

CHESHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

Volume 39, No. 1

Keeping Cheshire's History Alive!

SPRING 2016

SPEAKER PROGRAM

Tuesday, April 5, 7:00 p.m.

At **ARTSPLACE, 1220 Waterbury Road**

◆ **Ernie Ostuno, 1815 Volcano Eruption** Ernie

Ostuno, Senior Forecaster with the National Weather Service, will be presenting "Volcano Weather:

a Bicentennial of The Year Without a Summer"

at Artsplace, 1220 Waterbury Road. Children are encouraged to bring a drawing of a volcano. John Frederick Kensett was born in 1816, the year we had snow in July.

Monday, April 25, 7:00 p.m.

◆ **Cheshire Round Table**

A panel of Cheshire experts will discuss Cheshire Lore. Audience participation is encouraged. Remember the movie theater? The skating rink? Trains instead of roller bladers? When there was only one traffic light on Route 10? Farming community. A great place to grow up. Everyone knew everyone. Lots of open space. Dr. Leonard. Doc Moore. Mrs. Kurtz and Mrs. Clark—great teachers at Darcy School. Come share an evening of Cheshire nostalgia. Doors open at 6:30 with a pot luck dinner. Annual Meeting precedes the Round Table.

This Newsletter is all about...

JOHN FREDERICK KENSETT

HUDSON RIVER SCHOOL ARTIST

Born in Cheshire on MARCH 22, 1816

- A Star is Born by Jack Kelly
- John Frederick Kensett by Agnes Wnuk
- Kensett Cocktail by Cheshirepedia
- Artist David Dunlop critiques Society's Kensett painting
- Channeling Kensett the Artist by Jack Garber
- Official Kensett by Mary Ellen Kania
- Our Victorian Room, a Place Kensett Would Have Enjoyed by Jaime McCormick

CHS - HPH

The Cheshire Historical Society, Inc. (CHS) is incorporated under the laws of the State of Connecticut as a non-profit, educational institution. All contributions to CHS are tax-deductible for Federal Income Tax purposes. CHS operates the Hitchcock-Phillips House Museum (HPH) which is located in the center of Cheshire at 43 Church Drive, Cheshire Conn. 06410. Corporate headquarters for the organization is located at the HPH and can be reached by phone at (203) 272-2574. Visit our website at www.cheshirehistory.org.

Membership in CHS is open to anyone with an interest in history. Benefits include annual mailings, two newsletters a year, and voting privileges at organizational meetings. Dues payments are a significant part of our operating budget for the HPH. Members are also eligible for volunteer programs.

Our Mission

Keeping Cheshire's history alive through our museum's collections, exhibitions and programs.

Our Vision

The Cheshire Historical Society will be integrated in the life and interest of the community as an accessible source of historical information and knowledge.

SPRING CALENDAR

Except for holiday weekends, the Cheshire Historical Society (CHS) Hitchcock-Phillips House (HPH) will be open to the public every Sunday, 2-4 p.m. now through December 18th. Check website for more information. We are also open by appointment on other days. Call (203) 272-2574 to schedule a visit for a private tour or for research purposes. CHS has WiFi for our researchers and guests.

SUNDAYS

Visitor Sundays from 2 to 4 p.m. starting in April.
Tours are available.

MARCH

March 20—Happy 200th Birthday Party for John F. Kensett at ARTSPLACE, 1220 Waterbury Road, 4:00 p.m.
March 21 - Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m.

APRIL

April 5 - Volcano Weather: a Bicentennial of The Year Without a Summer 7:00 p.m. at ARTSPLACE, 1220 Waterbury Road
April 17 - Board Meeting, 2:00 p.m.
April 25 - Cheshire Round Table & Annual Meeting, 7:00 p.m.

MAY

May 16 - Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m.

JUNE

June 5 - Connecticut League of History Organizations (CLHO) Annual Meeting & Award Ceremony, 275 Research Parkway, Meriden, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Awards given at Noon)
June 11 - CT Open House Day, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
June 18 - Antiques & Collectibles Sale, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

JULY

July 9 - Civil War Monument Celebration, Church Green

IN THIS ISSUE

- **CHESHIRE'S FAMOUS ARTIST: 200th Birthday of JOHN FREDERICK KENSETT**
- **Artist Grows Up in Cheshire by Marc Tyler Nobleman**
- **CLHO Award of Merit for Thomas Mulholland**
- **Photos of the Backyard Changes Collage by Inge Venus**
- **A Note of Thanks to Mary Ellen & Ed Kania**

FROM THE PRESIDENT: John Frederick Kensett

This issue is devoted to John Frederick Kensett, born in Cheshire in 1816. He has been described as a kind and generous man, an artist devoted to his craft. The Society is grateful to Artsplace: Joan Pilarczyk, Agnes Wnuk, and the many staff and volunteers who have now made Kensett a recognized name in Cheshire. Brava! I'd like to welcome two new members to our Board: Christine Pittsley has become our Curator, succeeding Mary Ellen Kania; and, David Dent has become our Treasurer, succeeding Ed Kania. We are grateful to Christine and David for taking on these roles. We are also very grateful to the Kantias for the many years of volunteer service they provided to the Society. We would not be the organization we are today without their valuable contributions, loyalty, and support. Our Boutique in the Shed is undergoing changes this year. In that regard, the Society would like to thank Kathleen Connolly for her many, many years of service to the Society in her capacity as Assistant Curator and her many volunteer hours organizing our Shed, which she lovingly referred to as a unique shopping experience that worked because it contained so many nostalgic items. We're still considering what the new face of the Boutique will or might be. We'll have it figured out by the June 18th Antiques & Collectibles Sale, I'm sure. The most important activity we've taken on in March is the refurbishing of our Meeting Room. When you next visit the Society, you'll see these efforts, which include air conditioning (Hooray!) for our summer events. We continue on with our StEPs best practices coursework, now entering our second year and the effects of our involvement in this national program are both obvious and subtle. We have considered who we are, what we do, what we want to offer to our members and our community. We are rounding out the end of a management segment, to enable us to function in a more professional capacity. We continue to focus on the importance of our collections and the greater importance of sharing the stories of our collections *with you*. Come by and see us! Sundays, 2 to 4 p.m. Diane Calabro, CHS President

@YOU! Do We Have Your Email?

Do you receive e-mails from the Society? If not, please contact Justin Navarro at members@che.necoxmail.com or at (203) 272-2574 to update all of your contact information. This will ensure that you not only continue to receive important Society e-mail alerts, but also the link to our newsletters.

BEQUESTS to Cheshire Historical Society

If you have included the Cheshire Historical Society in your will, thank you! We'd like to keep a record of your generous action. Kindly send a copy to Cheshire Historical Society Attn: David Dent, Treasurer, P.O. Box 281, Cheshire CT 06410

WiFi! We have WiFi! Sunday afternoons are a great time to come by and use our WiFi, do research, or find a quiet spot to do your homework!

44th ANTIQUE & COLLECTIBLES SALE IS JUNE 18—CONTACT LOIS VAN ALMKERK FOR DETAILS AND CONTRACTS. TABLES ARE STILL \$35. Telephone (203) 272-5937

Boy Scout Eagle Project Update

We are grateful to the many Boy Scouts who chose our Hitchcock-Phillips House as the location for their Eagle Projects.

Troop 92:

Quentin Arai - Creating an Office from Old Kitchenette Project (Status: completed)

Sean Roach - Refurbishing Kitchen project (Status: application under review)

Troop 51:

Harrison Dent - Exterior Improvements to Shed and Memory Garden (Status: completed. Eagle Award in January 2016)

Thomas Mulholland - Third Floor Dormitory Room Project (Status: completed. Eagle Award given in June 2015)

Stephen Mulholland - Protective Film on Windows Project (Status: completed. Eagle Award given in June 2015)

Jake Solomon - Refurbishing Northeast Corner Room Project (Status: application under review)

Troop 198:

Jake Miller - Creating a Way Finding Sign (Status: application under review)

Welcome to Curator Christine Pittsley

A few months ago we had talked to Christine about the need areas at the Cheshire Historical Society. We're not certain how we became so fortunate, but Christine agreed to take on the role of lead Curator at the Society. We are so pleased that she was willing to do so. Christine has a strong preservation and history-related background. She is passionate about Cheshire's history. Her "day job" is an enviable one at the State Library, embedded in the history community. She has already spent countless volunteer hours inventorying our collections with the goal of having these be part of a national registry. As it does take a village, or a town, we do need help! If you might like to offer an hour or two each week with this inventory management project, please call the Society at (203) 272-2574. We are particularly keen on locating people who might help us type items into an Excel file as we build this database of our collections.

This spring brought a monumental change to the HPH: refurbishing our Meeting Room. We said bye-bye to 1950s wood paneling and hello to better electrical service, Wi-Fi, air conditioning, and an overall improved look. We are proud to offer this as event rental space (call the Society for details). Keep an eye out for our new sign, to be installed this summer, to aid people in finding our building (Eagle Project by Jake Miller). As always, we want to thank Cheshire Public Works (Kathy Doherty, and Keith) for their ongoing support and help.

A Star is Born

By Jack Kelly

Yes, a star is born amidst one of the most devastating climate disasters in New England's history. March 22, 1816 sees the entrance of one of New England's most famous artists into the world. Three months hence would see the event celebrated by the beginning of a climate disaster un-matched by anything in recorded history.

John Frederick Kensett was born in Cheshire, Connecticut and educated at the prestigious Cheshire Academy. He studied engraving design with his father. This was the art of engraving with a sharp tool on copper or glass either writing or artistic design. This would later be covered with ink and a print made. Very popular in the days before invention of the camera. Much beautiful art work evolved from the art of engraving. Kensett's interest in art took him to Europe to study in the land of the masters. He later travelled extensively in the U.S. where he used his talent for painting to great advantage. His most famous work was a monumental canvas of Mt. Washington. This was later made into an engraving and 13,000 copies made for enthusiasts throughout the country. Kensett died in 1872 as the result of Pneumonia contracted during a life-saving effort on his part to save a friend from the waters of the Long Island Sound.

It was June 5, 1816. Weather records of the period tell us that the early part of June that year was especially hot and sultry. This was a welcome change as records show that the period from 1811 through 1820 was a particularly cold time in the early nineteenth century. Therefore, Cheshire residents went to bed that night listening to the sound of crickets and feeling the warm breezes of spring. Little did they know a cataclysmic event had occurred 12,000 miles away that had unleashed a tide of disaster and ruin that was racing toward them.

On June 6, the residents awoke to blasts of cold wind and a chilling frost that withered the infant spring crops. Further, an arctic night had descended on the land with sleet and snow squalls creating drifts up to two feet deep. One Cheshire resident on his way to work at a clock factory recorded in his diary that on June 7, he was "Dressed throughout with thick woolen gloves and an overcoat." And later on as it grew colder he had to complete his attire with "a pair of heavy mittens."

The cold continued as residents in Cheshire reported water freezing in rain barrels to an inch thick five nights in a row, as it usually does in December. The beautiful greenery of spring had turned black under the killing frosts and hundreds of sheep, just recently sheared of their heavy wool, froze to death. On June 11, the frigid onslaught finally abated leaving a scene of devastation and destruction that would not soon be forgotten.

Following the devastation, local farmers were encouraged to plant a new crop. But there were only a few warm days before July 5, with a 33 degree temperature recorded and the plowed fields became stiff with frost. Winter stoves were lighted and fireplaces burned bright in everyone's home. Howling blasts of frigid air continued for several days to the extent that one Cheshire lady recorded in her diary "that she was fearful that the carriage she was travelling in would be overturned by the blustery wind."

By July 10, as this latest episode came to an end there appeared little hope of salvaging any crops, especially Cheshire's staple crop of corn. Some farmers whose losses in the first frost

Thomas Mulholland to Receive Award of Merit from CLHO on June 6th

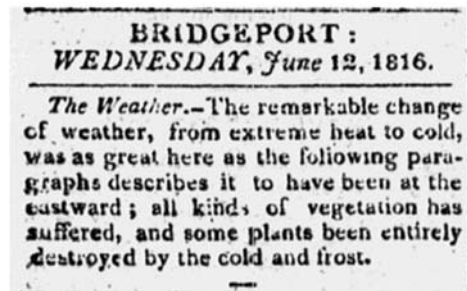
Having submitted Thomas Mulholland for an Award of Merit for *Individual Achievement* for his Room 10 Dormitory Room museum display room, the Society was very pleased to learn that the Connecticut League of History Organizations had made this award to our Student Liaison. The award will be given at the Four Points Sheraton on Research Parkway in Meriden on June 6. Call the Society to learn how you can attend this ceremony or go to www.clho.org for details.

were not too great, managed to cut their corn and store it upright in their barns. It matured in the barn using the natural juices in the stalks. These were in the minority, however, and as corn was planted more as animal feed, the specter of famine for the livestock in the coming winter was becoming a reality.

Raising livestock for market was a major source of income for the farmers of Cheshire, so they were encouraged to go back to the plow and sow oats and Indian corn to feed their animals. This was a good idea at the time, but on August 21, another arctic blast hit the area and lasted for ten days. It was all over!

In the early 19th century sons would marry and live on the same farm as their parents. Now with the crop failing, the farm could hardly support one family much less two. As a result many young people left Cheshire as did others all over New England. It resulted in the greatest westward migration of the century!

What possibly could have caused all this climatic turmoil? The answer lies in an event that happened a



News item from the Republican Farmer, June 12, 1816

CLOSE X

year earlier in 1815, when according to scientists the most horrendous explosion in recorded history took place. It was the volcanic eruption of Mt. Tambora in the Dutch East Indies with a roar that was heard 1000 miles away on the island of Sumatra. The devastation was so widespread that the 12,000 residents of the island vanished in an instant! When it was all over, 4200 feet of mountain had disappeared into the upper stratosphere where it was converted into a sea of ash and debris measuring 250 cubic miles. This island of atmospheric destruction then circled the Earth for several years, radically changing weather patterns everywhere on the planet.

Consequently, people who lived during that time did not refer to the year 1816 as just 1816, they came to refer to it as "Eighteen Hundred and Froze To Death."

Graphic above from: <http://connecticuthistory.org/eighteen-hundred-and-froze-to-death-1816-the-year-without-a-summer/>

John Frederick Kensett 1816-1872

By Agnes Wnuk, Artsplace

John Frederick Kensett lived through a transformational time in America. The period from his birth in 1816 to his death in 1872 saw amazing changes. Yet his art stayed gentle and serene, reflecting his own personality rather than the differences in the country. Today we see his art as an idyllic view of north-eastern natural beauty spots, but work created for public consumption was very different from the experimental work he painted for himself.

In 1816 Madison (1809-1817) was president and had been elected by land holding men in all 19 states across a country whose population was 9 million, with 92% living in rural areas. By 1872 there were 38 million people, 75% of whom lived on farms in 37 states and Grant was president. New York was the largest city throughout the 19th century with a population growing from 123,000 in 1820 to 942,000 in 1870. Connecticut uniquely had two capitals throughout Kensett's lifetime, Hartford and New Haven, and changed its constitution in 1818, which finally accommodated the freedom of religion. Cheshire, however, did not change at the rate of the rest of the state and country. Its population was 1,780 according to a New England Gazetteer in 1830 while the 1870 U.S. Census showed Cheshire having 2,347 people, the majority of whom were farmers.

Kensett was born Friday, March 22, 1816 in Cheshire. 1816 is known as The Year Without a Summer because of the effect that the Indonesian volcano Tambora's eruption had on the northern hemisphere. Many Connecticut and Cheshire residents ventured to Ohio due to decimated crops, lost farms and incomes caused by summer snow and cold temperatures.

John Kensett went from being a young boy in Cheshire to an apprentice in the co-capital New Haven to being a banknote engraver in New York and Albany. He spent seven years studying painting in London, Paris and Rome, and returned to New York to set up a studio. His final years saw financial success and a second studio in Darien, Connecticut, where he completed his most famous, experimental and personal works.

Kensett helped advance American art. As a member of the American Art Union Kensett helped spread awareness of mid-century contemporary art, especially with his 1851 painting "Mount Washington from the Valley of Conway." This landscape's engraving was distributed to 13,000 Art Union members. Kensett's paintings popularized major tourist destinations in an age when leisure became a commodity: places like Newport, RI, Beverly, MA, and Lake George, Adirondacks, NY. The 1864 Metropolitan Fair introduced a wider public to American art and it led its organizers, like Kensett, to found the Metropolitan Museum of Art. He was a member of a group, today called the Luminists, who advanced the level of art by using aerial perspective, among other techniques. His last paintings show a sophistication ahead of their time. It is unclear what further artistic innovation was cut short by his untimely death.

Most importantly Kensett was a kind man and friend. In Europe, he and his artist friends assisted themselves in developing their art by reviewing each other's work as well as helping each other financially, when necessary. This tradition continued in New York with the Artists' Fund Society which provided money to families of deceased artists. Kensett was president of the organization for years. When his friend Lydia Colyer's carriage fell into the cold waters of Long Island Sound off Darien, it was Kensett who jumped into the waters after her. This event cut short his life as he died of pneumonia on December 14, 1872, a mere six weeks later.

Cheshirepedia Prepares Kensett Cocktail

The Society would like to thank Cheshirepedia for taking time from their mission of creating a Wikipedia-type resource for Cheshire and instead devoting themselves to a very special project: creating a drink that could have been served during Kensett's lifetime, a drink that the social Kensett might have enjoyed. We hope you will try this beverage.

Several area restaurants are considering serving it (Funky Monkey & Viron Rondo Osteria). Or make it at home. Also go to www.cheshirepedia.org and see why our town is so special!

INGREDIENTS

Laird's Apple Jack (a distilled apple brandy - the French calvados also good, if you can afford it...)

Hard Cider - still or sparkling

Cranberry Simple Syrup

Fresh Cranberries - 1 lb.

Granulated Sugar

Fresh Mint Leaves

Orange Bitters

Cape Cod Select Frozen Cranberries (for garnish)

DIRECTIONS FOR CRANBERRY SIMPLE SYRUP To one cup of water and one cup of granulated sugar, add 2 3/4 cups of washed fresh cranberries. Bring to a simmer over medium heat, reduce heat to minimum low until cranberries are tender but have not burst - about 10 minutes. Occasional gentle stirring. Then remove from heat, let cool, then strain through a fine-mesh sieve. Discard cranberries (good to add to compost, however). Simple Syrup will keep for up to two weeks refrigerated.

MAKE THE DRINK In a heavy glass or metal shaker, muddle fresh mint leaves. Add 1 1/2 oz. of Laird's Apple Jack, 3 1/2 oz. of hard cider, 1 oz. of the cranberry simple syrup. Shake with 2 or 3 ice cubes. In a rocks glass (usually 8 oz. capacity) add fresh mint leaves and 6 or so of the Select Cranberries. Muddle thoroughly in the glass. Add the contents of the shaker and stir. Add another 6 cranberries and fresh mint leaves for garnish.

For Connecticut produced hard cider, see the comprehensive list of orchards which sell a variety of this product: <https://cydermarket.com/Connecticut.html>

Society Victorian Room, A Place Where Kensett Would Have Felt Comfortable

By Jaime McCormick

Step inside a room that reflects a period of change and power. The Victorian Room was designed after the Victorian period, which lasted roughly from 1819-1901. The first things people may notice upon entering this room are the beautiful hand-made quilts. On display are a variety of different patterns and colors including a style called "crazy quilts." This style became particularly popular in the last quarter of the 19th century. The Society's oldest quilt, made in 1780 and exhibited at the Cheshire Centennial Celebration in 1880 also resides in this room. Aside from quilts, evidence of the Victorian period is apparent in the room's decorations from the Victorian-style fan showing a balloon launch to the Parian statuette of James Watt who invented the steam engine. A Hepplewhite sofa, chair, and fireplace round out the room and are some of the most noticeable features but look close and one will see so much more. From the eye catching quilts to the many other beautiful decorations, the Victorian Room is definitely a must see on your tour of the Cheshire Historical Society!



Photo by Joan Pilarczyk

David Dunlop, Artist, Visits Society and Reviews Kensett Study

The Cheshire Historical Society had a unique visitor on Saturday evening, February 27. David Dunlop, artist, art historian, painter and lecturer in the PBS series, *Landscapes through Time: The Luminous Landscapes of J.F. Kensett* at Contentment Island, CT, stopped by the Society for a reception in his honor. Dunlop was keen to see the Kensett study of Niagara Falls, part of the Society's collection. John Frederick Kensett was a world renowned artist born in Cheshire. Dunlop commented on this American Niagara Falls study. He said it is a wonderful piece, displaying Kensett's sense of wanting that higher elevation in the piece. "This study takes us into the hand and the eye of Kensett. You see him as he thinks. And he works quickly." Dunlop shared that this piece would have been done on location and it might have taken Kensett about forty minutes to complete. "He was working fast because the light changes dramatically from one hour to the next." As this was "only" a study, the public in Kensett's time would not have been interested in these small pieces, however we are. "That's the Modernist aesthetic. It's what we want to see today." These small pieces show the artist's desire and as a result, these pieces are exciting. "You get this kind of adventure and what it tells us about the hand and eye and mind of the artist." These little panels are not encumbered with the exhibition or sales or revenues. "The artist does the study for himself," Dunlop shared. But that is our modern view, to have an interest in these studies. In Kensett's time, they wanted to see "the big machine," the final piece. Note that the large final work done from this study is reputed to be at the White House, having been purchased by Jackie Kennedy (this is being verified). Dunlop also shared that our study is likely done on cardboard with varnish on it or millboard. Dunlop conducted a two-day workshop at Artsplace, part of the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the year of Kensett's birth. Dunlop enjoyed a Kensett Kocktail prepared by Cheshirepedia as well as Colonial fare prepared by Society Curator, Christine Pittsley. A roaring bonfire was made by Troop 51 in the back yard.

Ernie Ostuno Speaks on April 5 at Artsplace: When Kensett Was Born - What Was the Summer of 1816 Like? How about "Eighteen Hundred and Froze To Death"!

World renowned artist John Frederick Kensett was born in Cheshire in 1816. It was a remarkable year for weather in our area. Two hundred years ago, the weather in Connecticut was turned upside down by a volcano eruption halfway around the world. Snow fell in June and freezing temperatures wiped out crops in July and August. The year of 1816 would come to be known as "The Year Without a Summer" and "Eighteen-Hundred and Froze-To-Death".

The Cheshire Historical Society is pleased to announce that Ernie Ostuno, Senior Forecaster with the National Weather Service, will be presenting "Volcano Weather: a Bicentennial of The Year Without a Summer" at Artsplace, 1220 Waterbury Road, on Tuesday evening, April 5th at 7:00 p.m. Children are encouraged to bring a drawing of a volcano to be displayed and Mr. Ostuno will compare these drawings to the actual volcano that caused snow in June in 1816. Ernie Ostuno became interested in weather while growing up on a farm in Cheshire. This interest eventually led him to a degree in meteorology from Western Connecticut State University and a career as a weather forecaster with the National Weather Service in Pennsylvania and Michigan. He has combined his interest in history with that of weather to produce several books and video documentaries about historic storms. His father, John Ostuno, lives in Cheshire and was part of the farming heritage in our community.

THE ERUPTION OF MT. TAMBORA & 1816 CHESHIRE'S YEAR WITH NO SUMMER

— The year of the birth of Cheshire Artist John F. Kensett

A Talk with National Weather Service Senior Forecaster,
Meteorologist, and Cheshire Homeboy Ernie Ostuno

TUESDAY, APRIL 5, 2016 AT 7:00 PM

at Artsplace
1220 Waterbury Rd,
Cheshire, CT 06410

Co-sponsored by
The Cheshire Historical Society
and Artsplace



For Information call 203-250-9350

Ana
2016
Arellano



Kids! Bring us your
drawing of a volcano!

Kensett Workshop: A Glimpse Into the Mind of the Artist

By Jack Garber

David Dunlop provided a unique workshop at Artsplace on February 27 and 28, a remarkable two-day experience that gave attendees a glimpse into the genius of John Frederick Kensett, an artist that intuitively understood color theory and was part of the Hudson River School of artists. Dunlop's commentary was entertaining, insightful, and inspirational. He explained that Kensett was breaking his painting mold in his later years, and he mused that we will never know what more he could have accomplished as his life was cut short by pneumonia that followed his heroic act of trying to save his friend from drowning.

Dunlop demonstrated Kensett's technique. He explained that Kensett would have bought paints that were packaged inside pig bladders, not the familiar metal tubes we use today. These small, pliable bladders would be sold for as little as eight cents for oxide-based colors, and as much as twenty-five cents for opaque white. In the 1840s, a dollar fifty would buy all the paints an artist would require (this would be comparable to our spending almost fifty dollars today). There were limited colors: iron oxides which were coal tar derivatives, vermilion, to name a few. Pig bladders were fragile. Artists would cut a small hole and squeeze out the paint. Kensett used few tools: fingers and rags primarily. The artist's marriage with the brush didn't happen until the Impressionists, Dunlop said.

The Kensett paintings that we so admire today were considered an anathema to the critics in Kensett's day and the critics were harsh. Kensett was painting with a big risk. He was reinventing the seascape, creating something transcendental. Dunlop did several pieces during the workshop. He began with a smooth surface and covered the entire canvas with iron oxide creating a complete orange brown background. He then removed the color, rubbing and refining with his fingers, paper towels and a squeegee. To create the blue area of the sky, Dunlop added violet. There was a gasp in the room as the area of the sky turned from orange brown to a familiar blue.

Dunlop shared meaningful insights. He encouraged everyone to practice, to draw, to paint. I certainly intend to do so! It was a well-organized workshop. Dunlop gave us a wonderful opportunity to understand the mind of a great artist: John Frederick Kensett.



Artist David Dunlop produced this Kensett style piece in oils (with linseed oil) in under an hour at the recent Artsplace workshop. He used his fingertips, paper towels and a squeegee. He worked with paint colors that would have been available to Kensett. Dunlop explained that Kensett was a relaxed painter with soft hands. He said, "When you are relaxed you are a supplicant to the muse."

Remembering a Naughty Boy: Kambiz Hakim who carved his name on a window sill for posterity

With our recent renovations at the Historical Society Meeting Room, we came across this name carved into the sill. You may have seen this. Diane Calabro was attending a meeting at Cheshire Academy and was looking at the 1968 Yearbook and saw the name: KAMBIZ HAKIM. It took a couple of minutes, and then Diane realized she did know that name! We wonder where the now 67-year old Mr. Hakim is now and would he recall this work with his penknife?



The Kensett Home in Cheshire stood where Bliss Bridal is today



Rowing: Kambiz Hakim, John Calabro, Richard Spence (Photo), Randall Jaeger, Thomas Martin, John Aleson, Mitchell Hines, Francis Marston. Standing: Mr. Thomas Gurne, Frank Martin, James McGee, Robert Giddens, Theodore Moses, Timothy Taylor, Scott Swanson, James McCormick, Patrick McCarty, Kenneth Schmidt, Peter Lovett, Mr. Robert Giddens.

Phillips House

Marc Nobleman - Knew Him When By Ron Gagliardi

You know how you occasionally encounter a person in his or her pre-fame days and you tell yourself that person is destined for success and you think that some day, you're going to say, "I knew him when?" Well, that happened with me in the case of Marc Nobleman.

I had been hired by legendary Cheshire Parks and Recreation director Dick Bartlem (he of Bartlem Park) to teach cartooning and animation at the Harmon Leonard Youth Center. I believe I started spreading the joy of cartooning there in the late 1970s. Marc was one of my students in the 1980s. I recall him being a sponge for anything I had to share about writing cartoon strips. I remember him being quite skilled for a person his age and was impressed by his one panel and four panel cartoons and wasn't a bit surprised when I began to learn of his success as a writer. It was around the time I was dipping my toes in the "kidsbook publishing waters" myself. I'm still on shore and he's been sailing around the world. I did manage to join him when he "docked" in Cheshire at the Alphabet Garden book store a few years ago where he was promoting one of his 80 books. "Hey Marc! Do you know anyone who has any contacts in the publishing industry? One of your old teachers could use a life raft."

Another Artist Growing Up In Our Town: Cheshire, The Embedding Capital of My Life By Marc Tyler Nobleman (CHS Class of 1990)

When I grew up in Cheshire (1979 to 1994), I was regularly reminded that my hometown was the "Bedding Plant Capital of Connecticut." (It was proudly announced on a sign at the Hamden border that we passed to get to our house.)

I wasn't a gardener then and, truth be told, couldn't explain a bedding plant even still, but Cheshire had a different kind of impact on me, the kind no sign marks.

It was in Cheshire where I was embedded with the notion that I could be an artist or a writer or maybe both.

I spent much of my youth doodling in three buildings (besides my house): Norton Elementary (class of '84), Dodd Junior High, as it was then called ('86), and Cheshire High ('90). I left a bit of my work behind in each of them.

In 1983, Norton held a contest for students to design its first-ever mascot, and I won, illogically, by drawing the national bird of Belize—a toucan. (I was inspired not by the Central American country but rather by a certain sugary cereal which, as it happens, I didn't even like.)



Award winning design
Marc Nobleman, 11, on the left, a pupil at Norton Elementary School in Cheshire shows his award-winning drawing to school principal George Kenyon. Marc's design of a toucan holding the school's banner was selected from the 177 entries submitted. Kenyon said the design will be placed on T-shirts and notebooks sold in the school's bookstore.



Around 1995, someone from Norton called me at my job in New York City to break the news that they'd run a new contest and sworn in a new mascot—a bulldog, which makes more sense. (The bulldog, too, was eventually replaced.)

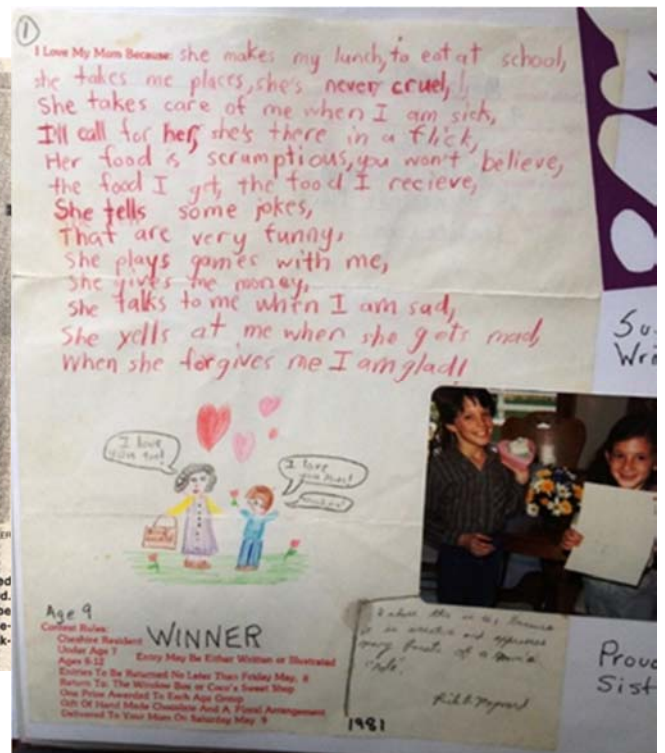
At Dodd, I sketched a short parade of kids on a wall alongside the bottom of the stairwell across from the office. Someone else painted it in. I don't know how long it lasted, but it's not there anymore.

At CHS, I came up with the concept for the cover of our yearbook—four dominoes, each imprinted with a year of our time at CHS, only the "1990" one still standing. (I also designed the logo for the senior musical, The Boy Friend.)

I also got one drawing into The Cheshire Herald (3/9/89); it was a searing "editorial" cartoon about

the proposal to build a pool across from the high school. Guess you know how that turned out.

But eight years earlier, I'd had a piece of writing published in the Herald —another contest, this one challenging kids to write a poem about their moms. And that ended up being more of an indication of what my future held than the artistic leap frog described above.



Another Artist: Marc Tyler Nobleman (Continued from previous page)

In 1995, while working as a marketing assistant at New York book publisher (the same where I'd gotten that call from Norton), I suddenly found myself an author as well. The company had recently begun publishing children's books and was looking to create an activity book. Just out of college with only one published credit to my name (the aforementioned Mother's Day poem), I volunteered to write it. And they took me up on that. The result was called *The Felix Activity Book*, which you've never heard of and which is no longer in print. But no matter how it plays out, your start is always special.

Since then, I've published close to 80 books for young people of all ages. I've had the privilege of being invited to speak at schools around the world, including my alma mater Norton. I blog about my experiences in publishing and in life, where the occasional Cheshire-centered story shows up.

I can't say it was Cheshire specifically that inspired me to be a writer; perhaps that would have happened no matter which small, clean, safe town I grew up in. But I can say that I liked Cheshire even when others thought it wasn't cool. Even as a kid, I knew we had it pretty good. As I said, it was clean and safe, plus scenic and good-spirited. It was the kind of place that gave kids room to breathe and breathe life into ideas. Being a writer-in-the-making, I was more of an indoor person so I loathed mowing the lawn, but in a town that affords a family the chance to HAVE enough lawn that it takes an hour to mow, the benefit was it gave me an uninterrupted hour more per (summer) week to just think.

My fondness for my hometown is still almost a weekly element in my life. It prompts me to propose mini-reunions to every former classmate whose email I have when I know I will be in town with a night to spare. It prompted me to track down and share on social media clippings of the 1985 John Cafferty and the Beaver Brown Band concert my class at Dodd won via a radio contest. It prompted me to take my kids on a tour of town, stopping at sites that meant something to me growing up. Most of those sites were the houses of my best friends from childhood...who are still my best friends today. Of all the building blocks that Cheshire has embedded within me, it is those relationships that, for me, are its greatest legacy.

About the author: *Marc Tyler Nobleman is the author of *Boys of Steel: The Creators of Superman* (which made the front page of USA Today) and *Bill the Boy Wonder: The Secret Co-Creator of Batman* (which led to a TED talk); upcoming titles include *Thirty Minutes Over Oregon*, *Fairy Spell*, *The Chupacabra Ate the Candelabra*, and *Brave Like My Brother*. He has spoken at schools and conferences internationally (from India to Tanzania) and blogs about adventures in publishing (from research victories to promotional gambles) at *Noblemania*. Twitter: @MarcTNobleman.*

Cheshire Civil War Monument Commemoration July 9, 2016 By Robert Larkin

Our Cheshire Civil War Monument will be 150 years old. The Cheshire Historical Society is planning a commemoration event to celebrate the monument's anniversary, along with support from representatives throughout town. The Town of Cheshire is planning monument improvements that include a walkway around the base and needed restoration of the plaques.

The Commemoration will be from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, July 9, 2016 at the monument, on the Cheshire Historical Society property, and the Church Green.

- A Civil War encampment conducted by Company F of the 14th Connecticut with marching drills, rifle firings and artifacts displays, as well as separate tents for associated historians and authors.
- Speeches on the Church Green about the improvements made to the monument as well as highlights of the monument's history
- Re-enactor appearances by President Abraham Lincoln and Admiral Andrew Foote.
- Civil War music provided by Connecticut State Troubadour Tom Callinan is also under discussion.

The Society wants to especially thank our Town Historian, Jeanné Chesanow, for her help with the preparation and cost of the book being prepared for this event.

Passing the Torch:

A Tribute to Mary Ellen and Ed Kania

"I remember it was impossible for me to say no to either of them," Diane Calabro smiles as she recalls the wonderful years she spent with the Kania's volunteering at the Society. "Ed's eyes actually twinkled when he spoke and he has such a great sense of humor." Mary Ellen commanded a special presence. Her Tiny Tuesday volunteer group was an example of that. This was a core group of volunteers dedicated every Tuesday morning to help Mary Ellen in her curator efforts. Most every volunteer story starts with: "Ed asked if I had some time," or, "Mary Ellen asked if I could help." With their combination as Mary Ellen as Curator and Ed as Treasurer, not much escaped their attention. "I can't imagine how many thousands of hours this couple gave to the Society," Diane mused. "They ran the whole place!" Many people referred to the Society as "Mary Ellen's Society," indicating the strong investment she had. Mary Ellen's accomplishments are many and the legacy she leaves behind speaks for itself. Mary Ellen set up the initial best practices that made our involvement with StEPs logical and doable. The Kania's brought a level of professionalism and organization that made the Society thrive. Mary Ellen protected the Society collections, knowing that the strength of preservation needed to endure, to be maintained so these items would last for generations to come. Ed held fast to the purse strings and provided financial guidance that will serve us well for years to come. As we begin the next phase of the Society's ongoing adventure, it's the perfect time to recognize Mary Ellen Kania's many years of service as the CHS Curator and Ed Kania's many years of service as President and then as Treasurer. And we bet you don't miss those late night calls from ADT!

We want to thank you! Major Contributors

A Donation in Memory of Richard Miller

Mary B. Hobler-Hyson

Juline Beier

Cheshire Academy

Gerald & Adoria Corcoran

Margaret B. Boutwell

David & Sally Schrumm

Robert Fennelly

Raymond & Eleanor Verner

Patti Flynn-Harris

Patricia McKinley

THANK YOU!

Membership Update

By Justin Navarro

This report marks my first full year as the Membership Secretary and it has been an eventful year. Upon my appointment, I immediately set about learning as much as I could about the membership records, learning more about the demographics of the membership, and finally starting to think about how to invigorate the membership as a whole. When I wasn't otherwise occupied with these duties, I helped start the process for developing a cleaner and thoroughly modern web site presence for the Society!

Regarding our records, over the course of this year, we have grown from 201 memberships to 212. During this past year, I have worked hard to make our membership information complete and accurate. In the coming year, I plan to move our membership information into a more formal database so that we can better make use of it to provide better services. Regarding our demographics, you may be interested to know that almost a third of the membership is in the Life category. Almost a quarter are from the Family category. Individuals and Senior Citizens are over another quarter. The remaining 20% includes our important businesses and supporting members.

The Cheshire Historical Society welcomes new members! Please tell a friend to join!

With respect to invigorating the membership, I have begun discussions with the Society's Board on what would be useful and valuable benefits to our existing members and to encourage new members to join us. You should have received a survey in your renewal packet and I encourage everyone to send in their thoughts. As I have told the Board, "While I send a thank you note to every new member when they join, we should be thanking our members on a regular basis through some kind of special benefits throughout the year!"

By 2017, I plan on being able to provide formalized a member benefits package. In addition, for the first time in years, we will also be increasing our dues. While membership will remain a bargain, we need to recognize that inflation has steadily eroded how much dues contribute to our operating costs. We plan on offering a final "Like it's 1999!" renewal rate to existing members. As always, I'd be happy to hear from anyone at members@che.necoxmail.com.

Other Contributors

Lady Fenwick Chapter DAR

Ruth & Richard Gleeton

David & Michelle Dent

Sandra & Michael Zambruski

Mickey Wheeler

Richards Chevrolet

Adelaide Marx

Jill Rochford

Barbara Christoff

Margaret Sondey & William Hines

Ralph Rowland

Marie Stapkowiski

Bob O'Brien

Anita Linsley

Louis & Mary Ricciuti

Peter & Judith Case

Ingeborg Venus

We also received \$90 in Door Donations.

(Contributions made from Nov. 1, 2015 to Mar. 3, 2016)

Officers:

President	Diane Calabro
Vice President	Art Sides
Membership Secretary	Justin Navarro
Recording Secretary	Jaime McCormick
Corresponding Secretary	Shirley Brady
Treasurer	David Dent

Directors:

Colleen Fitzgerald	May 2015-April 2018
Bob Larkin	May 2013-April 2016
Clare Leake	May 2013-April 2016
Cara A. Luciani	May 2015-April 2018
Marshall Robinson	May 2013-April 2016
José Rodriguez	May 2014-April 2017
Diane Ulbrich	May 2015-April 2018
Lois Van Almkerk	May 2014-April 2017
Pat Vita	May 2014-April 2017

Curator Team

Curator	Christine Pittsley
Assistant Curators	Iлона Somogyi - Clothing Historian

Facilities

House & Grounds Manager: David Calabro

Student Liaison Thomas Mulholland, Class of 2017

Thank you all for your contribution of volunteer time, expertise, and more! The Society is grateful to you.

We are always looking for people to help with volunteer activities. Please contact Diane if you are interested.

John Frederick Kensett (1816-1872)

By Mary Ellen Kania

From the Society Docent Book

John Frederick Kensett was born in Cheshire on March 22, 1816. His home, which burned in the 1890's, was on the site of the present Slater's Funeral Home [now Bliss Bridal], 242 South Main Street. He was the second child of an English father, Thomas Kensett, and Elizabeth Daggett Kensett. His mother was a Tuttle, a family well established in New Haven and Cheshire. She was also the granddaughter of Naphthali Daggett, a Yale president.

His father Thomas Kensett (b. 1786) left England for the Americas before 1806. By 1810, he was pursuing a career of engraving, painting, and publishing in both New Haven and Cheshire. Much of his work was done with the now far-better-known Amos Doolittle, a Cheshire native, who had settled in New Haven. From 1813 to 1817, Thomas Kensett was a partner in the Cheshire engraving firm of Shelton and Kensett with Dr. Charles Shelton, a Yale graduate, physician, and local entrepreneur. The shop was located on Blacks Road. An 1813 Map of the United States and an engraving showing the Prodigal Son, both by Shelton and Kensett, are displayed next to Kensett's painting.

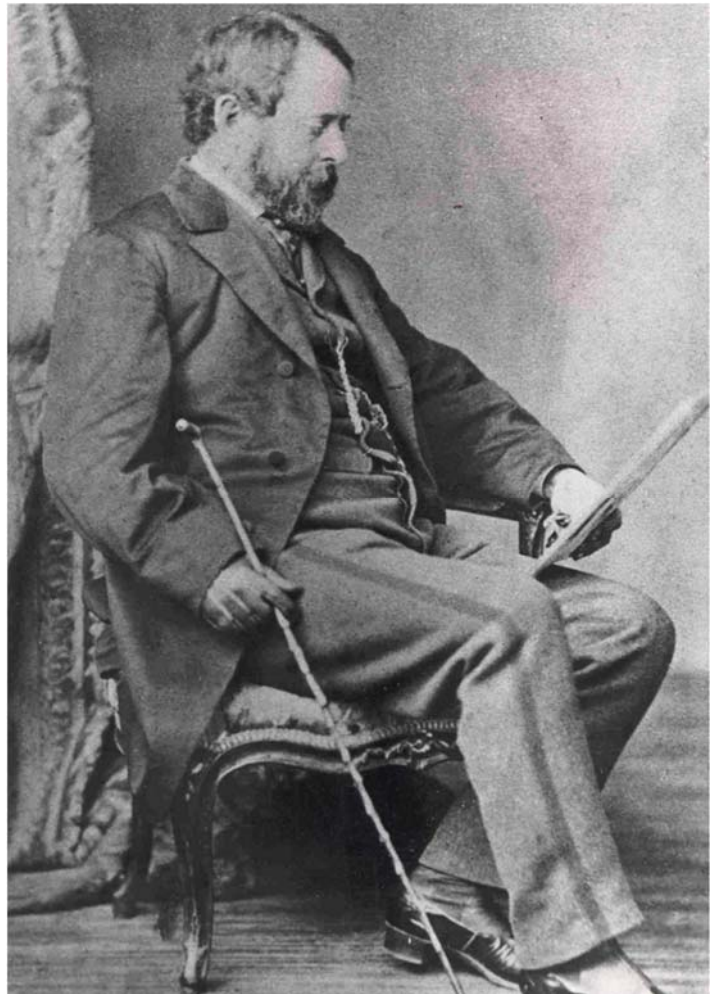
As a small boy, John Kensett briefly attended the Cheshire Episcopal Academy 1820-21.

He is known to have entered the engraver's profession early, probably by the time he was 12. He worked for his father and an uncle, Alfred Daggett, in their New Haven engraving shop. When he was 19, he left New Haven and took an engraving job in New York City, then one in Albany, NY. Then, in 1840, at age 24, he went abroad with friends to study and remained in Europe for seven years. During this time he perfected his technique and made many friends and important contacts.

When he returned, he established a studio in New York City and quickly became a leader in the New York art scene. With Frederic Church and Albert Bierstadt, Kensett was considered one of the pre-eminent American landscape painters in what was known as the "Hudson River School." He made sketching tours every summer, sometimes visiting several locales in one summer. His paintings of Niagara Falls, virtually a required subject for 19th century American painters, were done in the early 1850s. One of these was acquired for the White House by Mrs. John F. Kennedy. The small painting of Niagara Falls is believed to be a preliminary sketch for this work.

In 1867, Kensett bought nine acres on Contentment Island off the coast of Darien. Here he painted some of the most innovative images of his illustrious career. He died suddenly at the height of his career in December 1872. His pictures now hang in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City and in dozens of important museums and private collections.

In the fall of 2001, the Mattatuck Museum in Waterbury mounted a major exhibition of Kensett's paintings of the Connecticut shore with more than 20 works from museums throughout the country. In October 2001, to honor Cheshire's most famous artist, the Cheshire Town Council passed a resolution designating the north corner of the Bartlem Park entrance from Route 10 as Kensett Corner.



John Frederick Kensett CDV Photograph—part of the Society collection

Curator's Report (continued from last page)

Accessions for 2015 have not yet been completed as I have struggled with finding documentation of accessions. No register was kept for 2015 nor are there Deed of Gift documents to support many of the accessions. There are also accessions and Deeds missing. I will continue to attempt to reconstruct the activities of 2015 over the coming months.

All in all I am looking forward to the coming year, working with the board and membership to continue building our collections and uncovering Cheshire's history.

Note (1): Describing Archival Material. "Canadian Heritage; Government of Canada; EServices. Accessed January 18, 2016. <http://www.pch.gc.ca/eng/1326139843286/1326140043472>.

Contributions of original articles, news items and/or photographs, in addition to suggestions for the improvement of our newsletter are solicited and welcomed. Contact Diane Calabro at CHS. E-mail: cheshirehistory@che.necoxmail.net

Design and layout of the newsletter is provided by the CHS Board of Directors.

Changes in and around the Lucille Williams Memorial Garden in 2015



The court yard garden in memory of Lucille Williams from May through September is in continuous bloom.



During early August we saw a number of renovation projects taking place: A dozen horseshoes were artistically displayed on a board above the Hydrangea bush just outside the court yard.



A walkway was established from the court yard toward the apartment. The bench was moved from the area of the fire escape closer to the Boutique Shed. And a butterfly bench in memory of Warren Van Almkerk set up in its place.



The Ferns and Pachysandra were dug up and new flower beds created, to be planted with small ornamental shrubs in the Spring of 2016.



Behind the Shed a new Healing Garden was lovingly established as an Eagle Scout project by Harrison Dent.

CURATOR'S REPORT

By Christine Pittsley, Curator

Welcome to 2016. There has been quite a bit of activity since I assumed my position as Curator of the Cheshire Historical Society, a position I was extremely honored to accept. My goals for the coming year seek to build on the work done by our esteemed list of past curators. As a digital museum professional I will be converting all of our accession data into a searchable online catalog. This will enable the Society to quickly find and retrieve items from our collections for exhibition or patron requests. This will require a great deal of work as almost 60 years' worth of accession data will need to be added to a database. Once that is complete we will begin a house-wide inventory so we can add locational data to the database.

A second goal is aimed at conservation of our collections. Part of our stated Purpose is "...to collect and preserve whatever may serve to explain or illustrate the archaeology, the art and literature, the history, civil, ecclesiastical or natural - of the Town of Cheshire. **To provide in a suitable manner for their care, preservation and exhibition...** [emphasis added]." I have begun to do an inventory of our archival holdings, which would be defined as those items in our collection that contain any of the following: textual records, graphic materials, cartographic materials, architectural and technical drawings, moving images, sound recordings, records in electronic format, records on microform, philatelic records, related discrete objects.(1)

Having this inventory complete will allow us to not only add these records to our catalog, but also to invest in archival storage to better protect these fragile documents and photographs for future generations. Once these materials have been processed (organized, flattened when necessary, staples or paper clips removed and housed in archival boxes) we can create finding aids, which are detailed indexes of archival collections. This will aid research into the archives while protecting these fragile documents from repeated handling. Both of these activities are a huge undertaking and will require the cooperation of board members and volunteers alike.

We'll be undertaking the Collections portion of StEPs starting in March, which will also allow us to start defining our Collection Management Policy and collection priorities. In the meantime, because we have very limited storage and processing space, I am limiting our new accession to items that fit within our mission and purpose statements. A Deed of Gift will also be required of ALL new accessions so we have clear provenance and legal rights to anything coming in the door. For items that don't fit the definitions set out in our Mission or Purpose, but may meet exhibit needs, we will begin a formal loan program. All items being brought in for temporary exhibition will require a loan form to be filled out before exhibition.

Continues on page 10

Cheshire Historical Society
P.O. Box 281, 43 Church Drive
Cheshire, Connecticut 06410



E-MAILS FOR HISTORY QUESTIONS

Historical Society:

Curator: curator@che.necoxmail.com

President: cheshirehistory@che.necoxmail.com

Treasurer: treasurer@che.necoxmail.com

Membership: members@che.necoxmail.com

Town Historian: cheshirehistorian@cox.net

Cheshirepedia: cheshirepedia@gmail.com

LIKE us on FACEBOOK!

Visit our Website www.cheshirehistory.org
Telephone: (203) 272-2574

Come visit us on Sunday afternoons 2 to 4 p.m. or by appointment. Really, just call. We can give you or your organization a private tour—for free!

What's on Display—Current Exhibits

Artsplace has provided us with a **Kensett Exhibit**, a fact-filled display that is wonderfully entertaining.

Kensett was a "Man About Town," fond of his soirees. As is the case today, this lifestyle was not everyone's cup of tea. Our new curator has set up an exhibit showing the tension between **Alcohol and Temperance**. Come see if you'd rather be a teetotaler or someone who prefers their spirits!