

Smith-Harris House Commission  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
August 27, 2014

Present: Gary Lakowsky  
Kathleen Sasso  
Maggi Prokop  
Richard MacDonald

FILED IN EAST LYME  
CONNECTICUT  
Sept 2, 2014 AT 11:50 AM/PM  
Cathy Gallo, an  
EAST LYME TOWN CLERK

Also Present: Joanie DiMartino, Smith-Harris Curator

I. CALL TO ORDER. Chairman Lakowsky called the Smith-Harris House Commission Regular Meeting of August 27, 2014 to order at 7:05 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES. Mr. Lakowsky asked for additions, corrections or deletions to the July 23, 2014 Smith-Harris House Commission Regular Meeting Minutes.

MOTION: Ms. Prokop moved to approve the July 23, 2014 Smith-Harris House Regular Meeting Minutes, as presented. Seconded by Mr. MacDonald. Mr. MacDonald abstained from voting. (3-0-1) Motion carried.

III. REPORTS

A. Public Delegations. Donna Massung was unable to be present, and there was no report.

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 B. Museum Development, 3. 2014 NEMA Conference Costs. Seconded by Mr. MacDonald. (4-0) Unanimous.

MOTION: Ms. Sasso moved to add under New Business B. Museum Development, 4. Constant Contact. (4-0) Seconded by Mr. MacDonald. (4-0) Unanimous.

A. Property Maintenance.

1. Barn Roof. Mr. Bence will obtain estimates for the barn roof.

B. Museum Development.

1. Educational Program. There was no discussion on the educational program.
2. Textile Closet. Ms. DiMartino will select the paint color for the textile closet.
3. 2014 NEMA Conference. The NEMA Conference is for curators to receive input from museum experts and discuss grant opportunities. The cost for Ms. DiMartino and Ms. Sasso to go is \$300.

MOTION: Ms. Prokop moved to approve the 2014 NEMA Conference Costs in the amount of \$300.  
Seconded by Mr. MacDonald. (4-0) Unanimous.

4. Constant Contact. Ms. DiMartino reported Constant Contact can help with email advertising. The cost is \$540 for the year. There is a \$30 discount for prepaying. We can have one newsletter per month.

MOTION: Ms. Sasso moved to approve the expenditure for Constant Contact for an amount not to exceed \$540. Seconded by Mr. MacDonald.  
(4-0) Unanimous.

C. Summer Events.

1. Mrs. Lincoln September 6. Mr. Lakowsky reported the advertising has been completed. Messrs. Lakowsky and MacDonald will set up. Ms. Sasso will ask the Key Club to help with the set up.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Ms. Prokop moved to adjourn the August 27, 2014 Smith-Harris House Regular Meeting at 8:20 p.m.  
Seconded by Mr. MacDonald. (4-0) Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Frances Gheri, Recording Secretary

## **Curator's Report--August**

Submitted to the Smith-Harris Commission

We find ourselves, in late August, at the cusp of another season--a time of change. Change is often hard to embrace, but, as I celebrate one full year as curator of the Smith-Harris House, I find myself continually impressed with the willingness of everyone I work with to have dialogue and make decisions that have often lead to change, and this month's report features many of those positive initiatives.

### Tours/Staffing

- We've had a steady flow of visitors touring the house this summer; I will have the official number in my September report, as we have a few "open" days left in the season.
- I developed a form and inventory for the Friends' sale items, to more accurately keep track of sales and donations.
- I met with Cindy, one of our interpreters, to update her fully on changes and current direction of museum.

### Tour Script

- The tour script is coming along nicely, if a bit more slowly than I had originally planned. I've located many papers of previously-done research, and have been adding new information that is scholarly accurate to the best of my knowledge, and plan to continue the research while I finish. The tour script will always be a "work in progress," as information will be added or removed as we learn more about the families that lived in the house. I've completed the introduction, the parlor, and almost all of the second floor. Let me know if you'd like to see a current draft.

### Collections

Many changes have occurred with our collections over the past month; in particular:

- The small room off the Sitting Room is now the Office.
- The small room off the Master Bedroom is now the Sewing Room.
- Several items have been moved to new locations, such as the wash basin, the bath tub, the banjo clock, the "Christian Freeman" newspaper, and other artifacts, using their new home to enhance the story of the Averys, Smiths, and Harris Families.
- Our textiles closet is now complete, and ready for painting, shelving, and historic artifacts to store.
- A large amount of my time this past month has been dedicated to making these changes a reality, from prepping the former library for the carpenter to removing items from furniture to be moved, to adjusting room settings so that the House still looks nice for our visitors while we make adjustments.
- A special thank you to Friends President Donna Massung, who, along with her granddaughter, assisted me in preparing the library for the carpenter. Donna will also continue to work with

me as we organize the textiles closet, going through clothing and artifacts, selecting and purchasing proper boxes for storage, and maintaining proper care.

- Another special thank you to Commission members Maggi Prokop, Gary Lakowsky, Dick MacDonald, and our interpreter Cindy DeHaan for their willingness to come in at different times throughout the process to assist the carpenter with access to the house, and answer questions as needed.
- Also, a special thank you to Ron Bentz and his staff at the ELPR for assisting us with moving some heavy pieces of furniture.
- We have had the donation of a child's cradle for consideration to acquire; it appears to be 19th century. It will need some structural work to make it sound. We can decide this evening, or wait until next month to allow Commission members to view the item, which is in the space outside my office currently. Donor to remain anonymous until a decision has been made.

### Programs

- Publicity has been completed for the "Mary Todd Lincoln: Wife & Widow" program on Saturday, September 6th. We're all set with Sally & ready for the crowds!
- "A Toast to Our Textiles!" open-house event is scheduled for Tuesday evening, October 7th, from 6:15 pm to 7 pm. This is a meet-and-greet style event where we welcome visitors to come and celebrate the museum's changes with us. Publicity has begun for this event.
- the "Fiendish Folklore" program will once again be a collaboration with the Parks & Rec "Trick or Trunk" event. It was very successful last year, and we hope to increase numbers and awareness, as well as reach out to families.
- Possible canning program with ELPL still under consideration. Will be in November if finalized.
- Open-House Christmas Celebration will be December 6th & 7th. We won't charge for visitors to enjoy the museum; details still in planning stages.
  - Possibilities:
    - potential themes:
      - 2014--Elizabeth & Thomas First Christmas Together (1845)
      - 2015--Peace on Earth, For Blue & For Gray (1865)
      - 2016--Christmas Tidings from Brookside Farm (1920s)
      - 2017--A Very Victorian Christmas, from D.C. to Niantic (1885)
    - silent auction wreaths in conjunction with Wreath Sale
- Gary Lakowsky will be offering "An Evening with the Belschnikel" on Thursday, December 11th at 6 pm; details still in planning stages.
- Been in dialogue with Sally about the December 13th performance; date is set.

2015:

- I've contacted Allegra Farm re: horse-drawn carriage for the Memorial Day parade; he charges \$800-\$900 for non-profits; and doesn't work the horses past 4 hours.
- I'd like to see us offer several Civil War-related programs next year, given the 150th anniversary of the end of the war.

### CTHumanities Council/Grant update

- I've had two meetings with Commission member Kathleen Sasso, and several phone conversations with Lauren Miller, grant officer at CTHumanities. We've all agreed that our best choice is to apply to the STEPs (STandards and Excellence Program for history organizations) assessment program. It's a 2-year process that covers foundational museum standards and assists small to mid-sized museums to meet their goals. They believe we're perfectly set up to gain much from the program, so we plan to apply as soon as the application is available. We can have Lauren review our application ahead of time, and make changes before the deadline. This allows us to enter a program with our peers, and not compete with larger museums for a Capacity Building Grant; it also enables us to apply for a small grant for STEPS participants only to acquire funds to hire a consultant to lead us through the long-range plan process. This is a very exciting development, and I look forward to working with everyone on this. Please see attached handout for more information.

### Meetings Attended

- 7/25--Meeting with Cindy re: updates & changes
- 7/25--Meeting with Kathleen re: grants, etc.
- 8/12--Partial Friends Meeting
- 8/19--Meeting with Kathleen re: CTHumanities & STEPs program
- 8/26--Meeting with Barbara McGrath re: graphics, marketing, and publicity
- 8/27--Commission Meeting

### Professional Development

- 8/21--"What We Know About What They Wore: Decoding Dress in Early American Folk Art" lecture by Brenda Rosseau, Manager of the Colonial Williamsburg Costume Design Center, at the Florence Griswold Museum.
- 8/27--NEMA webinar, "Strategic Thinking and Planning for Membership"
- \*\*There is an upcoming lecture, "Looking at Furniture Through the Lens of Conservation" at the Florence Griswold Museum on Thursday, September 11th at 2 pm. \$7 per person. I plan to attend. Let me know if you'd like to join me. Here's the description: "This lecture explores the materials, fabrication, and decoration techniques of 18th-century decorated chests from the Connecticut shoreline. Tad Fallon and Randy Wilkinson, Furniture Conservators, Fallon & Wilkinson, LLC also provide tips and techniques on the care and conservation of historic furniture."
- \*\*Commission member Kathleen Sasso & I plan to attend one day of the annual NEMA conference in Boston this year. Cost will be \$180 for me as staff, and \$120 for Kathleen as a Trustee. Deadline for early bird registration is 10/10/14, so the Commission can decide this month or next month to fund our attendance. Please let me know if you would like to attend as well.

### Upcoming Initiatives

- Continue with tour script.
- Apply to the CTHumanities STEPs program with Commission member Kathleen Sasso.

- Finalize room changes, including developing the sewing room in more detail, as well as begin storage aspect of textiles closet, with Friends President Donna Massung.
- Continue developing autumn/holiday programs.
- Begin program planning for 2015.

Submitted by:

Joanie DiMartino, curator  
August 27, 2014

CC: Commission Members, Friends Board, and Interpretive Staff