

Smith-Harris House Commission  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
July 23, 2014

FILED IN EAST LYME  
CONNECTICUT  
July 25, 2014 AT 11:30 AM/PM  
Disseph Blair  
EAST LYME TOWN CLERK

Present: Gary Lakowsky  
Kathleen Sasso  
Maggi Prokop

Also Present: Joanie DiMartino, Smith-Harris Curator  
Donna Massung, Friends of the Smith-Harris House

I. CALL TO ORDER. Chairman Lakowsky called the Smith-Harris House Commission Regular Meeting of July 23, 2014 to order at 7:10 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES. Mr. Lakowsky asked for additions, corrections or deletions to the June 25, 2014 Smith-Harris House Commission Regular Meeting Minutes.

MOTION: Ms. Prokop moved to approve the June 25, 2014 Smith-Harris House Regular Meeting Minutes, as presented. Seconded by Ms. Sasso. Ms. Sasso abstained from voting. (2-0-1) Motion carried.

III. REPORTS

A. Public Delegations. Donna Massung reported the Friends set up a souvenir display at the house. Membership forms will also be available.

B. Ex-officio Report. Mr. Wilson was not present, and there is no report.

C. Curator's Report. (See attached)

D. Agenda Additions.

MOTION: Ms. Prokop moved to add under New Business D. December Show Date. Seconded by Ms Sasso. (3-0) Unanimous.

E. Chairman's Report. Mr. Lakowsky reported the wood on the back porch was rotting, and he tore it up. replaced the wood and painted that section of it. He also cut the branches near the corn crib.

He added raspberries and peaches are plentiful at the house.

He found a photo of the orchard from 1930.

F. Financial Report.

1. Status Update. Mr. Lakowsky reported as of July 21, 2014 there is a remaining balance of \$16,188.67 in the Smith-Harris House 2014/2015 budget. He spent \$50.39 for wood and nails and \$3.39 for wood glue from encumbered funds at Rings End.

Mr. Lakowsky reported \$47.33 has been spent for the docent and clerical bills and \$264 for the Curator.

2. Presentation of Bills. No bills were received.

3. Barn Rental. Ms. Prokop reported Saturday's rental was cancelled. She has one barn rental in September.

G. Collections Committee. No items were received.

H. Correspondence. Mr. Lakowsky read letter of thanks from Wil Reed's anthropology class. They found 550 items.

#### IV. OLD BUSINESS

##### A. Property Maintenance.

1. Garden Fence and Maintenance. Mr. Lakowsky reported the garden fence needs to be painted, and the garden needs to be maintained.

2. Tree Limbs. Mr. Putnam has agreed to have a crew take care of the tree limbs as time permits.

3. Front Walkway. Mr. Lakowsky reported the front walkway will be made of slate.

##### B. Museum Development.

1. Educational Programs. There was no discussion on educational programs.

#### V. NEW BUSINESS

##### A. Property Maintenance.

1. Barn Painting. Mr. Lakowsky met with First Selectman Paul Formica. Mr. Formica spoke to the Prison Warden who agreed to have the barn painted by inmates. It will be power washed prior to the painting. The Friends will provide food for the inmates.

MOTION: Ms. Prokop moved to encumber \$600 at Rings End for paint and supplies to paint the barn. Seconded by Ms. Sasso. (3-0) Unanimous.

2. Barn Roof. The barn roof is on the Town's Capital Improvement Plan.

B. Museum Development.

1. Educational Program Middle School. There was no further discussion on the educational program at the Middle School.

2. Textile Closet. Mr. Lakowsky reported the Friends have contracted with the carpenter.

C. Summer Events.

1. Mrs. Lincoln September 6. Mr. Lakowsky stated publicity will be needed for this event. It was felt \$10 should be charged for this event.

D. December Show Date. It was agreed that the December Show Date and Wreath sale will be held on December 13. Sally Rafanello will be contacted.

MOTION: Ms. Prokop moved to approve the December 13 show date. Seconded by Ms. Sasso. (3-0) Unanimous.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Ms. Prokop moved to adjourn the July 23, 2014 Smith-Harris House Regular Meeting at 8:00 p.m. Seconded by Ms. Sasso. (3-0) Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,



Frances Ghersi, Recording Secretary

## **Curator's Report--July**

Submitted to the Smith-Harris Commission

We enjoy July with opened blinds and windows, and cool breezes blowing through the Smith-Harris House as visitors enjoy tours! This is such a lovely time of year, where locals and out-of-state visitors alike indulge in leisurely picnics on the grounds, visit the museum, and enjoy summer's vacation days--meanwhile, behind-the-scenes, hard work is going into museum improvements and fall programming!

### Tours/Staffing

- I'm happy to announce that Cindy is able to return as part-time interpreter for the final month of summer. She'll begin on Friday, July 25th, and take the Saturdays throughout August, along with a few Fridays and Sundays.
- Hank Savin is also on-staff as part-time interpreter and has enjoyed his time so far at the House.
- We have had some visitors to view the House on non-tour days, which has given me the opportunity to try different tour formats.
- I've worked with the Friends Board to offer items for sale in the foyer at the end of the tour.

### Tour Script

- Much of my time this month has been dedicated to a lot of reading and research for rewriting the tour script. I feel like I have a much better understanding of the Thomas Avery family, and also how to approach our interpretation of the House so that each time period of the House is addressed during an approx. 30-minute tour for visitors. Here is a basic draft:
  - Front Hall (or outside front of House): overview of Avery family & Greek Revival-style of architecture
  - Parlor: use of Parlor; finding "The Christian Freeman" newspaper during restoration; why House is important--daily farm life during technological changes/national events
  - Master Bedroom: use of Master Bedroom, continued information about Avery family (size of family, etc), display hooks in closet which leads to:
  - Sewing Room: along with hooks Sewing Room will allow for discussion of increased technological changes in CT and America during that time of Avery family residence
  - Children's Room: discuss how this room reflects two generations of Avery children who lived here;
  - Murals: brief overview while heading back down to first floor
  - Sitting Room: use of room (less formal than parlor); discuss William inheriting house upon father's death, begin introducing Smith family line into tour
  - Office: discuss what little is known of Avery's business ventures; how other generations may have used the space; wrap-up Avery portion of tour; share brief overview of Smith
  - Dining Room: use of room; briefly mention changes in cooking (hearth-use out of fashion by 1845); room reflects slightly later elegance; talk about Smith and introduce Smith & Harris and the Munger Sisters

- Kitchen: use of kitchen--oldest portion of house; discuss the property in 20th-century known as "Brookside Farm," and dairy farming, acquisition by Town of Groton, Smith-Harris Commission
- Foyer: wrap-up with photos of house and land before restoration, importance of Commission in preserving and maintaining property, and share upcoming events and programs, offer membership/volunteering brochures, encourage visitors to visit outbuildings, linger on the porch awhile, and to return another time
- I've located a photograph of Reverend Abraham Selden Avery, Thomas Avery's brother, and would like to have it framed and display it in the parlor or office
- I've also found a photograph of Frank Harris, and would like to have that on display as well
- I think it would be ideal to have a tastefully arranged collage of a few selected 'before' photos to hang in the foyer to demonstrate historic preservation and work put into restoring the House
- This is a draft, and please know that I am open to discussion/changes/suggestions, etc. Tours are always a work in progress, and what is shared can (and should) be tailored to the visitor's interests and time.
- \*\*I'm also generating a binder with more detailed information, such as entire deed transactions for the House, information of the time periods the house covers, etc. so that any interpreters so inclined can discover more information and have a better understanding of the families who inhabited the house and the times they lived in.
- \*\*I also plan to give copies of the tour script to the Friends Board, as at times they also volunteer to staff rooms in the House, during special events and such, and should have the most current information available to them as well.

### Meetings Attended

- met with Tara Bowen at the East Lyme Library to discuss program collaborations, 7/8
- phone meeting with CT Humanities cut short due to visitors for tour, 7/8
- met with Kathleen Sasso to review tour, 7/18
- met with Hank Savin to review tour, 7/18
- Commission Meeting, 7/23

### Programs

- confirmed Sally Raffiello for Sept. 6th Mary Todd Lincoln widow program
- potential collaborations with library:
  - textiles program
  - food preservation/work
- \*\*Things to consider:
  - upcoming holiday/Christmas programming
  - 2015 is 150th anniversary of end of Civil War
  - other 2015 programs

### Collections

- Andy Derr, carpenter, plans to have a contract available to the Friends Board and begin work on the textiles closet in early August

### Upcoming Initiatives

- Finishing tour script, including physical changes to several rooms in House (contingent on Commission Approval)
- Working with Kathleen Sasso to generate Capacity Building Grant to develop a strategic plan through the CT Humanities by November
- Working with members of Friends Board to organize attic and basement
- Upcoming public programs

Submitted by:

Joanie DiMartino, curator  
July 23, 2014

CC: Commission Members and Friends Board