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Cheshire heads back in time

By Luther Turmelle
North Bureau Chief

CHESHIRE — Members of the Cheshire Historical Society and the town's Historic District Commission are working on a re-enactment that they hope will take residents back to the time when the town was a farming community.

The May 7 re-enactment will focus on the experiences of Titus Moss, a farmer in the 1800s who was killed in the Civil War during the Battle of Chancellorsville in 1863 at age 35, said Diane Calabro, a co-chairwoman of the event.

Using letters that Moss sent home to his family before he died — and that were ultimately given by his descendants to the Historical Society — the re-enactment will be played out in an area of several blocks near the Green.

"We want to make the town's history more interesting so that people will know what it was like back in that time when they stand on the town Green or on a corner of Main Street," Calabro said.

"We also want to take stock of what it is that makes a man who is in his early 30s, has a family and is somewhat successful to sign up to fight in a war."

Moss owned a farm in the area of what is now known as Moss Farms Road and came from a family that founded St. Peter's Episcopal Church.

He was a warden in the church and his picture hangs in the house of worship, located at Route 10 and Main Street, said Thom Peters, who will portray Moss in the re-enactment.

"There's a sense of curiosity as to how folks could reconcile going to war, being aware they would likely be casualties in one way or another," said Peters, who teaches U.S. history at the Hopkins School in New Haven. "He (Moss) had choices, he had options, and yet he still chose to go to war."

Peters is a member of the 27th Connecticut Volunteers, a Civil War re-enactment group.

He said playing Moss in a re-enactment is just another way of teaching people about history.

"Doing a first-person history is trying get people interested enough in the subject so that they want to learn more, read more," Peters said.

He is part of a cast of about 24 people that will be taking part in the re-enactment, Calabro said. The idea of doing a re-enactment came out of a dramatic reading of Moss' letters done by Peters and Sylvia Abbate, who played Moss' wife, Jennette, in April 2005 at the Historical Society. Abbate will reprise that role in the re-enactment.

The re-enactment is being funded in part by a grant from the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation in cooperation with the Connecticut Humanities Council.

Call 250-9350 for more information on the event.

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