

# Something BIG is Coming!



Sketch by Courtney A. Martin

**2008** is a huge year for the Noah Webster House & West Hartford Historical Society. Besides celebrating Noah's 250th birthday (NW-250), the museum is completing a 1.2 million dollar Capital Campaign and will soon begin an over \$600,000 renovation and restoration of the museum and historic house.

### NEW EXHIBITS...

These exciting plans include exhibits about Noah Webster and West Hartford, an orientation film introducing visitors to the site, a new visitor's reception area, restoration of the historic house, and exhibit space in Blue Back Square.

The new permanent Noah Webster exhibit will dynamically explore Webster's accomplishments and how he continues to impact our lives today. Using objects, facts, and activities, the exhibit will give visitors insight into Noah the lexicographer, politician, abolitionist, family man, and more.



A look at part of the design for the new Noah Webster Exhibit.

The West Hartford: A-Z exhibit will be a whimsical look at the history of our town. This semi-permanent exhibit will allow visitors to get a glimpse into the depth of our community's past. Images of people, businesses, neighborhoods and more, taken during multiple time periods will help to introduce people to parts of the town they may not know about. The goal of the exhibit will be to celebrate the town's history and to highlight the role of the museum as the Historical Society.

A new exhibit space in Blue Back Square, located near the new east entrance of the Noah Webster Library, will give the general public a look into the museum's mission and programs. Using plasma screen TV's for museum updates, information, and programming, as well as changing artifacts and window panels, Blue Back Square shoppers will be able to learn about the museum's mission and upcoming events.

### A FEW EXCITING EVENTS...

On Thursday, October 16 (Noah's 250th), a weekly lecture series will kick off. In tandem with the Hartford University President's College, the museum will offer a series of lectures on Thursday evenings from October 16 through November 20. Each lecture will focus on Noah's interests. These include: global warming, the abolition of slavery in America, the Dictionary, early American education, Noah Webster 101, and conversations with Noah (a theatrical presentation and Q&A with an actor portraying Noah Webster).

The year culminates in a celebration befitting Noah's stature as a founder of American culture. On Saturday, October 18, the museum, working with other Town groups, will host a giant birthday celebration based at Town Hall. The celebration will include storytellers, A Town-wide Spelling Bee, horse-drawn carriage rides, a Fife and Drum Corps, food,

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# Letter from the Director

## A Face Lift for Noah: 250 and looking marvelous!



Dear Members:

At 250 years of age we might all need a little nip here and a tuck there. This is exactly what we are planning to do for Noah Webster. Before you know it, good old Noah might look like a man half his age.

In preparation for Webster's BIG birthday, this spring we will begin a major renovation to the front lobby and a restoration to the historic birthplace. As the cover article describes, our capital campaign, which we started just over a year ago, has been highly successful. Thanks to so many of you and foundations such as the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, the Roosa Family Foundation, the Connecticut Humanities Council, and many others, the museum has surpassed its initial \$1 million dollar goal and is nearing completion of the campaign. Like a home renovation, once you upgrade your kitchen appliances then your cabinets look obsolete, and that then highlights how bad your living room looks and. . . before you know it you have renovated your entire house. This in some ways is similar to a restoration. What started as a restoration of the historic house, moved on to an orientation center, which expanded to creating new exhibits and completely reinventing the visitor experience.

Over the next year we will begin implementation of all the projects that we have worked so hard to plan and prepare for. I feel that once completed, we will have a site that our entire museum family is proud of and that fully explores to the best of our ability Webster's impact on American culture and our town's vibrant past.

Too often in our culture, historic sites are viewed as irrelevant and stagnant places. For many years, historic sites have been threatened by declining attendance and financial support. Some of the biggest leaders in the field have seen their audience plummet by nearly half of what it was in the 1970s and 80s. However, our little site has been labeled by one supporter as "the little museum that could." Over the past few years new school and adult programming have made the museum a vibrant part of our community. Over the next couple of years, we intend to physically make the museum the best that it can be. A new orientation center, exhibits and films, a restored interior of the historic house, and new house tours will connect to visitors in meaningful and timely ways that prove that history and culture do matter. Our task is to make history exciting, engaging, and meaningful. If through these projects we can help visitors gain a greater appreciation for how Webster impacts their daily lives and a respect of our community's past, then we will have accomplished our mission.

Thanks for all your support. Here is to making Noah Webster's birthday year one that we can all remember.

Thank you,  
Chris



# Spring Events

**April 5: Kids' First Saturday: Colonial Games: 1-4 p.m.**

**April 14: Quills and More: 10 a.m.-noon**

**April 15: Colonial Toys and Games: 1-3 p.m.**

**April 16: Bead weaving: 10 a.m.-noon**

**April 17: Hearth Cooking: 1-3 p.m.**

**April 18: Basket weaving: 10 a.m.-noon**

**April 26: A Colonial Girls' Day Out Encore: 10 a.m.- 12 noon**

**May 3: Kids' First Saturday: Scrap booking: 10 a.m.-12 noon**

**May 11: Mother's Day Tea: 2-4 p.m.**

**May 28: Annual Meeting: 5 p.m.**

**June 17: 5th Annual Golf Tournament**

**June 7: Kids' First Saturday: Trunks**

**June 14-15: Tag Sale**





# From Blue-Backed Speller to Blue Back Square

Noah Webster's Writings  
and the Places He's Inspired

By Jessica Vanski

*Educate: to inform and enlighten the understanding*

-Noah Webster's 1828 dictionary

There is no question that Noah Webster was a man of many accomplishments. With his multitude of writings, including books, editorials, journals, and newspapers, he is considered one of the most prolific writers of his time. His work has inspired the naming of schools across the country, the West Hartford Library, and a new area of West Hartford.

## Webster's Writings:

It all began when Noah was born in 1758 (2008 is his 250th birthday). After studying with West Division (a.k.a. West Hartford) minister, Nathan Perkins, Noah soon moved onto bigger and better things. In 1774, he attended Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut and by 1779 was teaching school in Glastonbury. He later opened a school house of his own in Sharon, Connecticut.

At the young age of 25, he published the *Blue-Backed Speller*, Part I of *A Grammatical Institute of the English Language*. Soon after, he published *Sketches of American Policy*. By 1785, Webster was traveling from state to state promoting his textbooks and lecturing on the topic of secure copyright legislation. After moving to New York City in 1787, Noah founded the *American Magazine* and published *Dissertations on the English Language*. He wedded Rebecca Greenleaf of Boston in 1789 and the two returned to Hartford.

Over the next couple of years, Webster sponsored the publication of *Governor John Winthrop's Journal*, published *A Collection of essays*

and *Fugitive Writings*, compiled *The Little Reader's Assistant*, and published *The Prompter*. After moving back to New York City, Webster began the publication of a Federalist Party newspaper, *The American Minerva* (renamed *Commercial Advertiser* in 1797, combined with the *New York Globe* in 1905 to become the *Globe and Commercial Advertiser*, which in turn was bought by the *New York Sun* in 1923) and the semi-weekly *Herald*.

As the eighteenth century came to a close, Webster found himself back in New Haven. He wrote *A Brief History of Epidemic and Pestilential Diseases*, *A Compendi-*



The statue of Noah Webster that now stands in front of the Noah Webster Library.

*Unity: The state of being one; oneness*

-Noah Webster's 1828 dictionary

*ous Dictionary of the English Language, and Elements of Useful Knowledge* and served in the Connecticut state legislature.

Although his writing slowed after moving his family to Amherst, Massachusetts in 1812, Webster continued his political efforts and served as a member of the state legislature in Massachusetts. Additionally, he co-founded Amherst College.

Before Noah Webster's passing in 1843, he returned to New Haven and received a much anticipated Doctorate of Law from Yale University. Webster traveled far to England and France in order to compile research for *An*

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# Celebrate Mother's Day...



Enjoy a hot cup of tea, delicious sandwiches and desserts, and Kandie Carle, the Victorian Lady, as she exhibits Fashions of the Gilded Age...

This Mother's Day, the Noah Webster House and West Hartford Historical Society will host the Third Annual Mother's Day Tea with Kandie Carle, the Victorian Lady. The tea will take place

on Sunday, May 11 from 2 to 4 p.m. at the museum, 227 S. Main St, West Hartford.

A light lunch of tea sandwiches (including tomato, chicken salad, cucumber & cream cheese, and watercress) and desserts (cranberry scones, lemon cake, tea cakes, and fruit tarts) will accompany a variety of teas. After tea, Kandie Carle, the Victorian Lady, will perform a program on the fashion and society of



the Gilded Age (1890s). Carle performed her Edwardian era program at last year's Tea, resulting in rave reviews.

Carle, an actress, singer, and dancer, has been performing as The Victorian Lady for nearly 12 years. Her fun and informative programs offer a history lesson with the fun and excitement of a true theatrical! Reservations are required. Call (860) 521-5362 ext. 21 for information and reservations. The cost for adults is \$20 and children are \$16. Members' cost is \$18 and \$14 respectively. This program is suggested for ages 12 and older. Visit [noahwebsterhouse.org](http://noahwebsterhouse.org) for further information.



## Save the Date!

**WHAT:** Noah Webster House / Seniors Job Bank Golf Tournament.

**WHEN:** 8:30am, Tuesday June 17th. Shotgun format.

**WHERE:** Rockledge Country Club.

**CALL:** Tuck Miller at 860-240-1043 for information or to sign up.



You are invited to the Museum's

## ANNUAL MEETING

**WEDNESDAY,  
MAY 28, 2008  
AT 5 P.M.**

The Meeting will include a reception, the presentation of the Meyer Prize for Excellence in History Board and Staff reports of 2007.

*A meeting of the Board of Trustees will follow the Annual Meeting*



# Spring Workshops & Summer Camps

This April, the museum offers a series of workshops for kids. Each day will offer a fun activity to keep kids occupied over spring break. Each workshop is open to kids age 7 and over. The program fee is \$15 per child per workshop (\$12 for museum members).

## Monday, April 14: 10 a.m.-noon: Quills and More:



Children learn about writing during the colonial era. They'll make a horn book and a copy book, try out quill penmanship, and take home a quill pen and ink.

## Tuesday, April 15: 1-3 p.m.: Colonial Toys and Games:



In this creative and fun session, kids will make a Nine Men's Morrice board then learn a variety of indoor and outdoor games like Graces, Lucy Locket, Skittles, and stilts.

## Wednesday, April 16: 10 a.m.-noon: Bead weaving:



Kids will create a bracelet or keychain by learning how to weave on a bead loom—an art perfected by Native Americans in the New England area. They used shells and sinew, but we'll use colorful glass beads and thread.

## Thursday, April 17: 1-3 p.m.: Hearth Cooking:



Colonial kids couldn't just grab a snack from the fridge! Young cooks will create an afternoon snack of homemade applesauce, Sunday night wafers, and lemonade over the open hearth.

## Friday, April 18: 10 a.m.-noon: Basket weaving:



People started weaving containers almost 12,000 years ago. Kids will learn this ancient art and make a basket of their own.

To sign up for any or all of these exciting workshops, call Jennifer DiCola Matos at 860-521-5362 x14.



## **COLONIAL KID'S ADVENTURE CAMP (Age 8-11)**

In this summer camp, kids explore life in the 1700s by spending a week as a colonial child!



By doing activities at both the historic Noah Webster House and the farm at Westmoor Park, children experience first hand the chores, games, and fun of colonial times! When at the Noah Webster House, children become colonial "characters" in costume, and help to cook their lunches over an open hearth. They explore Noah Webster's house and garden, work on crafts, make and play games and instruments, and learn colonial songs and dances. At Westmoor Park, children encounter life on a farm by doing barnyard chores, working in the garden, and processing wool. At this 162-acre property, they will have the opportunity to go on nature walks, collect plants, make candy and medicine, and play outdoor games.  
*Sessions: July 14-18, July 28-August 1, August 11-15, 2008. M-F 9:00-4:00\* \$219/Non-members, \$199/Members. \*Extended hours until 5 p.m. available for an extra \$25/week*

## **COLONIAL CRAFTS & TRADES WORKSHOPS (Age 9-12)**

For one week only, the Noah Webster House is offering two half-day, week-long hands-on workshops where students will actively learn about and try out different types of colonial crafts and trades. Session A runs from 9 a.m. to noon and activities include blacksmithing, pottery, paper-making, doll or toy making, soap making, and cooking. Session B runs from 1-4 p.m. and activities include tinsmithing, carpentry, wood panel painting, basket-weaving, dyeing, candle-dipping, and cooking. Both sessions give kids the opportunity to play colonial games, dress in costume, hear stories, and tour Noah's house. Workshop sessions can be taken together or separately. Prices include all materials.

*August 18-22, 2008. Session A: 9:00-12:00, Session B: 1:00-4:00*

*Session A or B: \$150/Non-members, \$130/Members.*

*Session A and B: \$250/Non-members, \$230/Members.*

**Save! Sign up two or more siblings to receive \$15 off the price of each child.**

# 12th Annual Meyer Prize Competition

The museum invites West Hartford students to participate in the annual Freeman and Mary Meyer Prize for Excellence in History contest.

The Meyer Prize is awarded to the student who submits the best research paper on local history. The first place student receives a prize of up to \$500. Other prizes may be awarded at the judges' discretion.

Papers should be typed, double spaced, and properly documented with endnotes or footnotes and a bibliography/works cited page. Three to 10 pages is an acceptable length.

Three copies of the paper must be submitted to the Noah Webster House by 5 p.m. on April 25, 2008. Winners will be announced by May 9 and prizes will be awarded at the Noah Webster House and West Hartford Historical Society's annual meeting at 5 p.m. on May 28. For more information or for an entry form, please contact Sarah Mocko, Coordinator of Public Programs, at (860) 521-5362, x 21.

Papers must center on an aspect of the history of West Hartford or a topic of local historical significance. Papers are judged by a three-person panel of scholars and historians. All high school students who attend West Hartford

schools or are West Hartford residents are invited to participate.

Last year, Conard High School student Carolyn Scully won the prize with her paper,

"Is West Hartford a Suburb?" Scully's paper focused on the evolution of West Hartford between 1945 and 1970. Using architect and author Andres Duany's *Suburban Nation*, Scully proves that West Hartford fulfills the five requirements of a suburb: housing subdivisions, shopping centers, office parks, civic institutions, and roadways.

Submissions become the property of the Noah Webster House and West Hartford Historical Society and may be used for publication. Previous winners have been published in *West Hartford Life* and in *The Spectator*.



*The Vanderbilt House, no longer in existence.*

## Spring Kids' First Saturdays

### Colonial Games:

*Saturday, April 5, 1-4 p.m.*



Try some colonial favorites! Skittles, Shove Ha'penny, Nine Men's Morrice, Fox and Geese, and many more! *Free with paid museum admission or \$3 per person.*

### Scrapbooking

*Saturday, May 3, 10 a.m. to noon*

Kids and parents learn how to preserve their favorite memories in a fun and exciting way! Learn about layouts, themes, colors, and more. Artist and teacher Kelly Hall leads the creative class.



### Paint and Stencil a Trunk

*Saturday, June 7, 11 a.m.*



Kids get creative by painting and stenciling a treasure trunk. After they paint the base coat, they'll look through the Noah Webster House to find historic trunks and learn about colonial travel. Then they'll return to their project and stencil it with traditional colonial designs. \$10 per child, \$8 for museum members.



(Continued from page 4)

*American Dictionary of the English Language* (1828). He later ventured to Washington in an attempt to further copyright legislation, met with the House of Representatives, and later met President Andrew Jackson.

Webster's Places

Throughout the United States, educational institutions, historic places, and religious groups have been inspired by Webster. From Blue Back Square in his home town to the "Quill and Cap" weather vane in Goshen, NY where he taught school in the 1780s.

*The Blue-Backed Speller*, part of a book formally known as *A Grammatical Institute of the English Language* was a movement of its time. It taught students to read, spell, and pronounce words for over 150 years. It is also the inspiration behind West Hartford's Blue Back Square. The Square is comprised of retail stores, dining establishments, entertainment, and residential areas near West Hartford Center. The name Blue



Little Noah, the mascot of the Noah Webster Library.

Back Square was chosen to honor West Hartford's most famous son.

In 1917, the new building for the West Hartford Public Library was dedicated to Noah Webster. Webster's donation of 78 books to a subscription library in 1837 helped expand the West Hartford Library Association. The subscription library was put together by the members of the Congregational Church in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Webster has also inspired the naming of several schools throughout the United States, including the Noah Webster Magnet School in Hartford, the Noah Webster Basic School in Mesa, Arizona, and the Noah Webster Academy in Orem, Utah. Each of these institutions help to teach children Webster's values which continue to be important today - cultural literacy, moral virtue, individuality, and excellence.

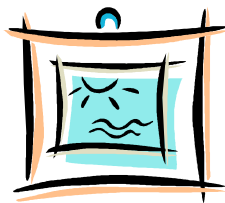
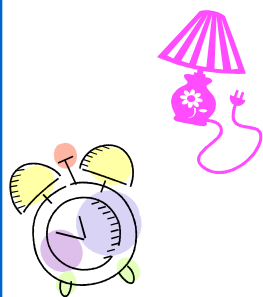
Similar to the way in which Webster's *Blue-Backed Speller* transformed American culture, Webster continues to impact America through the writings he created and the places he has inspired.



# Huge Tag Sale!

Saturday & Sunday,  
June 14 & 15, 2008,  
8 a.m.-1 p.m.

At the Noah Webster House &  
West Hartford Historical Society,  
227 S. Main St. West Hartford





# Something Big...

(Continued from page 1)

early American crafters, and much, much more. Details will be available later this summer.

Other NW-250 events will include the NPR game show Says You!, Back to School with Noah, and exhibit openings. More details will be available soon. Visit [www.noahwebsterhouse.org](http://www.noahwebsterhouse.org) for further information.

## BIG CHANGES...

The plans for the renovation of the Visitor Reception area will include several moves. New areas to house a Noah Webster exhibit and the Museum Shop will be created. The Museum Shop will move to the current Noah Webster display space, leaving the old shop space available for renovation.

The current Museum Shop will undergo a transformation to become a one-room schoolhouse theater. The theater will allow visitors to see the new orientation video in a cozy, historic environment. The space will also be available for school and public programs. The new movie is being created by Emmy award-winning documentary filmmaker Karyl Evans.

The historic house will undergo restoration efforts to help preserve it for future generations. The interior was last restored in the late 1960s. Since that time, thousands of visitors and the elements have taken their toll on the building. The restoration will address the impending structural, electrical and mechanical needs threatening the landmark. The house will also be reinterpreted to portray a more accurate story of Noah Webster and his family's lives.

The current lean-to section of the house (which was built after Noah moved out and is therefore irrelevant to his story) will become an exhibit and interactive area where children and families can discover the history of the house and farming in early West Hartford, as well as try hands-on activities from colonial life.

## UPCOMING CONSTRUCTION...

Through April and May, the museum will be undergoing this construction. For several weeks, the museum's front lobby may be inaccessible to staff and guests. For everyone's convenience, the side front door (near the outdoor wood shed) will be used as the main entrance. Signs will be posted to lead people through the garden to the door. Handicap accessibility will be through the gallery. The restroom and library will still be available.

The small gallery will temporarily become the visitor orientation space. Guests will be greeted, admissions will be collected, the introductory video will be shown, and the shop (on a smaller scale) will be set up in that space. The museum will be open on a cash and check basis only.

Unfortunately, part of the parking lot will be commandeered for construction equipment. Guests are requested to park either on Main Street or on Crestwood Road.



*The "lean-to kitchen" - part of the house which will become an interactive area for families.*

The new visitor orientation center should be open by mid-late May.

## THANK YOU...

Thanks to the generous support of museum members, business, and members of the community, the museum was able to raise over \$1,000,000 to make all of these dreams possible. The museum staff and Board of Directors are looking forward to a brighter, better, and more exciting future for the Noah Webster House & West Hartford Historical Society. If you have not yet given to the capital campaign, your donation is still welcome. There are several projects which still need funding.

# In Appreciation of Financial Support in 2007

The following individuals and groups have made contributions to the organization from January 1, 2007 through December 31, 2007:

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 Rose Worobel  
 West Hartford Rotary Club

**The following corporations matched contributions made by individuals:**

Aetna Foundation, Inc.  
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**Memorial/Honor Contributions**

**In memory of:**

Fred and Jane Hamilton  
 Theodore Pisk  
 Mark Tenney  
 Jane Tule

**In Honor of:**

Gordon Bennett  
 Connie Robinson  
 Janet Tracy  
 Richard and Maylah Park

**Long-term support through charitable gift annuities:**

Karen Anderson  
 Gordon Bennett  
 Louise Pruyne

Please see 2007 Annual Report for granting organizations.

Many others contributed in amounts ranging from \$5 to \$99, and we are equally grateful to those generous folks.

If we inadvertently omitted your name or spelled it wrong, please alert us by calling 521-5362 ext. 10. Thank you for your support.



*Join us or give the gift of membership...*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
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I have enclosed a check made payable to  
 The Noah Webster House  
 Please charge my credit card  
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Basic Membership Benefits

- ◆ Free unlimited admission to the museum
- ◆ Membership is good for one full year
- ◆ Free or reduced admission to many museum programs and events
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- ◆ 10% discount on purchases at the Museum Shop
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**Please check one:**

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| <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 <b>Senior/Student</b>                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 <b>Sponsor</b>                  |
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| Basic membership benefits plus four guest passes to the museum                            | All of the above plus invitation to special benefactor event   |



MAIL TO: THE NOAH WEBSTER HOUSE &  
 WEST HARTFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
 227 SOUTH MAIN STREET WEST HARTFORD, CT 06107



**Save these dates**

**Wednesday, September 17**  
 Noah Webster Exhibit Opening

**Sunday, September 28**  
 Says You!

**Saturday, October 18**  
 Noah Webster's  
 Gigantic Birthday Bash

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