

# Notes from The Last Green Valley Historical Collaboration!

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**What:** Historical Collaboration in The Last Green Valley

**When:** Saturday, December 10, 2016 from 2-4 p.m.

**Where:** Ashbel Woodward Museum, 387 Route 32, Franklin, CT. (*access & parking is via Plains Road only, using the same entrance as the State of Connecticut's Wildlife Management Agency*)



## More!

**Who:** All historical societies, librarians, or other like-minded organizations (and individuals) that focus on preserving and passing on our history.

**Topic:** The Ashbel Woodward Museum was once the home of the town physician, a noted local historian, antiquarian, Civil War veteran and author. Woodward lived in Franklin from 1830 to 1885. His home was acquired and restored by the Town of Franklin as a repository for collections and information relating to the history of the town and the community, and as a site for special historical events.

**Why:** Rich history exists in our National Heritage Corridor. Stories beg to be passed on, and our skills & talents shared!

## **Schedule:**

2:00-2:15 p.m. Arrive & Mingle

2:15-2:30 p.m. Brief Introductions – tell us who you are & where you from

2:30-3:30 p.m. **Presentation by Friends of Ashbel Woodward Museum featuring Christmas in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and Dr. Woodward's legacy & impact on the medical community of the day.**

3:30-4:00 p.m. Q&A, Refreshments, Wrap-up

**RSVP:** to [marcy@tlgv.org](mailto:marcy@tlgv.org) or call 860-774-3300. Secure your spot now!

***The 4th Historical Collaboration in The Last Green Valley happened in 2016!***

### **THE GOAL?**

***To offer a quarterly event, featuring an exciting & informative historical topic each session, presented by each of you! Show off your specialty.***

***Instead of working alone & duplicating efforts, let's pitch in to work & learn together!***

After all, HISTORY is OUR STORY.

Together we care for it, enjoy it and pass it on.

Join the collaboration to conserve our history in the National Heritage Corridor.

**Questions to [marcy@tlgv.org](mailto:marcy@tlgv.org) or call 860-774-3300.**

## **COLLABORATION NOTES from the Ashbel Woodward Museum**

**Thanks to all attendees and our hosts from the Ashbel Woodward Museum and the Franklin Historical Society! Whether you attended or not, enjoy Ranger Marcy's notes from the collaboration, and [view our photo album of the event on our facebook page](#):**

### **The Presentation:**

- **Alden Minor** welcomed all attendees on behalf of the Board of Directors and let us know that the Ashbel Woodward Museum is the only town owned museum.
- **Irene Morgan**, President of Franklin Historical Society & Ashbel Woodward Board of Directors provided some history of the Museum building itself.
  - Built in 1830's.
  - Dr. Ashbel Woodward left it to his eldest son, who proceeded to share it with his brother (Ashbel's other son).
  - It remained in the family until the early 1940's, with Dr. Woodward's daughter- in-law.
  - CT DEEP then took over the property using it for a home for students while training.
  - After some years, it became vacant and the state opted to get rid of the property.
  - The Town of Franklin initially voted "NO" to take over the property, but in 1997 it was taken over by the town with the caveat that it be used as a historical museum.
  - In August of 2003 the Grand Opening took place.
  - A curator was hired, but without substantial visitors or interest in the place, it was considered to return the property to the state.
  - The town voted to keep the property, which has been remarkably restored with extensive funding.
  - It now is an event driven historic home museum, plus offers storage capacity for donated items as well as a resourceful genealogical library.
- **Virginia "Ginger" Steiner-Walls**, collections chairperson with extensive work in the historic museum field, filled us in on the collections, as well as the pros & cons of acquiring and cataloging it all.
  - Together with the Historical Society, the Friends work to have procedures in place for preserving the current items and for intake of new donations.
  - There are now approximately 100 items in the collection, including many books & manuscripts, all taking in from donors determined to preserve & pass on the history.
  - In early 2003, during restoration and before the Grand Opening, an archaeological dig was done on the site. Although nothing stunning or dramatic was found, the pieces of pottery, etc. still were a strong connection to the past. These artifacts were returned to the museum after the UConn archaeology team studied them carefully.
  - Discoveries in the home itself pose other questions: etchings in the attic, notes on wood, charcoal drawings, a ramrod guide (now on display)... where & when did they come from? Many grumblings from the crowd of attendees let us all know that they've been in the same shoes with the same questions.
  - The museum's events were also mentioned as they occur throughout the year each year, with 5 different rotating themes/displays for each event. This keeps things interesting for the visitors, and somewhat easy to manage by the volunteers.

- Challenges with collections:
  - Old, historical houses = unstable conditions for storage. It is an expensive proposition to safely protect the items and collections from our historic past.
  - “FIC” items = “found in collection” used to be a negative connotation in the museum world, hinting at the fact that incomplete or subpar record keeping was taking place. However, as things are discovered or donated without pertinent information along with it, how do any of us know what it, where it came from, the age, without extensive research?
- **Daniel Walls**, reenactment coordinator, also with extensive work in the historic museum field, called attention to the annual “New England Volunteers-A Living History Event”.
  - Saturday, May 13(10am-5pm) and Sunday, May 14 (10am-1pm), 2017
  - A Militia Encampment of the New England Volunteers-A Living History Event
  - Experience:
    - the American Civil War
    - watch the battles
    - enjoy live music & history lectures
    - use Morse Code
    - drill like an Army soldier
- **Other Upcoming Events:**
  - Saturday, February 4, 2017, 2pm – How to Sit in a Hoop Skirt
  - Saturday, March 25, 2017, 2pm – Presentation Tea Buffet featuring “The Not-So-Good Life of the Colonial Goodwife” with Velya Jancz-Urban
  - For more events keep up to date on their [Facebook Page](#)
- **Matthew Novosad**, 3<sup>rd</sup> year history major at the University of Connecticut presented the life and work of Dr. Ashbel Woodward in fine fashion! See the fact-filled photos of Matthew’s presentation slide show on our facebook album from the event.
  - Born June 20, 1804, Died December 20, 1885 (81 years old)
  - Buried at the cemetery near the museum
  - In Dr. Woodward’s days, there was no specialization, the doctors had to handle it all
  - Dr. Woodward was revolutionary in his thinking and worked in medical associations to forward medicine as a science, with doctors working together to better both medicine & patient care
  - Everyday life, war times, and devastating diseases like small pox were incredible challenges of the time
- The setting, decorations and treats from a Colonial Christmas, including sugar plums & wassail, were enjoyed and devoured by the guests after the presentation. Tours of this restored beauty of a local museum were grandly given by the gracious hosts & hostesses.

**A brief overview [from The Friends of Ashbel Woodward website:](#)**

- The Ashbel Woodward Museum was once the home of the town physician, a noted local historian, antiquarian, Civil War veteran and author.
- Woodward lived in Franklin for 55 years, from 1830 to 1885.

- His home was acquired and restored by the Town of Franklin as a repository for collections and information relating to the history of the town and the community, and as a site for special historical events.
- Dr. Woodward was born in Willington, Connecticut (on the Ashford line) and studied at Bowdoin College in Maine before settling in Franklin.
- The museum is located at 387 Route 32, Franklin, CT, but access and parking is via Plains Road only, using the same entrance as the State of Connecticut's Wildlife Management Agency.

Want more info? Email [ashbelwoodwardmuseum@gmail.com](mailto:ashbelwoodwardmuseum@gmail.com)

**A Bit More from the [CTHistory.org](http://CTHistory.org) site:**

Ashbel Woodward was a physician, historian, and farmer who spent most of his life serving the town of Franklin. For more than 50 years Dr. Woodward provided care for those in need while also constructing a comprehensive history of Franklin. After his death, Woodward's service carried on through the use of his home as a museum and repository for the town's historical collections.

Born in Willington, Connecticut (on the Ashford line), Ashbel Woodward studied medicine at Bowdoin College in Maine before returning to Connecticut and settling in the town of Franklin. There, in 1834, he purchased property from the estate of Dr. Reuben Burgess, where Woodward lived for the remainder of his life.

**Civil War Service and Civic Spirit**

For the better part of the next 50 years Woodward served as the only physician in town. He became a member of the American Medical Association in 1849 and was one of the early members of the Connecticut Medical Society—eventually serving as its president from 1858 until 1861. Though in his 60s at the outbreak of the Civil War, Woodward perhaps lent his greatest service to his country when he served as a battlefield surgeon and medical facilities inspector for the Union army.

In addition to his medical pursuits, Woodward displayed a passion for history, particularly local history. He collected literature and numerous artifacts pertaining to Franklin's past and eventually wrote a book detailing the town's history. In what remained of his free time, Woodward farmed (mostly corn, peas, potatoes, and hay) and served as a Deacon of the Congregational Church. In 1880, on the 50th anniversary of Woodward's move to Franklin, between 200 and 300 grateful citizens arrived at his house in a show of thanks.

Woodward passed away in Franklin just 5 years later. Roughly 60 years after his passing, in 1947, Ashbel Woodward's descendants donated his home and property to the state of Connecticut. The home, built around 1835 in the Greek Revival style, eventually became the Ashbel Woodward Museum and received a listing on the National Register of Historic Places in 1992.

**THIS IS A MUST VISIT LOCATION – GREAT FOR ALL AGES!**

**PLEASE ADD IT TO YOUR “TO-DO” LIST FOR 2017!**

**Then, return with a friend!**

- **[Save the date: Saturday, February 25, 2017, 1-3pm for the next Historical Collaboration in The Last Green Valley at the Optical Heritage Museum.](#)**  
*(Snow date: Sunday, February 26, 2017)*

- **[Learn more about The Last Green Valley's historical & cultural resources.](#)**