

Greenwich Historical Society Newsletter

GREENWICH HISTORICAL SOCIETY
1931 • 2022
90th
SUMMER
2022

Legacy & Light

with Dmitri Wright and Maggie Dimock

Historical Society trustee and master artist Dmitri Wright will lead a plein air painting workshop on *Saturday, May 21*, in Cos Cob Park, as part of our Discover Greenwich series. He spoke with Historical Society Curator of Exhibitions and Collections Maggie Dimock about his road to becoming a modern Impressionist and the freedom he finds in painting outdoors.



MD: *Dmitri, your work is rooted so firmly in the present, but it incorporates clear gestures and allusions to the past. How did you develop as a painter? How long have you been working in this manner?*

DW: My education and training were steeped in both the legacy of Impressionism and the push toward the new. I like to think of it as akin to growing up in a bilingual household. One of my mentors, Samuel Brecher, was a student of Charles Webster Hawthorne (1872-1930), founder of the Cape Cod School of Art. Hawthorne's greatest influence was the painter William Merritt Chase (1849-1916). Another early mentor, Expressionist painter Donald Brown, encouraged me to accept a Max Beckmann International Scholarship through the Brooklyn Museum Art School to travel abroad and study Impressionism.

For a time after that my style was fermenting, maturing. As a student I was admonished for painting like Mary

Cassatt. I admired her work because it appeared so liberating; she was free in her technique, but also controlled. Her portraits were accurate but her brushstrokes moved toward abstraction. Today, I tell my students that the past is always there, and they should embrace it. Grandma and Grandpa are sitting there at the table with you, always. You can push forward and try something new, but you are always standing on the shoulders of giants.

MD: *You've painted and led workshops in several coastal Connecticut locations where generations of artists gathered, including the Florence Griswold Museum, Weir Farm and Cos Cob. What is it like to follow in the footsteps of past artists?*

DW: To me, those artists from the past are alive. If you look at it that way, it's easier to learn from them and venture forward. At some point it became fashionable to declare certain conventions in the art world to be "dead." They've said "the figure is dead." Impressionism can never be dead. In many ways we're still living in the middle of the ripples caused by its introduction to American painting.

MD: *What makes for a good plein air painting session with a group?*

DW: I'm always hopeful to have a group of artists and new learners excited to be there and responding to the immediacy and vibrancy of the locale. For this upcoming workshop in Cos Cob Park, I hope we can invoke the spirit of those

people who came before us - not like in a séance per se, but in that transcendent manner where all can feel themselves being transported to another place.

Many people - and artists - say they want to be free, and it's easy to imagine that to paint like an Impressionist is to experience a measure of freedom. But when it comes down to it, many people do not want to appear incompetent. They are afraid of failing, so ultimately approach their painting in a familiar way, using methods they are comfortable with.

MD: *I've painted with you at Weir Farm, and I really appreciated your approach to grounding your students in their senses and encouraging the freedom of that mental state. It's changed the way I look at paintings, even now!*

DW: I hope I can create an atmosphere in which people feel comfortable opening up. Impressionism can be as much fun to do as it is to look at. People have to allow themselves to approach the practice of painting as Impressionists did, with a looseness and informality, rather than getting fixated on skills they don't have. You have to let yourself approach painting as a child would, without any preconceptions or prior knowledge - but without being childish. When you enter that zone, you're really running on all cylinders. It can be incredibly transformative and moving. It's real freedom.

Summer Greetings



Evoking the spectrum of an artist's palette and paintbrush, nature's sweeping strokes enliven our campus with vibrant blooms and emerald grasses. With the energy and warmth of the season, we welcome visitors from our community and beyond to venture

out, gather and enjoy the bounty of programs and events that we will be offering over the brilliant summer months ahead. The launch of **Discover Greenwich**, commemorating our **90th anniversary**, takes the mission of the Greenwich Historical Society to the streets with a series of **walking tours** that illuminate the stories behind the neighborhoods we live in to create a stronger sense of place. Draw inspiration from the legacy of artists who gathered at the Holley boarding house and spark your creative spirit with a **plein air painting workshop** at Cos Cob Park led by Impressionist master Dmitri Wright.

Our **Create in the Barn** series, in collaboration with Karen McKenna, celebrates creative expression in all its forms, from candle making to mixology, while fostering social connection. In the **Artful Arrangements** workshop series, Trish O'Sullivan, Master Floral Designer at the New York Botanical Garden, recreates the artistry of Constant Holley MacRae's seasonal floral arrangements. You can support local vendors by shopping at our **Tavern Garden Markets** and enjoy the sounds of local bands in the company of friends at the **Music on the Great Lawn** concert series. Kids love our long-running **Art and History Camp**, and we love having them! As we begin our countdown to 100, we are grateful to share and nurture our connection to the past, to each other and to our collective future.

Debra Mecky
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & CEO

An Old Glory Comes Home

by Kelsie Dalton, Assistant Curator for Interpretations and Collections

We are lucky here at the Greenwich Historical Society to be the benefactors of the many local history lovers who entrust us with their artifacts. The extraordinary and the mundane - from a handwritten letter by Arthur Conan Doyle to an Electrolux vacuum - are all treasured, and each donation comes to us with a story. Recently, the Historical Society acquired a new story, one that came to us in the shape of a hand-stitched, 6' x 10' American flag with 42 stars, donated by the Duff family.

The 42-star flag is a rarity: it only accurately reflected the number of states in the Union from November of 1889 to July of 1890. However, because flags only became official on July 4 (a tradition started in 1818), and Idaho was added to the Union on July 3, 1890 (which was star 43), the 42-star flag was never an official banner of the United States. Two cousins descended from John Duff discovered the rare flag folded up in

a trunk and noted the words "Miss Susan Lane, Cos Cob" written in the upper corner. You might recognize the name John Duff, the proprietor of Palmer & Duff Shipyard, which once built and repaired sailing vessels across the water from Bush-Holley House. Duff was both a successful businessman and a popular Cos Cob resident, but how did his descendants end up with Susan Lane's flag? And who was Susan Lane?

Census records show that Susan Lane was a longtime resident of Cos Cob, likely born at 34 Strickland Road in the Ephraim Lane House, her childhood home. Susan and two of her sisters, Kitty and Julia, were milliners, tradespeople who designed and produced ladies' hats. Millinery was a popular profession for women at that time, and the



42-star American Flag, ca. 1889-1890
Greenwich Historical Society, Gift of the Family of John Duff,
Photo Credit: Paul Mutino

three sisters lived together and supported themselves well into their 70s. One of them likely stitched the flag - which, according to an article

found in the historic newspaper database, was then presented to Cos Cob School by Susan Lane during an Independence Day celebration in 1920.

Further archival digging revealed that Annie Duff, a daughter of John Duff, worked at Cos Cob School at the time, and it was probably through her that the flag passed into the family. The Duff cousins said it best when they brought their donation to the Historical Society: "This flag belongs here." Nearly 100 years later, we are honored to welcome the flag back to Cos Cob and happy to have been able to reconstruct its history.

Summer Programs & Events

GREENWICH HISTORICAL SOCIETY
1931 • 2021
90

Discover Greenwich

Creating a Sense of Place

Join us as we celebrate our 90th anniversary with a dynamic series of programs and events that promote a sense of place, spark dialogue and inspire meaningful connections across our diverse community.

For more information or to register for programs and events visit greenwichhistory.org/discover-greenwich

SERIES LAUNCH & COCKTAIL PARTY

THURSDAY, MAY 12, 2022
5:30 P.M.-7:30 P.M.

*Museum Lobby and
Tavern Garden Courtyard*

EXPLORE:

Walking Tours

Greenwich Municipal Center Historic District

with John Bridge and Kate Loh

Saturday, May 14, 10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Putnam Hill Historic District

with John Bridge and Kate Loh

Saturday, June 11, 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Greenwich Point

with Susie Baker

Saturday, July 9, 1:00- 3:00 p.m.

ENRICH:

Lectures, Demonstrations and Workshops

Artful Arrangements: Constant Holley

MacRae Floral Design Series

with Trish O'Sullivan

Friday, April 22, 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Thursday, June 16, 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Location: Greenwich Historical Society Barn

A *Plein Air* Experience of Light and Legacy: Painting Workshop

with Dmitri Wright

Saturday, May 21, 10:00 am - 3:00 p.m.

Location: Cos Cob Park

Eight Shirts, Seven Coats, Fifteen Fathom Wampum: The First Deeds

with Drew Shuptar-Rayvis

Wednesday, June 8, 6:00 - 7:30 p.m.

Location: Greenwich Historical Society Barn

ENGAGE:

Community Activities

Scavenger Hunt

Sunday, July 17

10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Picnic in the Park Series

with Happiness Is...Catering

Bruce Park - Sunday, August 14th

Montgomery Pinetum - Sunday, August 21st

Binney Park - Sunday, August 28th

CREATE IN THE BARN SERIES

Candlemaking Workshop

Thursday, May 19, 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Mixology Class

Thursday, June 23, 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Tavern Garden Markets



Our Tavern Garden Markets feature a specially curated, alternating selection of locally grown and sourced products. Support regional growers, merchants and artisans when you fill your basket and your home with the bounties of nature and unique, hand-crafted goods.

2022 Market Dates (rain or shine!)

Alternating Wednesdays in the Tavern Garden and Museum Lobby
10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

May 4	August 10
May 18	August 24
June 1	September 7
June 15	September 21
June 29	October 5
July 13	October 19
July 27	November 2

MUSIC on the Great LaWN

THURSDAYS

Site opens 5:30 p.m.

Concert 6:30 p.m.-8:00 p.m.

June 2nd Merlin

June 16th The Sun Kings

June 30th Billy & the Showmen

July 14th King's Highway

July 28th Suburban Chaos

August 11th The Bob Button Band

August 25th Gunsmoke

September 8th Demolition Brass Band

PRESENTED BY THE FIRST BANK OF GREENWICH

47 Strickland Road, Cos Cob, CT 06807

HOLIDAY CLOSINGS

Monday, May 30, Memorial Day
Monday, July 4, Independence Day

OFFICE, MUSEUM STORE AND CAFÉ

Monday - Friday, 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Saturday and Sunday, 12:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.

MUSEUM GALLERIES

Wednesday - Sunday, 12:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

BUSH-HOLLEY HOUSE

Wednesday-Sunday, 12:00 p.m., 1:30 p.m., and
3:00 p.m. Tours last 45 minutes. Call for reservations.

LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES

By appointment

ADMISSION

\$10 adults, \$8 seniors, \$7 group rate

FREE: Youth under 18, members, active
military/ Blue Star. FREE for all the first Wednesday
of every month.

Visit all 21 museums on the Connecticut Art Trail for
\$35. Buy a passport at the museum lobby desk or at
ctarttrail.org.

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*We work to preserve and interpret Greenwich history to strengthen the community's
connection to our past, to each other and to our future.*



Art & History Camp 2022

July 11-29, 2022

Kids learn important skills while exploring Connecticut's colonial
history and the works of the Cos Cob art colony through interactive
games, crafts and hands-on fun.

www.greenwichhistory.org/art-and-history-camp

Sail into the Summer!

with nautical-themed gifts from the Museum Store!

The discerning shopper's destination for unique accessories and gifts,
the Museum Store is a local gem. We offer convenient online shopping
and pick-up, ample parking and complimentary gift wrapping. Browse
the latest arrivals and relax at the Artists Café during your next visit!

THE MUSEUM STORE IS OPEN

Monday-Friday 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Weekends 12:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.

www.greenwichhistory.org/museum/store

