

**TOWN OF EAST LYME
SMITH-HARRIS HOUSE COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, SEPTEMBER 23rd, 2015**

FILED IN EAST LYME
CONNECTICUT
Oct 1 2015 AT 10:00 AM PM
Casey A. Blair
EAST LYME TOWN CLERK

Present: Gary Lakowsky, Chairman, Maggi Prokop, Barbara Odgers,
Kathleen Sasso

Also Present: Joanie DiMartino, Smith Harris House Curator
Donna Massung, Friends of Smith Harris President
Mandy Morris

1. Call to Order

Chairman Lakowsky called the September 23, 2015 Meeting of the Smith-Harris House Commission to order at 7:03 PM.

2. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Lakowsky called for any additions, deletions or changes to the August 25, 2015 Regular Meeting Minutes.

****MOTION (1)**

Ms. Odgers moved to approve the August 25, 2015 Regular Meeting Minutes of the Commission as presented.

Ms. Sasso seconded the motion.

Vote: 4 – 0 - 0. Motion passed.

3. Reports

✚ **Public Delegations**

Mindy Morris, who had worked with them during the summer, presented information on 19th Century Funeral Customs that they might be able to use for upcoming October events. (Attached)

Donna Massung, President of the Friends reported on the October 12, 2015 Columbus Day – an Explore History (free) vent will be held at the House from 12-4 PM which will include mural painting. On October 24, 2015 from 3-6 PM would be Spirit voices – Victorian Mourning and Spiritualism with Tours of the Burial Ground costing \$10 per person or \$30 per family. Lastly, on October 28, 2015 there will be the event "Slightly Creepy Folk Tales" held at the House for free from 6 to 8 PM. This event is part of the 'Trick or Trunk' Halloween program.

Mr. Lakowsky noted that they would need to cancel their Regular Meeting held on October 28, 2015 and schedule a Special Meeting for Thursday evening October 29, 2015 instead.

✚ **Ex-Officio Report**

There was no report.

✚ **Curator's Report**

Ms. DiMartino thoroughly reviewed her report. (Attached to Minutes)

Ms. DiMartino said that the Rotary is giving them \$250.

Mr. Lakowsky noted that the Lions are giving \$500.

Ms. Odgers asked how many of the Steps CT \$100 charges for the sessions would be required. Ms. DiMartino said one in this fiscal year and then two in the following fiscal year.

✚ **Agenda Additions**

Mr. Lakowsky asked that they add Cynthia DeHaan Gift to the agenda as New Business Item D.

****MOTION (2)**

Ms. Sasso moved to add item D. under New Business – Cynthia DeHaan Gift to the agenda.

Ms. Odgers seconded the motion.

Vote: 4 – 0 - 0. Motion passed.

✚ **Chairman's Report**

Mr. Lakowsky reported that he had tilled by hand a quadrant of the garden area and was able to fix a weed whacker that he found in the basement of the House for use at the House.

He also reported that he has contacted a person that he knows who does fund-raising professionally for large organizations in an effort to broaden their contacts and the appeal of the House.

✚ **Financial Report**

▪ **Status Update**

Mr. Lakowsky noted that Mr. MacDonald was unable to attend this evening as he had another event to attend.

▪ **Presentation of Bills**

Mr. Lakowsky asked if there were any bills.

Ms. Odgers presented a receipt for \$75 that was approved at a previous meeting.

Ms. Prokop presented a bill for \$14.60 from the misc. supplies line item for the purchase of water for the motorcycle show.

Ms. DiMartino presented a bill for \$378 for the Constant Contact account (yearly fee) to come from Museum Programs.

****MOTION (3)**

Mr. Lakowsky moved to pay the above listed bills as presented.

Ms. Sasso seconded the motion.

Vote: 4 – 0 – 0. Motion passed.

▪ **Barn Rentals**

Ms. Prokop said that they did not have anything new other than the October 10, 2015 wedding.

▪ **2016-2017 Budget**

Mr. Lakowsky recalled to the members that they had some previous discussion on moving some of the line items around in their budget and suggested that they review it and return it to him at the next meeting of the Commission. He passed out draft budgets for this purpose. He noted that the intent is to have the line items be more reflective of what is actually happening so that they do not have to try to fit things in somewhere or do transfers.

✚ **Collections Committee**

Ms. Odgers presented her report (Attached) and noted that she had attended a program at the Library on 'Outhouses' where the presenter had donated a monogrammed roll of paper to them.

✦ **Correspondence**

Mr. Lakowsky said that he did not have anything at this time.

4. OLD Business

✦ **Property Maintenance**

▪ **Garden Fence and Maintenance** – Mr. Lakowsky said that he previously reported on the garden.

▪ **Front Walkway** – Mr. Lakowsky said that this would be done in the spring.

▪ **Lighting** - Mr. Lakowsky said that they are very close to receiving a donation on the new flood light. He said that he would obtain another estimate on the cost of the installation and hopes to be able to have this done sometime in October. They will take the floodlights that are up there and they will be on a sensor so that they will go on automatically. The new flood light will 'flood' the entire area that currently is dark.

✦ **Museum Development**

▪ **STepCT Report**

Reported previously – see attached Curator's report.

5. NEW Business

✦ **Property Maintenance**

○ **Barn Roof** – Mr. Lakowsky said that this is still on schedule for Spring 2016

○ **Split Rail Fence** – Mr. Lakowsky said that he has the estimate.

○ **Brush Removal** – Mr. Lakowsky said that he would catch them to do this when they do the road.

✦ **Museum Development**

Mr. Lakowsky said that there is a meeting October 2, 2015.

✦ **Upcoming events:**

▪ **October Events –**

▪ **October 12** – Explore History – 12-4 PM – Free

▪ **October 24** – Spirit Voices – 3 – 6 PM - \$10/pp; \$30/per family

▪ **October 28** – Trick a Trunk and Slightly Creepy Folk Tales – 6 – 8 PM – Free

▪ **Cynthia DeHaan Gift**

Mr. Lakowsky said that Ms. Sasso had come up with the idea of planting a boxwood tree in Ms. DeHaan's honor on the grounds – the question is where they would like to plant it. A suggestion was made to plant it near the door as there is a spot there for it.

Ms. Prokop will check into where to purchase the boxwood, when to plant it and the approximate cost and let them know at the next meeting.

It was also noted that the Care & Share donation in December will be made in memory of Cynthia DeHaan.

Mr. Lakowsky lastly noted that he has a 2008 map detailing the land for the Historic Register and that the area marked in red has what was presented at that time in relation to the overall area for the Smith Harris House. He said that he is proposing that the back area of some 400' x 400' and an area at the entrance also be part of their property as it is more in line with what they do. He said that he would like their approval to present this to the Board of Selectmen.

****MOTION (4)**

Ms. Prokop moved to authorize the Chairman of the Smith Harris House Commission to present the revised area plan of the Smith Harris House to the Board of Selectmen. Ms. Odgers seconded the motion.

Vote: 4 – 0 – 0. Motion passed.

6. Adjournment

Mr. Lakowsky called for a motion to adjourn.

****MOTION (5)**

Ms. Prokop moved to adjourn the September 23, 2015 meeting of the Smith Harris House Commission at 8:49 PM.

Ms. Sasso seconded the motion.

Vote: 4 – 0 – 0. Motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Zmitruk,
Recording Secretary, Pro-Tem

19th Century Funeral Customs

"Many people did not fear death; rather, they feared not being "properly" mourned"
(National Park Service, 2011)

Preparation before the funeral

- It was customary for the clock in the room of the deceased to be stopped at the time of passing and would not be restarted till after the passing.
- All blinds and curtains were closed
- A black wreath was hung on the doors in order to let others know that someone had passed (at this time mourning was public and shared with in the community)
- Mirrors and any reflective surface ^{was} covered in black cloth
- Crepe, a black cheese cloth like material, was draped on mantels, shelves, and window sills. (White draping would be used if it was a child that had passed)
- Many times herbs such as rosemary were laid out around the parlor to help mask the smell
- Families would send out funeral cards or invitations to let family and close friends know of the passing and the day it would be held. These were typically white with black bordering
- Postmortem postcards were sent to family members who were too far away to attend the funeral.

Body Preparation

After death the body was laid out and washed. Men would wash the deceased if they were male and women would wash them if they were female. The body was then wrapped in a shroud that had long sleeves and an open back. It would not be till later on that people would begin to bury people in their own clothing. Next the body was placed in a coffin in the parlor usually atop saw horses or two ladder back chairs. After the minister prayed over the body the coffin was nailed shut and draped in a black shroud to be taken to the cemetery.

Keepsakes

- Memorial cards were handed out at the funerals and were considered tokens of the dead. These had the deceased's name, birth date, death date, number of years months and days of life, as well as an uplifting poem or message.
- Mourning portraits were pictures, sketches, or paintings of a family member dressed in mourning usually holding a portrait of the dead.
- People would make items that could be used to remember the deceased. Examples are samplers, hair wreaths, monuments, etc.

Women in Mourning

Attachment submitted

9/23/15

- Colors that were worn defined the degrees of mourning and the distance of relationship to the dead
- Women's mourning could last up to two years or longer
- There were 3 stages to a women's mourning
 - o Deep Mourning- this was for a spouse or child and could last up to a year
 - Women only spoke to close family members and secluded herself
 - Could only wear black
 - Usually had a bonnet with a black veil to wear outside
 - Black gloves, handkerchiefs, handbags, fans, and mourning jewelry
 - o Second Mourning- lasted 9-12 months
 - Full mourning cuffs and collars were replaced by white cuffs and collars
 - Veils could come off
 - o Half mourning
 - Lasted 3-6 months
 - Could ~~were~~ ^{use} purples, mauves, and grays

Men in Mourning

- Men wore their best dark suit and usually a black band around their arm or hat
- Men were expected to be the strong ones and return to work as soon as the dead were buried
- Men could remarry shortly after their wife's death in order to find a mother for his children
- Depending on how long ago the wife had died the new wife might have to take up mourning for the deceased

Changing Times

- By the 1880's hospitals had become an acceptable place to die
- Funeral director had become a profession and funerals were occurring in funeral parlors
- Grief became less public
- Coffins changed shape and became caskets by the late 19th century
- People were no longer being buried as much on personal property
- The first rural cemetery was established in Boston, Mount Auburn Cemetery
- Tombstones became more elaborate

References

Ken. 2011. Passion For The Past. 19th Century Mourning Practices. Retrieved from:
www.passionforthepast.blogspot.com

Old Sturbridge Village. 2003. Historical Background on Mourning Rituals in Early
19th Century New England. Retrieved from: <http://resources.osv.org/>

National Park Service. 2011. The Custom of Mourning During The Victorian Era.
Retrieved from: www.nps.gov/jofl

Director's Report--September, 2015
Submitted to the Smith-Harris House Commission

Upcoming Meetings

- STEPS-CT Management (MGMT) sessions, Monday & Tuesday, September 28th & 29th, 9:30 am to 4:30 pm, at CHS in Hartford.
- Middle School program with ELMS teachers, Friday, October 2nd, 9:30 am at ELMS.
- STEPS-CT sub-committee meeting, Friday, October 2nd, at 3 pm at the ELHS Library.
- "Spirit Voices" meeting, Friday, October 9th, 11:15 am at the House/Barn.
- Historic House Trail Brochure meeting, Tuesday, October 13th, 10 am at Charter Oak.
- Friends Board Meeting, Tuesday, October 13th, at 2 pm, at the ELPL.
- Historic Properties Commission Meeting, Monday, October 19th, 6:30 pm, at Town Hall.
- Smith-Harris House Commission Meeting, Wednesday, September 23rd, 7 pm in the senior center.
- Additional meetings scheduled throughout the month TBD.

GRANTS

The big news is that much of my early- to mid- September hours were spent in applying for three (yes, 3!) grants to cover beginning initiatives in our collections management, to allow us to both generate a significant basis for our inventory, but also allow us to extend our knowledge to our visitors. The grants proposals were sent to:

- Niantic Rotary Foundation, for \$1000 toward the purchase Past Perfect software (\$1004.00, with our AASLH member discount); *Update - Rotary giving \$250. —*
- Foundation of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (FAIC) for materials and supplies to offer an "Angels Project," under the supervision of textiles expert Susan J. Jerome, to document, clean, and properly store our complete textiles collection with a committed group of volunteers;
- Chelsea Groton Bank for \$1050.00 to cover the \$150.00 honorariums for a local conservationists to lead a series of seven "Preserve Your Past" workshops from April through October 2016 for the general public on how to best care for their own family heirlooms and antiques.

This last is an initiative to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the Smith-Harris House. As the community of East Lyme banded together to save and preserve the House, in turn the museum will share its knowledge by offering a series of workshops to assist residents in saving and preserving their own personal heirlooms and collections.

STEPS-CT

Attachment Submitted 9/23/15

The current STEPS-CT Sub-Committee: Donna Massung, Kathleen Patterson, Kathleen Sasso, Maggi Prokop, and director Joanie DiMartino met throughout the month to continue with STEPS-CT work.

- We begin the Management (MGMT) section next week, which will feature budget-related policies and documentation.
- Please see attached sheet for our list of MVG documents completed and in-progress. We're getting close to finishing our Board Manual for both organizations.
- We will need to pay for our second year of AASLH & CLHO memberships at the end of this year, as part of our STEPS-CT obligation (and NEMA).
- **The Friends of Smith-Harris House have paid for the first 3 sessions of STEPS-CT; the Commission will need to pay for the final 3 sessions (one will be in this fiscal year [Collections--March, 2016], and two will be in the next fiscal year [Historic Landscapes--July, 2016 & Interpretation--November, 2016], so we have time to plan the budget. The cost is \$100 each session.

Technology/Publicity

- Donna & I have met with Stacey Ventura to renovate and update our website. We will be working together to update text and photos on several pages, removing by-law information, adding links to our (new) Facebook page and Constant Contact E-blast, and adding a way for visitors to sign up for membership and programs directly on-line through a Paypal account.
- Stacey is working on changing my work email address to: director@smithharris.org.
- We will need to pay for our Constant Contact account, as well. (\$378.00; yearly pre-paid discount of \$162.00)
- I will be creating a new Facebook page for the Smith-Harris House; stay tuned!
- We will be participating in a "Mystic Country"-wide initiative managed by the Southeastern CT Cultural Coalition to generate a "Historic House Trail" brochure which will be placed all over the state to promote the many different historic houses in this area.

Programs/Education

- Maggi & I are offering house tours to Wil Reed's students on Thursday, October 1st at 7:30 am. I don't yet know where the students are digging this semester.
- I have been contacted by the program director of Crescent Point for House tours for their residents; however, many of the residents are not physically able to access the House, so I suggested the possibility of creating a "Traveling Trunk" -style program to bring to their site sometime over the winter. I would like to have at least one other person working on this with me, as I think it has potential to be offered to other audiences as well.
- UPCOMING PROGRAMS: please see attached sheet.
 - Please review and let me know what you would like to do to assist.

It's that time of year when we need to begin considering program options for January through March/April 2016. I'm open to suggestions, especially any ideas on how to recognize and celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the Smith-Harris House.

Meetings Attended

- 8/28- grant meeting.
- 8/28- STEPS-CT sub-committee meeting.
- 8/31- STEPS-CT AUD wrap-up session in Hartford.

- 9/4- FAIC grant proposal “Angels Project” phone meeting with Susan J. Jerome.
- 9/8- website meeting with Stacey Ventura.
- 9/8- Friends of Smith-Harris House meeting.
- 9/11- “Spirit Voices” meeting.
- 9/11- budget meeting.
- 9/15- “Historic House Trail” brochure meeting.
- 9/18- “Spirit Voices” update/revamp meeting.
- 9/21- represented the Smith-Harris House at the EL Historic Properties Commission meeting.
- 9/23- Commission meeting.

Submitted by:
Joanie DiMartino, executive director

September 23, 2015

Explore History!
Smith-Harris House
Monday, October 12th
12-4 pm, Free

Looking for something fun to do on Columbus Day? Join the Smith-Harris House as we host family-friendly activities that explore history! Try your hand at painting a "mural," make a hankie doll, and test your skill at "squash bowling," "graces," "hoop roll," and other historic games played by children two centuries ago! Take a tour to discover what life in an East Lyme farmhouse was like in the 1800s! Visit our website for more information at www.smithharris.org or contact director Joanie DiMartino at 860-739-0761 or curator@smithharris.org.

Spirit Voices: Victorian Mourning and Spiritualism
Smith-Harris House & the Old Stone Church Burial Ground
Saturday, October 24th
3-6 pm.
Open-House is free
Tours of the Burial Ground: \$10 per person/\$30 per family
Tour times: 3:30, 4:30, 5:30

Discover Victorian-Era rituals of death and dying at the Smith-Harris House! From 19th-century funeral traditions such as "widow's weeds" and "safety coffins," to the rise of the séance, learn how those who died were remembered and honored by loved ones. Then, take a 45-minute tour of the Old Burial Ground and encounter former residents of the Smith-Harris House, as they share vignettes of their former lives! To purchase tour tickets, contact director Joanie DiMartino at 860-739-0761 or curator@smithharris.org. For more information, visit our website at www.smithharris.org.

Slightly-Creepy Folk Tales
Smith-Harris House
Wednesday, October 28th
6-8 pm, Free

Come for the treats, stay for the tales--as part of the Town of East Lyme's "Trick or Trunk" Halloween program! The first floor of the Smith-Harris House will be lit by candlelight, while several spine-tingling local and regional folktales are shared. Perfect for families and those who enjoy folktales! The "Trick or Trunk" program, which occurs annually on the grounds of the Smith-Harris House, is a safe Halloween Trick-or-Treat alternative event sponsored by the East Lyme Youth Services Department of Parks & Recreation.

STEPS documents for Mission, Vision, Governance

Develop a Board Manual for Commission Members and Friends Board of Directors, including:

- Mission & Vision Statements (Commission & Friends/Both)--DONE
- Bylaws (Commission & Friends)--DONE
- Code of Ethics (Joint)--DONE
- Conflict of Interest Policy-- in process
- Job Descriptions for Commission/Friends Board Members-- in process
- Job Descriptions for Paid Staff-- in process
- Job Descriptions for Unpaid Staff-- in process
- Job Performance/Annual Review for Paid Staff-- in process
- Records Retention Policy-- in process

We plan to apply for a 1st-year STEPS grant (\$1500.) to develop a Strategic Plan. The money will go toward hiring a consultant who will lead us through the process of deciding what our priorities and goals are for the next 3-5 years, so that we can best allocate our resources.

SEPTEMBER 2015 COLLECTION COMMITTEE REPORT

There was no meeting held in September.

The Johnny Appleseed Rambo species tree donated by Mary Cutillo, is no longer available for purchase.

I will be trying to contact early members of the Commission on Aging to hopefully find someone who can provide an answer concerning the tree planted near the Virginia White bench.

I have spoken with Ann Marie Gucwa concerning the small piece of needlework made by her mother that she and the Girl Scouts donated. She plans to speak with her mother for details. It appears the piece is recently created and would be most appropriate for the Special Use Collection.

The Bi-centennial Quilt has been found.

The Time-Life Civil War books are awaiting a decision from the High School Library.

I have switched my attic focus to ensuring that all textiles currently in the attic are conveniently arranged near the stairs for the Regional Angels Grant program scheduled in March.

As we approach the Holidays the decorations scattered in the attic will also be brought forward away from in front of the attic window for easy access.

The attic window is in need of repair so it is important to clear away the clutter there. Please see attached for a description of the window.

Tuesday September 22 I attended a program about Outhouses at the Library. It was very informative and the presenter Mr. George Papp, Sr. is very anxious to visit our Outhouse. He mentioned archeological digs at Outhouses have turned up very interesting finds. I asked him his opinion concerning the painting of historic Outhouses and he felt they were usually white washed or natural wood. There would not be any attempt to draw attention to an Outhouse. He did start out by saying Lilacs or other bushes were often planted around the Outhouse to obscure them from view. He donated a monogrammed roll of paper to the museum; it will be placed in the "Special Use" department.

Sincerely, Barbara B. Odgers

Attachment submitted 9/23/15

The term "Chinese Chippendale" used to describe the Smith-Harris 36 pane window was first mentioned by the architect Robert I. Carter hired by the Restoration Committee. Bob specialized in the 18th century.

"The term Chinese Chippendale in architecture is applied to a specific kind of railing or balustrade that was inspired by the 'Chinese Chippendale' designs of cabinet maker Thomas Chippendale. The infill between the top and bottom rails and the vertical supports is a series of interlocking diagonals, although rectilinear designs exist as well."

"The design was popular in the United States in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Prominent examples of the style exist on the wing terraces and uppermost balustrade at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello. The term may also be applied to latticework." (definition provided by Wikipedia; reference to This Old House article)

Chinese Chippendale does not refer to something built by Thomas Chippendale (1718-1779) but rather the term refers to a design developed by Thomas Chippendale and very often copied by others.

In 1754 Thomas Chippendale became the first cabinet-maker to publish a book of his designs titled *The Gentleman and Cabinet Maker's Director*. Since the Chinese Chippendale design carries his name it is likely that some of those designs appeared in his book. It is not a stretch to imagine that craftsmen would adopt his designs for their own purposes.

Although we have little knowledge of the specific builder of the Avery homestead we can tell from the fine woodwork that the builder was an experienced craftsman, and most likely had access to books on his trade.

I have a Governor Winthrop desk that I know was purchased brand new in 1950 by my father for my mother. In researching the Chinese Chippendale design I found a Governor Winthrop desk where the glass doors of the upper cabinet are described as "Chinese Chippendale". It looks just like mine.

Sincerely, Barbara