It’s Official! Construction Has Begun

If you passed the Historical Society over the past few months, you couldn’t help but notice the surprising transformation as our tireless contractors blasted, dug and chipped away to lay the groundwork for our long-awaited campus transformation. On April 9, under an auspicious blue sky, we proudly celebrated a major milestone of the Reimagine the Campus Campaign when, with “golden” shovels in hand, we officially launched the construction phase of our new campus. “It’s very rewarding to see us come to this moment in time after all the years of planning and research,” Historical Society Executive Director Debra Mecky said. “I’m overwhelmed and I’m pinching myself asking if it’s really true. We still have a lot of work left to do, but it’s a special moment in our town’s development.”

Architect David Scott Parker, who led tours through the work area, said the project’s start has gone exactly as he had hoped it would. “I couldn’t be more pleased, and it’s been a collaborative effort from the beginning,” Parker said. “In a year and a half this is going to be a reality. This is such a happy day for everyone.”

Noting the new galleries, archives, expanded parking, café, museum shop, meeting space and additional handicap accessibility, Board Chairman Davidde Strackbein said the expansion will allow the Historical Society to make “a greater contribution to the cultural life of Greenwich.”

Peter Malkin, chairman of the Reimagine the Campus Campaign, noted, “We are a year ahead of schedule on the fundraising and our redevelopment. And within that year ahead of schedule, we’re now a month ahead of schedule! The digging has been done, not just for the parking area but for the entire foundation, and it’s under budget.” We now expect to open in fall 2018.

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Plans for Antiquarius ’17 Well Under Way

The groundwork has now been laid for this year’s holiday fundraiser, Antiquarius, and some exciting new developments are in store. With a group of 40 key volunteers in attendance, the Antiquarius volunteer breakfast, held on May 2, was graciously hosted by board member Jessica Guff and opened with a short history of Antiquarius provided by Board Chairman Davide Strackbein. Antiques Show producer Frank Gaglio talked about how this year’s show will include “Fine Art, Jewelry and Antiques” in its subtitle to reflect a greater emphasis on categories that especially appeal to the Greenwich market.

This year’s honorary design chair, Richard Keith Langham, will set the scene for the opening night party at the Eastern Greenwich Civic Center, and at least two homes styled by Langham will be featured on the Holiday House Tour.

With antiques and design fresh in mind, Warren Lagerloef and Alexia Palmer of returning Antiquarius sponsor Betteridge gave a talk on the perennial relevance of antique and vintage jewelry for wearers and collectors alike. Designer Kevin Isbell continued the program and the sentiment with a talk on the importance of incorporating antiques into contemporary homes for a more personalized look. Stay tuned for Antiquarius announcements in the coming months! There’s more exciting news to come.

Save the Dates

Opening Night Party for the Greenwich Winter Antiques Show
December 1, 2017

Greenwich Winter Antiques Show: Fine Art, Jewelry and Antiques
December 2 & 3, 2017

Holiday Boutique
December 5, 2017

Holiday House Tour
December 6, 2017

Historic Trust Event Honors Patrons for Their Generosity

On May 24, the Historical Society honored its leadership donors at a cocktail reception chaired by board members Anne Ogilvy and Robert H. Getz at the beautiful back-country home of board member Lynne Wheat.

Getz recognized attendees for the direct impact their donations make on the Historical Society’s ability to sustain preservation, history and art education initiatives as well as stewardship of Bush-Holley Historic Site. He also noted the tremendous progress we have made over the last year in realizing plans for our reimagined new campus.

Guests also enjoyed a fascinating informal talk by David Rago and his wife Suzanne Perrault, who oversee the preeminent auction house that bears Rago’s name. Well known as expert appraisers for the hit PBS series Antiques Roadshow, they specialize in decorative ceramics and porcelain. The Rago Arts and Auction Center recently became a sponsor of Antiquarius and will offer appraisal services during the Antiques Show.

The Historical Society thanks Northern Trust for generously underwriting the evening.

Please consider making a contribution to the Greenwich Historic Trust Leadership Giving Program by June 30 to ensure recognition in this year’s annual report. Your support will ensure that we continue to connect people of all ages with the vibrant history of our community. Contact Katrina Dorsey for more information at 203-869-6899, Ext. 15, or at kdorsey@greenwichhistory.org.
Bea Crumbine Honored as Volunteer of the Year

On April 12, 2017, the Greenwich Historical Society held its annual Volunteer Recognition Event to acknowledge all of its wonderful volunteers at the Round Hill Club. Board member Bea Crumbine was presented with the 2017 Volunteer of the Year Award by First Selectman Peter Tesei and Executive Director Debra Mecky for spearheading the Historical Society’s exhibition From Italy to America, which documented the contributions made by Italian immigrants in shaping so many aspects of our town. Bea’s efforts not only drew the spotlight to the Italian community but also resulted in sister city status for Greenwich with both Rose and Morra de Sanctis, Italy, where many of Greenwich’s Italian families originated.

Also recognized was youth volunteer Ana Heavey who, throughout her high school years, helped develop programs for the Girl Scouts and served as a junior advisor on the Historical Society’s Education Committee. Three outgoing Antiquarius volunteers were recognized for their leadership roles: Suzanne Eason Hopson for long-standing service in logistics and transportation; Deb Robinson for the Patron and Preview Party and Carrie Emery for garnering patron support.

On behalf of the board and staff of the Greenwich Historical Society, Executive Director Debra Mecky expressed thanks to all the wonderful volunteers for sharing their “time, energy, creativity and support. We wouldn’t be able to do all we do without you.

Hamilton Avenue Students Inspired by Bush-Holley Historic Site

By the end of this school year, nearly every student at Hamilton Avenue School had visited the Bush-Holley Historic Site as a result of our museum/school partnership. The program, begun seven years ago, arranges for working artists and educators to conduct classroom workshops at the school to further explore topics touched upon during site visits. It exposes students to the enjoyment and creation of art, while building a foundation for lifelong learning and appreciation of local history.

On June 15, proud students shared the results of their studies with their families and school officials, with an exhibition of class quilts and self-portraits and tours of Bush-Holley House. Their delightful impressions offer fresh and insightful reflections on our site and are a gratifying testament to this important educational program.

Support the Hamilton Avenue School/Museum Partnership

You only understand where you’re going if you know where you came from. The Historical Society continues to nurture a close partnership with Hamilton Avenue School, a Title One magnet school in Chickahominy, where more than half of the students are eligible for free or reduced-cost lunches. Many speak English as a second language. Your support of this program allows children in grades one to five to visit the Bush-Holley House each year to study the history of the town they call home. Your donation also pays for classroom enrichment activities to enhance the museum experience.

Supporting this initiative is a fantastic opportunity to instill the appreciation of art and history in children who might not normally have the chance to visit a museum or historic site. To support this program, please contact Katrina Dorsey at kdorsey@greenwichhistory.org or call 203-869-6899, Ext. 15.

Call 203-869-6899, Ext. 10 for reservations & information about all programs | news + programs | July | August | 2017 | Greenwich Historical Society
Save the Dates:

July 16
Greenwich LOOK Polo Event

December 1, 2017
Preview Party for the Greenwich Winter Antiques Show

December 2 & 3, 2017
Greenwich Winter Antiques Show

December 5, 2017
Holiday Boutique

December 6, 2017
Holiday House Tour

An elegant afternoon at the Greenwich LOOK VIP Polo Event

Sunday, July 16
Ticket includes gourmet lunch by Sonnier & Castle, an open bar and a glamorous afternoon of high-goal polo viewed from your perch in the LOOK VIP Tent.

Best of all, $50 of each $200 ticket will benefit the Greenwich Historical Society.


Thank you, Amelia!

Greenwich High School senior Amelia Luckey, who hails from Byram, interned with us mid-May to mid-June to gain work experience before heading to the University of Vermont where she will be studying education. Amelia came to us through Greenwich High School’s Senior Options program. She assisted with school tours and programs in the Education Department and also took part in staff and planning meetings. “I want to be an elementary school teacher, so the part of the job I enjoy the most is working with the schoolchildren,” Luckey said. “I love to see their excitement as they learn what it was like to live in Colonial times.”

We wish Amelia the best of luck as she embarks on her college career.

Don’t Let Your Membership Lapse

You may have received a reminder note in the mail recently.

Please don’t forget to renew your membership. Your support is crucial.

Visit our new blog at greenwichhistory.org/blog and follow us on:
New Vanderbilt Society Helps Us Plan for the Future

Dear Friends,

We are pleased to announce the launch of the Vanderbilt Society, our newest initiative and a core part of our Reimagine the Campus Campaign.

Since the Greenwich Historical Society was founded in 1931 to collect, preserve and share the history of our exceptional town, several members have included bequest provisions in their wills to support our important mission. An outstanding example of this tradition was provided by the late Claire Vanderbilt, who was instrumental, along with her husband Hugh, in advancing the Historical Society’s role in Greenwich for almost 50 years. Among her memorable efforts was a bequest, which, along with material contributions from other generous donors, facilitated the purchase of Toby’s Tavern, a critical component of the current expansion of our National Historic Landmark campus.

In honor of Claire and Hugh, we have established the Vanderbilt Society to recognize individuals who include a bequest to the Greenwich Historical Society in their estate planning. Bequests of all sizes, as well as retirement plan rollovers and gifts of art and other property, will ensure optimal use of the newly restored and expanded facilities designed by architect David Scott Parker. Bequests to the Vanderbilt Society will enable us to welcome more members of our community and beyond to learn about and be inspired by the archives, exhibitions and education programs, which are the cornerstones of the Historical Society’s vital contributions to the Town of Greenwich.

Our current expansion of the Historical Society’s campus on Strickland Road will create a state-of-the-art venue to further expand and enhance these programs, and to that end, we have added a $5 million endowment goal to the Campaign. Your participation in the Vanderbilt Society would play an important role in ensuring that current and future generations would benefit from these initiatives.

All Vanderbilt Society members will be recognized annually at a reception and personally thanked for their generosity to the Historical Society. Also, with their permission, they will be acknowledged in the Annual Report and other Historical Society publications.

As members of the newly formed Vanderbilt Society, we would like to invite you to also become a member and, in doing so, enable the continued success of this esteemed organization as it continually seeks to reach its highest aspirations.

To join the Vanderbilt Society, contact our Development Director Katrina Dorsey at 203-869-6899 or kdorsey@greenwichhistory.org. She will provide you with a detailed and thoughtful explanation of how to work with your advisors regarding this bequest, complete with the appropriate language specifically describing different types of bequests.

Sincerely yours,

Davidde E. Strackbein
Chair, Board of Trustees

Debra Mecky
Executive Director, Greenwich Historical Society
When people hear the names Jim and Jane Henson, most immediately think Sesame Street and The Muppets. Visitors to our current exhibition, *Jim and Jane Henson: Creative Work, Creative Play* will not only have the opportunity to learn about the origins of some of their favorite Sesame Street characters, but will also learn how the Hensons’ experiences as parents and artists laid the groundwork for important contributions to early childhood education through these beloved puppet personalities.

Jim and Jane Henson met as art students at the University of Maryland in 1954. Having made his first puppets and television debut that summer, Jim recruited Jane to be his production and performing partner. They were natural collaborators, sharing a subversive sense of humor and encouraging each other’s artistic instincts. In 1959 their partnership turned romantic, and they were married on May 28, initiating what would become a seamless interplay of work and family that would be a constant throughout their lives.

They moved into their home on Round Hill Road in 1964. In that first year Jim built a dollhouse modeled on that home for his daughter Cheryl, complete with dormers and chimney stonework made with cut and painted sandpaper. Over the years, Cheryl and her father added roof shingles, custom-turned balusters, electric lights and handmade furniture. Watching the children play with the dollhouse and observing the antics of the family cats (who were forever finding their way in to sleep) inspired the short Sesame Street film *Number Two: Dollhouse*, which may be seen in the gallery. Using Cheryl’s dollhouse as a prop, Henson filmed two girls with two dolls interrupted by two naughty cats—and all the ensuing chaos.

The dollhouse is one of many family pieces included in the exhibition. Jane recalled, “At home, we had all kinds of things going on all the time.... A general feeling of creativity was always around the house.” Boundless imagination fueled by an array of art materials resulted in creations such as hand-painted wooden blocks and the decorated boxes that held them, a coloring page Jim drew for the children and Cheryl’s story of the tooth fairy, laid out on television storyboard paper. An equally important source of inspiration was the home’s natural setting. Jim painted large canvases of light filtering through trees, and Jane roamed the nearby woods collecting stones with interesting shapes to incorporate into her ceramic sculptures.

The Henson family lived in Greenwich from 1964 until 1971, extraordinarily productive years. This exhibition provides an opportunity to celebrate Jim and Jane Henson’s unique family life, its impact on their work and how they continue to inspire, entertain and educate new generations around the world.

P.S. Just before the exhibition opened, Cheryl made a brand-new addition to the dollhouse: a hand-painted grandfather clock, featuring a picture of the Round Hill Road house. Look for it in the living room!