



Chester Historical Society

July 2019 Newsletter

We're celebrating our 50th year; we invite you to stop by

Often when we ask "Have you been to Chester Museum at The Mill?" the reply is "I've been meaning to go" or "I was there 2-3 years ago."

Much like history, a lot can change in a short time, even in just one year.

In fact, change comes every year at Chester Museum at The Mill and viewing this year's creative new exhibits should be on your short list of things to do this summer and fall.

We've been making history in addition to sharing Chester's history

The Chester Historical Society is now in its 50th year. To celebrate, our ground floor exhibit space underwent a near complete makeover.

Contrasting colors now complement 9-foot-high wall murals that recall the Meeting House and the Griswold Mill, two buildings that were restored by the Society and bookend our past 50 years.

Longtime residents' memories will be stirred and newer residents will appreciate the five large colorful panels that summarize by decade the numerous Society activities, many of which contribute to current Chester life.

Overhead hang a series of historical posters created by the team of Jan and Peter Good—reminders of events made possible by the Meeting House renovation.

Be sure also to take in the video oral history of Sally Bibbiani recalling the summer of 1958, when Hollywood came to Chester for the filming of "It Happened to Jane". Footage from the actual film interspersed with Sally's stories bring that year alive.

Sandy and Keith Dauer were overall curators for this special exhibit. We are also indebted to Sandy and Marilena Vacarro (murals and panels), Jon Claude Haines (video) and the Goods (posters) for their experience and wonderful contributions.

(continue on page 2)



A panoramic view of our colorful 2019 seasonal exhibit captures the sweeping changes that have occurred in Chester over the past 50 years.



School Days, a new second-floor exhibit, will bring back many memories as well as highlight Chester's transition from four district schools in 1900 to the unified schools that followed.

But wait, there's more upstairs

While the second floor features our long-running, award-winning "Streams of Change: Life & Industry Along the Pattaconk" exhibit, it too is refreshed on a regular basis. Four areas are new this year:

Chester Schools: Trustees Rob Miceli and Nancy Watkins created a story depicting the evolution of educating Chester students. From four district schools to the combined Union School (1906) to Valley Regional High School (1951) and Chester Elementary School (1960), the exhibit includes school accessories, desks and a slate tablet to write on.

Andy's Beauty Shop was a fixture on Main Street for many years. Donna Carlson and Cheri Habersang recaptured the fashion and styles of the time along with photos of Andy Kranyak at work. The electric curling machine from his shop alone is worth a museum visit!

Constance Baker Motley's importance in Civil Rights and Women's Rights are lessons that are as current today as they were for her, beginning in the late 1950s. Trustee Marta Daniels consolidated her prior exhibit of Judge Motley to appear on a panel featuring this notable former Chester resident.

Vintage Films from Chester's past are shown on the second floor monitor. Selections include: the Town Center and storeowners from the 1930s, Chester Fair (1950s) and the 1936 Chester Centennial Parade & Picnic.

Plan to Visit Chester Museum at The Mill

Something for All Ages

Saturdays 1-4 pm; Sundays 10 am-4 pm
June thru October

Free Admission • Air Conditioned



A new fashion exhibit features the former Andy's Beauty Shop and a simply amazing curling machine used in his Main Street location.

Remembering the Chalany Farm on Cedar Lake Road

The 14-acre farm on Cedar Lake Road, once the home of a Czech family, the Chalany, may soon be a lost piece of history. The property goes on the market later this summer, possibly enticing a developer who will cut the property into home sites.

In the meantime, though, some of this farm's history has been preserved, thanks to Bill Myers, a longtime Cedar Lake Road resident.

Here's Bill's story: "About 10 years ago, rumors were adrift of an old horse-drawn buggy in an old barn, located somewhere on the Chalany Farm. After the old farm was listed for sale on the open market, I ventured down to see if I could find it. Way up in the back, in an old, falling down, decrepit, dark barn, was a very old, four-wheel horse-drawn buggy, jammed into the barn with lots of junk. The barn looked like it would collapse at any moment. The buggy was covered in decades of soiled dirt and obviously had not moved for many years.

"From that very moment, I knew that this buggy must be saved. It is a priceless historical implement of a passing era in the history of Chester. I was determined to see that it was preserved by the Chester Historical Society.



The Chalany buggy that Bill Myers worked so long to rescue. Due to its size, the Society is loaning it to the Chester Fair Association. Look for it in the Agricultural Antique Exhibit building at this year's Fair (August 23-25).

"However, in spite of many letters, e-mails, texts, and phone calls, we couldn't secure the buggy from the family's estate. Recently, however, my persistence paid off. I was able to secure the buggy, and it still was in good condition within the old barn. Additionally, I've secured many other Chalany Farm implements, including some horse-drawn plows, an orchard ladder and lots more."



William and Father Robert Chalany, with Cedar Lake in the background. (Photo found online)

Isadore (also spelled Isidor) and Gabrielle Chalany immigrated to Chester from what was then called Slovakia in 1917. It appears they bought the Cedar Lake property in the late '20s. They had six children, Julia, Rose, Helen, Robert and William; their son Alexander died as an infant in 1927. Four graduated from Chester High School; William (most people knew him as Willie) did not graduate. The family were members of St. Joseph's Church. The sisters left the farm once they were married. Robert was ordained as a priest in 1952 and spent most of the ensuing years in Africa or New York. Willie remained on the farm until his death in 2008, and Robert retired there and died in 2012.

Chester Historian Rob Miceli remembers, "Father Chalany was mostly not in Chester as an adult, but he still loved coming home and being able to do farming. He was a classmate of my mother, so she chatted with him whenever he was around. Willie used to mow the parking lot of the Fairgrounds. If Father was in Chester at the appropriate time, he would help. They would bale the hay, early on in small rectangular bales, then in later years they had a baler that produced big round bales."

The Historical Society is delighted to be able to preserve some of the farming implements. We wish we had more space to keep more. If anyone has space to share for our growing collection, contact Cary Hull at 860-558-4701

Planning & Development: Where \$\$\$ Make Sense

The success of the Chester Historical Society — an ongoing duty and responsibility of the Board of Trustees — has been achieved with the active assistance and support of its membership and generous contributions of the community. Thoughtful management of the unique artifacts and historic documents, plus creating ongoing educational programs to share Chester’s history, is the mission of the Society.

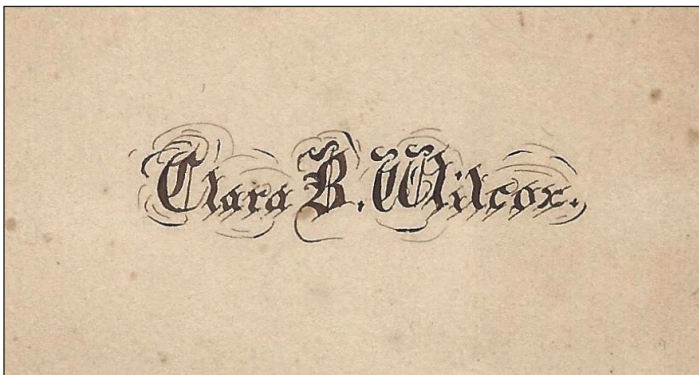
The Society’s most valuable artifact (and its biggest asset) is the former Griswold Mill Building itself. In recent months, we retired the last of the notes covering our mortgage, while our Building and Development committees have been busy identifying necessary major maintenance items on the near and short-term horizon. These include our heat and cooling system (we have just finished upgrading this), replacement of roof and gutters, deck and driveway repair, and exterior painting.

The Trustees have already committed \$25,000 toward these improvements, about 1/3 of what will be eventually needed. The entire effort will require \$75,000 and will require funds from the commu-

nity and grants to be successful. In the upcoming months we will launch “**Preserve the Mill**”, a special fundraising effort to secure the facility, hopefully for the next 50 years. We will welcome your support.

The Trustees have placed a priority on long-range planning to assure the future financial sustainability of the Society to continue the proper research, preservation and storage of the growing historic collection. Protection from potential environmentally tragic events such as flooding or fire must be built into the financial plan. In addition, CHS must have long-term sufficient funds to address future unknown economic challenges.

The Development Committee is establishing a Reserve Fund for such emergencies and unpredictable events. Diverse conservative management of funds is constantly evaluated and modified to protect the donations and gifts from the community. The generous donations from the Barbara Delaney Estate have become the central funding source to start building a strong long-term future for the Historical Society.



What is “ephemera”? How does it relate to the Chester Historical Society? Al Malpa, Chester resident and longtime ephemera collector and dealer, will explain in a free program at the Meeting House on Sunday, Sept. 15 at 5 p.m. This tiny pen-and-ink calling card by Clara B. Wilcox – part of a collection of calling cards recently given to the Society by Peg Lieberman – is an example of the ephemera we’ve collected and preserved in our archives since our 1970 founding. So what makes this little piece of paper historical or worth keeping? See you on Sept. 15th for the answer.

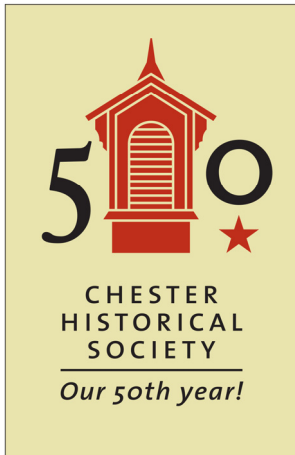
Supporting History Through Membership

Our membership year just began on July 1. It’s a great time to join in support of our collective efforts to share the rich history of Chester. Please consider a membership today.

Board of Trustees 2019-2020

Cary Hull, President
Sandy Senior Dauer, Vice President
Jenny Kitsen, Vice Pres • Ed Meehan, Vice Pres
Jo Anne Park, Treasurer • Nancy Watkins, Secretary
Diane Lindsay, Curator • Rob Miceli, Historian
Skip Hubbard, Archivist
Martin Nadel, Collomore Concerts

Robert Blair III • Tim Carlson
Marta Daniels • Keith Dauer
Paulette Heft • Mitchell Koslawy
Tom Marshall • Dawn Parker
Mike Sanders • Jackie Stack
Bruce Watrous • Ron Woodward



Celebrating 50 years of

- Informative Free Programs
- Educational Exhibits
- Historical Publications
- Musical Concerts
- Creative Fundraising Events

Help us do more for the Town we all cherish!

Make a donation! Become a member!

Your Support helps tell Chester's Story

As an all-volunteer organization with no income from the town or state, we rely on the support of members and friends, together with grants, to annually present our free exhibits and public programs, plus create publications. Member support and community support are fundamental to achieving our mission of preserving and sharing Chester's rich history.

- Please accept my donation for \$ _____
- I'd like to be a member for the year ending June 30, 2020 (indicate membership level).
- Student: \$15
 - Individual: \$20
 - Household: \$30
 - Benefactor: \$100
 - Life: \$500 (one-time payment to enroll one or two members of the same household.)

Make checks payable to: Chester Historical Society. Mail to: CHS, P.O. Box 204, Chester, CT 06412
Dues and donations may be tax-deductible under IRS rules. Consider your check as your receipt.

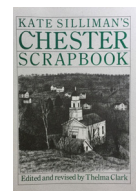
Name(s) _____

Mailing Address _____

Email _____ Phone _____

Bonus! Free Kate Silliman book for all new members

A valued resource, *Kate Silliman's Chester Scrapbook* (264 pages, 134 photos) is the 'go-to' place for much of Chester history. New members can pick up a free copy (\$15 value) of this Society publication during museum hours (Saturdays 1-4, Sundays 10-4, June thru October).



Chester Historical Society

Membership year ending June 30, 2019

Individual

Sosse Baker
Robert Bandzes
Frances Bertelli
Tom Brelsford
Margaret Breslin
Jane Deuse Cable
Tim Carlson*
Samuel Chorches
Elizabeth M. D'Amato
Alma Carini Doak
Robert Dona
Lauren Gister*
Jane Gordon
Jon Claude Haines*
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Patricia Kosky
Mitchell Koslawy*
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Diane Lindsay
Tom Marshall
David Nelson*
Carl Nilsson
Dawn Parker*
Betsy Watrous Pasinella
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Charles Priest
H. Peter Satagaj
Judith Lynde Schondorf
Sharon Soja
Elizabeth Watrous Stopa
Ruth Thayer
Louise R. VanHaverbeke
Patti Anne Vassia*
Veronica Villafang*
Nancy Watkins
Daisy Watrous
Anne Winslow

Household

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James & Marian Bairstow
Paul & Wendie Barbarino
Bonnie & John Bennet
Dale Bernardoni
Robert Blair & Kris Pollock
Mark Borton & Francine Cornaglia
Donna & Rick Carlson, Jr.
Ernie & Pam Cartier
Edward & Gail Castelli
James & Diana Castelli
Ted & JoAnna Chapin
Sherry & Herb Clark
Alan & Ginny Cuneo*
Emelia DeMusis
& Stephen DeBenedet
Kristen DiErrico & Hans Lohse
Lol & Charlene Fearon
Richard Fensky & Elaine LaFlair

Dan & Jean Fitzgerald*
Joseph & Charlotte Forst*
Christopher & Sarah Fryxell
Ivey Gianetti & John Williams
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Cynthia Glacken
& Fritz Jellinghaus*
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Robert & Mary Humpage
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John & Wendy King
David & Diane Kukta
Kenneth Maxwell & Arlene Tunney
Pam & Doug McAvay
Allan Mehlberg & Spruce Roden
Steven & Kathryn Merola
Madaline Meyer
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Richard & Lorraine Morrow
Russ & Deb Munson
Charles & Susan Murphy
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& Barbara-Jan Wilson
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Jim & Marie Ready
Cookie & Fred Robertson
Ray & Jeanne Roussel
Charles & Denise Schiller*
John & Lisa Schroeder
Richard & Carol Anne Seaman
Joan Sepessy
Richard & Elaine Sevigny
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Kelley & Scott Smith*
Laird & Toni Smith
Tom & Renee Smith
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Gilbert & Patricia Veconi
Dave & Margo Viggiano
Skip & Margaret Weisenburger

Tom & Diane Wetmore*
Ronald & Lois Wickson
George & Patty Winter
Sue & Bob Wisner*
Peter & Jane Zanardi
Burgi & Leo Zavatone
Bill & Agneta Ziegler

Benefactor

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Joyce Christy Birtcher
Edward & Debra Calamari
Geraldine Carini-Garcia**
Arthur Christianson
Jewel Christy
Audrey Conrad
Dan David*
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Tammy & Weymouth Eustis
Barbara & Bob Fraser
Helene & Ned Johnson
Kim Kellogg & Ric Hosley*
Ed & Peg Meehan
Jean Mulford
Charles & Jo Anne Park
Michael & Susan Peck
Joan & Craig Phillips*
Sandy & Deedee Prisloe
Paul & Dawn Radicchi
Mark Rohlfs
Hila & Saul Rosen
Laura Straub
Yenowich Sisters
Theresa Zwart-Ludeman

Life

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Ray & Liz Archambault
Thomas & Kathleen Archambault
Albert Armington
Gil & Anne Bartlett
Phyllis Bevington
Thomas & Marianne Bladek
Robert Blair
Lary Bloom
Bill Bonfanti & Madeleine Winans
Dominick & Stacy Bosco
David Brooks
Gregory Cook
Michael & Felise Cressman
John W. Dalton
Marta Daniels**
Keith Dauer & Sandy Senior-Dauer
Deb Dembo
Elise Piquet-Doll
Gerry & Cynthia Dubey
Shirley Feldmann
Henry & Britt Flanagan
Mary & Bryant Frank**
Jill Gladding
Peter & Jan Good
Robert & Lynda Gorman
Alva G. Greenberg

Mark & Cheri Ferrari Habersang
Donald & Monique Hanson
Karen & Jamie Hart
Kurt & Marion Watrous Henstorf
Leni Herschman
Elizabeth Hubbard*
Skip & Karen Hubbard
Tom & Cheri Hubbard*
Cary Hull & Al Malpa
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Kathryn Watrous Jones
Jon & Doreen Joslow
Pauline Kaplan
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Steve & Ann Kitteredge
Jules & Kathleen Kranich
Pam Larson
Robert & Stacey Lewis
Carol LeWitt
D. Leonard Lieberman
Lorraine Lieberman
Margaret Lieberman
Donald MacDermid
Jess Maghan & Peter Walker
Robert Miceli
Christopher Moore
Deborah Morrow
Joel Motley III
William Myers
Martin & Lois Nadel
Jil Nelson
Charles G. Nessler, Jr
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& Donna Tuths*
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Sandra Davis Owen
Donald & Katherine Paulson
Jo-Ann & Michael Price
Robert Radicchi
Glenn & Peg Reyer
Jeff & Holly Ridgway
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Dr. Kim Senay
Joel & Adrienne Severance
John & Kimberly Stack
Justine Tobis
William Vollers
BJ & Corry Watrous
Bruce & Beverly Watrous
Christopher & Kelly Watrous
Lynn Weymer
Whitelaw & Margaret Wilson
Virginia Winans
Victoria Winterer
Ron & Suzie Woodward
James Zanardi
Richard & Joan Ziemann

*New Members

**New Membership Level

From Meeting House to Museum: A capsule history of 50 years

For an organization steeped in history, the Chester Historical Society is a relative newcomer to the town's story. While the town was settled in 1692 as the Pattaconk portion of Saybrook Colony and incorporated as Chester in 1836, this past April marked the beginning of the Society's 50th year. And what a half-century it has been!

Soon after its April 1970 incorporation with 100 charter members, the Society embarked on its initial project—the restoration of the historic, but deteriorating Meeting House on the Town Green.

The Meeting House restoration was celebrated with a rededication ceremony in 1973 and generated a renewed community focus on the facility and Town Green. Craftworks Fair (1973), the Robbie Collomore Music Series (1974), the Meeting House Players (1979) and use of the Meeting House for town meetings, school and private events became dates on the town calendar. The Rotary Club built a gazebo at the south end of the Green (1980).

The Society sponsored and completed an addition to the Meeting House, expanding its stage. At its 1985 rededication the Town of Chester, in appreciation of the Society's "distinct contribution to the quality of life in Chester through constant use of this historic building," allocated a special space under the stage for storage of the Society's growing collection.



From its beginnings, the Society also created and published numerous books on the history of Chester and its people. Each year free public programs were presented, often at the Meeting House, attracting Chester residents and those living nearby.

In spite of its frequent programs and activities, the Society never had a home for its first 30 years. That changed when the Society purchased the former Griswold Mill Building from the National Theatre of the Deaf in early 2001, following a rapid fundraising drive.

While many basic infrastructure needs were addressed immediately, it was the community-wide Bring History Home Capital Campaign in 2006 that initiated the remaining tasks (including two secure, climate-controlled rooms for collections) required to house what became Chester Museum at The Mill.

The museum opened in June 2010 and in its first year the Society won both state and national awards for its permanent exhibit, "Streams of Change: Life & Industry Along the Pattaconk".

Now in its 10th season, the Chester Museum at The Mill welcomes nearly 1,000 visitors, students and civic organizations per year to enjoy its seasonal and long-running exhibits.

Chester Historical Society Presidents

| | |
|-----------|-------------------|
| 1970-1976 | Barbara Delaney |
| 1976-1978 | Jim Grote |
| 1978-1981 | William Zimmerman |
| 1981-1988 | Edmund Delaney |
| 1988-1999 | Dawn Burr |
| 1999-2003 | Shirley Miceli |
| 2003-2005 | Cary Hull |
| 2005-2009 | Donna Carlson |
| 2009-2019 | Skip Hubbard |
| 2019- | Cary Hull |



Chester Historical Society
P.O. Box 204
Chester, CT 06412-0204

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
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Deep River, CT

Postal Patron
Chester, CT 06412

Mark Your Calendar

Fri-Sun, Aug. 23-25
Chester Fair
Historical Society Exhibit
Chester Fairgrounds

Monday, Sept. 9
Tuxedo Junction Band
Listen / Dance
Chester Meeting House, 7 p.m.

Sunday, Sept. 15
Chester Ephemera - Al Malpa
Chester Meeting House, 5 p.m.

Sunday, Sept. 22
Tri-Town Vintage Baseball
Devitt Field, Deep River, 2 p.m.

Sunday Sept. 22
Robbie Collomore Music Series
Ansonia String Quartet, classical
Chester Meeting House, 5 p.m.

Sunday, Oct. 13
Robbie Collomore Music Series
Hubby Jenkins, jazz & blues
Chester Meeting House, 5 p.m.

Monday, Oct. 14
Tuxedo Junction Band
Listen / Dance
Chester Meeting House, 7 p.m.

Sunday, Oct. 20
Our Towns' Films of the '30s
Deep River Town Hall Auditorium, 3 p.m.

Sunday, Oct. 27
Museum Season Close
(see also Nov 29-30)
Chester Museum at The Mill
10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Sunday, Nov. 3
Robbie Collomore Music Series
John Jorgenson Bluegrass Band
Chester Meeting House, 5 p.m.

Monday, Nov. 11
Tuxedo Junction Band
Listen / Dance
Chester Meeting House, 7 p.m.

Sunday, Nov. 17
Chester Designs - Jan & Peter Good
Chester Meeting House, 4 p.m.

Sunday, Nov. 24
Robbie Collomore Music Series
Carter Brey, cello;
Benjamin Pasternack, piano
Chester Meeting House, 5 p.m.

Fri- Sat, Nov. 29-30
Special Thanksgiving Family Hours
Chester Museum at The Mill
10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Stay Informed:
www.chesterhistoricalsociety.org
www.collomoreconcerts.com

Funding for the mailing of newsletter provided by Essex Savings Bank as part of its Community Investment Program

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