

Santa Visits Westport

For generations now, the annual Westport Christmas Party has thrilled both children and adults with song and celebration. But the big question every year is whether Santa Claus himself can work our small town into his busy schedule, and make a personal appearance! December 17, 2011 was the date this year, and at 6 PM, the townsfolk started gathering at the Westport Church, just as they have every year for so many years. The table was set, with cookies and refreshments galore, and soon our faithful *maestra* Goldie Westheimer was at the piano, leading a packed house in joyous Christmas song.



But still, everyone was wondering if they would see Santa that night. Letters had been written, e-mail petitions delivered, and all the assembled were singing in their very best Christmas voices. Had we been nice enough this year? It was getting late – so then, the anxious children took matters into their own hands. At 7:20PM, they snuck into the back room and rang our seldom-used historic church bell, which surprised everyone and echoed throughout the land for all to hear!

That did the trick! Magically, within minutes, old Santa showed up at the Westport Church, complete



Fiona, Emily, Gigi, Taiji, and Aiden with Santa.

with a big bag of presents! Both the kids and the adults were thrilled, of course, and Santa was also thrilled to personally meet the children of our town. “Why, this is the highlight of my night!” he said, “And the cookies are great, too!” After visiting with all the kids, Santa Claus gave his blessings to all, and with a mighty “Ho, Ho, HO!” was off in a flash.

Was it all of our letters to Santa? Goldie’s always-excellent piano playing? Those beautiful Westportian voices singing their favorite Christmas carols? Or maybe, just maybe, was it our resourceful children ringing the church bell that night that got Santa to visit Westport?

Yes, kids, there IS a Santa Claus!

An Aside

Steve Brigham’s Wild World of Westport column will return in the February issue.

The Time Traveler

Thad Van Bueren

As we mark the beginning of another New Year, the passage of time looms larger in our thoughts. It is a time for celebration, and also one for resolutions. The celebratory aspect is a great time to gather the tribe, whoever they may be, and have a roaring good time. In contrast, the pacts we make to change ourselves are often much more personal—perhaps even kept strictly to ourselves, hidden from public view.

As a child, I recall my family marked the transition to the New Year with two special observances on the night of December 31st. One involved making a traditional Dutch delicacy called 'oliebollen' (literally translated as 'oil balls'). Few realize that these treats were the precursor of the donut, brought to the new world by Dutch colonists who settled places like New York City. In Holland they remain a seasonal treat, despite their evolution into the anytime snack we know in America.

Oliebollen are typically made with raisins, currants, and bits of chopped apple in a dough that is allowed to rise before they are cooked in hot oil. Apple fritters are a close approximation. However, the ones my family made were smaller and dusted in powdered cinnamon sugar, rather than glazed. You can find many recipes for this Dutch treat by searching the web, but part of the pleasure is to be creative with the ingredients. I like to add nutmeg and nuts, for example.

The other New Year tradition I recall fondly was the casting of hot lead in a bucket of water. I haven't researched the origins, but this tradition probably has medieval roots. My dad was an engineer who had good access to various metal alloys with low melting temperatures and strange names like babbitt (a good addition to your Scrabble vocabulary!). This was an outdoor activity, and I cringe a little now to think of the toxic aspect of the endeavor. Lead poisoning is something to guard against if you get the notion to try it. We cast a ladle of the melted metal into cold water to create fantastic shapes used to foretell the future. At the time it was simply a wonderfully dangerous and exciting process involving hot mitts and the hiss of the molten material hitting the water. In retrospect now, I recognize the symbolism of rebirth; melting

down the old and forging the new. It had a transcendent, Phoenix-like aspect to it, and we displayed the resulting pieces as curios until they were recast the following New Year.

I've had many occasions since then to think about how time is marked in different cultures. We tend to think of the modern Gregorian calendar as universal, accurate, and ancient, but those assumptions are all in fact mistaken. Western Europe gradually switched from the Julian (Roman) calendar to the Gregorian scheme after the Pope decreed 10 days should be dropped from October 1582 to adjust for the growing disparity between the solar year and the system of reckoning prevalent at that time. Since then, 10 to 13 days have been dropped each century to achieve rough synchronization of the Gregorian calendar with the solar year. That sounds simple until you realize those adjustments were not uniformly adopted everywhere. Instead, they were hotly contested among nations and religious denominations.

As a result, calendar chaos prevailed in Europe for centuries! You could thus cross the border from one country into another and move back and forth through time! I can handle adjusting for time zones—but imagine dealing with that nightmare! If you are interested in a concordance of dates in particular places and times, check out this great web site: <http://www.webexhibits.org/calendars/year-countries.html>. We are adding February 29 again this year to get our calendar back in synchronization!

All calendars require these adjustments for the simple reason that the length of the lunar cycle and solar year are not an integral number of days, nor do they remain constant over time due to the wobble of the earth on its axis (something only the Mayans and modern astronomers figured out). In the year 2000, the length of the year measured between the spring equinoxes was 365.24219 days (called a tropical year), while the time required for the earth to complete one revolution around the sun (called a sidereal year) was 365.2564 days. Whatever calendar you use, have a great new year.

After looking through some photographs collected this year during visits to local museums, I would like to circle back to the 1870s and 1880s in the Gregorian reckoning. The location is about 2 miles north of the Ten Mile River, marked by an old farm house (now

being engulfed in a new resort). You can also still see a structure that is in the process of falling over the bluff edge. The photograph was taken there when it was known as Newport. It operated as a ship landing with a chute to load and retrieve cargo—mostly lumber from the Ten Mile woods.

If you look east from Newport Landing, there is a white fence on a hilltop that encircles the Newport Cemetery. It is near the tree line at the top of a hill, and Abalobadiah Creek (formerly Balobadah Creek on some maps) runs behind it to the east. Over two dozen settlers are known to be buried there. There is in fact still a deeded public access to this cemetery.

Water District News

Happy New Year from the Westport County Water District! As we begin the new year, our first priority is to finalize our operating budget so that we can determine what rate increases will be necessary this year. Our first Budget Workshop will be held on Monday, January 9th at the Firehouse, and the public is invited to attend. As always, we value input from you, our water district customers. And speaking of input, Toby would like to say “Thank you Santa, and you’re welcome!”

Westport Village Society

Thad Van Bueren

The quarterly WVS Board meeting is coming up on Thursday January 19th at 7 PM and we invite community participation. There are several matters on the agenda that may interest you. One is whether or not WVS will help State Parks run Westport Union Landing State Beach, scheduled to close June 30, 2012. WVS will also consider permitting procedures for events on the Headlands, 2012 fundraising events, and other matters. Updates will also be provided on the local history publication and routine business matters. The meeting will take place at the Church.



Newport chute in 1870s (courtesy of the Guest House Museum)

Gallery This! at the Westport Hotel

by Liza Saenz-Bernard

*“What lies behind us and what lies before us
are tiny matters, compared to what lies within us.”*

-- Ralph Waldo Emerson

In past issues of the Wave, I have written a monthly art column informing the Westport community on what our local artists are doing. Now, at this beginning of this New Year, with the help of you and your friends, we can all begin a new way of expressing ourselves through different art forms.

Neil Young’s song “Only Castles Burning” sent warm feelings through me as I drove home the other day. I was thinking about our little community, Christmas, Art, life, A Breath of Plein Air 4, and also missing my family – and this song made me pull over and really listen to the words: “. . . flying Mother Nature’s silver seed, to a new home in the sun.” I got on-line to find more of the words so I could improve my art column, but then I realized that I was trying too hard. “Keep it simple” is a good motto. We can get so caught up in the holidays and lose touch with what is around us. But Music is one way for us to escape, get grounded, or even shake a leg! And this is another Art form.

Art seems to be on the back burner for a lot of people these days. To create, what do you do? How do you get inspired? To become creative, do you have to go somewhere, or does it come naturally? Everyone is different. Duke Ellington, for example, said, “I

merely took the energy it takes to pout and wrote some blues.” Here’s a suggestion if you want to write, paint, build, cook, sew a new dress, or play music. “The Artist Way” by Julia Cameron is a wonderful book, full of exercises, quotes, workshops, and a workbook.

I recently found some old Westport Waves, and read with great surprise at how much art had been created and displayed right here in Westport at the old Gallery This! Just a quick glance of the past: Toby’s copper kelp door and wrought iron wave pieces, Steve’s redwood sea creature, Tabi & Noemi’s paintings and jewelry, Joe’s furniture, Jennifer Saunder’s large black & white photographs, tapestries by Elaine, Tommy’s painted rocks & abstracts, Robin’s stained glass window, Amiee & Neta’s quilts, Kathryn’s paintings & comic strip, and others. We cannot go back but we can continue producing and expressing ourselves through whatever medium you choose. Now, the Westport Hotel is a wonderful venue to show your work. E-mail or call me if you have any questions about exhibiting at our next show at the Hotel, on February 25th.

A Breath Of Plein Air 4, the next version of our Fall Westport Art Festival, is planned for September 2012. This event has been quite successful in the past, but I need your help making it happen this year. All the information on customers, instructors, volunteers, etc., for the past 3 events are in a filing cabinet, needing air (plein or not). We also have a notebook with the publicity list, images for publicity, instructors, a budget, calendar, registration forms, flyer schedule, letter to instructors, instructor perks, CDs with photos, and more. All that is needed is

someone to be the leader who will call/gather volunteers to meet once a month at the Hotel or Church. The instructors, calendar date, postcards, and images are ready to go.

That special person is out there – maybe you or someone you know would like to make this next event happen! Take into consideration that I will volunteer my time, along with 4 other people, who are on stand by, waiting for this “silver seed” to take off. We will not be getting together this month, unless someone gives me a call or e-mails me, but we will meet in February.



Kathryn Lemieux at a recent *Last Saturday* show.

The **Last Saturday Art Show** at the Westport Hotel will continue on February 25th, with the theme of Love. Look around -- it is there! You have 6 weeks to work on a piece of art to hang in the dining room. Please have your work ready to hang by the 3rd week of February. Thank You, and Happy New Year! You can email me at saenzphoto@yahoo.com or call 707-962-9234 if you have any questions.

Looking Ahead

Jan. 3rd – Westport MAC meeting cancelled
 Jan. 16th – Martin Luther King Day
 Jan. 19th – WVS Board Meeting, 7PM at Church

Contributions for the next WAVE are due by **Jan. 26th** and should be sent to editor Steve Brigham at westportwave@aol.com. Electronic subscription requests can be sent to thadvanbueren@directv.net.



Lois Senger painting at *Plien Air* event.