

# THIS PLACE MATTERS



Dear Friend,

Do old places matter? YES! We know that you, one of the Noah Webster House & West Hartford Historical Society's supporters, would agree. West Hartford, the birthplace of Noah Webster, is a place that matters. It's our job to help our community connect with the town's history and heritage. Your financial support is critical to maintain *this old place* and to preserve the history of our special community. Please give **a tax deductible donation today** to the museum's 2017 Annual Appeal!

You and I realize the value of old places. But what makes them so important? Tom Mayes, Deputy General Counsel of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, answers this question in a series of articles called "Why do Old Places Matter?"\* Here are four major reasons he says old places matter:

**History** | "People feel the excitement of experiencing the place where something actually happened."

How lucky are we to have the one-and-only birthplace of Noah Webster? This National Historic Landmark is open daily for tours and receives visitors from around the globe. People are drawn here not just to see a Colonial home, but the place where Noah was born, where his character was formed by the "Yankee" ideals of hard work and dedication, and where he made the momentous decision to pursue a career of learning, teaching, and writing.



Noah Webster was born in the Best Room in 1758.



Young women in West Hartford circa early 20th century.

**Continuity** | "In a world that is constantly changing, old places provide people with a sense of being part of a continuum that is necessary for them to be psychologically and emotionally healthy."

Our mission also encompasses maintaining and interpreting the museum's collections of West Hartford related artifacts and manuscripts. The thousands of items in our collection highlight

how people long ago were not so different from us. They faced the same struggles and had the same dreams and aspirations for themselves and their children. Exhibits like the upcoming *West Hartford A-Z* (opening in January 2018) and our new West Hartford History blog give visitors an opportunity to learn more about the past through items from the collection. We are constantly accepting new items for the collection, including photographs, postcards, and memorabilia.

**Identity | “Old places...serve as reference points for measuring, refreshing, and recalibrating our identity over time. They are literally the landmarks of our identity.”**

The identity of the Town of West Hartford is diverse, complex, and interesting. The magnitude of interest in this identity was demonstrated by the community’s response to the 2017 West Hartford House Tour. Over 400 guests visited six historically and architecturally significant homes on Farmington Avenue, west of the Center. In addition to learning about each house and its past owners, visitors gained knowledge about the neighborhood’s history that was shaped in many ways by the trolley line that once ran along Farmington Avenue.



*In 100 years, not much has changed about this c. 1917 home featured on the 2017 West Hartford House Tour.*

**Learning | “In learning about the past, we learn about ourselves.”**



*The museum’s summer camp has been bringing children joy for over 20 years!*

The past provides meaning and context for the present. Our collections and programs help to document the people, places, and events that continue to shape the world around us. Each year 7,000 school children from throughout Connecticut experience programs at the museum. Through *your* support, our scholarship program for underserved schools continues to grow. This year, 20% of visiting students will attend a museum program free-of-charge. And our educational programs are not limited to children. This year, we offered a two-part community forum on race and religion, lectures, a bus tour for adults, and more.

Show that you know old places *do* matter. Please make a donation to the Noah Webster House & West Hartford Historical Society today. YOUR financial support means the difference between saving or losing our past. **Please give today.**

Sincerely yours,

Jennifer DiCola Matos  
Executive Director  
(860) 521-5362 x 12

\*Hayes, Tom. “Why Do Old Places Matter.” National Trust for Historic Preservation, January 2017, [https://savingplaces.org/stories/why-do-old-places-matter#.Wg74\\_VWnHIV](https://savingplaces.org/stories/why-do-old-places-matter#.Wg74_VWnHIV).