

Cheshire Historical Society News

Volume 44, No. 2

Keeping Cheshire's History Alive!

Fall 2021

The Cheshire Historical Society (CHS) was happy to open our doors again to tours, programming, and events this past summer. In addition to reengaging with the public, there has also been a lot happening “behind the scenes.” Please join us as we share with you our accomplishments since you last heard from us in our Spring 2021 Newsletter.

RECENT HISTORY

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

- In cooperation with the Society, **Girl Scout Troop 60454** conducted a survey for their Silver Project concerning the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on residents and workers in our community from March 2020 to June 2021. Four members of this seventh grade Dodd Middle School troop completed the oral history interviews of several community members, including members of our local police and fire departments. The Scouts are currently working on a book compiling some of the story's community members have shared, which they hope to complete by the fall. Keep an eye on our website for an upcoming interview with the Girl Scouts about their experience.
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were unable to conduct our usual in-person tours of the museum for our local third graders. However, that didn't prevent two of our Society members from educating students about our local history. CHS President **Diane Calabro** and retired Doolittle Elementary School teacher and current CHS Director **Janet Edwards** designed a highly educational “virtual” tour with photographs and illustrations of several of our museum display items along with a comprehensive overview of our local history.
- The Society participated in this year's Connecticut Open House Day on June 12th. Student Volunteer Curator, **Chris D'Agostino**, organized the very successful event which included: spinning wheel and colonial woodworking demonstrations; museum display items and tours; a spice guessing game; book signing of *Images of Old Cheshire* by author **Ron Gagliardi**; as well as tips on canning, crochet, and embroidery.
- Although many of us associate slavery with the Southern United States, slavery was well established in Connecticut, including Cheshire, during the colonial era and finally faded by the end of the first half of the 19th Century. CHS president **Diane Calabro**, Treasurer **Shirley Brady**, and volunteer, **Emily Douyard**, created a Juneteenth banner with the names of all known enslaved people in our town from 1694-1840. This banner was hung over the outside of the Hitchcock-Phillips House windows for display on “Juneteenth,” or June 19, the holiday marking the emancipation of the slaves after the civil war.
- On July 5, The **Bennet** family led the annual Cheshire Fourth of July (Independence Day) celebration on the First Church Green. The CHS exhibited a display of engravings made by Revolutionary War patriot and Cheshire engraver, Amos Doolittle, who lived from 1784 to 1832. Participants read the Declaration of Independence and learned about Amos Doolittle, the engraver of the Battles of Lexington and Concord, including the “shot heard ‘round the world.”
- **Aidan Engels** (Eagle, July 3, 2020 - Cheshire 325th Anniversary Publication) and his brother, **Matthew Engels**, (Eagle, June 28, 2018 - Re-interpretation of the CHS Tool Room) were both recognized at the Eagle Scout Court of Honor, BSA Troop 92, held at Mixville Park on August 5, 2021. **Diane Calabro**, Society President, was invited to and attended this event. The Society is grateful to the many Boy Scouts who have provided their time and expertise for Eagle projects at the Society.



*Juneteenth banner outside
Cheshire Historical Society*

AROUND THE SOCIETY

Help yourself to herbs from our colonial herb garden in the backyard behind the CHS museum! Bring your scissors and look for the plastic labels in the garden to identify the herbs including oregano, basil, rosemary, sage, thyme and more! During colonial times, New England housewives kept kitchen or dooryard gardens to feed their families and produce herbs for seasonings, medicines, food processing as well as for household chores such as cleaning and dyeing fibers for yarn. English colonists brought with them plants that had been grown in Europe and England for centuries. These plants were used not only as food and medicine but also held historic, cultural, and religious significance. Dooryard gardens also had plants native to North America which Native Americans showed colonists how to use.



Herbs were often dried for use in teas, sachets, and potpourris. Our Native American Studies specialist **Eric Nelson** suggests a modern-day strategy for drying herbs: place the herbs in paper lunch bags to keep them shaded and store them in the car with the windows closed for about two weeks. The heat trapped inside the car will bake the moisture right out of them.

Make sure you are familiar with the plants you harvest prior to using them. Always consult with a qualified medical professional prior to using any plant for medicinal purposes, especially if you have a health condition or are taking prescription or over-the-counter medications. The Cheshire Historical Society assumes no responsibility for the health and safety of those who harvest and use the herbs from its garden.

CURATOR'S REPORT

Prepared by Diane Calabro, President (as the curator position is open at the time of this report)

The Cheshire Historical Society Board of Directors reviewed several candidate items for acceptance into our Permanent Collection. The Society Board approved our formal Collection Policy and our Collection Plan which provides guidance in the selection and process of bringing items into the Permanent Collection. Our Collection Plan emphasizes that we are interested in items that "tell a Cheshire story". Our Collection Policy, in part, outlines how we evaluate items. Now approved is the ability to add items to our "Permanent Collection" meaning items that tell a clear story about life in Cheshire can be added and will become stewards for generations to come; the "Educational Collection" includes items that can be handled by students and adults to learn more about daily life in our town; and the "Support Collection" features items that can be used by the Society such as costumes for our re-enactment events.

STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

The CHS Board of Directors and interested members met last year with Museum Consultant, **Kathy Craughwell-Varda**, to develop a plan going forward that supports our mission of keeping Cheshire's unique and continuing history alive by creating connections that engage the community through new and existing collections, exhibitions, and programs. On April 19, 2021, the CHS Board of Directors approved the Three-Year Strategic Plan received from Ms. Craughwell-Varda. A committee to address the report was created soon after and met for the first time over the summer. Some of the goals that the Society will be working towards include inspiring interest in local history, redesigning and re-envisioning exhibit areas and programs, as well as increasing our visibility while engaging the community and collaborating with local partners.

PUTTING THE “FUN” IN FUNDRAISING

Update: Fundraising Campaigns

Fundraising Recap

Thank you to everyone who participated in this year's Give Local and Great Give. Together we raised over \$2,000. The money will be used to maintain the Hitchcock-Phillips House and our priceless collections inside. Funds will also support our community-wide events and programs. Additionally, CHS would like to thank everyone who donated directly to the Society outside our giving campaigns. As you know, we are an all-volunteer nonprofit group whose mission is to keep Cheshire's history alive through our museum's collections, exhibitions, programs, and workshops. We rely on donations to help us. We 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.

Spirits Alive Cemetery Tour

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic we will not be having our annual Spirits Alive Cemetery Tour fundraiser. You may recall that last year we had to cancel our in-person event and switch to a virtual platform. Those videos are still available online on YouTube under “Spirits Alive Cemetery Tour”.

Friends Helping Friends Fall Fundraiser

Need an excuse to go shopping and support a good cause? The Cheshire Historical Society has partnered with **Boscov's** for their Friends Helping Friends 25th Anniversary. Donate at least \$5 to the Cheshire Historical Society and get a 25% discount shopping pass to Boscov's. You'll also register to win a \$100 Boscov's gift card. The shopping pass is good in-store one day only on October 20, 2021, 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. For more information and to purchase a shopping pass please contact CHS Treasurer, **Shirley Brady**, at treasurer@che.necoxmail.com, call (203) 272-2574 or stop by the Society Sundays from 2-4 p.m. 100% of your donation goes to our organization. Support the Cheshire Historical Society and treat yourself at the same time!

**GivingTuesday**

On November 30th the Cheshire Historical Society will be participating in GivingTuesday. GivingTuesday, an annual event held on the Tuesday following Black Friday and Cyber Monday, is a global generosity movement aimed at doing good and supporting your community. Please consider a donation in support of the Cheshire Historical Society. Keep an eye on your email as well as our social media for more information and links to donate as we get closer.

In addition to giving through our website, 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.

MAKING HISTORY

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

Fall 2021 – Cheshire Town-Wide Scarecrow Contest

Join society volunteers in creating an original scarecrow that will be entered into the town-wide competition. Interested members can email us at cheshirehistory@che.necoxmail.com or call (203) 272-2574 for details.

October 20 – Boscov Shopping Pass Fundraiser Shopping Date

Starting now you can pick up your coupon at the Society.

November 30 – GivingTuesday

Be a part of the global generosity movement that is GivingTuesday, a day to give back to your community, and support the Cheshire Historical Society.

To Be Determined, based on Pandemic Guidelines

November 28 – Gingerbread House Workshop

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

Website: www.cheshirehistory.org

Facebook: @CheshireHistoricalSociety and Spirits Alive Cemetery Tour

Instagram: @cheshirehistory and @cheshirespirits

CHESHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY – Board of Directors

Officers:

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

Directors:

Clare Leake	2019-2022
Jaime Grant	2019-2022
Janet Edwards	2021-2024
Colleen Fitzgerald	2021-2024
Will D’Agostino	2021-2024
Lois Van Almkerk	2021-2024, Charter Member

Appointed Positions:

Archivist – Karen Gionet Zentek
 Audience Engagement Manager – Ana Arellano
 Corresponding Secretary – OPEN
 Curator – OPEN
 Curator, Assistant – Collections Manager – Judy Kollias
 Curator, Assistant – Historic Costume Consultant – Ilona Somogyi
 Curator, Assistant – Native American Studies – Eric Nelson
 Membership Secretary – OPEN
 Historic Structures Manager – OPEN
 Spirits Alive Cemetery Tour Manager – Joyce Mulholland
 Student Volunteer Curator – Chris D’Agostino
 Development Secretary – OPEN



The Cheshire Historical Society is looking for volunteers to help with events, collections, programs and more at the Hitchcock-Phillips House Museum. This is a great way to learn about our community and meet others around town with similar interests. If you’re interested in volunteering, email us at cheshirehistory@che.necoxmail.com, give us a call at (203) 272-2574, or stop by the Hitchcock-Phillips House, 43 Church Drive, on Sundays from 2-4 p.m.