

Looking Forward to the Year Ahead

FROM OUR NEW PRESIDENT

Cayetana Navarro first appeared at the Society in an acting role as a poisoning victim in our first Spirits Alive cemetery tour. Since 2015, Navarro has taken on more and more volunteer activities. She has now taken that big step and has become the 32nd Society President. And what a year to begin as President! When asked to share something with our members, Navarro suggested that we include a letter written to the members in 1972 by then president, Armand Brodeur. Let's turn the clock back to that time. The Society had been an organization without a home of their own for over 15 years. An opportunity came up. The Cheshire Academy was selling the "house on the green," a building they were using as an off-campus dormitory in 1969-1970. They called this "The Phillips House" as the granddaughter of the original owner had married the Academy mathematics teacher, A.W. Phillips, and the couple lived in this house. In 1972, two years later, Brodeur was trying to repurpose a no-frills dormitory setting into a house museum.

From his letter to the members:

Exciting things have happened already this summer regarding the Historic Society's role in the redecorating and maintenance of the wonderful Phillips House on the Green. Your Board of Directors and Committee for the Phillips House are anxious to share it all with you as soon as possible. As the plans call for a very vigorous program to attain our goal... We have also made some startling discoveries at the Phillips House.

As we proceed with the 3-year Strategic Plan and are now involved with the inventory project, we are also experiencing a summer with as much importance as Brodeur did in 1972. It has been an exciting summer for us. It has been very hard work for our dedicated volunteer teams: vigorous indeed! And, as Brodeur shared so many years ago, we too have made startling discoveries.

Navarro is looking forward to the year ahead. The Strategic Plan will help guide us to modernize and improve our museum and our programs.

STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

History Consultant, Kathy Craughwell-Varda invited a group of local museum professionals to evaluate the Society house museum. They spent an entire day viewing each room to determine the strengths and challenges that would be part of the next phase of the strategic plan implementation. Overall, the group felt that the Society building contains many treasures and offered guidance as to how the rooms could be displayed in future.

Craughwell-Varda was able to provide insight as to how to proceed with the inventory management which is the next step in the Strategic Plan process. This was shared at a meeting with Society board members. The inventory assessment began in June and is still ongoing.



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WHAT'S HAPPENING

- **Strategic Plan** put into practice with inventory volunteer teams
- **Our Beautiful Gardens** and the volunteer clubs that manage these
- **Spirits Alive** update
- **Community Outreach:** Talks, Fairs, and Walks



New President, Cayetana Navarro, Director, Jan Edwards, and new Town Historian, Diane Calabro

RECENT HISTORY

On April 23, 2022, the Society held our annual meeting at the Harmon Leonard Jr. Youth Center. At this time, our new president, Cayetana Navarro, was greeted by the general membership, as were Douglas Olson as our new vice president, and Shirley Brady remaining as treasurer. A membership vote eliminated the position of

secretary from the Society officers. Diane Calabro was recognized for her many years of volunteer service. Navarro told the group that the Society Meeting Room will now be known as the “Diane Calabro Meeting Room” to honor her tremendous volunteer efforts throughout the past decade.

On June 9, 2022, the Society was host to the Chapman Elementary School Third Grade History Tour. Many children toured the building and enjoyed seeing their local history as portrayed within our Society house museum.

ITEM DONATIONS

Currently, we are not accepting any new donations for the museum collection as the Society is in the process of conducting an inventory of the contents of the Hitchcock-Phillips House – some 7,000+ items. We will only consider items that have a “Cheshire Story” in future. Please see our recently approved Acquisition Policy for more information about what this means: <https://www.cheshirehistory.org/acquisition-policy>.

SPIRITS ALIVE UPDATE

What has become one of our most beloved events, our Spirits Alive Cemetery Tour, will not be held until further notice. Thanks to the Hall Family, we can offer some of our Spirits sharing their stories on YouTube. Links for this are available on our website. Our ongoing thanks and gratitude go to the Mulholland, Marchand, and Holtzman families in chairing and implementing what has become our largest fundraiser. It takes so many volunteer hours to make this event happen! There is a possibility that Spirits Alive will come back better, bigger, and even more entertaining as we celebrate our local history. We will keep you posted as we learn about future plans for our popular history cemetery tour.

CHESHIRE SCARECROWS! Our 2021 Scarecrows Come by and see our 2022 display!

In the photo:
Colleen Fitzgerald, Clare Leake, and Jan Edwards





Cheshire Historical Society Vice President Dr. Doug Olson, former Cheshire Garden Club President Inge Venus, and Gardener Elizabeth Holmstrom, in the Colonial Garden on April 20, 2022

THE GARDENS: SUBURBAN GARDEN CLUB AND CHESHIRE GARDEN CLUB

How fortunate that the Cheshire Historical Society has support and impressive partnerships with not one but TWO garden clubs, working directly with our new Vice President, Douglas Olson!

The Society would especially like to thank Elizabeth Holmstrom of the Cheshire Garden Club for her help with the Lucille Williams Colonial Garden. Along with Inge Venus, President of the Cheshire Garden Club, Elizabeth has added many colorful annuals to the area in front of and all around the Shed located behind the main building. She spent many days weeding and pruning the garden and made the space inviting for the warmer months.

The Suburban Garden Club, under the stewardship of Bernie Uluski, has also been making improvements to their gardens. She has spearheaded the coordination of the historic garden on one side of the Phillips House, following ably in the footsteps of the previous chair, Rita Giannotti. Rita's commitment to the Phillips House was remarkable and noteworthy, and Bernie has continued this commitment. The bricks around the 9-11 Memorial Tree were repointed, a new period lilac was planted in the front of the House, and the gardens on the north and east side of the building have been trimmed and curated.

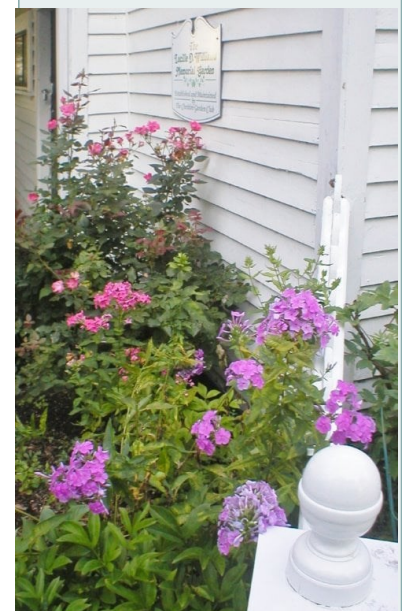
The Society thanks both garden clubs for amazing results of their hard work and talent.

FINANCIAL DONATIONS

MADE SINCE OUR SPRING 2022 NEWSLETTER

We would like to thank the following individuals for their recent monetary donations:

Linda Drazen and
Kevin Meehan
Robert Schreitmueller
Reed Durand
Carol Alix
Cara Luciani
Margaret McKee
Cayetana Navarro
Janet Edwards
Joan Stapkowski
Bob Demers
Mark and Kathy Collins
Robert Belletzkic
William Suter
M.F. Collins
Pat Vita
Roberta "Mitzi" Romano
Ana Arellano
Diane Calabro
Jaime McCormick
Lois Van Almkerk
Mike Brady
Mary Hyson



INVENTORY VOLUNTEERS

With the help of Museum Consultant, Kathy Craughwell-Varda, the Society is making big steps towards joining this century in terms of accessible inventory management and other museum best practices.

Several volunteers have devoted many hours conducting an inventory of artifacts in the Hitchcock-Phillips House Museum. A [wonderful article](#) on this effort appeared in the September 8th issue of the Cheshire Herald.

Team Janet Edwards and
Clare Leake

Team Mitzi Romano and
Colleen Fitzpatrick

Team Brady
(Shirley and Dan)

Team Tom Scheil and
Peter Prohaska

Team Doug Olson and
Stephanie Dickinson

And soon, Cayetana Navarro
and Eric Nelson!

The Society is looking for volunteers to help with one specific project: the reconciliation between existing accession logs and our inventory lists. Anyone who likes combing through records, looking at photos, and trying to match them to descriptions of things we found in our collection will love this project!

You'll learn a lot about what we have and meet others around town with similar interests.

If you are interested in volunteering, email us at cheshirehistorical@gmail.com or leave a message at (203) 272-2574.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Bennett Family 4th of July Celebration

For over ten years, Ray Bennett and his family have organized a Fourth of July Celebration on the Church Green. Cheshire Chief of Police, Neil Dryfe, opened the celebration by reading the Pledge of Allegiance. The Cheshire Historical Society traditionally reads the Declaration of Independence, which closes this annual morning event.

This year's event featured a talk by Daniel Bennett about the various flags that were displayed by patriots in 1776. These included "Don't Tread on Me," "Appeal to Heaven," and "Join or Die." There was also a talk about the history of the Liberty Bell including a popular poem from that time. Diane Calabro, Town Historian, spoke about the efforts made by Cheshire residents in 1775 and 1776, including a mandatory house-by-house inventory done by Samuel Beach to see what tools, implements, and fabrics could be commandeered

for the coming war effort.

It was a beautiful day

for a celebration on the Church Green. The Bennett Family did a wonderful job filling the hour-long presentation with relevant history about the birth of our nation's independence. "We have to keep it going," Ray Bennett said as he reflected on the time and effort his family puts into the event. "It's really important to do this."

The Society encourages all of our members and the Cheshire Community to be sure to attend the July 4th Celebration as well as the August Cheshire Grange Fair next year!



Cheshire Grange Fair

Volunteers from the Society had a booth at the 137th Cheshire Community Grange Fair, held by Cheshire Grange No. 23 in the center of town. Eric Nelson and Colleen Fitzgerald had Cheshire specific books for sale and had demonstrations on spinning wool on the spinning wheel donated by Jane Oswicki of Windsor Wools. Many people were fascinated to see this process. As one guest explained, he had never been able to figure out how the wool from sheep became clothing. After he watched the process, he said he had a new appreciation for how clothes were made. "It's a lot of work!" he exclaimed.

Cheshire Trail Trekkers

The Society made a brief cameo at the September 21st Mixville Park Walk with the new Cheshire Trail Trekkers. Eric Nelson discussed the possible food sources for the Quinnipiac Tribe which paired with Town Historian Diane Calabro's talk on the history of the Mixville area. There are many planned history talks. Nelson will be explaining Cheshire's natural history on a future date.

LIST OF BOARD & COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Officers

President – Cayetana Navarro
Vice President – Douglas Olson
Treasurer – Shirley Brady

Directors

Janet Edwards (2021-2024)
Colleen Fitzgerald (2021-2024)
Will D'Agostino (2021-2024)

Appointed Positions

Archivist – Karen Gionet Zentek
Curator, Assistant for Historic Costume Consultant – Ilona Somogyi
Curator, Assistant for Native American Studies – Eric Nelson
Curator, Student Volunteer – Chris D'Agostino
Spirits Alive Chairpeople – Joyce Mulholland & Dawn Marchand

CONTACT INFORMATION

HOURS OF OPERATION

Location The Cheshire Historical Society is located on the Church Green in central Cheshire at 43 Church Drive. The distinctive red double doors are the feature most visitors notice first in this 1785 building. The Society is using a new e-mail: cheshirehistorical@gmail.com

Phone number (203) 272-2574

Hours By appointment only as we complete the building-wide inventory.

Newsletter Editor Eric Nelson ★ **Newsletter Photographs** Mitzi Romano