



# Salisbury Association

Serving Our Community Since 1902.

Land Trust

Historical Society

Community Events

SPRING

2023



## Students Examine Artwork

The Salisbury Association’s art collection has many 19<sup>th</sup> century portraits of prominent Salisbury citizens, but perhaps none has created as much interest as the portrait of Maria Coffing and Jane Winslow. The portrait, along with a companion portrait of Maria’s husband, John, was painted by Edwin White in 1844 and hangs in the Academy Building.

John’s portrait was donated to SA in 1971, but the portrait of his wife did not come to SA until 2012 when a descendant of the Coffings reached out to SA in search of historical photographs. From such photos, Curator Katherine Chilcoat knew that a portrait existed of Maria, and she asked him if he knew of it. He was able to find the portrait at a cousin’s house, and she donated the painting to SA.

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Maria Birch Coffing and Jane Elizabeth Winslow, 1844, by Edwin White.



## Salisbury Association enrolls 682 acres in Wildlands Partnership



The forest at Dark Hollow.

Photo by Harry White

The Salisbury Association has safeguarded as forever-wild 682 acres through the Northeast Wilderness Trust’s Wildlands Partnership program. The program encourages local land trusts across the Northeast to engage in forever-wild conservation by offering support for project costs. It also offers access to the voluntary carbon market for ongoing income.

*continued on page 2*

**Artwork... from page 1**

SA had the portrait cleaned and appraised. The appraiser said “I almost fainted when I saw it. Black people were rarely seen in portraits. There is still a great deal more of the mystery to solve.” In the portrait, Maria is shown in a traditional seated position. In the background is a young Black woman. Who was she? What was her relationship with the Coffings?

The woman is almost certainly Jane Elizabeth Winslow. Orphaned at five years old around 1830, “Jennie” Winslow joined the Coffing household and stayed until after Maria Coffing died in 1865. The 1840 census shows a “free colored person between the ages of 10 and 23” living with Maria Birch Coffing. The 1850 and 1860 censuses both list her by name as part of the Coffing household.

This portrait has been the subject of study by students at The Hotchkiss School and Salisbury School. At Hotchkiss in 2021, humanities students examined the power of portraits and the significance of choices including style and composition in the exhibit,

“Common Ground: A Dialog in Portraits.” The students applied what they learned about historical portraits by creating a contemporary portrait. One student responded to the power dynamic in the Coffing/Winslow portrait by painting a portrait in which a Black woman was the only central figure.

More recently, students at Salisbury School dug into the portrait’s history as part of its Coloring Our Past history course. They shared their preliminary research in a presentation on February 9 hosted by Scoville Memorial Library. Of particular interest was their exploration of why artist Edwin White would have included Jennie. Based on subjects painted by White later in his career, it may have been more than simply the wishes of the family. The students will present their completed project at the Troutbeck Symposium over three days, April 30 - May 2. The Symposium is a presentation of student work examining untold stories of American History, especially that of people of color. A collection of these projects will be on display in the Academy Building during May.

**Wildlands Partnership... from page 1**

Six of Salisbury’s preserves are now protected with forever-wild easements: Dark Hollow, Pope Preserve, Yoakum, Mitchell Shostak, Belter Lime Rock, and Railroad Path (SA’s 94-acre preserve next to the Town’s Railroad Ramble). These properties are mostly core forest, in an area of high climate resiliency. They harbor a rich variety of wildlife and plants including many rare species and provide safe places and multiple options for migrating wildlife and plants. According to Michael Klemens, Salisbury’s planning and zoning board chair and author of *Conservation of Amphibians and Reptiles in Connecticut*, climate models show that the highlands region of Salisbury will be the last refuge for many of Connecticut’s species that depend upon cooler temperatures. The forest

itself functions as a carbon sink, sequestering and storing carbon, helping to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

“We have always felt that these areas of core forest are best managed as forever-wild. Adding a layer of protection to these conserved lands helps make that protection more secure for the future. We like that the easements allow the continuation of public access and our local monitoring programs, and that they allow small land trusts to aggregate land and participate in the carbon market” said John Landon, Co-Chair of SA’s Land Trust. “We chose these areas carefully, selecting only our most suitable, forested lands.”





## Upcoming Exhibit: What's in a Name?

Why did settlers of our town choose to name a lake Wononscopomuc? Where is the academy on Academy Street? The factory on Factory Street?

The mystery of why places around us are called what they are can be solved by a visit to an upcoming exhibit “What’s in a Name.” Curators from the Salisbury Association Historical Society have delved into centuries of town records, newspaper accounts, early histories, journals and oral legends to discover fascinating stories behind the names of local streets, natural attractions and buildings we pass every day.

The exhibit will explore origin stories, both fact and fiction. Take, for instance, the name of our town. In 1803, a Congregational minister floated a rumor that the town had been named for a “Mr. Salisbury” whose unsavory history included the murder of a servant girl. You’ll be glad to know this was discredited on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first town meeting by a judge who confirmed that “Salisbury” was borrowed from a cathedral town of the same name in England.

And what about Lake Wononscopomuc? Dutch settlers of the town bought land from the Schaghticoke, Pootatuck and Mohican Indians. The name of the lake is believed to have come from a Mohican term meaning *rocks at the bend in the lake*. The names for Twin Lakes are thought to be Mohican names, too. West Twin Lake is Washinee which is Mohican for *smiling water*. East Twin Lake is Washining, *laughing water*.

In researching street names, the curators discovered that few street signs existed until well into the twentieth century. Around 1930, Bill Barnett, later longtime First Selectman,



spearheaded a campaign to raise money to erect signs labeling streets. The original signs were wooden and eventually replaced by the green and white metal signs we see today.

Perhaps one of the most intriguingly named streets is off Main Street in Salisbury just east of Town Hall. “Lock Up” refers to a small brick building that once stood adjacent to the old cemetery there. It was a place where drunks were detained while sobering up. The Lock Up was torn down in 1939, no longer needed once the state police barracks opened in Canaan.

The exhibit will open in July in the Academy Building. There’s an interesting story behind that name, too. The brick building was erected in 1833 when a committee of local citizens raised \$1,250 to build a new school. Tuition at Salisbury Academy was \$3 per eleven-week term for English studies, \$4 per term for Classics. After it ceased operating as a school, the building served as a meeting house and then as a courthouse. It was restored in 2011 by the Salisbury Association.

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## Affordable Housing and Land Conservation

Several Salisbury Association Trustees and members of Salisbury affordable housing groups attended a “Summit on Housing and Conservation” in Hartford on February 1. Speakers discussed how land trusts and affordable housing groups can communicate and collaborate for the betterment of their communities.

Too often, people assume that land trusts and affordable housing groups are in competition with one another. Both are vital

benefits to our community. It’s not a question of either/or.

Thus the Salisbury Association is committed to supporting efforts in our town for work-force housing and entry-level housing. The lack of such housing has impacted our local businesses, schools, and health care facilities.

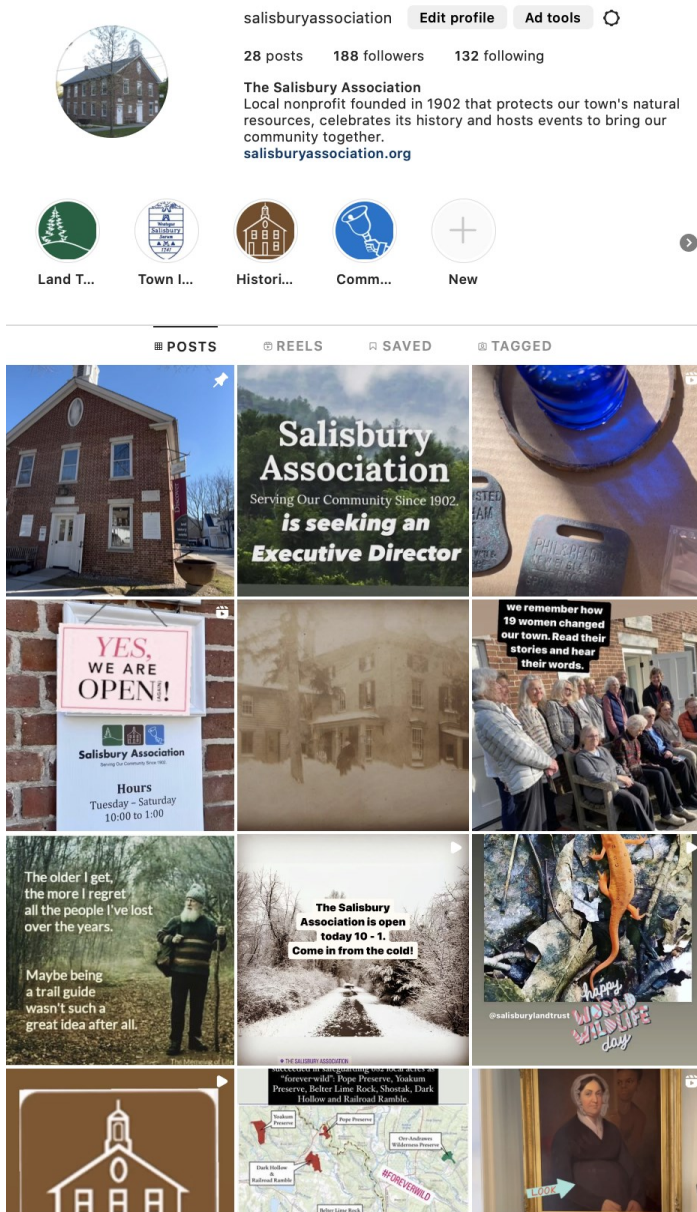
This fall, we will be mounting a special exhibit on affordable housing in our community. Don’t miss it!

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# Salisbury Association Launches a New Instagram



In a continuing effort to reach out to our community, the Salisbury Association has added a new Instagram account @SalisburyAssociation. This account is a general account for the organization. It helps us highlight how we contribute to our community in three ways, through work done by the Land Trust, Historical Society and Community Events committees. The central site amplifies posts from @SalisburyLandTrust and @SalisburyHistoricalSociety. If you are on Instagram, please follow! And encourage friends and family to do the same!

**Contact the Salisbury Association:**

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## SA Earns Accreditation Renewal

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission has renewed the Salisbury Association’s accreditation for another five years. SA is part of a network of over 450 accredited land trusts across the country. Accreditation is a rigorous process in which the organization must provide documentation showing it adheres to the highest standards of nonprofit management. Accreditation signifies the Accreditation Commission’s confidence that SA’s lands will be protected forever.





## Salisbury Association

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*Belter Lime Rock is SA's newest preserve. The hiking trail to this beautiful view will be open soon!*

Photo by John Landon

## Upcoming Events

**April 22 / Volunteer Day.** Help remove invasive plants at Vincent Preserve. Meet at the Academy Building, 24 Main Street at 9 a.m.

**April 30-May 2 / Troutbeck Symposium: Coloring Our Past.** Area students present their research on local Black history. A collaboration of local schools, the SA Historical Society, Salisbury Town Historian, Scoville Memorial Library, Noble Horizons and Troutbeck Resort in Amenia.

**May 6** at 4 p.m. / Tim Binzen lecture: **Native Americans in the Upper Housatonic River Valley**, at the Scoville Memorial Library.

**May 8-June 1 / Academy Building Exhibit: Coloring Our Past**, student work investigating Black history, from the Troutbeck Symposium.

**May 16 / Bellamy-Ferriday House & Gardens Tour**, Bethlehem, CT. Participants will tour an extraordinary landmark house museum that

dates back to 1754. Beautiful gardens filled with heritage lilacs, roses and other shrubs and flowers surround the house.

**May 27** at 8 a.m. / **Annual Bird Walk** at Schlesinger Bird Preserve. Meet at the Preserve entrance on Scoville Ore Mine Road near Route 41.

**June 1-July 14 / Academy Building Exhibit: The Land We Protect: Conserving Our Natural Resources.** Opening reception June 10 at 5 p.m.

**July 4 / Annual Independence Day Celebration** at the Town Grove.

**July 15-August 31 / Academy Building Exhibit: What's in a Name?**

**July 27** (rain date July 28) / **Bat Program and Count**, at the Academy Building and the Scoville Memorial Library.

