

# Cheshire Historical Society News

Volume 41, No. 2

*Keeping Cheshire's History Alive!*

Fall 2018

**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.

**COLOR VERSION OF OUR NEWSLETTER IS ON OUR WEBSITE**

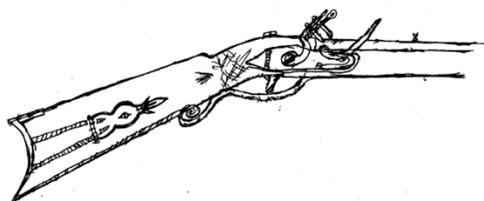
## FARMINGTON CANAL: BOATS IN 1827 TO BIKES IN 2018

This newsletter takes a look at the history of the Farmington Canal, the original footprint upon which our current paved linear park stands today. The constructed canal system that contained 28 locks from the Long Island Sound in New Haven to Northampton, MA enabled the movement of goods on horse-pulled canal boats from one end to the other in twenty-four hours. On Sunday, September 9, 2018, the ribbon cutting took place to celebrate the final .08 mile gap which now allows bikers and walkers access to a 34-mile trail. In Cheshire, the walking path was started in 1993 and completed in 2018, about 25 years of negotiation and construction. The Farmington Canal was conceived in 1822, operational five years later, and ceased operation in 1847, about 25 years of construction and service.



Photos: Left: Patti Flynn-Harris and Town Manager Sean Kimball at the Ribbon Cutting on 9/9/18. Center: CTgov photo of Lock 12, a real Cheshire gem, as this is the only intact lock left of the 28 locks constructed for the Farmington Canal. Right: Lock 12 today, very much a point of interest in Cheshire.

### UPCOMING PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES FOR OUR FALL SEMESTER



**Sunday, October 14 at 2:00 p.m.**

**Golden Age of the Kentucky Rifle and Beyond,  
A Talk at Cheshire Historical Society  
By Fred Kerson**

During the Golden Age that began during the late half of the American Revolution and after the war of 1812 to the 1820's artistic decoration reached its height and with this period the finest of relief carving, inlays, and engravings. They may justifiably take their place "among the finest of early Americana with many specimens ranking with the best handiwork of American artisans in other fields of the late 18th and 19th centuries." says the late arms expert Norm Flayderman.

One rifle on display will be a Golden Age New England Kentucky rifle that could have been used in our six states in 1820. Even more profuse and lavish inlays and less carvings are on post Kentucky rifles. Most of the rifles from the Stratford Gun Collector's Association are from the post Golden Age of the Kentucky Rifles. A good part of a man's wealth went into the creation of one of these masters of wood and metal.

Fred Kerson is current president of the Stratford Gun Collector's Association which is the third largest Gun Collector's organization in the state of Connecticut. Founded in 1947 they held famous Gun Shows at the Stratford State

Armory from 1961 to 2001. For the past few years they held Gun Shows at the American Legion Hall in the town of Orange Connecticut. *Mr. Kerson did the rifle sketch above.*

**Friday & Saturday, October 19-20**  
**Spirits Alive! At Hillside Cemetery**

*Spirits Alive Historic Hillside Cemetery Lantern Tour* is a fun and unique way to connect with our local history. Our all new stories told are sometimes funny, sometimes sad, sometimes shocking, and always entertaining and educational. Dead men

(and women) tell no tales until Cheshire's Historic Hillside Cemetery opens after dark just once each year. *Spirits Alive Historic Hillside Cemetery Lantern Tour* will be held in Cheshire, Connecticut on Friday and Saturday, October 19th and 20th. Guests will be guided by lantern along paths lit by more than 1000 candles, stopping among the tombstones to hear 8 firsthand accounts of Cheshire's dearly departed.

In 2018, Cheshire's forgotten history is revealed through the true stories of a newlywed, a soldier, a criminal, an activist, an alarmist, an inventor, a hostess and a revolutionary. Come hear their stories and figure out which will tell of the dark story of the canal; a 100 year old heinous crime; a family secret; a brazen burglary; a night of fun that took a wrong turn; a crime and punishment; a revolutionary and a spy; and a town ruined by change and more.

**THIS TOUR IS SOLD OUT.**



**Monday, October 29**

**Conversations from the Grave! 7 p.m.**

The Spirit's Alive actors, all volunteers, talk about their experience playing historic Cheshire personages following the Spirits Alive tour the week before. If you went on the tour, this will give you a deep dive into the people portrayed, providing more background information and more historical context. If you were unable to obtain tickets, this would be a good opportunity to hear from the actors and learn about Cheshire history. Come early as this talk fills the Society Meeting Room to capacity.



**Sunday, December 9**

**Gingerbread House Workshop 2 – 4 p.m.**

**Reservations required. Call (203) 250-9350.**

A free fun family event. Participants should bring candy to decorate gingerbread houses (to share with everyone, as we do every year). Diane & Dave Calabro facilitators. This is the only announcement being made for this event.

**Sunday, December 16**

**Society Holiday Open House and Christmas Party Noon to 4:30 p.m.**

“Classic Style” is the theme for this year, with gingerbread houses modeling some of the architectural styles of the Cheshire Town Center Historic District. Suburban Garden Club will once again dazzle us with floral and greenery decorations and exhibits. Several Christmas Trees will be on display, all with a Classic Style flair! We expect to surprise you with special displays so please put this on your calendar and come!



### From the President

Dear Society Members,

I live on Peck Lane and at least once a day I drive over the former Farmington Canal on my way to Route 10 either on West Johnson Avenue or on Schoolhouse Road. While the boats on the Canal served primarily for freight transportation, there were passenger boats with amenities and entertainment. How exciting to think that on a clear night I might hear music and gaiety from my front yard if I were able to step back in time to the 1830s. Or as a traveler at that same time period, I might be able to board such a boat in Milldale (this would be the stop closest to me) and make my way to New Haven in a mere five or so hours and enjoy the delights of city life! I hope that you read the articles in this issue about the canal and perhaps the next time you are enjoying the Farmington Canal Greenway, our linear trail, that you might also imagine yourself back in the days when the canal was active. OH! And we fill you in on the origin of "Beachport." Sorry, no sand involved, simply a prosperous merchant named Richard Beach. For those of you who took advantage of the Members Only Pre-sale of Spirits Alive tickets, two of the spirits will be related to the Canal.

You may notice that we have removed our three Monday night speaker programs from our fall roster. A few decades back, before there was Google, Wikipedia, Netflix, Ted Talks and the Moth Hour and more, we believe that the Cheshire Historical Society was an important source for historical information for collectors and those interested in learning more about local history. Now we are inundated with information! Kudos to the Cheshire Public Library as they have really taken the driver's seat for significant history programs. They are, in fact, our biggest competition. With our all-volunteer staff and our tight budget, we don't have the resources to compete in this area at this time. We invite anyone with an interest and/or expertise in a particular field to reserve a Sunday afternoon speaker event, such as Mr. Fred Kerson is doing on October 14<sup>th</sup> and we will do our best to publicize this event. You can contact me directly at [cheshirehistory@che.necoxmail.com](mailto:cheshirehistory@che.necoxmail.com) for more details.

**BE SURE TO VISIT OUR WEBSITE: <http://www.cheshirehistory.org> FOR UPDATED INFORMATION ABOUT OUR SOCIETY AND OUR UPCOMING EVENTS**

### Other Groups Meeting at the Society

Cheshire Horse Council meets at the Society on the second Monday evening of the month.

Cheshire Toastmasters meets at the Society on the first and third Wednesday evenings of the month.

Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) meets on the second Monday afternoon of the month

*The Society and these organizations always welcome new members and guests.*

### Letters to the Society

*We provide a number of school tours throughout the year and the children generally write charming thank you notes. The following is a letter from a student who came with his third grade class from Doolittle School in May. These tours include a visit to Town Hall, the Civil War Monument, the Congregational Church, as well as the Historical Society. Volunteer docents are always welcome for these school tours! Contact Diane at (203) 272-2574 if you are interested.*

Dear Mrs. Calabro,

Going inside the Historical Society was a lot cooler than driving by it and looking at it from the outside. I also enjoyed looking up at the floor [in the Panel Room] to see how they used wooden pegs instead of nails.

I also liked ringing the [trolley] bell on our way out. There are many more things that I liked but these are my favorites.

Sincerely, Adam



*From Bob Larkin, former Society Board Director, about his upcoming talk: Connecticut's Irish Regiment in the Civil War.*

Hi Everyone!

I thought you might be interested in a talk scheduled for October 6th at 1 p.m. with a reception afterward at the Quinnipiac University "Great Hunger" Museum on 3011 Whitney Avenue in Hamden. It will include a history of the Ninth

CT Vol. during the Civil War, a mention of a number of soldiers including some from Hamden, nearby monuments and some Irish Medal of Honor winners.

I'd like to also mention the annual wreath laying at the Ninth CT Vol. Monument on November 3rd at 11 a.m. at Bayview Park in New Haven opposite 36 Sixth Street, near Howard Avenue and the New Haven Harbor as well as the reception afterward at the Knights of Columbus Museum, 1 State Street.

Look forward to seeing you there.

Bob Larkin

#### **Connecticut's Irish Regiment in the Civil War: A Presentation by Bob Larkin**

Bob Larkin was the chairman of the committee that dedicated a Connecticut Civil War monument honoring Connecticut's Irish Regiment (Ninth CT Vol) at the Vicksburg National Military Park in 2008. He will give a lecture on the soldiers of the Ninth CT and their connections to Ireland, war time and post war history as well as local monuments honoring them. A review of Irish Civil War Medal of Honor recipients also will be included. A light coffee reception to follow in the upper gallery.

This event is \$5 for the general public and tickets should be purchased online in advance. <https://calendar.quinnipiac.edu/> Free to Quinnipiac students, however registration is required.

Saturday, October 6 at 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

#### **The Cheshire Historical Society, Formed in 1951**

The Cheshire Historical Society, Inc. is incorporated under the laws of the State of Connecticut as a non-profit, educational institution. All contributions to the Society are tax-deductible for Federal Income Tax purposes. The Society operates the Hitchcock-Phillips House Museum which was built in 1785 and has 19 display rooms and is located on the Church Green at 43 Church Drive, Cheshire CT 06410. Corporate headquarters for the organization is located at the Museum and can be reached by phone at (203) 272-2574. Visit our website at [www.cheshirehistory.org](http://www.cheshirehistory.org).

Membership in the Society 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 Museum. Members are also eligible for volunteer programs. We will also try to give members advance ticket sales information for our events when and where possible.

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

#### **Cheshire Historical Society Board of Directors**

##### **Officers:**

President	Diane Calabro (2012-present)
Vice President	Cara A. Luciani
Membership Secretary	Justin Navarro
Recording Secretary	Mitzi Romano
Corresponding Sec.	Shirley Brady
Treasurer	David Dent

##### **Directors:**

Clare Leake	2016-2019
Jaime Grant	2016-2019
Marshall Robinson	2016-2019
José Rodriguez	2017-2020
Lois Van Almkerk	2017-2020 Charter Member
Pat Vita	2017-2020
Tracy Ajello	2018-2021
Reneé Barley	2018-2021
Colleen Fitzgerald	2018-2021

**Appointed Positions** Curator OPEN  
 Assistant Curators Ilona Somogyi - Clothing Historian  
**Facilities** House & Grounds Manager: David Calabro  
**Student Liaison** Jacob Lanzer, CHS Class of 2019

### Boy Scout Eagle Project Update

The Cheshire Historical Society is grateful to the many Boy Scouts who chose our house museum as the location for their Eagle Projects.

#### Troop 92:

Quentin Arai - Creating an Office from Old Kitchenette Project (Status: completed 2016)

Jake Butler – Creating a Garden Podium (Status: completed 2017)

Matt Engels – Shelving in the Tool Room (Status: completed 2018)

#### Troop 51:

Harrison Dent - Exterior Improvements to Shed and Memory Garden (Status: completed 2016)

Thomas Mulholland - Third Floor Dormitory Room Project (Status: completed. 2015)

Stephen Mulholland - Protective Film on Windows Project (Status: completed. 2015)

#### Troop 198:

Jake Miller - Creating a Way Finding Sign (Status: completed 2016)

The Museum qualifies as a **Place of Historical Significance** for Cub Scouts or other groups who need to complete this visit requirement. Call or email to set up an appointment for a visit.



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

### THE FARMINGTON CANAL: Started with a Special Town Meeting, A Celebration or Two, and Offered Freight Transportation and Five Hour Packet Boat Service to New Haven

The Farmington Canal began as a concept voted into reality in 1822 at a special town meeting. A ground breaking ceremony was held three years later. In November 1827, water was flowing through the canal lines in Cheshire and a West Main Street shop along the canal line owned by Richard Beach christened Beachport (yes, that's why we have Beachport). For a little over twenty years, the Farmington Canal allowed reasonably priced freight transportation, carrying as much as one and a half tons of goods on as many as 220 boats in a month. It also offered daily passenger service allowing Cheshire residents a five hour ride to Long Island Sound in New Haven. The railroad replaced the barges in 1848 and these operated for another 125 years.



#### April 1, 1822 – A Special Meeting

A special town meeting voted to consent to the “establishment of a canal from the tide water in New Haven to the north line of the state by Farmington and from Farmington to Berkshire County through the town of New Hartford.” Moderator of the Cheshire meeting was one of the town's leading citizens, Samuel A. Foot who was to serve as United States senator from 1827-1833 and as governor from 1834 to 1835.

#### July 4, 1825 – Groundbreaking Celebration

Ground was first broken for the Farmington Canal with the oration of the occasion delivered by Burrage Beach, Esq., of Cheshire, the leading lawyer not only of Cheshire, but also of surrounding towns and from his record we are assured that his address on this occasion found attentive and interested hearers, one in which his reputation as a forcible speaker was well sustained, reflecting credit to the town of which he was an honored citizen. Two or three thousand people were present. [Burrage, Beach, b. September 25, 1773; graduate of Yale in 1793; studied law with his father, Samuel Beach, d. in Cheshire in 1844, aged 70.]

Deacon Hooker wrote, “On Saturday a boat on wheels drawn by four horses arrived in town from New Haven this afternoon containing old Mr. Hillhouse, the superintendent of the canal, and eight or ten other persons. It was covered with a white awning and curtains decorated with two flags. On its stern was painted ‘Farmington Canal,’ and on each side ‘For Southwick & Memphremagog.’” The procession, composed of gentlemen in carriages, wagons, and on horseback, was two miles in length. Gov. Wolcott said, “The noble enterprise of uniting the Valley of the Connecticut with the city of New Haven by a navigable canal is this day to be commenced.”

#### November 24, 1827 – Water in the Canal! Another Celebration and Beachport is Named

Water was let into the so-called Cheshire Summit level, and there was a great celebration. What is now West Cheshire was christened “Beachport,” in honor of the proprietor by throwing a bottle of “pink water” into the canal from the chimney-top of Mr. Beach's store, which was on the bank of the canal. Three boats went up some distance, one of them, the “Fayette,” flying a flag a red flannel petticoat. The real significance of this seems to be lost, but as a correspondent of the “Columbian

Register” of December 8, 1827, protested vehemently that it was the work of the canal officials, and not the ladies of Cheshire, it would seem there was some sort of joke on the town not entirely appreciated by the inhabitants. [Our Spirits Alive tour may cast some light on this!]

Richard Beach had a store and warehouse in what is now West Cheshire, then known as Beachport. It is stated that when this building was completed, Eldad Keeler, a noted athlete for those days, mounted the chimney with a flag in hand, shouted with all the voice he could command, “BEACHPORT!” This name was given as a compliment to Mr. Beach, who in prospect of this new movement, had erected this store near the canal. A portion of this store was used as a depot for the canal, a part of the building projecting over the canal basin, and thus permitting the canal boats to be loaded and unloaded of freight inside the building. This building afterward became a part of the Cheshire Manufacturing Company’s [later Ball & Socket Manufacturing] place of business at its organization in 1850.



*Part of the Society’s collection, this is a 1996 drawing by Cheshire artist Robert H. Sibold based on the research done by William P. O’Hara, Jr. for his MS thesis at SCSU. Note Eldad Keeler on the chimney about to toss his bottle of pink water into the canal. The artist did not include the red petticoat!*

### **July 29, 1835 – Go the Distance! Beachport to Northampton in about Twenty Hours!**

The long-expected opening of the canal at its full length to the Connecticut River at Northampton was finally celebrated. The trip over the whole length of the Canal required 24 hours and cost \$3.75, with meals. The boats were gaily painted and invariably were drawn by big gray horses, ridden by boys dressed in white. Some of the boats had knifelike projections mounted on the bow, with which they cut the towline of any slow-moving craft which they wished to pass. The passenger boats were elegantly furnished, and meals are served up on the board by the owners. The line boats were used only for freight transportation and passengers had to fend for themselves. Even in the boom years there were never more than sixteen or seventeen boats on the canal in a single day.

West Cheshire was the business section of town from 1827 to 1846. Goods were brought here from Waterbury, Naugatuck and other surrounding towns for shipment on the canal. Several Cheshire boats plied on this waterway. James B. Fields had one for carrying barytes. Nathaniel Newell had one for transporting general freight. William H. Newell also had a boat for freight. There was an exchange of farm products, including wood and cider going down to New Haven, in return for sugar, salt, molasses, flour, and coffee coming back to the inland towns. Meat and fish in barrels, fabrics, coal, corn and oats, glass, grain, grindstones, dried hides, metals, lime in casks, nail, oil in hogsheads, paints, pitch and resin, plaster, raisins, rice, shingles, soap, spices, spirits, stoves, tin plate, tobacco, wheat, wine in casks, and wood in bales were all items moving up and down the canal. The 222 boats carried over 7.8 million pounds of goods during September and October, 1839.

Cheshire children were enchanted by the canal line. Someone made a small pond with an ingeniously constructed canal boat drawn by a dog in a harness, amusing the whole neighborhood.

While not the morning commute we would expect driving down I-91, passengers could take the New Haven and Northampton Packet Boat at one a.m. and expect to arrive in New Haven for 6:30 a.m. for a cost of about 63 cents.

The farmers hated the canal. The division and appropriation of land was never fairly addressed for landowners along the canal. The water leaked through the towpath and turned meadows into swamps. The rickety bridges frightened their cattle and were set so high that it was hard to draw a good-sized load of hay over one. In the north part of Cheshire the earth seemed to regularly break away from the canal flooding the farm land owned by Joseph Hitchcock. A neighbor made a deathbed confession that it was he who let the water off several times as he had a grudge against Farmer Hitchcock. This type of sabotage was common.

Boys could drop from a bridge to a boat deck and ride as far as they wished. Children could skate for miles and miles on a frozen canal.

### **September 14, 1937 – Murder at Lock 12**

[And this should be familiar to guests on the 2017 Spirits Alive Cemetery Tour]. Arthur Hivon, 45, had been released from the New Haven County Jail after serving a 30 day term for wife beating and breach of the peace. He returned home (the old Lock 12, Lock Keeper’s House) threatening to “get” the boarder, Lawrence Reed, 35, living there. In conflict with

his wife Josephine, 48, Hivon shot her and brutally clubbed her to death with the stock of a rifle, the barrel of which was thrown into the canal. Reed escaped by jumping out the second story window and, making his way through the woods, contacted the authorities.

### **A Little About Construction**

*Locks in Connecticut:* Lock numbers 1 to 6 are north of Granby Station (37 ½' down), Locks 7 and 8 are in Southington (18' down), Lock 9 is in Milldale (8' down), Locks 10 and 11 are in Cheshire (15' down), Lock 12 is in Brooksvale (9' down), Lock 13 is on the Cheshire Hamden line (8' down). Lock 28, the final lock, is located between Chapel and Wooster. The 28 Connecticut Locks had a continuous descent from Massachusetts to Long Island Sound of 220 feet. The entire Canal thus had 60 locks, with 292 feet of rise and 213 feet descent, going from the Sound to the Connecticut River.

*Construction of the Canal:* The canal section was fixed at a bottom width of 20 feet, a width at water surface of from 34 to 36 feet, and a depth of water of 4 feet, the towing path and the berm bank or opposite side to be not less than two feet above the water surface, nor, in the case of the towing path, more than 5 feet above.

The heaviest machine that had been used to dig the canal was a horse scoop no bigger than the one any farmer kept in his barn. The tools were picks, shovels, and wheelbarrows.

Irish laborers used these simple tools to erect the 35 foot embankment and masonry culvert which carried the Farmington Canal over the Ten Mile River.

As a move of economy, the earlier locks had been constructed with dry masonry walls and a timber lining, a plan used on the Middlesex Canal. As was discovered later on that canal, the wood soon decayed, and the later built locks of the Northampton, in both states [Connecticut and Massachusetts] were of masonry laid in "hydraulic" cement, the discovery that there was suitable raw material in quantity at Southington, Connecticut, and the development there of cement mills materially assisting in the change, and some of the first locks were rebuilt.

*The above information comes from "Reflections on the Canal in Cheshire, A Scrap-Book Account" compiled by Raimon L. Beard for the Cheshire Historical Society in 1976. Copies of this pamphlet are available at the Society for \$3.*

### **1848 – Train Service replaces the Canal Line**

There were many factors that caused the demise of the Farmington Canal. It was expensive, over-budgeted, had mismanaged funds. Mother Nature wreaked havoc on the canal with either not enough water due to droughts, or too much water due to flooding. Winter weather meant many repairs in the spring. And there was a large number of cases of sabotage by adjacent landowners who were never fairly recompensed for the appropriation of their land.

The most accurate and interesting account of the railroad system is at <http://www.tylercitystation.info>. This website is maintained by Robert Joseph Belletzkie, Librarian, Historian, Ferroequinologist, and WebStationmaster. Bob has been offering an annual railroad tour and this tour has sold out every year.

### **Did you know?**

In the early 1970s, discussion was underway to develop this railroad track area into a bus line, connecting Cheshire to New Haven.

### **Notes from July 17<sup>th</sup> Library Talk by Canal Expert and Historian, Carl Walter, on the Farmington Canal**

Two hundred years ago overland transportation was very difficult. Roads, where they existed at all, were narrow, ungraded, unpaved and surfaced with rocks and ruts. Depending on the season, they were muddy, dusty, or snow-covered. There were very few bridges across rivers and streams. Because travel was difficult and time consuming, most people rarely traveled more than a few miles from their homes. They ate and they wore what they produced on their farms and they used products that were manufactured locally. Unless one lived within a few miles of the Connecticut River or Long Island Sound, any surplus production that they wished to sell was usually priced out of the market due to the cost of transportation. Certainly goods could be made that could be more easily transported. Milk could be made into cheese. Apples could be made into brandy. But this was not the case with bulk commodities like lumber, firewood, shingles, copper ore and bricks. Similarly, imported goods like salt and sugar were made more expensive by the cost of transportation.

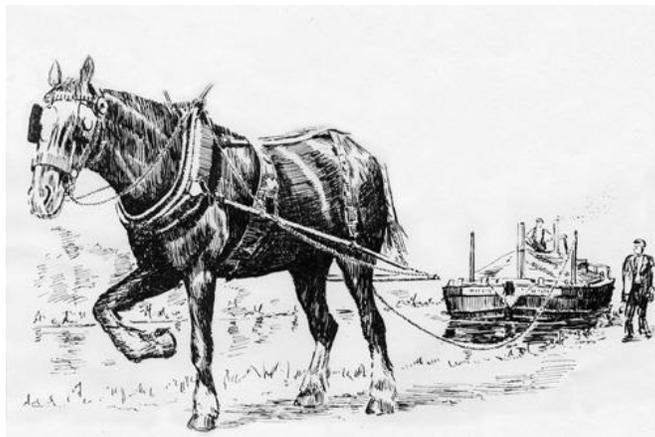
In 1820, Hartford and New Haven were in competition with each other for primacy and population, wealth and power. The route to all of these was through commerce and trade. New Haven, located on Long Island Sound had emerging trade worldwide. But had no access to interior markets. Indeed when a New Haven merchant wanted to trade north, he found that it cost the same to send a barrel to Farmington as it did to send it to London.

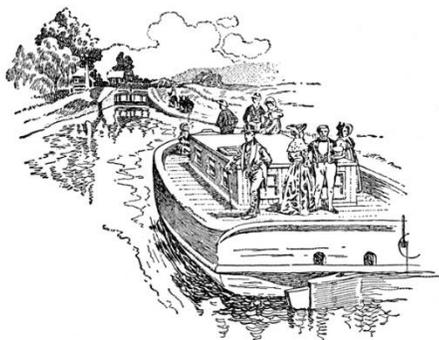
In the early 1820s, New Haven's leaders decided to address this problem by building a canal from New Haven to Northampton. This manmade river, which is analogous today to I-91, would give New Haven access to the interior. Canal transportation offered several advantages over river transportation. There is no current to pull against. There are no falls or rapids to contend with. There are no rocks or shoals. And the channel would not shift after every storm. Canal boats would float across calm water and would be pulled across mirror surfaces at the almost unbelievable speeds of four miles per hour. In those days, the rule of thumb was that one horse could pull one ton on a road for one mile in an hour. The same horse pulling on a canal could pull up to twenty tons for one mile in the same hour. This was a marked improvement and stimulated interest in the building of this canal.

Another factor to build the canal was to tap into the Farmington market. Before the Revolution, Farmington covered a huge area. It was the tenth largest population center in the 13 Colonies. Its population was more than Hartford's and three-quarters the population of New Haven. After the Revolution, in 1820, on the verge of building the canal, Farmington had shrunk as it had spun off a lot of other towns such as Burlington, Bristol, Berlin, and Southington. Farmington had 10,000 people before the Revolution and this would have been a prime motivation for the builders of the canal. They considered the Farmington market as theirs for the taking. Another strong motivation was the northern terminus of the canal, which would end in Northampton as there was a Northampton to New Hampshire Canal at that point to take goods further north. There is a large lake system there and the Farmington Canal would enable New Haven merchants to compete with Hartford and northern markets.

How important is this? Consider that the roads are very bad. The town of Southampton, for example, would have had the bulk of their trade with the port of Northampton and then to the Connecticut River and this had to be done before wintertime, as these towns were pretty much snowbound. The Southampton general store shows receipts for November 13, 1839. In another month, at the most, the canal will be closing due to ice. Usually the first week of December the canal would close and reopen in April or May as it was too hard to manage the canal with the snow and the ice. The general store manager decides he will go to New Haven a month before the canal closes so he can stock his store for the winter. His first day in New Haven, he stops at three stores and he buys molasses and sugar, tea, raisins, salt, baking powder, pipes, tobacco, cloves, nutmegs, cinnamon, nails...anything he is going to need to sell over the winter months. He buys cod fish. He buys wrapping paper to wrap the goods people purchase (this was before paper bags). He buys a chest of tea. He buys dried fish. The next day he goes to yet another store and buys nuts, walnuts, filberts. The third day he's lucky at this store. He buys three barrels of flour, damaged and at a reduced price. The next day all of his goods are on the canal boat in New Haven. The ten tons of things that he's bought is transported to his general store in Southampton to stock up for the winter when snow covers the roads. This gives you some idea as to how important it was to have this canal transportation to these places that didn't have access to other waterways such as the Connecticut River or Long Island Sound.

There were also distinct disadvantages to canal transportation. First, the canal required a great deal of water and finding enough water to fill the canal was always a problem except on those occasions where there was too much water. Every linear foot on the canal, every linear foot on this tow path, contains three and a half tons of water. This water is seeping into the ground as the canal system is really built out of sand, technically, and the water is always testing the integrity of the walls. It's leaking out of aqueducts and it's leaking out of locks. The liquid pavement of this highway is in a constant state of suspense, waiting for an event, be it a storm or an operational accident, an act of sabotage or a simple muskrat hole.





It took twenty-four hours to go from New Haven to Northampton. The boats went day and night. In 1835 a packet boat offered passenger rides. They only lasted about a season and a half because they didn't have enough passengers to keep the business going, as there really wasn't enough trade in northern New England to support this market. They were able to pay their operating expenses and their ordinary costs but they could not overcome the extraordinary expenses due to weather and washouts, disasters and sabotage. A big thunderstorm would wash out a portion of the canal.

A lot of people didn't like the canal. In Cheshire there was a man who did not like his neighbor and he felt it would be very nice to fill the neighbor's yard with sand up over the top of this house. There was intense warfare between the river-ites and the canal-ites. New Haven was taking over the commerce from a number of areas and there was intense feeling about this. When the canal was granted its charter it was allowed the use of any water that crossed over its line to be used as feeder sources. If you had a mill there already, your water was diverted to the canal and this meant a lot of hard feelings. People chopping down dams or doing one thing or another. A farmer might have his land divided and would have to use a bridge to get to the other parts of his farm. There were a lot of lawsuits and lots of sabotage. With over a hundred miles of canal, you can guard the important parts but you can't guard the entire length. And then Mother Nature adds her activities and damage just happens.

*The above are some notes taken during the talk given by Canal expert, Carl Walters, at his Farmington Canal presentation on July 17, 2018 at the Cheshire Public Library. Simsbury Free Library has Walter's canal maps for sale (see article below).*

#### **THE SIMSBURY FREE LIBRARY OFFERS CANAL MAPS**

In partnership with canal expert Carl E. Walter, the Simsbury Free Library (SFL) has just published nine maps of the Farmington Canal. The map series includes one for each of the towns through which the canal once ran: New Haven, Hamden, **Cheshire**, Southington, Plainville, Farmington, Avon, Simsbury and Granby.

Each map notes the various features that still remain or were once there (e.g., culverts, bridges, locks, etc.). The reverse side of each map provides a narrative about the need for the canal, the construction and financing of the canal, the challenges running the canal, and the reasons for its demise. Also included is a canal topic unique to each map: tolls, road and farm bridges, locks, waste weirs, canal boats, aqueducts, canal basins, culverts, dams, and feeders. Each map features 10 town-specific photos of the canal and its features, many of them taken in the 1930s.

Construction of the Farmington Canal began in 1825 and was completed to Westfield, Massachusetts in 1829; it was quite an undertaking considering all of the work was done by the labor of men and animals. In 1934, the canal was extended to Northampton, Massachusetts, though its opening was delayed until 1835 due to a water shortage. While the canal was closed most of the 1837 season due to winter storm damage, it was in operation with varying levels of success until it was abandoned in 1847.

Maps are available for sale at the Simsbury Free Library. Folded maps are \$5.00 each, \$40.00 for the set of nine maps. Flat maps are \$10.00 each. Call (860) 408-1336 or email [simsburyfreelibrary@gmail.com](mailto:simsburyfreelibrary@gmail.com) for information. (from <https://simsburyfreelibrary.org/farmington-canal-maps-published/>). Simsbury Free Library donated a laminated map of the Cheshire canal area to our Society.

#### **Facilities Update**

It was a quiet summer at the Hitchcock-Phillips House Museum without much to report. The window air conditioners in the Meeting Room, the Panel Room, and the Native American Indian Room kept the first and second floors of the museum at acceptable humidity levels over the past months at a cost of about \$300 per month. Jean McKee donated a half step to the Society and many guests are using this half step at the backdoor entry. A handrail was installed at this same entry and several people have commented that it has helped them enter the building. We have several "vintage" ceiling fluorescent light fixtures that need replacement (Exhibit Room, Craig Library, and Industry Room) and we hope to have these repairs done prior to the Christmas Party. We are working with Jim Vibert from the Historic District Commission to make small repairs to our original front door with the bulls-eye glass windows.

Our Wish List includes replacing the flooring in the Exhibit Room and the Curator's Office. It is likely that when the old floor or rug is taken up that we will find good wood floors underneath that only require refinishing. Both rooms represent big projects and we may wait until 2020 to seriously undertake these improvements. Restrooms need to be addressed and perhaps we can work with SHPO for grant possibilities for these repairs and betterments. The Victorian Room needs to be reinterpreted and improvements made to the room overall but we would like to wait for more expertise (curator or other museum professional) before we take this on. The second floor north hallway will need to be painted in the spring and I am happy to report that painting projects are now on a schedule.

Volunteers are always needed to carefully dust artifacts in the museum.

### Curator Update

The Society is still seeking a qualified volunteer who would be interested in becoming our Curator. Please share this with any museum professional that has spare time and wants to take on a significant project.

The Collection Committee is considering several possible acquisitions which will be presented at the September Board Meeting.

We dedicate ourselves to the best care and stewardship of our collection as we can possibly manage.

We're always looking for Sunday afternoon volunteers

### Thank You for Your Generosity

We want to thank you! We had several very generous donations in during the spring and summer months. GIVE LOCAL was a significant fundraiser for us and we very much appreciate the donations made by so many of you during that giving period. Through GIVE LOCAL, we won a special bonus prize as well as receiving matching funds from Connecticut Community Foundation. Next April we will do even better! Our special thanks to Mitzi Romano who has taken advantage of her workplace's support for non-profits. Her company, VOYA, is very generous in rewarding volunteer hours.

Thank you for thinking of the Cheshire Historical Society. So many of you included a little extra donation with your annual membership renewal. We are grateful to you for that extra contribution. We are also grateful to those of you who were able to include corporate matching for donations and recognition of volunteer service. We received a number of donations in memory of Ralph Edson, a fine man and certainly missed by so many of us.

Altogether, we received \$5,633 in donations from our members between February 7, 2018 and September 12, 2018.

Our VERY SPECIAL THANKS to:

**GIVE LOCAL (\$1,730)**

**Voya Financial Advisors Volunteer Service Award**

for Mitzi Romano (\$1,120)

**Diane Ulbrich**

**DAR**

**Randal Patterson**

**Bonevity Fund**

**Thayer/McKee Family Trust**

**Reed & Julianne Durand**

#### In Memory of Ralph Edson:

**The Garrity Family, Gere Family, Patricia Foran,  
Patricia McKinley, and William Washburn**

**Michael & Shirley Brady**

**Philip Wooding**

**Quinnipiac Valley Audubon, In Honor of Eric Nelson**

**Sandra & Michael Zambruski**

**Wells Fargo Community Support**

**BMS Matching Gift - Matson Family**

We also received \$306 in Door Donations since February. We very much appreciate this from our visitors and researchers. Note that we are very happy to have those jars, boxes and other containers of pennies and other loose change you have at home. We'll happily sort them and roll them up and add to our donation jar. As Member Eigil Wium said, these are **Pennies from Heaven**. (Contributions made from February 7, 2018 to September 12, 2018.)

**Linda McCoy**

**Braden Zambruski**

**Cheshire Horse Council**

**Bruce Taylor**

**Dorothy Watkins**

**Mr & Mrs Verner**

**The K Foundation**

**Louis & Mary Ann Ricciuti**

**Bob Belletzkic**

**Barbara Ann O'Brien**

**Karl & Joanne Pfluger**

**Patricia Sienkowski**

**Valley United Way**

**Adelaide Marx**

**Barbara Christoff**

**Inge Venus**

**Erwin Dressel**

**Deberah Wylie**

### Bequests to Cheshire Historical Society

If you have included the 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

43 Church Drive, Cheshire, CT 06410

### @YOU! Do We Have Your Email?

If you did not receive an e-mail notice about the pre-sale of Spirits Alive tickets in mid-August (three e-mail alerts were sent out), then we do not have your e-mail. If you would like to be informed of special member only benefits and other Society information, then please be sure to share your e-mail with us!

Contact Justin Navarro at [justin.navarro@che.necoxmail.com](mailto:justin.navarro@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.

### Membership Update

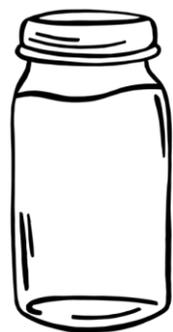
By Justin Navarro

Although we have a number of fundraisers throughout the year, the Spirits Alive program being one of the most popular and profitable, a robust membership indicates a healthy organization. With that in mind, we encourage you to bring friends and family to our events that may be of interest and recommend they join as well!

If you have not yet renewed, you may still go to <http://cheshirehistory.org/wordpress/membership> to do so.

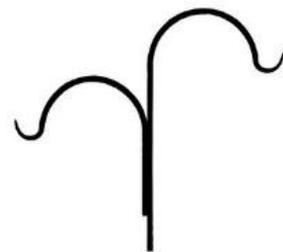
And as always, I'm happy to hear from anyone at [justin.navarro@che.necoxmail.com](mailto:justin.navarro@che.necoxmail.com).

### More Glass Jars Please! Spirits Alive Needs Jars



Mason jars, spaghetti sauce jars, and any pint-, quart-sized or larger (or "interesting") jars clean and with the label removed (soak for a bit in hot, soapy water and most labels slide right off). Drop them by our back door (where the brick walk is) at your convenience. We would plan to use about

1,500 jars for the Spirits Alive Tour in October so please do not put these glass jars in your recycle! Save them for the Society. Also needed are Shepherds Hooks, oil lanterns, and packages of tea lights (IKEA has the best prices for these and **this is a key need** as we will use about 6,000 tea lights for our cemetery tour). Note that we would be happy to BORROW Shepherds Hooks and lanterns just for our tour, October 19-20. Cash donations can also be made to support costume needs for what has become our major fundraiser. Thank you for your ongoing support!



### Cheshire Street Cemetery & St. Peter's Church Cemetery Data Research Project

By Megyn Jasman, CCSU Student

*We found Ms. Jasman's research paper of interest as she found most of the cemetery markers at Cheshire Street Cemetery "hard to read" in December 2017. The Society has a listing of Headstone Inscriptions copied in 1934 under the auspices of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration and Works Progress Administration and over 300 stones were listed at the Cheshire Street Cemetery, with stones apparently being very readable and in good condition (only a few stones are listed as not readable or broken). Ms. Jasman's paper indicates the extent of acid rain and other environmental factors on our tombstones which is concerning.*

I visited two cemeteries while collecting my data. The first one I went to is Cheshire Street Cemetery located on Cheshire Street, Cheshire, CT. The cemetery is very small and most of the gravestones are old, dating from the 1700s-1800s. These older gravestones were located towards the front of the cemetery. Due to their old age, most were hard to read. Due to my troubles reading the engravings, I did not have to choose my sample. I used what I could read, which was not much. Towards the back of the cemetery, there are more recent cemeteries which really took me by surprise. The most

recent I found was 2009! Due to the dates, I could not use these recent gravestones for my project, but I still found it interesting because of the diversity in dates. This is the oldest cemetery in Cheshire, so I found it interesting that people are still being buried there today.

I came to the assumption that most people who were buried at Cheshire Street Cemetery were not too rich. Most stones were made from sandstone or slate, which are cheaper materials. Also, most gravestones were small and had no designs, with the exception of a few family obelisks.

My favorite stone I found at this cemetery is one of a boy who died at age 3 in 1781. The stone was made of sandstone and was incredibly hard to read. I tried my best to read his name, and came up with Duaab. The stone was broken apart and I assumed it was moved from its original location because it was leaning up against another stone for stability. Despite the poor quality of this stone, I liked it because of its religious epitaph. His name and age

are listed, but about half of the stone consists of a religious epitaph. Most stones have a sentence or two, when Duaab's had almost a paragraph for a religious epitaph, which I found very unique. (Duaab's stone below) [located in the far southwest corner of the cemetery].



*Photo on left from Ms. Jasman, December 2017. Photo on right taken 9/12/2018 by the Society.*

There were not enough gravestones at Cheshire Street Cemetery to include in my data, so I also visited St. Peter's Cemetery. This cemetery is located behind St. Peter's Church in Cheshire, CT. The cemetery is much bigger than Cheshire Street's, but I wouldn't say it is a huge cemetery, because I have seen much larger ones. All the stones were located behind the church, but some wrapped around the side of the church. Select stones were located in the wall on the outside of the church! Due to the dates of these gravestones in the wall, I could not use it for my data, but wanted to discuss it in my report anyways due to its uniqueness.

Unlike the simplicity of the stones at Cheshire Street, St. Peter's Cemetery had incredible gravestones. Many stones had a variety of designs on it, but the most common was urns. Also, most stones were made from granite or marble. This helped me assume that the people buried here were rich and significant. Being a resident of Cheshire, CT, I also know all the big names of the town. Many names were ones I recognized, such as Humiston, a school next to the graveyard. I also recognized Doolittle and Ives, which are names of another school and farm in town. I choose these stones that had names I recognized, for my sample.

My favorite stone from St. Peter's Cemetery is of a girl named Julia E. Ives, who died at 18 years, 10 months, and 3 days. On the front of her stone is her name, death date, and biological epitaph. On the back is a beautiful engraving of a finger pointing up for Heaven. This is the only stone I found with this design and I loved it. (Photo: The back of Julia Ives headstone).

My graveyards were not too different from the others in my group. The main difference I found was that the stones I used, specifically at St. Peter's Church, were made from various raw materials. Most other graveyards had a primary material, but St. Peter's had lots of variety. The gravestones in the wall stood out the most for my cemetery. It was very unique and not seen often.

December 7, 2017



*"Duaab Ha\_\_"'s stone is a mystery. We are unable to locate this in the Headstone Inscription for 205-4 Cheshire Street Cemetery copied by B.S. Brockett in November 23, 1934. Nor are we able to find this among Parson Hall's records in the Beach history, **Cheshire Connecticut 1694-1840**. The stone is broken and it is possible it was moved to this location and placed in the far corner of the cemetery? We have some stone rubbings done in the 1990s that are stored in the third floor of the Society and it is just possible that we have a more complete view of the stone from these. Details to follow!*

### A Spirited Dinner with Joyce Mulholland

By Diane Calabro, Society President

Joyce Mulholland is the Chairperson of the Spirit's Alive Cemetery Tour, now in its fifth year. We met with Joyce at The Manor Inn Restaurant on a Thursday night a few weeks ago. A lovely, lithe and energetic woman with a quick smile and an even quicker wit, Joyce has a habit of making everything better. She will toss her long blond hair, flash a conspiratorial smile and whatever might need fixing is on its way to improvement.

The Mulholland Family first came to the Society for our Gingerbread House Workshop years ago. Joyce brought her two young boys, Stephen and Thomas, and the family went home with a frosting and candy masterpiece for the holidays. Christine Pittsley referred us to Joyce in 2012 when we needed a recording secretary for our Board. Joyce arrived a few minutes late exclaiming that she'd just flown in from New Orleans. I confess I had visions of Bourbon Street in my head and hoped our minutes wouldn't reflect that. I never needed to worry as this was an annual family reunion (family is another very important part of Joyce's life), and as she does with all things, we had the best darn minutes ever taken. We didn't realize the sweeping changes that Joyce and her family would make at the Society. Almost immediately Joyce shared that, "Cheshire needs a cemetery tour!" She told us about other towns and other Societies that held these tours. Stephen Mulholland became our Student Liaison and he provided a formal overview of the proposed cemetery tour to a skeptical Board.



The Board approved the cemetery tour and that first tour in 2014 was a challenge. There was so much to manage, so much to consider, and so much to plan! Joyce sailed through it all, as confident as ever. "I'll just call Wethersfield and ask them how they do that!" I am certain that every group that managed a cemetery tour within a hundred miles of us provided advice that first year.

That first tour was an adventure and I believe it will be something I'll remember my entire life. I'm sure that Joyce was also holding her breath and hoping for the best that first time around. We were worried. Will people like this? Will we sell our tickets? Will it go okay? Well, yes, yes, and yes!

We now fast forward to our fifth year of Spirit's Alive and Joyce is actually sitting still at the Manor Inn, her eyes crinkling with laughter as she says, "We sold out in four days! Really!" As if this might be a strange anomaly. Both of our long suffering, always supportive (and ready for sainthood) husbands rolled their eyes.

Joyce shared that this year's tour does have two stories about the Farmington Canal. We have a deceased relative of the Brooks Family, Jean McKee's family, who will talk about how fortunate they were to have the Farmington Canal come through their farm in South Brooksvale. Later, we have another person, perhaps best described as a Cheshire socialite, who exclaims, "The Canal ruined everything! It brought in the riffraff!" So we get to see these two differing opinions. We need to remember that digging the Farmington Canal was hard, brutal work. Canal workers were digging in the mud, standing in cold water for their entire workday, using shovels and wheelbarrows. The canal company couldn't pay their wages. Instead, they offered the workers vouchers, I.O.U.'s, so when you really look at these Irish workers in particular, they don't have money, they have vouchers. They weren't given water to drink. Instead they were given whiskey. It was a hard life for them. Thomas Mulholland wrote this script and did an excellent job.

Joyce is careful to mention that the volunteer Spirits Alive writers do their best to look at the facts that are available for each person and then project what human experiences might have impacted them, e.g., love, loss, fear, and struggle. "We try to humanize that person by tying together the facts we have about that person. Then we add what was going on in history. We put in the backdrop of national history and sometimes local history. All of a sudden their lives take on that much more meaning. I think it is fun for our tour guests to walk away wondering who is going to look at *your life* and when they look, are they going to see the history that happened around you? What is it that you did that speaks to the history of our time? We want people to think about that and many of the scripts end by challenging people to consider their place in the world and the decisions they make. How can you lead a better life? What will your legacy be?"

When I told her I was writing this article, Joyce took a moment and said, “Seriously, the Spirits Alive story is about so many people. It’s really about everyone else. Not me.” Joyce recalled when Dave and I sat in the Mulholland living room on a Saturday morning in the spring of 2014. We brought a box of Neil’s donuts (it was the first time the Mulholland family had tried these). Ana Arellano made our first flyer. Joyce sent a text to six of her best friends and asked if they and their families would help. Thirty volunteers came from those calls. Now we have more than sixty volunteers. At least seven people are writing scripts at any given time, including Joyce’s father, Ted Holtzman, and Joyce’s sister in Florida. Dawn Marchand made the first big improvement three years ago when she “dramatized” each script. Dawn takes any personal story that is at risk of being dull and thinks for days or weeks on the person and their life and somehow brings forth a personality and emotion to the script. Joyce exclaimed that “It is so interesting how she does it! She always says that although we perform eight scripts, the actual historic Hillside Cemetery is the *ninth performer*, that the Cemetery is always present and speaking to the guests. She has such great perspective!” This year Steve Holt with Dawn at his side are directing and coaching the actors. “Those were game changers!” Joyce said. “I can feel a shift this year. I felt one three years ago when Dawn gave our spirits more depth. This year with Dawn and Steve working together! All I can say is that these are two very talented people.”

Joyce made sure to credit her husband. “My Steve is behind everything I do. He gathers, buys, transports, sets up, follows up, finds, builds, prints, and encourages.” Joyce flashed another big smile at me, “You know! You’ve got one just like him!” she said, referring to Dave Calabro.

“I’ve made best friends through Spirits Alive. You and Dave for starters. People I met who answered an ad such as Justin Navarro [who is now on our Board, manages Membership, and is our Web Master] and Angela Jannetty, who has done costuming for all five years. She is magic! She acted for two years. She will always be known as the Widow Kye [a.k.a., the Kye-Witch]. I remember the day we met up at Cheshire Coffee to discuss their interest! People who were just church acquaintances such as Dawn and Mark Sullivan. They have been actors for five years. Richard Abbate and Joellyn Jason are also church friends. Some volunteers like Randy Yale and Wade Elmer had acting experience. The rest found they were actors all along. Mary Dattilio, who joined us last year and returns this year, has acting experience. This year we have Tracy Burrill who comes to us with amazing acting experience! Dori Hall and Claire Lasher are both high school students and it is amazing to see them grow! All these actors create the event out of thin air. *They* are the product.”

Joyce shared that she feels her family is truly richer for their involvement in Spirits Alive. “How many families share such a thing?” she said. “We plan all year. Our dinner conversations often turn to some dearly departed that Thomas has found or some aspect of Spirits Alive planning. This has become a creative outlet that we share with each other, with our friends and our extended family. One of my sons studies writing and communications and the other son is taking history and museum studies. No coincidence! The Society, Diane and Dave, and Spirits Alive tours have made their mark on our sons! Thomas did *all* the research this year and has a grid with a hundred more people on it. Stephen wrote and is acting his script this year. I have told you many times and I can never tell you enough times that Steve and I deeply appreciate the role that Diane and Dave Calabro have played in raising up our boys. Thank you.”

Joyce shared that her parents, Ted and Joyce Holtzman, are also involved. Ted has been the Spirits Alive Gate Keeper, ringing his bell to announce the next tour departure. Ted is also the historical fact checker. Joyce said, “Any script *heavy* in fact is a script that Dad wrote. And my Mom stands next to him.” [And we wish them a very happy 60<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary, occurring as you read this newsletter.] Joyce’s mother-in-law and sister-in-law have flown in from Florida for most years to cook, be tour guides, to set up and break down the tour. I can recall them coming for a tour that was bitterly cold and when I asked them if they would rather be in Florida where it was warmer, they both said they wouldn’t miss this for the world. Hand warmers helped as well.

As our server brought us desserts we realized we were the last people in the Manor Inn Restaurant, we had been so engrossed in our conversation! Joyce declared that Spirits Alive has been an awesome experience for her. She emphasized that she is a small part of the Spirits Alive tour as so many others contribute so much to this event. However, I can’t imagine Spirits Alive without Joyce, and all the members of her family. The Society owes a large debt of gratitude to the Mulhollands.

## THE CHESHIRE HISTORICAL SOCIETY FALL 2018 NEWSLETTER