



Chester Historical Society

May 2022 Newsletter

Judge Motley Film to Open Delaney Series

Barbara and Edmund Delaney were instrumental in founding the Chester Historical Society in 1970 and continued as its patrons and creative forces for the rest of their lives.

To honor their memory and legacy, in 2018 the Society announced the creation of a series of periodic historical and cultural programs in their name. The Delaney Series programs would offer wide and diverse themes, mirroring Barbara and Edmund’s interests, loves and concerns.

While COVID-related viruses certainly put a hold on these plans, the Delaney Series will finally present its inaugural program on May 22.

The event will feature the short documentary film, “The Trials of Constance Baker Motley,” co-produced by her son Joel Motley III, who will host the program, sharing memories of his mother and their family life in Chester.

The Delaneys and the Motleys had a close friendship for 40 years, from the time the Motleys purchased their Cedar Lake Road country home until Judge Motley died in 2005.



Judge Constance Baker Motley seated on her Chester porch, 1998. Photo courtesy *Hartford Courant*; photo, Joanne Hoyoung Lee.

Constance Baker Motley, originally from New Haven and a graduate of Columbia Law School, worked in the early civil rights arena as a front-line NAACP lawyer, working with Thurgood Marshall, Medgar Evers and Martin Luther King Jr. Called “a key strategist of the civil rights movement,” she was the first Black woman to argue at the Supreme Court and argued 10 landmark civil rights cases, winning nine.

Recently Vice President Kamala Harris cited Judge Motley as a personal role model.

New Supreme Court Associate Justice Kentanji Brown Jackson had Constance Baker Motley in mind when accepting her nomination. Jackson said, “I proudly stand on Judge Motley’s shoulders, sharing not only the same birthday (September 14th), but also sharing her steadfast and courageous commitment to equal justice under law... I can only hope that my life... will inspire future Americans.”

... Much as Constance Baker Motley inspired our newest Supreme Court Justice Kentanji Jackson.

DELANEY S E R I E S

The inaugural Delaney Series program featuring the award-winning film, “The Trials of Constance Baker Motley,” will be held Sunday, May 22 at 3 p.m. at the Chester Meeting House.

Joel Motley III (pictured) will host the program. Audience memories of Judge Motley will be encouraged. The program is free; light refreshments available.



(Motley Family Photo)

Memories to Flow Recalling the Flood of 1982

Were you here that infamous June weekend in 1982 when a monster storm dumped 9 inches of rain over two days?



North Main Street Suffered Major Damages

Forty years later, on Sunday, **June 5 at 4 p.m.**, we're gathering in the Chester Meeting House for a Crackerbarrel conversation with Powerpoint images of the damage in Chester caused by the storm.

We're eager to hear your memories. If you weren't living here then, you'll be shocked by the images of the destruction caused by the storm.

As always, the program is free and refreshments will be available. We think this is a program the kids will enjoy, so please bring them with you .

Membership & Appeal Reach Record Highs

Memberships are now at a high of 272, an increase of 36% in the last five years. Concurrently, our recent 2021-22 Annual Appeal received more than \$17,000 in donations, an increase of 44% over the same period.

As the Chester Historical Society is not funded by the Town Budget, a huge 'Thank You' goes out to the community for its support of our town's history, especially during these pandemic times.

Now we're inviting everyone to join with their neighbors in supporting the many ways we preserve and share Chester's history... all programs and exhibits offered with no admission to the public.



After years of working in New York City, Barbara (Antiques Magazine editor) and Edmund (lawyer) Delaney moved permanently to Chester in early 1970. The couple was already part of a small group headed by First Selectman Robert Blair moving to form a local historical organization. The movement quickly attracted interest and the Chester Historical Society was incorporated on April 24, 1970 with Barbara as the founding president. Soon the Society was restoring the Old Town Hall, publishing books, initiating programs and holding special events, one of which became the current Robbie Collomore Concert Series. The Delaneys were never far from the action as Barbara served six years as president; Edmund later was president for eight years.

In 2000, Barbara and then President Shirley Miceli encouraged the purchase of the former Griswold Mill building, the Society's first home and now the site of Chester Museum at The Mill. We're very pleased to honor Barbara's and Edmund's energy and joint contributions to Chester with the Delaney Series.

Our next membership year (July 1 - June 30) is just around the corner and we would love to have you on board. Annual memberships begin at only \$20 for individuals and \$30 for a household.

A membership form can be found on our website www.chesterhistoricalsociety.org. As a bonus, we will extend all new memberships for an additional year!

Chester Museum at The Mill
Opening Weekend - June 3 - 5
Fri 5-8 p.m.; Sat 1-4 p.m.; Sun 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Where We Ate; Where We Eat

So, what's for dinner?

The smart thing would be to eat your way up one side of the street and down the other. Because if you do, you'll experience a parade of creative cheffery as well as gain a good sense of what the locals are growing.

March 2016 Yankee

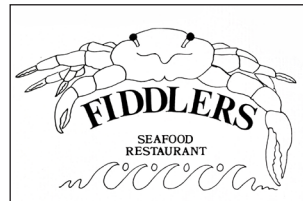
Long before Chester became home to award-winning restaurants and being touted in Yankee magazine for its "creative cheffery," Chester had its favorite restaurants. There was the Al-A-Bob (where Blackkat Leather is); Otto's (no, not today's Otto but the Otto's that served German fare); the Cove Road Inn (a 1960 newspaper described its "unexpected dining in a lovely setting"); and, of course, the Pattaconk (do you remember the 1987 summer when alligator was a favorite on the menu?).

Chester is good for dining and drinking, with options from Provençal food at "the Du," as some locals call the highly rated Restaurant du Village, to the Lunch Box, a basic breakfast spot that doubles as a travel agency. At the friendly Pattaconk 1850 Bar & Grille on Main Street, a favorite haunt, 126 ceramic beer mugs hang above the bar, each to be claimed by the regular customer who is its designated user. New York Times 2003



THE WHEATMARKET OF CHESTER has been under the ownership of Dennis Welch since April 26. Formerly of the Copper Beech and the Middlesex Opera House, Dennis has had 18 years of experience in the business. The Wheatmarket offers gourmet food and catering services. Gerry Baumier, who will be staying on to work, has owned the Wheatmarket for the past 8 years. 5/30/91 (MSN photo by Barbara Puorro)

We are looking forward to sharing photos and ephemera from Chester's restaurants – past and present – for a summer exhibit at the Chester Museum titled "Where We Ate; Where We Eat."



We are still collecting items – and stories – for this exhibit, so if you have anything to share (we can scan and return all original photos, etc.), please call

Diane Lindsay soon (860-526-2443) or email us at chestercthistoricalsociety@gmail.com

10th Creative Challenge links Chester history and creativity

Sometimes your only history source is to read; other times it might have been right under your feet.

With the tentative title of "Wood You Nail It?" this year's Challenge will be based on scrap oak boards and nails from the 19th century Chester Meeting House floor, which was replaced in 2020 (photo).

This year's Challenge will be offered as a virtual silent auction (Sept. 7 – Sept. 17), culminating at a reception on Sept. 17 in the Meeting House.

As with prior endeavors using Chester's past, this Challenge is for all those with a creative mind. More information will be available this summer through Sosse Baker and the Society.





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Civil War Letters Book Wins CT Award of Merit



Rob and Tom Miceli (pictured) were recently honored by the Connecticut League of History Organizations (CLHO) with a 2022 Award of Merit for their book, "These Few Lines: Chester in the Civil War as Depicted in the Correspondence between Willis and Nancie Ayers."

The awards committee called the book "a wonderful way of making documents accessible and comprehensible to the public." The committee "also felt the woman's perspective offered a crucial dimension to our understanding of this moment in American history."

The Miceli brothers are fifth-generation Chester natives. Both are educators – Tom at the university level and Rob an elementary school teacher. Rob has earned the title of Chester Historian because of his wealth of knowledge about the town's history. This book, published by the Chester Historical Society in 2021, was their second Chester publication.

The new book costs \$20 and can be purchased at Lark or Chester Museum at The Mill.

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