

Branford High School Field Trip/Poetry Workshop

Branford Center Historic Cemetery

November 15, 2024

Greetings and welcome to all participants in today's workshop.

I thought it would be helpful, ahead of time, to give a little clarification as to what to expect from our creative adventure together.

The Cemetery was founded in 1644 and, like an archeological dig full of pottery shards, is full of fragments of the almost 400 years of its history. Founding churchmen, Revolutionary and Civil War soldiers, infants, a young German immigrant who drowned swimming off Branford Point, a Nobel Prize winner, anonymous paupers - all have been buried there. History is continuous and long, and the Cemetery, which is still active as a burial ground, contains evidence of its breadth and sweep.

It is also located on beautifully landscaped, park-like grounds whose gentle hills descend to the shore of a tidal marsh where eagles and herons are frequently spotted.

In the course of the morning, you will be guided through some of the historic monuments as well as more contemporary gravesites. You will have the opportunity to wander freely through the living landscape. Throughout all these explorations, it is my hope that you will allow yourself to meditate, react, and allow yourself to follow wherever your train of thought leads you. All the while, please take copious notes, and pictures with your phone, so when the time comes to put these thoughts into poetic expression, you have supplied yourself with enough material.

At around 11:30, we will all walk across the Branford Green to the Blackstone Library. The auditorium has been made available for us to have lunch, followed by a quiet hour for us to draft our poems. Hopefully there will still be time for those who wish to share their work.

In the days that follow, please feel free to contact me and send me your poems as PDF's for editorial advice. You may also make an appointment to meet with me at the Blackstone Library on Thursday, December 12 at 6 pm in the Lucy Hammer Conference Room.

I will be collecting your poems as PDF's. Along with work by participants in other Poet Laureate workshops, and if you agree, they will be published in an anthology called **The Poets Among Us**. There will also be an opportunity to read your poems at an event at the BACA gallery on the Branford Green on May 17th.

You may contact me by email at poetlaureate@branford-ct.gov.

I am delighted that you all have chosen to open your minds and hearts to the joys and terrors of creative self-expression. I promise you, the rewards can be great - self-knowledge and a new sensitivity to words and the suggestive power of language.

Judith K. Liebmann
Poet Laureate of the Town of Branford