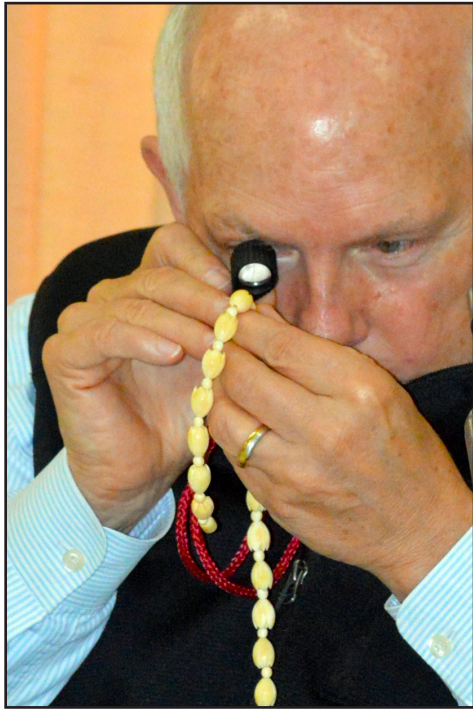




Chester Historical Society



Annual Report 2014 - 2015

President's Message

It has been another successful 12 months as we close the Society year on May 30, 2015. Our 45th anniversary of the Society occurred in April and in November we closed our 5th season welcoming visitors to Chester Museum at The Mill. Time flies when you're involved with history!

We continued to attract many visitors and guests to our museum, programs and events. In the 12 months since June 2014, more than 2200 people came to Society-sponsored activities. Almost 900 visited our museum during the season, including scout troops and school groups. An additional 290 people stopped by during Chester's Spring Carnivale.

Our non-museum event schedule was full, varied and attractive. A September vintage baseball game (1857 rules and uniforms), pairing teams from Chester, Deep River and Essex, was extremely popular and will be repeated this fall. Other free public offerings included programs featuring the Chester Fife & Drum Corps and *Sliding into Bases and Sledding Down the Hills*, a teaser for our upcoming 2015 summer exhibit. Two fundraisers, our annual Antiques Appraisal Day and Hooked Again, a silent auction of art created from sample products from the former M.S. Brooks Company, provided significant income to our annual operating budget.

Our museum exhibit, *Over the River & Through the Woods: Early Transportation in Chester*, enhanced with the addition of an 1880s bicycle, closed a very popular two-year run in November.

In addition to superb media publicity, we continue to find success with low-cost, person-to-person marketing initiatives. We had a booth presence four times at the Chester Sunday Market, pointing people to our museum around the corner. We also had the chance to talk with nearly 600 visitors to our annual Chester Fair exhibit.

Now five years into our museum/home, the Board of Trustees turned its attention to developing a Strategic Plan for the upcoming years. Led by Trustee Jenny Kitsen and consultant Chris Dobbs, the entire Board contributed in identifying and prioritizing major/minor needs and opportunities. In March, the Board approved the final plan, which included goals, specific strategies and completion times. Our four overarching goal areas are:

1. Historical Resource – The Society's programs, exhibits, collections and publications will make it and its museum a resource for all ages.
2. Community Engagement – The Society will develop greater connections to area residents and engage more people to become active participants, members, volunteers and strong organizational leaders.
3. Financial Security – Increased resources will allow a more financially secure Society to expand operations and fulfill its mission.
4. Physical Plant – The Society's property and infrastructure will be adequately maintained and improved to meet the organization's growing needs.

All Society members should be proud of creating a home for the Society and opening Chester Museum at The Mill. The Strategic Plan now provides a blueprint for efficient use of our collective resources and energies for the next 4-5 years.

We thank all who have helped get us to this point and encourage all Society members and everyone who loves Chester to join with us in sharing history and supporting our upcoming endeavors.

Skip Hubbard



Chester Historical Society

2014- 2015

Officers

Skip Hubbard	<i>President</i>
Cary Hull	<i>Vice President</i>
Sandy Senior-Dauer	<i>Vice President</i>
Jill Jones	<i>Treasurer</i>
Pam Graham	<i>Secretary</i>
Diane Lindsay	<i>Curator</i>
Robert Miceli	<i>Historian</i>
Martin Nadel	<i>Robbie Collomore Music Series</i>

Trustees

<u>May 2015</u>	<u>May 2016</u>	<u>May 2017</u>
Donna Carlson	Ed Castelli	Marta Daniels
Keith Dauer	Pam Graham	Sandy Senior-Dauer
Skip Hubbard	Jenny Kitsen	Cary Hull
Christopher Moore	Joel Severance	Pam Larson
Bettie Perreault	Anne Winslow	Bette Radicchi
Matthew Sanders	Peter Zanardi	Rick Schreiber
		Anna Shubik Sweeney

Front Cover, clockwise from top left: (1) Jeweler Paul Indorf takes an expert look at an article brought to the Society's 11th Antiques & Jewelry Appraisal Day in November; (2) The drum beat was evident at the Meetinghouse when we presented a January program featuring the Chester Fife & Drum Corps; (3) Jack Baker's submission to the Society's April Creative Challenge fundraiser used an M. S. Brooks and Sons product for a monocle for this classic *New Yorker* cover; (4) Eric Nelson batted for Chester when it joined with Deep River and Essex in September in vintage baseball games played by 1857 rules.

History Preservation

The History Preservation Committee is responsible for the Society's collections – for acquiring new items, as well as cataloging, preserving and accessing other collection items.

The core group consisting of Ruth Thayer, Pat Kosky, Janice Benda (from Andover) and Diane Lindsay works most Tuesday afternoons and Friday mornings in the Meeting House Archive Room.

We applied to the Traveling Archivist Program for a visit and were accepted. Elizabeth Boucher came in July, and we recently received her report and recommendations.

One of the functions of the group has been to serve Society members and the larger community as a resource, finding and interpreting collection materials. Inquiries from Chester, Colorado, and as far away as Italy have been answered.

Recently we have started scanning more photographs and documents, as donors wish to retain the originals but would like the Society to have a copy. The group also works with the Exhibit Committee members, preparing for exhibits by researching records and searching for relevant artifacts in our collection.

The transfer of our collection from the Meeting House storage areas to the vaults at the Mill has continued. Only after items have been added to our Past Perfect database and photographed, or scanned, are they moved to the vaults.

We are hoping to acquire new computers for the Archives in the next year, as ours are sadly out of date. We will be researching possibilities to see how we can best replace our old computers.

The work of cataloging the collection continues. We are organizing the paper files from the early days of the Society, as well as adding new donations to the database. Considerable work remains, and new volunteers are always welcome.

Diane Lindsay, Curator



You can say Bruce Watrous was stopped in his tracks when he walked by some Main Street digging by the Connecticut Water Company. Beneath the roadbed was evidence of the trolley that came to Chester in 1916-17. With help from the town crew, the Society soon had a four-foot rail to display at its museum.



Tom Medlin of Essex, an appraiser of furniture and American paintings, was one of 11 experts who volunteered their time to value and comment on items brought to the Society's Antiques & Jewelry Day in November.

Fundraising

While raising much-needed funds for the Historical Society, our fundraisers generally have a valuable historical component, whether it's providing information about the history and value of a person's "antiques" or repurposing items with a Chester background.

Our 11th Antiques & Jewelry Appraisal event, held Nov. 8 at St. Joseph's Parish Center, was a great success, attracting more people than last year and raising a profit of \$2,820. Our 11 appraisers (all of whom donate their time to us) appraised 327 items from 133 attendees from towns near and far (Ansonia, Willington, East Haven and Preston were some of the most distant towns). We anticipate holding our 12th Appraisal in early November 2015.

Our spring fundraiser was the "Hooked Again Creative Challenge." Forty-eight artists created unique items using assorted sample eye-hooks, handles and hardware, still enclosed in small sealed manila envelopes, from the M.S. Brooks & Sons factory. The Challenge culminated in a Reception and Silent Auction at the Meeting House on April 11. This very successful event, our fifth Creative Challenge since 2004, was once again chaired by Sosse Baker and raised a profit of \$5,112.

Ideas of fundraisers for the Society and event volunteers are always welcome.

A New High for Annual Appeal

We would especially like to thank our membership for the response to our 2014-2015 Annual Appeal. For the fourth consecutive year the campaign set new highs in participants (94) and dollars (\$9,160). While our appeal campaign begins in November, donations can be made at any time.

Programs and Exhibits

In 2014 we expanded our *Over the River & Through the Woods: Early Transportation in Chester* exhibit from the previous summer to include bicycles, and featured a beautiful 54" Columbia Allbright on loan from the CT Historical Society. The railroad section was enhanced with the addition of several colorful rail items. Our second-floor long-term exhibit has a new addition – a four-foot piece of the old trolley track that ran to Chester Center, uncovered last year when some Main Street water work was underway.

Attendance was very good throughout the season, and we hosted several off-hour group tours (we encourage any area organization to request a group tour).

On September 21, a delightful (if slightly aborted due to a torrential downpour) vintage baseball game was played at Devitt Field in Deep River, starring sluggers sponsored by the Deep River, Essex and Chester Historical Societies. About 350 spectators enjoyed a 'gentlemen's game' played by 1857 rules and overseen by an adjudicator complete with top hat and black suit. Old-fashioned refreshments provided by the Ivoryton Café, classic uniforms, some unnatural mustaches and cheerful rivalry made for a memorable experience. The three towns look forward to a rematch on September 20 this year; contact one of the historical societies if you would like to join the fun – females too!

In January the Society enjoyed a performance with narration by the Chester Fife and Drum Corps, the second oldest continuously operating corps in the USA.

We put together a sampling of this year's new exhibit for Chester Carnivale in February, but Mother Nature decided that was not going to happen, so nearly 300 visitors got a peek in April instead.

In March, Peter Zanardi helped organize a 'crackerbarrel' interactive talk on the history of sports, particularly baseball, in Chester. Peg Lieberman described sledding adventures and ice skating parties, and many other local residents participated, adding funny and poignant stories.

The two presentations led up to our new exhibit, opening at the end of May. This year's theme, *Pastimes in Past Times: Chester at Play*, focuses on family games, toys and sports before the digital age. We encourage you to come and see old games and toys that you might have hidden away in your attic, or maybe still enjoy. There is an interactive section for children of all ages. We welcome your comments and any additions to this flexible, evolving exhibit. Next year we expect to stay with the same overall theme, but we will focus on hobbies, clubs and organizations. If you have articles or memories that might prove useful, please contact us.

As always, we encourage you to visit the museum, a free-admission community resource for residents and visitors alike.

Sandy Senior-Dauer and Keith Dauer
Co-chairs, Exhibits and Program Committee



The popular *Over the River & Through the Woods* transportation exhibit attracted even more visitors when we added a 54" high-wheeled 1880s Columbia Bicycle on loan from the Connecticut Historical Society



The Chester Squirrels represented the town when the tri-town historical societies co-sponsored vintage baseball games played in September using 1857 rules. Front row: Paul Radicchi, Jim Cataldi, Steve Meucci, Coach Tom Miceli, Luke Marchant, Richard Thiel; Back row: Ed Meehan, Keith Dauer, Ted Heiser, Josh Winkley, Eric Nelson, Marilena Vaccaro, Rob Bibbiani, Jim Barron, Alex Learned, Skip Hubbard.

Finances

Revenues for the annual operations of the Society are generated from three primary sources: membership dues, donations (Annual Appeal, museum visitor box, other) and fundraising events. Principal expenses for general operations include servicing our loan obligation, utilities, insurance and accounting, general maintenance, preservation and cataloging of archives, and exhibit expenses.

In spite of successful fundraising events and exceeding our donation income budget, a few expenses offset the positive news. A long, cold snowy winter, and an increase in insurance rates had a negative impact on operating expenses, leading to less money than budgeted to fund the retirement of debt and our maintenance reserve.

After selling about two-thirds of our *FerryBoat* books, we have covered the printing costs; additional sales will continue to build our fund dedicated to publications.

The Society applies for and receives grants to be used for specific purposes. This year we were awarded a \$3,400 Community Foundation of Middlesex County grant toward an enhancement project that will include moving the historic millstones to flank our entrance and redoing the landscaping between the driveway and the building with native plantings. We are additionally grateful for the contributions of Chris Lawrie of Landscape Architects, who is overseeing the project. We also received a \$500 corporate grant from the Essex Savings Bank toward production of our Annual Report and newsletters.

Jill Jones, Treasurer

Operations Summary Fiscal YTD 6/1/14 - 5/15/15

The unaudited summary below reflects the YTD Operations Budget of the Society, which is apart from the Robbie Collomore Music Series. At press time, the fiscal year had not yet been closed. Final financials will be available when completed. By the end of June, our sole liability will be \$47,500 in interest-bearing notes.

Working Balance 6/1/14	\$7,772
Revenues	
Membership Dues	5,795
Annual appeal / Donations	11,573
Museum Donations	1,140
Fundraising	8,681
Grants	500
Museum Sales	445
Other	700
Total Operating Revenues	\$28,834
Expenses	
Building Utilities	7,333
Building Maintenance & Operations	796
General Operations	8,570
Fundraising	973
Communications	437
Programs & Exhibits	742
Staff Training & Education	0
Museum Store Purchases	290
Interest on Notes	2,474
Transfer to Notes Retirement	5,000
Transfer to Maintenance Reserve	1,000
Total Operating Expenses	27,615
Operating Profit / Loss	1,219
Working Balance 5/15/15	\$8,991

Membership

As of May 2015 the Society has current 214 memberships, representing approximately 350 members (see back page). We added five new memberships to our rolls and processed two membership upgrades, both to Life membership levels.

By level, we currently have 74 Life memberships, 17 Benefactors, 76 Families and 47 Individuals. A goal set in our Strategic Plan is to bring more people into our annual membership program as well as increase interest in volunteer opportunities.

We encourage all members as well as non-members to stay current by signing up for our informative monthly e-newsletter. Other than the Society-associated Robbie Collomore Music Series, we do not share any email lists with other organizations. We also now have a Facebook presence (Facebook.com/chesterthistoricalsociety). Our website is chesterhistoricalsociety.org.

Robbie Collomore Music Series

The 41st season of the Robbie Collomore Music Series was both an artistic and financial success. The first concert of the season was our annual Barbara and Edmund Delaney Young Artist Concert featuring violinist Sean Lee. This performance also represented our annual concert in conjunction with The Juilliard School. The second concert of the fall season presented the renowned jazz pianist Fred Hersch and the Fred Hersch Trio. A sellout house confirmed his stature as a giant in the world of jazz piano.

In the spring we presented blues and folk icons Jim Kweskin and Geoff Muldaur. The sellout crowd included people who remembered growing up with their original jug band music. The Chiara Quartet was the last concert of the season and besides being a treat musically, was remarkable in that the Chiara is the only string quartet that plays without music.

The structural reorganization of the Collomore Committee mentioned in last year's report is proceeding smoothly. A decision to develop a more interactive and contemporary website is nearing fruition and will be implemented for our upcoming season. Our traditional split fall and spring season has led to a number of problems in the spring season. For the upcoming season, all four Collomore concerts will be presented in the fall.

The Cornwall Trust has shown steady continued growth. We maintain a somewhat more defensive posture due to unsure economic and political stability worldwide. The value of the account increased from \$134,619.78 on 4/30/2014 to \$137,495.67 on 3/31/2015. While the performance of the Trust was satisfactory, we encountered increased costs due to development of the website, additional secretarial support and a new phenomena - performers requesting significant advance payments.

Collomore Music Committee: Randy Allinson, Ray Archambault, Karin Badger, James Baker, Anne Easton, Andrea Ely, Karli Gilbertson, Donald Hanson, Rick Holloway, Martin Nadel (chairperson), Bettie Perreault, Sue Saltus, and John Williams.

Chester Historical Society

2014- 2015 Membership

LIFE

Randy & Chris Allinson
Frank W. Appleton, Jr.
Harry & Hazel Archambault
Ray & Liz Archambault
Thomas & Kathleen Archambault
Albert Armington
Phyllis Bevington
Thomas & Marianne Bladek
Robert & Mildred Blair
Lary Bloom
Bill Bonfanti & Madeleine Winans
David Brooks
Shirley Feldmann Bush
Gregory Cook
Michael & Felise Cressman
Alys S. Cuneo and Lynn Weymer
John W. Dalton
Keith Dauer & Sandy Senior-Dauer
Barbara Delaney
Deb Dembo
Elise Piquet-Doll
Gerry & Cynthia Dubey
Henry & Britt Flanagan
Cal & Jill Gladding**
Peter & Jan Good
Robert Gorman
Alva G. Greenberg
Mark & Cheri Ferrari Habersang
Leni Herschman
Skip & Karen Hubbard
Cary Schuler Hull & Al Malpa
Mrs. Edward C. Hull
Nathan & Geraldine Jacobson
Kathryn Watrous Jones
Jon & Doreen Joslow
Pauline Kaplan
Mrs. Jenny Kitsen
Steve & Ann Kitteredge
Robert P. Klomp
Pat Kotchen
Pam Larson
Robert & Stacey Lewis
Carol LeWitt
D. Leonard Lieberman
Lorraine Lieberman
Margaret Lieberman
Donald MacDermid
Jess Maghan & Peter Walker
Lou Matz
Robert Miceli
Christopher Moore
Deborah Morrow
Joel Motley III
Martin & Lois Nadel
Jil Nelson
Charles G. Nessler, Jr

Sandra Davis Owen
Jo-Ann & Michael Price
Robert Radicchi
Harvey Redak & Justine Tobis
Glenn & Peg Reyer
Jeff & Holly Ridgway
Michael & Sally Sanders**
Arthur & Judith Schaller
Evelyn Schneider
Rick & Terry Schreiber
Dr. Kim Senay
Joel & Adrienne Severance
Bruce & Beverly Watrous
Whitelaw & Margaret Wilson
Virginia Winans
William & Victoria Winterer
James Zanardi
Richard & Joan Ziemann

BENEFACTOR

John & Janice Benda
Edward & Debra Calamari
Gil & Anne Bartlett
Arthur & Mabyr Christianson
Helene & Ned Johnson
Jules & Kathleen Kranich
Phyllis M. McDowell
Jean Mulford
Charles & Jo Anne Park
Sandy & Deedee Prisloe
Paul & Dawn Radicchi
Janice Carlisle & Joseph Roach
Hila & Saul Rosen
John & Kimberly Stack
Laura Straub
Paul & Anna Shubik Sweeney
Ron and Suzie Woodward

FAMILY

Eric & Ginny Anderson
James & Marian Bairstow
Jack & Sosse Baker
Joyce Birtcher
Robert Blair & Kris Pollock
Mark Borton & Francine Cornaglia
Geraldine Carini-Garcia
Ernie & Pam Cartier
Edward & Gail Castelli
James & Diana Castelli
Dick Chaffee & Susan Chetwin
Ted & JoAnna Chapin
Herbert & Sharon Clark III
Lol & Charlene Fearon
Frank & Helene Ferrari, Jr.
David Fredericks
Mario & Dorothy Gioco
Roger & Elizabeth Goodnow

Allen & Pamela Graham
Edward Grzybowski
Marcus & Maryanne Hall
Richard & Mary Harrall
Louis & Marie Anne Heft
Susan D. Joslow &
Thomas W. Holland
Richard & Patricia Holloway
Geoffrey & Carol Jacobson
Joel & Susan Jacobson
Laurel & Scott Johnson
Jill Jones & Frank Kucharski
Harold & Linda Jones, Jr.
Randy, Beth & Emily Judd
John & Wendy King
David & Diane Kukta
Genevieve M. Laskowski
Sam & Nikki Lindberg
Claude & Catrin Martin
Ed & Amy Martorelli
Kenneth Maxwell & Arlene Tunney
Ed & Peg Meehan
Allan Mehlberg & Spruce Roden
Michael & Mary Elizabeth Merlini
Steven & Kathryn Merola
John & Madaline Meyer
Samuel & Mary Mirabito
Thomas & Ann Monaghan
Richard & Lorraine Morrow
Charles & Susan Murphy
Arthur H. Napier III &
Barbara-Jan Wilson
Lance & Dawn Parker*
Donald C. Paulson
Michael & Susan Peck
Don & Kristen Perreault
Kim & Kathy Price
John & Jennifer Rannestad
Bruce & Mary Rayner
Jim & Marie Ready
Cookie & Fred Robertson
John & Lisa Schroeder
Mel & Kris Seifert
Richard & Elaine Sevigny
Bob & MaryJo Sortland
Jacqueline Stack & Mark Riggio
Van & Barbara Standke
Alex & Mary Ann Stein
Richard & Leslie Strauss
Melody & Philip Tierney
Peter & Sally Tiezzi, Jr.
George & Linda Trevisani, Jr.
Dave & Margo Viggiano
Wayne Wahala & Lisa Gauthier
Skip & Margaret Weisenburger
Ronald & Lois Wickson
George, Patty & Maggie Winter

Peter & Jane Zanardi
Burgi & Leo Zavatore
Bill & Agneta Ziegler

INDIVIDUAL

Robert Bandzes*
Dale Bernardoni
Frances Bertelli
Sally Bibbiani
Tom Brelsford*
Margaret Breslin
Jane Deuse Cable
Marta Daniels
Alma Carini Doak
Robert Dona
John H. Ford
Jane Gordon
Elizabeth Gourlay
Martin L. Heft
Charley Hnilicka
Carol Horvath
Christopher Kearns
Patricia Kosky
Dorothy Lavezzoli
Edward Leffingwell Jr.
Tedd Levy
Diane Lindsay
Sally Marvin
William Myers
Hazel Negrelli
Betsy Watrous Pasinella
Bettie Perreault
Charles Priest
Bette Radicchi
Lewis Clark Robison
Matthew Sanders
H. Peter Satagaj
Judith Lynde Schondorf
Sharon Soja
Rick Spencer*
Chuck Still
Elsie Straube
Ruth Thayer
Gregory Thompson*
Elizabeth Tremalgia
Louise R. VanHaverbeke
William Vollers
Nancy Watkins
Daisy Watrous
Elizabeth Watrous
Dorothy S. Whiting
Anne Winslow

*New Members

**New Membership Level
Membership as of 5/14/15