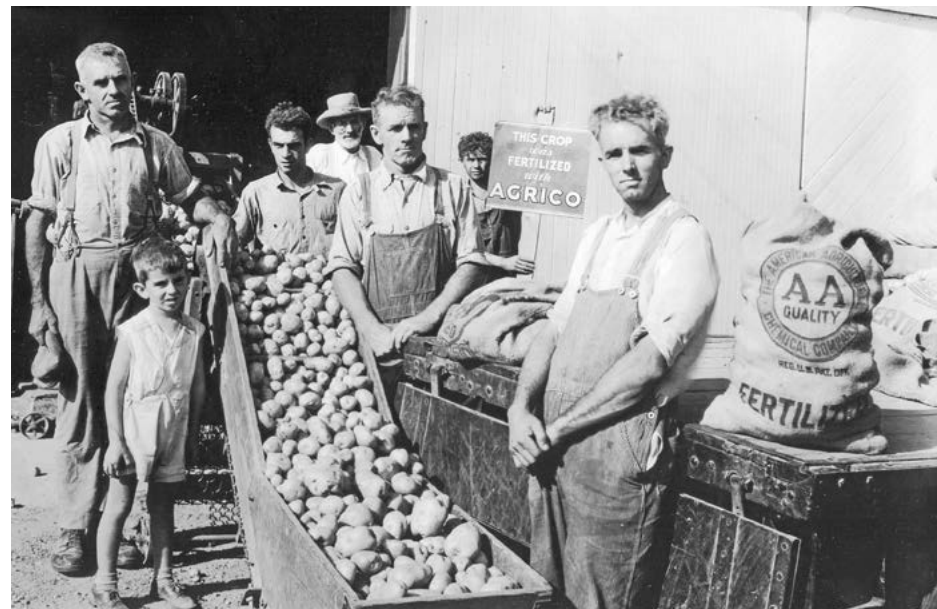


The Wood Farm
on Sodom Road

WESTPORT'S FARMING FAMILIES

TELL US YOUR STORY!

In the coming year, we'll dig into the stories of Westport's farming families, focusing on the 20th century, an era that began with 400 farms and ended with fewer than 30 farms. This project seeks to identify **people, places, objects, images**, and related materials to represent this significant shift in agricultural activities and to celebrate the surviving Westport farms (please contact us if you can contribute information). Materials gathered during this project will be showcased in a summer exhibition at the Handy House.



Smith family at
Long Acres Farm



Westport Historical Society 2024

ANNUAL REPORT

October 1, 2023– September 30, 2024

A TRIBUTE TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

How can a small organization such as ours with one full-time employee and a part-time administrative assistant, contemplate and successfully manage large events, or undertake major projects such as the Bell School rehabilitation? We depend upon a dedicated volunteer corps who form the backbone of the Westport Historical Society, expanding our impact immeasurably. They are at the heart of planning and managing the Artisan Fair, they are the friendly greeters at the Handy House during the summer months, and the welcoming house sitters for the House Tour. They provide graphic design services and creative ideas for Halloween. They offer financial oversight, strategic vision, and expertise for collections.

Thank you to all our volunteers, both long haulers and short-termers, for representing the Westport Historical Society with such good humor and enthusiasm! To learn more about volunteer opportunities, visit www.wpthistory.org/join-support/volunteer/

Some highlights of the year:

BELL SCHOOL REHABILITATION PROJECT

With the completion of the construction phase of the Bell School, the transformation of our headquarters enters its final phase. The R.P. Valois and Company team, led by job captain Don Jussaume, brought a level of skill, care, and dedication far exceeding our expectations. Moreover, Valois helped us to keep within a very limited budget and to make the best use of limited resources. We are most grateful to those who supported this project including BayCoast Bank, Community Preservation Act funding, and for donations from individuals and local foundations.

THE HOUSE TOUR

After a 3-year hiatus, our popular House Tour fundraiser returned, raising \$32,000 to support ongoing activities of the historical society. The tour included



the storied Synton House and the historic Cory Barn, located at Westport Point, as well as three homes at the Head of Westport, showcasing a variety of distinct architectural styles from Georgian to Gothic Revival Italianate, and everything in between! We are very grateful to the many sponsors, both business and individuals, to the homeowners who so generously offered their residences for this event, and to the 40 volunteers who acted as house sitters and parking assistants, making our 400 visitors feel at home!

HURRICANE!
A winter and summer exhibition offered a chance to look back at the impact of the hurricane of 1938, 1954 and Hurricane Bob 1991, showcasing images and video from the collection of the Westport Historical Society. It attracted an enthusiastic audience, many of whom shared their own experiences and memories of hurricanes. Handy House artist-in-residence



With funding from the Helen E. Ellis Charitable Trust administered by the Bank of America and the Westport Community Gift Fund, we hosted our first-ever artist-in-residence at the Handy House. During her residency, photographer Tina Tryforos created artwork using the historic photographic process of cyanotypes inspired by her research of historical photographs of women from Westport along with domestic objects those women may have encountered or used in their lives. This residency offered hands-on workshops to allow community members to make their own cyanotypes.

WESTPORT HERITAGE MAP
This much-in-demand free brochure features 22 sites of historical significance ranging from the Paul Cuffe Monument to Lees Market and identifies the distinct communities that make up the town of Westport, such as the villages of Westport Point, the Head of Westport, and Westport Factory. QR codes link to in-depth information about each location on the map. Westport Historical Society volunteer Ray Shaw designed the map. The project was funded by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Westport Point Neighborhood Association, and the Westport Cultural Council.

WOMEN OF WESTPORT POINT RESEARCH PROJECT
In addition to “unfurling” the individual life stories of women at the Point, this ongoing project has also highlighted their universal deep-seated appreciation and reverence for the natural beauty, history, and primitive way of life — far

removed from the pressures of modernity — of Westport Point. Through articles, books, paintings, and personal memoirs written by these women, our historical understanding of the Point has expanded beyond that of a whaling port and the home of whaling captains. Read more about this project at www.wpthistory.org.

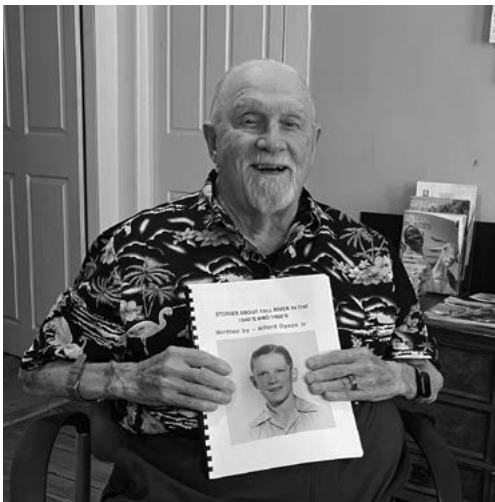
PUBLIC PROGRAMS AND EVENTS
Annual events such as the Artisan Fair and Halloween continue to bring life to the historic Handy House, connecting both younger generations to local history and enticing older generations to reminisce and share their own stories. Community conversations covered an array of topics such as Westport’s lobstering activities, the Prelude Lobster Corporation, and growing up on the river in the 1950s. Our special thanks to Richie Earle and Russell Walters for facilitating many of these conversations!

The annual Paul Cuffe Birthday Celebration took place in January at the Westport Elementary School with Cuffe descendant Robert Cox presenting the stories of Cuffe’s inspiring life to grades 1-4. Third graders explored the Handy House in November, learning about architecture, archaeology, and the challenges of everyday life in the 18th century.

WESTPORT GRAVESTONE CLEANING AND RESTORATION GROUP
In 2024, the Westport Gravestone Cleaning and Restoration Group worked in 10 different cemeteries, repairing 184 gravestones and cleaning 2,500 more. The team completed restoration work at the Taber-Tripp-Davis Burial Ground on Sodom Road in April and the Wainer Burial Ground on tribal land off Drift Road in June. The largest restoration project took place at the Wordell Family Burying Ground on Blossom Road where 99 markers were reset, restored and or repaired from July to September.

Based on our climate, we have determined that re-spraying of gravestones with D/2 biological solution is indicated after approximately four years to stave off lichen and mold growth. A total of 1,031 gravestones in sections A, B, C, and D in Beech Grove Cemetery were re-sprayed in early October. D/2 was donated to the group by Westport resident and company owner Ted Kinnari. The Beech Grove veterans’ section surrounding the flagpole was also completely re-sprayed this summer. A complete re-spraying of the Allen-Brownell-Brown, Blossom Family, and Rufus Wordell cemeteries also took place. Select repairs and cleaning were done at Beech Grove, Linden Grove and Maple Grove. During the winter months, the group was





honored with the 2023 Atlas Preservation Restoration Award for its work at the Crossman Family Burial Ground last fall. We are actively seeking new volunteers for gravestone cleaning and those interested in learning the restoration process in the future. (Report submitted by Todd Baptista)

COLLECTIONS

The following are some highlights of recent donations and acquisitions. We are very grateful to all who have entrusted us with these gifts:

2024.004 Slides of Hurricane Carol, 1954. Donated by Mary Ann Lamontagne.

2024.008 The journal of Henry Smith, 1853- 1861. Purchase.

2024.009 Photographs of Hurricane Bob. Donated by Fred Thurber.

2024.014 Collection of photos and documents relating to fishing, boatbuilding, rum running, and hurricanes. Donated by Russell Walters.

2024.016 Video of Gooseberry after Hurricane Carol, 1954. Donated by Robert Whittaker.

2024.017 Pairpoint plates made for the Westport Harvest Festival. Donated by Betsy Bienvenue.

2024.018 Stoneware jug. Donated by Carmen Brown.

2024.026 Framed photograph of Ray Davoll on the Fagowie. Donated by Fine Art and Americana.

2024.030 Westport Point photographs. Donated by Edith Camara.

2024.036 Articles about Prelude Lobster Corp. Donated by Scott Rossiter.

2024.043 Photographs, books, documents relating to Synton House and the Hall family. Donated by Elizabeth Preston.

BALANCE SHEET

September 30, 2024

Current Assets

Cash	\$253,434*
Bell School rehabilitation fund	\$186,899
Pledges receivable	\$25,000
Sylvan Endowment	\$151,384
Board designated endowment	\$487,107
Handy House restricted funds	\$272,795

Total Assets **\$1,376,619**

Liabilities

Total current liabilities	\$1,759
Total equity	\$1,374,860

Total liabilities and assets **\$1,376,619**

(Please note that our fiscal year is Oct 1 to Sep 30)

*includes an emergency reserve fund and a bequest

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

(Operating expenses including Bell School project)

October 1 2023– September 30 2024

Revenue and support

Direct Public Support	\$154,369
Special events	\$ 31,315
Grants	\$179,150
Investment transfers	\$ 40,952
Other	\$ 4,264

Total revenue and support **\$410,050**

Expenses

Contract Services	\$160,294 (includes Bell School project)
Facilities	\$6,960
Utilities	\$1,772
Operations	\$31,400
Program	\$1,437
Other	\$35,810
Payroll	\$80,095

Total Expenses **\$317,768**

Thank you!

DONATIONS RECEIVED OCTOBER 1, 2023 – SEPTEMBER 30, 2024

We gratefully acknowledge the contributions by many individuals at all levels.

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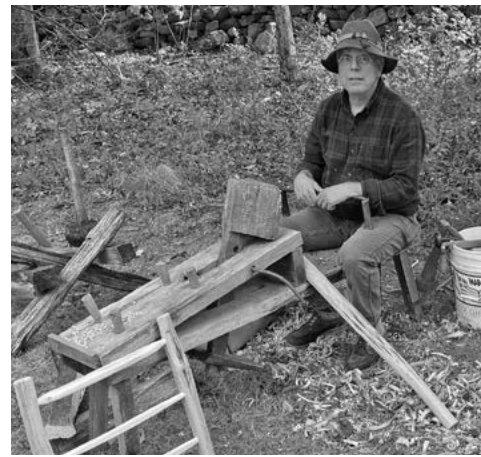
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Edith Camara on horse at Julius Cabral farm on Drift Road
Donated by Edith Camara
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Opportunities for you!

BECOME A HANDY HOUSE DOCENT

Docents assist with managing visitors to the Handy House, providing some interpretation, assisting with special events and merchandise sales. We offer a flexible schedule but as a general rule of thumb volunteers must be able to commit to volunteering for 3 hours on one Saturday or Wednesday per month June through October.

JOIN THE WESTPORT GRAVESTONE CLEANING AND RESTORATION GROUP

Learn more about the activities of this dedicated group of volunteers at www.wpthistory.org/gravestone-cleaning-project/

Learn more about our volunteer committees such as the Artisan Fair committee, Facilities Committee, and assisting with special events such as Halloween.

<https://wpthistory.org/join-support/volunteer/>