

CHESHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

Volume 40, No. 1

Keeping Cheshire's History Alive!

SPRING 2017

A House, A Home, A Home-Away-From-Home The History of the Hitchcock-Phillips House

By Mitzi Romano

The assignment was simple: Go to Town Hall and do a title search for the Hitchcock-Phillips House. How difficult could that be? We already knew the basics:

- Rufus Hitchcock built the house in 1785.
- The west wing was added around 1820 when Rufus's son William brought his wife home to live there.
- Rufus died in 1832.
- In 1834, William's family moved to Waterbury and his sister Lucretia and her family with Rev. Peter Clark moved into the house.
- At some point, the house is passed down to Lucretia's daughter Maria, who is married to Andrew W. Phillips, an instructor at Cheshire Academy.
- When A.W. Phillips became a professor at Yale, the family moved to New Haven and used the house as their summer home, until 1907, when the house was sold to Alfred Bennett.
- Mr. Bennett used the house as a rental property until he sold it to the Roxbury School (the Academy's name at that time) in 1930.
- The School used the house as a dormitory.
- In 1972, Cheshire Academy sold the house to the Town of Cheshire, which then leased it to the Historical Society,

As it turned out, the trip to Town Hall was only the beginning of a journey that would take me to the Town Library, the Cheshire Academy archives, Ancestry.com, and through the nooks and crannies of the world wide web.

The Hitchcock House

According to the detailed records that Rufus Hitchcock kept, he built the Georgian Classical house that now bears his name in 1785, when he was just 25 years old. The cost to build the house was 348 pounds, 18 shillings, 8 pence. And the materials used to build the house included 4550 clapboards, 1600 shingles, 13,572 nails, and 179.5 pounds of large nails.

So, what did that original house look like? Since building permits were not required until the 1950s, I had to turn to older newspaper articles to provide details. According to a 1933 *New Haven Register* article, it did not include any ells or dormers but did include a single-story wing on the northeast corner. The current front doors with their "arrow" hinges and latches and bulls-eye glass windows are original to the house.

Seven years after building this house, on July 11, 1792, Rufus married Hannah Lewis of Southington. Rufus and Hannah had three children: Jared Rodney (who was born in 1793 and died at just nine months of age), Lucretia, and William Rufus. When Lucretia was just four years old and William Rufus only one year old, Hannah died in childbirth, at age 30. For eight years, Rufus was a single parent to Lucretia and William, until he married Flora Gilchrist on December 10, 1807.

She Says It Doesn't Feel Like 45 Years: Antiques & Collectibles Sale Hits a Milestone Year with Lois Van Almkerk at the Helm

Lois Van Almkerk, Society Director, flashes her megawatt smile and says she's doing it again this year. "Forty-five years! I have to!" She feels a strong commitment to staying the course and she has a loyal following of dealers who contact her year after year. Lois sticks to what works: she charges \$35 for dealer space.



Drawing by Warren Van Almkerk

"I remember when we would have eighty dealers in the yard. We'd hold the Antiques & Collectibles (A&C) Sale every month throughout the summer." Originally invited by Brad Fuller of the First Church to hold her A&C sale the same day as the renowned Congregational Church Strawberry Festival, Lois feels it's a good match. "We all benefit from sharing the day. We bring in an audience that the Strawberry Festival might not, and we certainly have plenty of interesting items for everyone who comes to the Green."

Along with the A&C Sale and the Strawberry Festival, the Society is also participating in CT Open House Day on the same day. "We can focus on history, as well," said President Diane Calabro. "We'll offer special events such as speakers and hands-on activities in the Meeting Room. Of course, we'll also have tours of the HPH for any interested guests." The Shoppe, formerly known as the Boutique-in-the-Shed, will also be open for what has become the annual sale event. Director Clare Leake is organizing the Shoppe and she is seeking donations for this annual sale (note that these are items that are not and never will be from our museum collection items). The Cheshire Horse Council will also be offering pony rides in the afternoon.

"It's going to be a busy day, but a great day for our visitors," Lois said. "I still have space available and I would be happy to talk to anyone who is interested in being a dealer on Saturday June 10th." Lois can be reached at (203) 272-5937 for more information. Clare can be reached by calling (203) 272-2574 and leaving a message.

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.

Presidents Message - StEPs Update

We are coming to the end of our two-year commitment to the Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations (StEPs) program. StEPs has helped everyone on our Board better understand the importance of taking care of what we have, and has enabled us to have a deeper understanding of museum standards and why they matter. While the coursework is completed, we still have only completed two of the six segments, so StEPs will be part of our lives for quite a bit longer. We are committed to completing all segments, but we want to do this at an appropriate speed for our Society. Many standards introduced us to entirely new concepts and requirements, which take time to digest and implement. The American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) launched StEPs in 2009 and our Society is one of over 800 history organizations who have committed to becoming stronger, more focused, and more sustainable. Are we better for StEPs? Yes, absolutely. One special benefit of the StEPs program in Connecticut is the special partnership with Connecticut League of History Organizations and CT Humanities. Personalized seminars, a dedicated mentor, and easy access to museum management experts were an incredible opportunity. We also got to meet our neighbors - other Connecticut house museums - to hear their stories and their challenges. Sharing with these groups has helped enormously. We realized we don't have to operate in a vacuum. We have learned the generally accepted practices for house museums. What happens next? We finish our segments and submit to AASLH. We continue to improve ourselves in best practices and seek out additional coursework to further learn how to manage our house museum efficiently, ethically, and with expertise. We cultivate relationships with other museums and heritage organizations, and within our Cheshire community. Most importantly, we keep Cheshire's history alive.
Diane Calabro, President, Cheshire Historical Society

StEPs-CT

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 on the Church Green at 43 Church Drive, Cheshire CT 06410. Corporate headquarters for the organization are 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. 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. Design and layout of the newsletter is provided by the CHS Board of Directors.

Letter to the Society

Ruth Ann Turley sent us this lovely note in mid-February (received when Winter Storm Niko left us 15" to 18" of snow): "I love it when my Cheshire Historical Society Newsletter comes. It reconnects me with Cheshire and brings back happy memories after I retired. I enjoyed leading school groups through the house. I liked talking about the scrub board, no washing machines, and the chamber pot under the bed. Keep up the good work. The activities are varied and interesting. All is well here in Florida. Golf, bridge and church keep us busy. The blue skies and puffy white clouds are beautiful. Hello to all my friends at the Historical Society."

@YOU!

Do We Have Your Email?

Contact Justin Navarro at cheshirehistory@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 news-

Donation of \$20 in pennies came from Eigil Wium. We were glad to have it! And we like the jar Mr. Wium brought the pennies in: Pennies from Heaven, indeed!



Come visit the Society on Sunday afternoons from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. We have a lot to offer our visitors so please take some time to stop by! We have wonderful docent-lead tours. There's always *something happening* at the Society!

Society Board of Directors

Officers:

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

Directors:

Three year terms begin in the month of May

José Rodriguez	2014- 2017
Lois Van Almkerk	2014- 2017
Pat Vita	2014- 2017
Colleen Fitzgerald	2015- 2018
Cara A. Luciani	2015- 2018
Diane Ulbrich	2015- 2018
Clare Leake	2016- 2019
Jaime McCormick	2016- 2019
Marshall Robinson	2016- 2019

Curator Team

Curator	Open
Assistant Curators	Ilona Somogyi - Clothing Historian

Facilities

House & Grounds Manager: David Calabro

Student Liaison

Thomas Mulholland, Class of 2017

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. through the end of the year. Check website for more information. It is also open by appointment on other days. Call (203) 272-2574 to schedule a visit for a private tour or for research purposes. CHS now offers WiFi to our researchers and guests and an updated Meeting Room (available for rental).

SUNDAYS: Visitor Sundays from 2 to 4 p.m. Tours are available.

MARCH

March 24 – Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m.

March 27 – Brass City Talk at Cheshire Library, 6 p.m.

APRIL

April 2 – “Cheshire Rocks”, Eric Nelson, Afternoon Tea 2 p.m.

April 9 – Cheshire to Conn. River MW&CR Train Tour (bus ride; purchase tickets in advance) 9 a.m.– 4 p.m. See Page 11 for details.

April 13 – Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m.

April 15 – Easter Flower Sale with Cheshire Horse Council

April 25-26 – GIVE LOCAL – visit www.GiveLocalCCF.org

April 30 – Annual Meeting, History of HPH Talk by Mitzi Romano, Afternoon Tea 2 p.m.

MAY

May 7 – Cheshire Horse Council Pony Ride

May 13 – Cheshire Academy Alumni Weekend – Visit to the Society

May 16 – Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m.

May 21 – Alice Washburn Cheshire House Tour, call for reservations

May 29 – Memorial Day Parade

JUNE

June 10 – Antiques & Collectibles Sale, CT Open House Day, Shoppe

Annual Sale, Cheshire Horse Council Pony Rides (afternoon only) 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

June 19 – Board Meeting 7:30 p.m.

JULY and AUGUST

Come see us on Sunday afternoons, 2-4 p.m. HPH is air-conditioned and has WiFi Check website for events through the summer.

Cheshire Toastmasters meet at the Society on the first and third Wednesday of each month at 7:15 pm. Cheshire Horse Council meets at the Society on the second Monday of each month at 6:30 pm. If you would like to stop by the Society for research or a tour, please do so as a Society member will be on site.

We will be at the Cheshire Grange Fair in August – be sure to stop by and say hello!

SPIRITS ALIVE NEEDS JARS

Mason jars, spaghetti sauce jars, and any quart-sized or larger jars clean and with the label removed (soak for a bit in hot, soapy water and most labels slide right off). Drop them by the Society at your convenience. We would plan to use about 1,000 jars for the Spirits Alive Tour in October so please do not put these glass jars in your recycle! Save them for the Society.

Curator Update

WANTED: A very special person or persons to coordinate Curator, Collection Management, Archiving, Electronic Inventory, Acquisitions, and more. We are looking for volunteers who could manage 10 to 20+ hours per week for many, many years. This is the perfect “encore career” for people interested in history and keeping history alive in Cheshire.

E-mail to cheshirehistory@che.necoxmail.com or call the Society at 203-272-2574.

Acquisitions update will be provided at our Annual Meeting on April 30, 2017

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A House, A Home, A Home-Away-From-Home, The History of the Hitchcock-Phillips House

By Mitzi Romano

Rufus and Flora had no children of their own. Rufus was a colonel in the militia, as well as a merchant, justice of the peace, town representative to the state government, and town clerk from 1792 through 1831.

On November 5, 1818, Lucretia Hitchcock married Peter G. Clark (sometimes spelled “Clarke”), an Episcopal minister who was a Navy chaplain.

On October 20, 1819, William Rufus Hitchcock married Mary Hull and the common belief is that the two-story west wing, heated by four fireplaces, was added to the house around 1820 to accommodate William and Mary’s new family, which grew to include son Rufus Edward, who was born in 1821.

On March 22, 1832, Rufus Hitchcock died and his widow Flora, inherited just the original section of the house and half of several outbuildings, as provided in Rufus’s Will:

“I give bequeath & devise to my beloved wife Flora Hitchcock the use & improvements of all that part of my dwelling house which I have occupied since my son has had a family together with the use of the one half of my wood house & the one half of my hog house which I have hitherto occupied for those uses. also a right in the back house such as may be necessary for her convenience. likewise the use & improvements of the yard Northerly & Easterly of the dwelling house extending to the line of Martha Granniss to the hoghouse & to the passway into the front gate & front door of the dwelling house & to the well. reserving to my heirs the privilege of passing across said yard to the well & to the store & garden adjoining in the usual path also the privilege of driving & watering cows at the well in the usual place & manner ...”

In 1834, William and his family moved to Waterbury. According to Census records, Flora Hitchcock moved with them but apparently retained ownership of her portion of the house in Cheshire. It appears that it was at that time that the Clark family moved in, and the house actually became known as “The Clark Place” around town.

The Clark Place

The Clark family consisted of Lucretia, the Rev. Peter Clarke (who had reportedly retired from the Navy), and daughters Maria Scoville (born in 1823) and Lucretia H. (born in 1826). Records (including Rufus’s 1830 Will) show that there was also a son, William Henry. The 1933 *New Haven Register* article notes that William became a clergyman and was the rector of a parish in the South, where he lived for many years. It does not appear that he ever returned to Cheshire.

On September 16, 1844 Flora Hitchcock transferred title to her portion of the house to her stepdaughter, Lucretia, via a quitclaim deed. Flora’s deed is interesting in that it seems to indicate that Lucretia already owned a portion of the property:

“... a piece of land lying in the town of Cheshire on the west side of the public green, described as follows... - ... then westerly in the line of said green to the southwest corner of Lucretia Clark’s land, then northerly in the line of said Lucretia’s land ... with a Dwelling House and other buildings thereon standing – Bounded northerly on Asa J. Driggs land and land of Wm R Hitchcock subject to my dower right westerly on her own land and southerly and westerly on the public green...”

It appears that William Hitchcock still owned part of the land, but had he sold his portion of the house to the Clarks when he relocated to Waterbury? Was Lucretia given some of the land as a dowry?

According to federal Census records, Peter, Lucretia, Maria and Lucretia H. were still living in the house in 1850. However, Rev. Clark died on January 1, 1860, leaving his widow, two daughters and a servant as the only inhabitants of the house at the time of the 1860 Census. In 1865, Lucretia Hitchcock Clark died. Two years later, on April 23, 1867, Maria, who was now 44 years old, married 22-year old Andrew Wheeler Phillips. In the 1870 Census, the house was inhabited by Andrew, Maria and Lucretia H.

Andrew Wheeler Phillips had become an instructor in mathematics at Cheshire Academy in 1864. But in 1875 he accepted a position as a mathematics tutor at Yale University, and the family moved to New Haven. Over the years, he was promoted to assistant professor in 1881, professor in 1891, and dean of the graduate school in 1895. During this period, Andrew and Maria reportedly used the house in Cheshire as their summer residence.

A.W. Phillips Place

On February 22, 1895, Maria Scoville Clarke Phillips died. Her will left all of her property to her husband, Andrew. Interestingly, the March 16, 1895 Inventory of her estate listed “One third interest in Real Estate in Cheshire (Estate of Lucretia H. Clarke) \$666.66”. At this point, mathematics fails me in determining how much of the Hitchcock-Clarke-Phillips House property she actually owned! The December 20, 1901, probate certificate for the estate of Maria S. Phillips certified the transfer

“... to Andrew W. Phillips of New Haven, whatever interest said deceased had in the following real estate to wit all that certain piece or parcel of land with dwelling house and other improvements thereon situated in the Town of Cheshire, Connecticut known as the Clark Place ...”

Just four days later, Andrew Phillips transferred ownership to his 75-year old sister-in-law, Lucretia H. Clark via quitclaim deed

“... a certain tract of land with the Dwelling House and other buildings thereon standing situated in the Town of Cheshire in the County of New Haven and State of Connecticut, known as the Clark place containing three acres more or less ...”



Mother and Daughter

The Mother

Mrs. Rufus Hitchcock (Left)
Hannah Lewis Hitchcock,
Rufus Hitchcock's First Wife.

The Daughter

Lucretia Hitchcock Clark(e),
(Right) Daughter of Rufus and
Hannah Lewis Hitchcock.
Both images used with
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Connecticut Historical Society



Slightly four years after that, on January 2, 1906, Lucretia transferred ownership of "the Clarke place" out of the Hitchcock family to Alfred S. Bennett through yet another quitclaim deed.

But before moving on to the Bennett family ownership of the House, one final note about the Hitchcocks. Andrew Phillips had become a widower on February 22, 1895. He eventually remarried on June 27, 1912. His second wife was actually 10 years younger than he and was a widow herself. She was Agnes DuBois Hitchcock Northrop, the daughter of Rufus Edward Hitchcock. She was Maria Scoville Clarke's first cousin, once removed.

The Bennett Property

So, with this tangle of family relationships, is there a possibility that Alfred S. Bennett was also related to the Hitchcocks?

How else to explain the quitclaim transfer, which is generally only used to transfer property between family members?

Based on a 1918 biography I located online, there does not appear to have been any family relationship. Arthur S. Bennett was born in England in 1858 and first arrived in Cheshire in 1880, where he set up a small farm with his brother James. In 1885, he traveled back to England to get married and then returned to Cheshire and engaged in a variety of enterprises, including a butcher shop, cattle partnership, and auctioneer. Like Rufus Hitchcock, he also represented the town in the state legislature. The biography noted that he was retired as of 1909 but the 1910 Census listed him as a farmer and the 1920 Census indicated that he was a public official. Finally, the 1930 Census listed him as retired.

Sold the Phillips House to Episcopal Academy for Student Housing (Right)

Alfred S. Bennett *The photo of A.S. Bennett was pulled from an article about him in Taylor's Connecticut Legislative History and Souvenir., Vol. V, 1905-1906"*



They Called it the Phillips House

(Left)

Andrew Wheeler Phillips
The photo of A.W. Phillips was pulled from Men of Mark in Connecticut: Ideals of American Life Told in Biographies and Autobiographies of Eminent Living Americans, Volume II"



(Continued from Page Five)

History of the Hitchcock-Phillips House

It is not clear how A.S. Bennett used this property as it appears he owned quite a bit of property in town. In fact, Bennett Avenue provides one of the boundaries for the Hitchcock-Phillips house property. One article noted that he lived on Bunnell Street, but there is no longer any such street on Cheshire maps. Luckily, the book *Landmarks of Old Cheshire* includes a note that Bunnell Street is now called Spring Street. The 1930 federal Census noted that he was then living on South Main Street, with no street number provided. Could that have been the Hitchcock house, even though the house is technically located on Church Drive? Looking at a 1924 map, he also owned property just south of what was then the Methodist Church, on South Main Street, so it is unlikely he was actually living in the Hitchcock house at that time.

The traditional belief is that Mr. Bennett used the house as an income-producing boarding house, until he sold it to the Roxbury School on June 2, 1930. At that time, he took back a \$15,000 mortgage on the property, to be paid in full on June 2, 1945. However, a 1969 letter from his son to The Cheshire Academy “Re: Phillips House Mortgage” indicates that the mortgage may have been renegotiated since payments were still being made to his son and two daughters at that time.

Roxbury School and Cheshire Academy

The Roxbury School used the house as a dormitory building, with a resident teacher in attendance. It was named Phillips Hall/House for Junior Boys, in honor of Dr. A.W. Phillips.

In 1937, the Roxbury School became The Cheshire Academy and another quitclaim deed transferred legal ownership to the new entity. The house continued to be used as a dormitory.

Interestingly, one of the resident teachers from the 1960s, who recently toured the house, noted that the first floor of the west wing had been his family’s apartment, just as the entire wing had been an “apartment” for William Rufus Hitchcock’s family. The only building permit for structural changes that is on file in the town’s Building Department was for the conversion of a hallway and stairway into lavatories in late 1966. This may have been on the second floor of that wing.

The Town of Cheshire

On November 30, 1971, The Cheshire Academy transferred title to the Town of Cheshire for \$1.00 via a warranty deed. The town now leases the building to the Cheshire Historical Society. But this is not the end of the story, as this search simply raised a number of new questions.

History’s Mysteries

How many fireplaces does the house have? The 1933 *New Haven Register* article notes that “Eleven fireplaces were in this home and are still available for use.” A 1972 article in *The Newtown Bee* also notes that “Eleven fireplaces, most still to be uncovered, are listed in the records of the house.” Currently, eight fireplaces are exposed and the location of two still-covered fireplaces is fairly certain. But where is number eleven?

When were the third-floor dormers added? According to the 1985 *Historic Resources Inventory* of the Connecticut Historical Commission, they were added in 1925, when A.S. Bennett owned the property. This is consistent with the information reported in the WPA Architectural Survey conducted in 1935. But the 1933 *New Haven Register* article implies that the dormers were added by The Roxbury School.

When was the second story added to the northeast wing?

How and when did the house get “reassembled” into a single property?

How was the house used by A.S. Bennett? Was it a boarding house?

Why did Lucretia Hitchcock transfer the property to A.S. Bennett for just “one dollar and other valuable considerations”?

Do I detect another “simple” assignment coming on?

Mitzi Romano is a recent addition to the Cheshire Historical Society Board of Directors. You may have noticed her photograph of the bulls-eye glass in our Fall 2016 newsletter. Mitzi will be presenting her deed research at our April 30th Annual Meeting and Sunday Afternoon Tea. Mitzi has also set up Cheshire Historical Society on Instagram. She is a frequent Sunday afternoon volunteer and does a splendid job as a docent. Please stop by and request that she give you a tour of the HPH Museum. You’ll be very glad you did!

Save This Date! Sunday, May 21, 2017 Alice Washburn Cheshire House Tour

By Pat Vita, Director

We are delighted to tell you that on Sunday, May 21 we are sponsoring an Alice Washburn Cheshire House Tour, similar to our Washburn tour held in May 1990. If you missed it the first time, you are very fortunate to have another opportunity in May. If you toured the houses before, you are fortunate to be able to revisit these beautiful houses and see another house recently authenticated as a Washburn. No matter what style house you prefer if you admire quality artisanship and custom design, you will enjoy seeing these homes.

President Diane Calabro says, “The town of Cheshire is so fortunate to have our distinctive Alice Washburn designed homes, as few as there are. We are also fortunate to have had Mrs. Washburn as a Cheshire resident. She was an architect well ahead of her time, concerned with quality and form following function. Her accomplishments were amazing as at that time female professionals were not taken seriously.”

Those of us who participated in the last tour are thrilled because since then historian Martha Yellig Buck has authenticated another Cheshire Washburn house that we will be able to see. Please join us on the tour and help us continue promoting our mission of “keeping Cheshire’s history alive.”

If you wish to act as a host or hostess at one of the houses, or want to reserve a ticket before they go on sale, please call Pat Vita at (203) 272-3963.

THANK YOU!

WE WANT TO THANK YOU!

MAJOR CONTRIBUTORS

♥Joan Hodgson
 ♥Diane Ulbrich
 ♥Juline Beier
 ♥Carolyn Williams
 ♥Ilona Somogyi
 Cheshire Academy
 Cheshire Toastmasters
 Donald Baillie
 Sally Bowman Real Estate
 Michael & Gail Sullivan
 Mitzi Romano
 Edwin Moss Aderer
 James & Janice Matson
 John Purtill, Jr.

CONTRIBUTORS OF MERIT

Mike & Gail Collins
 Cheshire Women's Club
 Cheshire Horse Council
 Raymond & Eleanor Verner
 R. Fennelly
 United Way
 Jill Rochford
 Melisa Baston
 Ralph Rowland
 Rita Giannotti
 Ruth Ann Turley
 Jessica Turbacuski

We very much appreciate those who contribute beyond their dues when they renew their membership. Carolyn Williams donated a 32" LCD Smart Television for our Meeting Room. Ilona Somogyi donated an Epson Scanner for our Archive activities

We also collected \$280 in door donations. This included several buckets, jars, and boxes of loose change! If you have pennies and other coins that you've been meaning to do something with, send them our way. We'll roll them up and give you credit for a wonderful donation to the Society! We also have a number of people who are giving us their deposit bottles. Every little bit helps in this economy!

(Contributions made from August 19, 2016 through February 21, 2017)

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:
 The Cheshire Historical Society
 Attn: David Dent, Treasurer
 P.O. Box 281, Cheshire, CT 06410

Is This a Real Arrow Point?

By Eric Nelson, Ethnobotanist

At the Cheshire Historical Society Open House in December, I found a plastic cup in the Native American room containing three stones. The label on the cup stated that these were possible arrow points found at the Ives Farm on 1535 Cheshire Street. All three stones have a triangle shape. Two of the stones are traprock basalt, a common rock found on the Prospect Ridge of which Roaring Brook Falls is a part. The third stone is brown sandstone.

So how do we tell whether these stones are real projectile points or just rock fragments? To begin with, all stone projectile points (arrow points and spear points) have a triangular shape but not all stones with this shape are necessarily projectile points.

Most stone points are made through a process called flintknapping which involves the removal of fragments called flakes from the parent rock in a predictable manner. These rocks have a high silica content with tiny crystals or no crystalline structure. Quartz, chert and flint are among these. Chert and flint do not occur here naturally but were brought here through trade routes from New York and New Jersey. Basalt that formed from lava that cooled rapidly on the earth's surface could also be used. However, trap rock basalt cooled slowly beneath the surface and its crystals are too large. The brown sandstone consists of quartz sand but has impurities and its crystals are also too large. Many points have concave surfaces called pressure flake scars made by removing small flakes from the edges through inward and downward pressure with a deer antler tip or copper rod.

Some projectile points might have been made by grinding the stone edges on a piece of sandstone in much the same way that we would use sand paper. Shale, slate and possibly trap-rock basalt would be among the rocks used. The grinding process is much more time-consuming than is flintknapping.

A projectile point is thin on all edges unless the tip or the base had broken off. Some

points have parallel indentations called notches near the base for easier attachment onto a wooden shaft.

Since all three stones in the cup have edges too thick to penetrate into animal flesh and lack pressure flake scars and notches, they are probably rock fragments. Visit the Native American room at the Historical Society and compare these stones with our collection of stone projectile points.

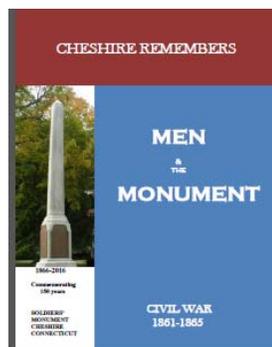


Eric Nelson is a CHS volunteer and conducts early Native American skills workshops at the Historical Society on a regular basis. His next talk, "Cheshire Rocks," will be held on Sunday Afternoon, April 2 and includes an Afternoon Tea. Check our website and Facebook page for upcoming workshops.

The Society contacted Meredith Sturges, President of the Cheshire Lady Fenwick Chapter of the DAR who shared that she finds genealogy fascinating and has had great success using Ancestry.com. She explained that The Daughters of the American Revolution is a non-profit organization whose purpose is to promote historic preservation, education and patriotism (Wikipedia). In order to be a member, you must prove direct lineage to an ancestor involved in the Revolutionary War. That person or those people are called Patriots. She provided this quote: "Colonial America was a very small place. Families arrived, intermarried, and had children. If your relatives arrived from the 1600s thru mid-1700s, they most likely participated in the American Revolution on one side or the other, or both! Finding the clues and connecting those dots brings history alive. I would say that is the purpose of all Genealogical Organizations by keeping history alive by passing family heritage to the next generations. It certainly provides a sense of pride to have this knowledge of our roots. The DAR, as well as SAR and C.A.R., applies that history specifically to what made us the United States of America. DAR also feels that it is our duty to preserve the values that were set down by our ancestors and so promotes awareness of Environmental, Military, and Educational concerns." Meredith also shared how proud she is of her own connection to the settlers of Wallingford - Moss (Morse), Cook (Cooke) which she has through both parents, Hall's (a John Hill that became Hall) was married to Susanna Shakespeare (yes, that family!), and who was stepmother to Meredith's ancestor. Of course, all of this requires a lot of verification. This is why genealogy is fascinating!

Acronym Note: The National Society of the Children of the American Revolution (C.A.R.) is an organization of persons through 21 years of age who are lineal descendants of a patriot of the American Revolution. The C.A.R. is an independent organization which looks to the National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution (SAR), National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), and General Society of the Sons of the Revolution (SR) for its leadership and financial support. (from www.sar.org).

The Cheshire Historical Society is proud to offer "Cheshire Remembers." This is a fascinating book about the history of our Monument. It is available for \$10 at the Society. Supplies are limited. Call Diane at (203) 272-2574 to purchase your copy. We can mail this to you, as might be needed.



Researching for DAR Membership

By Ted Holtzman

"We know a lot about our ancestors, including those that fought in the Revolutionary War," said our daughters, "Why don't you apply for Membership in the DAR for Momma? It would be a nice thing for Momma (and us)!"

Used to being manipulated by the women in my life, I agreed. How hard could that be?

It was true that I had always had an interest in History: Ancient History, Colonial History, and, eventually, family history (genealogy). Along the way, I had learned of the story of our ancestors who had fought in the American Revolution (on both sides). We had plenty to pick from, but if it had to be an ancestor of my wife, the field narrowed.

My wife Joyce descended from ancestors that all were colonial settlers of New Hanover County, North Carolina. It just happens that the colonial history of the county, and its county seat of Wilmington, is particularly well studied and documented. I selected a family line of descendants of a Patriot Ancestor [Revolutionary Soldier] in which there were recorded wills that would be helpful in establishing lineage. We also had a copy of a 1934 letter that outlined the family origins and order of descendants. This would be easy.

I contacted the local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), which meets often at the Cheshire Historical Society. They were pleased at the prospect of a new member and notified the Registrar of their chapter. First Gloria Williams, and later Kathy Stefanik, helped me with the application. The requirements were simple and straight forward. First identify the Patriot Ancestor and then document the descent of succeeding generations and their spouses down to Joyce, the applicant.

An army muster role that included the name and rank of the Patriot Ancestor was the first step in documentation. However, we had no documentation for the date of his birth or death. While requested, it turned out that the lack of it was not disqualifying.

A copy of his will identified his children, including the ancestor of Joyce. We were off and running.

The next ancestor did not have a will. We had no birth date, but did have a date of death that had been passed down to us. However, the source of that date had not been passed on to us.

Wishing the record to be as complete as possible, we expended much time in research. It turned out that the lack of a date of death was again not disqualifying. The requirements for DAR documentation are demanding, but not unreasonable.

We were successful in obtaining birth certificates, marriage licenses, and death certificates for 20th Century generations, but that type of documentation often did not exist for the 19th Century. We used, instead, newspaper notifications of marriages and deaths. Methodically, we collected the required documentation, step by step. Finally, the process was complete. After a journey of a year, Joyce was gladly accepted as a DAR member.

If You Haven't Been to Visit in a While, Maybe This will Change Your Mind

We can't thank Cheshire Public Works enough for their help in keeping our building up. You may have noticed the sparkling paint job, the fine new roof, and all of the other improvements that happen on a day-to-day basis. We want to thank Kathy Doherty and Keith Baron, and of course, George Noewatne for their ongoing support. While Diane Calabro thinks that the Public Works group cringes every time she sends an e-mail or places a call for assistance, we recently received this note from George Noewatne, Director of Public Works and Engineering:

"The building looks wonderful inside and out, and with all the roofing, siding repairs, patching, interior and exterior painting, lovely gardens and other beautification and structural updates, it is quite an asset to the Town. Public Works is here for you. I can't thank you, the Society, the gardening organizations, and others enough for making the building a real landmark. We all have a great partnership, and I look forward to its continuation for many years!"

As we promote our Membership Drive and as we seek donations from our members and our community, this is what it's all about: a building that is wonderful inside and out, including the gardens maintained by the Cheshire Garden Club and the Suburban Garden Club. We are trying to maintain a world-class house museum here in Cheshire. We need your help. We need your support. We need you to come to the HPH, walk around the grounds, come inside and see the building, take a docent led tour, and let our house museum charm you as it has so many of us. We are all volunteers and we can always use more hands and more funds as we keep Cheshire's history alive. Statistics show that Society-type house museums are more prevalent in our country than McDonalds Restaurants. We have to *shine* to stand out. We will have to work hard and *real-*

House & Grounds Update

By David Calabro

Sometimes a 1785 year-old house feels especially young at heart. We've done a lot of improvements at the HPH and quite a bit of sprucing up. I'm proud to share that as of this writing, every room in the house is being used for a dedicated function, especially the apartment area of the building (the apartment is the "new" addition built in 1820). You can come and visit the Craig Library, Native American Indian Display Room, Scanning and Archive Center, and Volunteer Break Room. These are now cheerful rooms with plenty of activity.

Still on our list are electrical improvements to replace older fluorescent lighting (did you know that fluorescent lighting actually makes colors fade?) with LED lighting. We continue to address painting needs throughout the building, having mini-mized areas with gross peeling paint issues. Two rooms require wallpaper replacement. Window treatments in many rooms need to be updated. Rugs in the Victorian Room need to be replaced. These are all activities on our maintenance schedule.

The HPH seems to have a few more visitors and a few more volunteers Sunday to Sunday which is a testament to how friendly and inviting the building has become. It's a fine old building with a great heart.



A VERY SPECIAL DONATION

Joan Hodgson donated funds for the CHS to purchase a replica Admiral Frock Coat for John White to wear as he portrays Admiral Foote. As we call upon John to re-enact the Admiral annually or sometimes twice a year, it is wonderful to have a costume that is authentic. Many, many thanks to Joan for this very special donation!

Thank You Suburban Garden Club

It is late to send a thank you note for a Christmas gift, but the CHS would like to again express our thanks to the Suburban Garden Club for the truly splendid Christmas decorations done at the HPH for our Christmas Party and Holiday Open House. The nature-themed decorations and trimming were remarked upon by one and all. What a beautiful display! We are so very grateful to these gifted gardeners. For those of you who are not aware of this, Suburban Garden Club also maintains the plantings and gardens in the front and the north side of the HPH. In a few weeks we'll be looking forward to seeing some evidence of spring!

Mark Your Calendar: Visit THE SHOPPE on June 10

The Shoppe, formerly known as the Boutique-in-the-Shed, will open for our one-day fundraiser on Saturday June 10 from early morning until four o'clock. The Shoppe is located in the shed behind the main HPH building. When Cheshire Academy used our building for a school dormitory, this shed was the Literary Club for the Academy students and was an area the students could use as a study hall. For nearly twenty years, the Boutique-in-the-Shed has offered an eclectic mix of antiques and collectibles for sale on Sundays through the summer months. Now, to be compliant with our non-profit status, the Shoppe is open for this main fundraising event. And it will be chock full of tempting items for sale donated for this purpose. (Note that our museum collections are never sold at the Shoppe). How can you help? We need items for our sale. If you wish to donate "olde," antique, collectible or invaluable artifacts to be sold at our sale, please drop them off on any Sunday afternoon between two and four o'clock or call the Society at (203) 272-2574 and leave a message for Clare. And be sure to come by on June 10th for one-of-a-kind items and to support our Society.



Thank You to Our Student Liaison, Thomas Mulholland, Class of 2017

Where does the time go? It seems like yesterday that a Sophomore named Thomas Mulholland stepped into the role of Student Liaison at CHS. Society President Diane Calabro frequently tells Thomas that he'll be back and he'll be a future President at CHS but he has a lot of world to explore before he's ready to settle down to something as mundane as being our President. Thomas, Class of 2017, and CHS Student Liaison for only another couple of months, accomplished a great deal. He created the 1950s Dorm Room on the third floor, modeling a typical student dormitory room that might have existed when Cheshire Academy owned our building and used it as student housing. Thomas won an Award of Merit for this project from the Connecticut League of History Organizations in 2016. He also earned his Eagle Scout, the highest achievement or rank attainable in the Boy Scouting program of the Boy Scouts of America. Thomas and his family created the Spirit's Alive Cemetery Tour at historic Hillside Cemetery. Thomas is the historian for the project, doing in-depth research to bring Cheshire citizens to life in scripts and through re-enactor portrayals. Some of these deceased citizens were people that were notable and famous. Some of them were famous by association. All of these characters were portrayed with sensitivity and truly brought alive for this annual cemetery tour. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to this young man. He will always be welcome at the Society and we certainly anticipate that his future endeavors will be amazing.

Of course, we now have big shoes to fill. If you know of someone that would be interested in being the Student Liaison at CHS, please contact us at cheshirehistory@che.necoxmail.com to request an application form. Student Liaison must currently be a student (high school or college), should attend monthly Board Meetings (third Monday evening of each month, generally 7:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.), and consider working on a project of some significance to the Society. This project should be something the student is keen to do: writing, preservation, fundraising, archival work, etc. Applications will be reviewed in the month of April 2017 (April 15, 2017 is the deadline).

(Above) Thomas took this selfie at the 2016 Spirits Alive Tour

Ives Farm Sharpening Wheel Restored by Bart Piccirillo

Before she retired as the Society Curator, Mary Ellen Kania had a punch list that included having the old Ives Farm stone sharpening wheel rehoused as the wooden structure around the stone wheel was deteriorating. We asked several carpenters to consider taking this project on. It wasn't until a very young volunteer, Gordon, came to the Society with his Mom last fall. Then he came with a friend. And then he came with his Grandfather, Bart Piccirillo. Gordon's grandfather took the old stone wheel and returned it a week later in perfect working order. We made sure it worked as we sharpened every knife we could find. Do you have any knives you need sharpened? Come to the Colonial Garden behind the Society main building and take a look. Many, many thanks to Mr. Piccirillo, and to Gordon, too!

Volunteer Wish List

Our volunteers are the strength of our organization. People tell us they would like to volunteer and here is a list of what you can do if you might consider volunteering your time. This is not all we need and frequently people stop by and volunteer their time to do things we didn't even know we needed doing!

Front Door Greeter – Sunday afternoons and for special events and tours. This person would welcome visitors, ask what they would be interested in seeing or doing at their visit, and record the day in a notebook (e.g., "A nice sunny day today and we had about 30 visitors"). Also encourage visitors to fill out a survey when they leave.

Sunday Afternoon Docent – This person would give a tour of the HPH museum. Training would be provided. Volunteers also needed for Third Grade School Tours offered several times through the school year.

Carpentry work at a discounted rate – We are looking for shelving and cabinet units to be upgraded in several rooms.

Archive Help – This volunteer would carefully photograph, package and box items for long term storage. Also seeking volunteers to help type the information about these items into an Excel file (this can be done on site or at home at your leisure). Training provided.

Scanning Help – This volunteer would help with the flatbed scanner to scan our many photos and documents into .tiff files. Training provided.

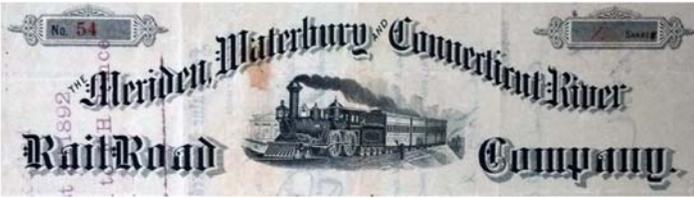
Cleaning – We spend a lot of our Sunday afternoons carefully dusting, sweeping, vacuuming and doing light gardening. Do you have time and energy after cleaning your own house to come and help at the HPH? We have 20 rooms, two baths, hallways, closets, and a half dozen storage areas.

Shoppe – One of our big fundraisers is in the middle of June (this year it is June 10th). Formerly called the Boutique-in-the-Shed, our Shoppe will be open for business this one day and we need a lot of help cleaning and arranging the items for sale.

Writers – We are always looking for writers to help with our newsletters, our publicity and promotional pieces, interpretation of our collections, and generating or revising our policy and procedure documents. If you are a person who likes to write, we have plenty of areas where you can dip your quill and help us out.

There is always plenty to do! We are open on Sunday afternoons, on the first and third Wednesday evenings and second Monday evenings of the month. We're looking for a group of volunteers that might be able to commit to every Wednesday evening for scanning and archiving work. Please contact Diane at cheshirehistory@che.necoxmail.com for more information.

Ride the MW&CR-EAST GHOST TRAIN! Bob Belletzkie Offers Bus Tour on April 9 – MW&CR Train Route from Cheshire to the Connecticut River



On Sunday, April 9, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., the MW&CR-East Ghost Train will ride the rails from Cheshire to Cromwell, complementing our previous tours west to Waterbury. Travel back in time with us! Well ahead of the foliage this year, we will have excellent views of extant remains of this fascinating railroad, which ran from 1885 to 1924.

From HPH, we will make station stops at Cheshire Street, the Hanovers, West Main St. in Meriden, West Meriden (Quarry) Jct., East Meriden Jct., Bee Street, Bullus, Highland, Smiths, Westfield (Berlin Branch crossing), West Cromwell, and finally Cromwell. At the landing on the Connecticut River, freight was transferred to and from boats, and coal, the heating fuel of choice at the time, was off-loaded. Passengers also embarked here on steamers for New York as well as for relaxing river excursions. The return trip will go by way of Middletown, the second terminus of this line via the Berlin Branch, and Center Street, Meriden where the railroad had its beginnings in 1885. Conductor Bob Belletzkie will narrate the tour once again and arrange several stops to get a closer look at bridges, abutments, culverts, embankments and other points of interest.

Our time-machine 'train' will be a luxury DATTCO coach, with comfortable seating, air-conditioning, rest room, Wi-Fi.

Ticket price of \$45 includes lunch, snacks on bus and tour booklet, post-tour reception at CHS. You can also make payments for your tickets using your credit card on line at www.cheshirehistory.org.

We are sure to sell out FAST, so reserve your spot ASAP: Email to cheshirehistory@che.necoxmail.com or call (203) 250-9350.

***DON'T BE LEFT BEHIND AT THE STATION!
ALL ABOARD FOR THE MW&CR-EAST GHOST TRAIN!!***

Image Courtesy of Mattatuck Museum

Garden Club Member's Husband Left Imprint on Colonial Garden

By Inge Venus

Back in 2003 members of the Cheshire Garden Club's Civics and Parks Committee undertook the restoration of the courtyard garden behind the Hitchcock-Phillips House (HPH) which was established way back in 1976 as an old-fashioned herb garden and then in 1984 dedicated to the memory of Cheshire Historical Society and Cheshire Garden Club member Lucille Williams.

The intent was to convert this area into an authentic Colonial Garden. Invasive barberry shrubs and pachysandra as well as poison ivy were carefully removed as well as the unkempt lawn surrounding the center herb wheel.

The asphalt walkway to the back entrance of the HPH was replaced by the Town with inlaid bricks and the three garden areas were completely overhauled and bordered by red bricks, separated by pea stone gravel walkways,

One of the major reconstruction projects was the center herb wheel. This is where Bob Polito, the husband of garden club member Nettie Polito, came to the rescue.

Brick by brick, the original design of eight pie-shaped compartments was recreated and carefully cemented into place. Here he is shown with club member Vicky Brady.

And the most endearing contribution that Bob made back in September of 2003 was the construction of a wooden bench similar to what our residents back in Colonial times would have known. This bench now occupies the area next to the pink dogwood tree and the Shoppe.



Sad to say, but Bob Polito entered into eternal peace on February 1st. We will remember him dearly.

Society Wish List

People ask us, "What do you need?" Below is our "wish list." If you have something like this at home that you're not using or you might be out on a shopping spree, please let us know. You can contact us or stop by on a Sunday afternoon.

- * Area Rug for Volunteer Break Room - 5'x7' or 6' round. Room is light yellow, white trim with forest green linoleum floor.
- * Area Rug for Library Office – 5' x 7'. Room has wood paneling and an awful carpet. In 2018, we would plan to pull up the 1970s carpet and have this floor refinished as we did in the Meeting Room but in the meantime, we could really use something in this space.
- * Small table and chairs for Volunteer Break Room – about the size of a card table.
- * Electric teakettle for Volunteer Break Room.
- * K-Cup coffee machine for Meeting Room – We had a donated unit but it stopped working and needs to be replaced.
- * Trashcans – both exterior (we have none) and for inside (office & kitchen) use.
- * Paper towels, paper plates, paper cups, napkins, toilet paper rolls. Plastic or paper tablecloths.
- * Acid free archive supplies such as acid free tissue paper or donations specific for Gaylord and Uline orders.
- * Use of a high-volume copier for our spring and fall newsletters.
- * Folding Chairs – perhaps up to two dozen sturdy chairs (we are down to 47 chairs right now).
- * DVD Player (does not need to be Blu-ray and can be gently used) and any history-themed DVDs.



Ives Farm Sharpening Wheel
restored by Bart Piccirillo
See story on Page Nine

Spring 2017

LIKE us on FACEBOOK!
See us on Instagram

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

E-MAILS FOR HISTORY QUESTIONS

Town Historian: cheshirehistorian@cox.net
Historical Society: cheshirehistory@che.necoxmail.com
Cheshirepedia: cheshirepedia@gmail.com

SPEAKER PROGRAM

Check the location of program – March Program will be at the Cheshire Public Library. April Program will be held at Cheshire Historical Society Meeting Room located at 43 Church Dr.

Monday, March 27, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Location: Cheshire Public Library, 104 Main Street, Cheshire CT. Contact: Cara Luciani, 203-272-2245
cluciani@cheshirelibrary.org

Description: **Talk on the Brass Valley.** The author and photographer, Emery Roth, is speaking on his new book, "**Brass Valley: The Fall of an American Industry.**" They called the steep valley of Connecticut's Naugatuck River, "Brass Valley," because from the time the world began running on steam and bearings, trolleys and soot, the Naugatuck Valley came to be where most of the world's brass manufacturing happened. *Brass Valley: The Fall of an American Industry* (Schiffer Books, 2015) is a book of pictures and stories about how it all happened. Mr. Roth will be bringing his book and doing a signing after he speaks.

The Cheshire Historical Society is proud to co-host this unique event. Please be sure to join us at the Cheshire Public Library. Cara Luciani is also on the CHS Board of Directors and is a former President of the Society.

Sunday, April 30, 2:00 p.m.

CHS Annual Meeting, Afternoon Tea and Speaker Meeting
Location: CHS, 43 Church Drive

Description: **A House, A Home, and A Home-Away-From-Home: The History of the Hitchcock-Phillips House**

By Mitzi Romano, Society Recording Secretary
Come hear the real history of the HPH. Learn about Rufus Hitchcock, his wives, his children, and their descendants. This fascinating look back in history was researched by Mitzi Romano, who began with deed research at Cheshire Town Hall and unraveled the mysteries of the HPH. A brief annual meeting precedes the talk. A hearty afternoon tea service will be available. Please bring a savory or a sweet, if you might wish to. And bring a friend!

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

GIVE LOCAL is Coming

April 25 & 26, 36-Hour Online Giving Event

Hosted by the Connecticut Community Foundation (CCF) and sponsored by ION Bank, this is the fifth year for Give Local and the first year that Cheshire Historical Society is involved. Mark your calendar to visit www.GiveLocal.org from 7 am on Tuesday, April 25 to 7 pm on Wednesday, April 26 to make a secure donation (minimum of \$10 and there is no maximum). Every dollar will be matched by bonus funds provided by CCF and Give Local sponsors. We might also be eligible for cash prizes. And we will receive a check for all donations, bonuses and prizes in early June 2017.

Why Do This? David Dent, Society Treasurer, explains, "Our heating costs are almost covered by our membership dues. Our electrical costs are almost covered by our current donations. Our operating budget will always operate in the red unless we do additional fundraising." The HPH is a big property. While we try to be as frugal as we can, we have necessary operating expenses and needed upgrades and maintenance for the interior of the building. As you know, the Town of Cheshire owns the building and has done an outstanding job in replacing the roof, painting the exterior, and more. We have a number of immediate needs: replacing failing 50-year old fluorescent lighting fixtures in 15 rooms, painting the interior front stairwell and entry, upgrade electricals in some areas, and repair inadequate flooring in some rooms. We very much want to improve the Tool Room displays, described by one Cheshire Police Officer as our "room of torture" and by one professional in our town as one of the worst exhibits this person has encountered. (The Tool Room has too many sharp items laid out in dangerous and inappropriate ways. Certainly a story for another newsletter). One stretch goal is to refurbish the Exhibit Room to remove the paneling and flooring as we did in the Meeting Room. We know that there is a fireplace behind the paneling in the Exhibit Room so we'll have a surprise waiting for us. Another long term goal is to work on easier access into the building and through the building, as possible, to make a visit to our museum easier for older and handicap visitors. Wouldn't it be great to have an elevator! Now that certainly is a stretch goal!

Please try to visit the Give Local Website on April 25 and 26. We appreciate each and every donation given to the Society. We do our best to use funds as carefully and effectively as we can and always with long term benefit in mind. Whatever you might donate will be used wisely by the Society.