

Cheshire Historical Society News

Volume 44, No. 1

*Keeping Cheshire's History Alive!**Spring 2021*

We've missed you! During the "unprecedented times" of the past 12 months, we have not been engaged in our usual in-person activities, and our communications with members have been a bit threadbare. However, the Board of Directors and numerous volunteers have been incredibly busy, working behind the scenes on improvements to both the Hitchcock-Phillips House and our organization, as well as re-tooling our online presence.

Please join us as we share with you our accomplishments since you last heard from us in our Spring 2020 Newsletter.

NEW FACES

Newly-Appointed Board Members

During the past year, we have added three new appointed members to our Board of Directors.

Karen Gionet Zentek, Archivist – In November 2019, Karen was appointed our first Archivist. Her role is to collect, preserve, and make accessible, the historical records held by the Cheshire Historical Society. Karen immediately took on the task of going through the official historical documents, personal diaries and journals, photographs, letters, scrapbooks, and unpublished books and cookbooks in the Hitchcock-Phillips House. It is also the Archivist's responsibility to explore the historical context in which the records were created, the uses for which they were intended, and their relationship to other sources. Karen's goal for 2021 is to make our historical records accessible in both print (for those who visit in person) and digitized format that will be accessible in an online repository.

Eric Nelson, Assistant Curator for Native American Studies and Ethnobotany – In all honesty, Eric is not a new face to our visitors. In fact, he has pretty much been our resident "Rock Star" for many years, sharing his knowledge of native geology at many venues. He has a vast knowledge of local plant and animal life, is a frequent volunteer and guide for Cheshire Land Trust, and is a popular presenter for the Society's activities including CT Open House Day. While we wait to resume these in-person activities, Eric has been busy designing different types of engaging activities and managing our Native American Indian Exhibits.



Chris D'Agostino, Student Volunteer Curator – Chris started volunteering at the Hitchcock-Phillips House when he was a Senior at Xavier High School. He is currently a First Year Student at Albertus Magnus College, majoring in History, and continues to come to the House every Sunday to volunteer. He has already created a special exhibit in the second floor Panel Room containing about two dozen unusual objects from our collection.

RECENT HISTORY

A recap of events involving the Historical Society since the publication of our last Newsletter

Despite the closure of the Hitchcock-Phillips House to visitors for most of the past 12 months, and the cancellation of most of our traditional activities, the Board of Directors and volunteers have kept busy and productive.

- The "Boutique in the Shed" became a "Boutique on the Farm" fundraiser.
- We participated in the annual Independence Day Declaration Celebration with the Bennett Family and the Cheshire Horse Council, with a Post Rider bringing home letters from the front lines of the American Revolution (from the Beach History of Cheshire), which were read to attendees.

- **Karen Gionet Zentek** became our new webmaster and began redesigning our website. It remains a work in progress but is coming along nicely, with new tabs for easier reference.
- Volunteers and a contractor are refurbishing the Victorian Room. Renovations include removal of wallpaper, painting, floor improvements, and removal of glass display panels to allow better airflow and open up the covered radiator. Work is ongoing while we await the issuance of our Strategic Plan to identify our next steps with the room.
- Speaking of the Strategic Plan, Board Members and other interested parties attended three sessions led by consultant **Kathy Craughwell-Varda**, to formulate a true Strategic Plan for our organization. This involved identifying the Society's mission, vision, and aspirations, as well as core values, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Throughout the process, we developed objectives, strategies, and operational tactics, as well as measurements and funding streams.
- **Zach Gottlieb** completed his Eagle Scout project, creating an Archive File Room/Office in the original apartment kitchen in the back of the building. (Photo at right)
- The Spirits Alive team created and posted on YouTube six Spirits Alive videos, to fill the void created by the lack of a live Tour this year. Many thanks to the **Hall Family** for their hard work on this.
- **Pat Vita** coordinated with the Town to install the stone Mile Marker XIII in the Lucille Williams Colonial Garden. This monument had marked 13 miles north of New Haven when it was in its original location across the street from Cheshire High School.
- Sunday volunteers, led by President **Diane Calabro**, brought the spirit of the holidays to the Hitchcock-Phillips House with several lit Christmas trees positioned in the windows facing the Green.
- Diane and **Lois Van Almerck** spent many hours poring through donated scrapbooks. The registration of their contents is almost complete.
- **José and Aida Rodriguez** have spent many Sundays cataloguing the postcard collection donations from Attorney Bailey and Judge Voelker. While many of the postcards are duplicates of those already in our collection, they have also come across a few "gems."
- **Emily D'Souza** completed 70 hours of volunteer service for the Girl Scouts by performing an inventory of our extensive Decorative Arts book collection.
- We have also attempted to keep Cheshire's History Alive via social media (Facebook and Instagram) posts, including:
 - "Quilty Pleasures" posts highlighting our quilt collection during National Quilt Month (March 2020);
 - Today's Events are Tomorrow's History – Signs of the Covid Times;
 - The Independence Day Declaration Celebration;
 - A look at many of our tea sets and their significance for National Hot Tea Month this past January;
 - The original Cheshire Country Club in West Cheshire for Black History Month; and
 - Occasional guest appearances by the History Hound.



PUTTING THE "FUN" IN FUNDRAISING

Online Fundraising Campaigns

It is that time of year! With Spring, comes our participation in two online fundraising campaigns: **The Great Give and Give Local Greater Waterbury and Litchfield Hills**.

First, we would like to thank all who donated to our organization **last year**. Because of you, **we raised over \$2,600 between the two campaigns!** Your support enabled us to offset some of our lost revenue due to COVID-19 (notably, no Spirits Alive Lantern Tour) and meet some of the priorities we set last year. While the Historical Society has been closed to the public, we've been busy and your donations have made many of the past year's projects possible. With your support, we were able to:

- Purchase equipment to have Zoom Meetings, which has allowed the Society to remain operational and conduct business safely.
- Lay down a much-needed and safer brick walk in our Colonial Garden.

- Repair water damage from a chimney flashing failure as insurance does not cover this repair.

These projects and countless others are possible because of your continued support.

As you know, we are an all-volunteer nonprofit group that works to keep Cheshire's history alive through our museum's collections, exhibitions, and programs. We rely on donations to help us create and maintain exhibits that cover Cheshire's history from the Native Americans to present day, as well as provide daily upkeep of the Hitchcock-Phillips House that was built in 1785.

Please keep an eye on your email as well as our social media for more information about the campaigns and links to donate as we get closer.

- **Give Local Greater Waterbury and Litchfield Hills runs from April 20, 7 a.m. to April 21, 7:00 p.m.**
- **The Great Give runs from May 4, 8:00 a.m. to May 5, 8:00 p.m.**

Both online giving campaigns also have special opportunities throughout to increase your impact with special awards granted during designated timeframes.

If you don't want to wait or can't contribute online, we also accept checks made out to Cheshire Historical Society which can be sent to 43 Church Drive, Cheshire, CT 06410. Thank you in advance for your support and we look forward to seeing you at the Hitchcock-Phillips House in the future.

CHESHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY – Board of Directors

Officers:

President	Diane Calabro
Vice President	Cara Luciani
Treasurer (Appointed)	Shirley Brady
Recording Secretary	Mitzi Romano

Directors:

José Rodriguez	2017-2020
Lois Van Almkerk	2017-2020, Charter Member
Janet Edwards	2017-2020
Tracy Ajello	2018-2021
Reneé Barley	2018-2021
Colleen Fitzgerald	2018-2021
Clare Leake	2019-2022
Jaime Grant	2019-2022
Marshall Robinson	2019-2022

Appointed Positions:

Archivist – Karen Gionet Zentek
 Audience Engagement Manager – Ana Arellano
 Corresponding Secretary – Pat Vita
 Curator - *OPEN*
 Curator, Assistant – Collections Manager – Judy Kollias
 Curator, Assistant – Historic Costume Consultant – Ilona Somogyi
 Curator, Assistant – Native American Studies – Eric Nelson
 Development Secretary – Cayetana Navarro
 Historic Structures Manager – *OPEN*
 Spirits Alive Cemetery Tour Manager – Joyce Mulholland
 Student Volunteer Curator – Chris D'Agostino
 Website/Webmaster – Karen Gionet Zentek



MAKING HISTORY

A look at upcoming events involving the Historical Society for the remainder of 2021

April 20, 7:00 am to April 21, 7:00 pm – Give Local

Give Local Greater Waterbury and Litchfield Hills, the first of two 36-hour online giving events that could be our primary fundraisers for 2021. www.givelocalccf.org

**May 4, 8:00 am to May 5, 8:00 pm – The Great Give**

If you miss out on Give Local (and even if you don't!), The Great Give is another 36-hour online giving event. www.thegreatgive.org

To Be Determined, based on Pandemic Guidelines

May – Cheshire Memorial Day Parade – The Society has historically (!) entered a float in this parade

June – CT Open House Day – Special events at the Hitchcock-Phillips House, showcasing our history

June – Cheshire Historical Society Marketplace (formerly, Antiques & Collectibles Sale)

July 4 – Independence Day Declaration Celebration on the Green, presented by the Bennett Family

August – Cheshire Grange Fair

September – A Day at Ives Farm, presented by Cheshire Land Trust

October – Spirits Alive Historic Hillside Cemetery Lantern Tour – our iconic annual (except for 2020) event

November – Gingerbread House Workshop

December – Open House and Christmas Party at the Hitchcock-Phillips House

Please keep an eye on our website and social media accounts for updates on these and other events involving the Cheshire Historical Society.

Cheshire Historical Society, 43 Church Drive, Cheshire CT 06410 (203) 272-2574

Website: www.cheshirehistory.org E-mail: cheshirehistory@che.necoxmail.com

Facebook: @CheshireHistoricalSociety and Spirits Alive Cemetery Tour

Instagram: @cheshirehistory and @cheshirespirits