The Wishing Well

Beginning with this issue, we introduce opportunities for generous members to make a difference by underwriting compelling projects in the $1,000 to $5,000 range that are waiting for an angel. If you’re interested in any of the following projects or would like a more detailed explanation of why they are needed and how much it will cost, email or call Bill Hosley at hosley@newhavenmuseum.org or 203-562-4183 x 11.

#1 Landscape Improvements: remove exterior foundation plantings to protect building and improve curb appeal.

#2 New Haven Illustrated Gallery Improvements: repaint and fine tune the gallery—new wall color, refinish floor, improve lighting, enlarge the exhibit’s photographic component.

#3 Web Site Additions: increase features to our web site including membership forms and ability to donate funds online; list and sell select shop items; add “virtual exhibits”; access issues of our newsletter, and join a web-based membership community for “New Haven Colony Descendants” nationwide.

#4 Arts of New Haven Exhibition in the Clement Gallery: Reinstall and improve lighting, refinish floor, add display platforms to highlight feature pieces from the collections.

The Era, Art & Legacy Feature Exhibition Lecture Series

The Era, Art and Legacy Lectures will highlight aspects of the 1930s Federal Arts Project throughout New Haven and the nation, enhancing the recently opened exhibition. Join us as we explore New Haven in the 1930s; celebrate the murals and sculpture of New Haven; learn how the art is being preserved; and discover New Haven’s place in this national program to employ artists and create public works of art.

All lectures begin at 5:30 p.m. in the NHM&HS auditorium.

Reservations: please call 203.562.4183 x.10
Pre-registration guarantees a seat.

Admission:
Per lecture: $8 members $10 non-members
Series: $20 members $25 non-members

Community Gallery Exhibition: The New Haven Bar: From the Colonies to Today

The New Haven County Bar Association will celebrate the centennial of its charter by mounting an exhibition that explores the legal profession in New Haven. The New Haven Bar: From the Colonies to Today will be on view from April 24 until October 27 and will explore the role lawyers have played in setting the standards and integrity of the legal profession in the city for over 300 years. The New Haven Bar will also highlight New Haven lawyers through the years and cases of national importance.

Past to Present

The newsletter of the New Haven Museum and Historical Society

Adult Programs Featured in 2007

The New Haven Museum and Historical Society is refocusing its efforts on programs, lectures, tours and events for its members and friends. This year’s calendar will offer many ways to explore our Museum and Whitney Library collections as well as the art, architecture and culture of the New Haven region. Look for our feature exhibit lecture series and our newest addition—New Haven Heritage Salons. You will find more detailed information on the late winter/spring opportunities inside this issue or at our web site www.newhavenmuseum.org.
Meeting with our new president Mike Iannuzzi in November we identified a few key objectives for the year ahead. We will review each of our core operations - library, museum, education and facilities - and determine how to make them more effective and self-sustaining.

You may have read the recent (December 31, 2006) New York Times feature on how Colonial Williamsburg is coping with declining visitation and historical inquiry nationwide by selling off assets - in this case Williamsburg’s off-site Carter’s Grove historic house museum.

This story couldn’t be more timely as we continue to grapple with the fate of the Pardee Morris House. As many of you know, the Society’s trustees voted to transfer it to private ownership with preservation restrictions two years ago. It was hard to face. We operated Pardee Morris as a museum for 80 years without a dime of state or municipal support. I have long believed that “citizen angels,” as I call them, risk being lost in a sea of homogenization. Unique cultural attractions and archival repositories like ours provide greater New Haven with a sense of memory and allure.

As we grapple with the continuing challenge of making New Haven’s oldest civic cultural organization relevant and indispensable, it’s clear that one of the solutions will be to plant our flag firmly in place, declaring that New Haven matters, traditions matter, real things matter and that places devoid of “place markers,” as I call them, risk being lost in a sea of homogenization. Unique cultural attractions and archival repositories like ours provide greater New Haven with a sense of memory and allure.

Longtime friend and past Seal of the City recipient Doris Townshend analyzed the results of approximately 100 survey forms filled out by our members. We learned a lot of things that will influence our priorities in the year ahead. We learned that photographs are the most popular part of our collection of historic sites and artifacts.
The New Haven Heritage Salons Explore Issues Past & Present

The New Haven Museum debuts its New Haven Heritage Salon Series – programs involving learning, leisure, socializing, and refreshments. The evenings will include a panel discussion and conversation with the audience. Refreshments and light hors d’oeuvres will round out the event. Look for our next Salon later in the year.

An Evening with Edmund Sinnott Slides & Conversation about New England Church Architecture & Preservation— Yale Professor of Botany, Edmund Sinnott (1888-1960) is alive and well in the extraordinary archive of photographs and writings he and collaborator Jerold Manter produced during the 1940s-70s on New England Church architecture. These wonderful images and records will drive the discussion as we explore the issues surrounding church heritage stewardship. These buildings give shape, form and meaning to our environment and in many Connecticut towns they are the single most prominent architectural landmarks and many are now at risk.

Date & Times: February 27th 5:30–7:30 pm
Registration: 203.562.4183 x.10 or info.newhavenmuseum.org
Admission: $15 members $20 nonmembers

Periscope—Great Things to See and Do in & Around New Haven

A visit to the New Haven & Derby Railroad Club in Orange, Connecticut

I recently took a call from a Chuck Fleischman of Milford seeking documentation for a model recreating the 19th century appearance of the Long Wharf railroad and port depot in New Haven. Not surprisingly we have tons of stuff including photographs, maps and manuscripts. It sparked my curiosity so I went out one evening to the Club’s facility in the Academy Building of the Orange Historical Society in Orange Center and saw what they’re up to.

For more than 20 years, this modest club has been painstakingly preserving the memory of an obscure but fascinating slice of American railroad history – which is the story of the 13 mile section of railroad once known as the New Haven & Derby Railroad – a section of track that ran from Long Wharf up the Valley to Shelton and Derby and then connected by other lines to New York and the West.

I am not a railroad buff – though always enjoy interacting with those who are. One the most evocative museum displays I’ve ever seen is the approximately 300 square foot super realistic diorama of Cincinnati, complete with working model trains, at the Cincinnati Historical Society headquartered inside that city’s monumental Art Deco railroad station. Imagine such a thing for New Haven, with its enormous and important railroad history (see www.nhrbta.org). On a modest scale this Club is doing history skillfully and with imagination and passion. I was fascinated to see how, over the course of 20 years, they’ve painstakingly recreated a series of connected civic landscapes, precisely recreating specific buildings, tracks and, in the case of Shelton, an existing canal and dam so that beyond playing with trains, worthwhile in its own right, they are also preserving a sense of time and place. Dioramas like this are extraordinary teaching tools that provide a jumping off point for discussing how industrial communities looked and functioned.

Like the Revolutionary and Civil War reenactors who have done as much as the best historians and filmmakers at focusing public attention on the American experience, the community of railroad enthusiasts deserve recognition. Evidence is overwhelming that this is one area of contemporary life where history is alive and well.

Bill Hosley

Message from the President

Thank you for the honor and the challenge of being the 27th President of the New Haven Colony Historical Society and the first President chosen to lead the New Haven Museum & Historical Society. As we enter into a new era, there must be a connection of our past accomplishments to our future success. In order to make that connection we have an obligation to Listen, Learn, and Lead. Listen to our members, our staff, our executive director, our board, our past leadership, and our community; and as we listen we must learn and the knowledge we gain will assist us in leading the NHM&HS forward.

My goal is to have a Well Informed Board and a Well Informed Community. We need to be well informed as we are the ambassadors who need to speak with passion and understanding to increase awareness and membership. Partnerships must be formed with the Business Community to create greater awareness with the General Community. We must embrace the Academic Community that surrounds us and work diligently to strengthen that relationship. We are capable of creating excitement and a Buzz in the community about who we are and what we do.

We are fortunate to have a great staff. The experience and passion of our Executive Director, Curator, Librarian and Director of Education will lead the way toward a successful future. Collectively the Board of Directors has the talents needed to successfully handle the affairs of the NHM&HS. But it will be our passion that will lead the New Haven Museum and Historical Society to a new era of greatness.

As we enter 2007, I look forward to working with everyone and if we listen, learn and lead then together we can make history.

Michael P. Iannuzzi
President of the Board

Bill Hosley
Executive Director
hosley@newhavenmuseum.org
From the Collection:  Portrait Busts  by Amy Trout, Curator

Webster – two great Americans that represent leadership and education, respectively.

Sculptural busts reached their height of popularity in the late 19th century, when mass production allowed middle-class households to own wooden and plaster figural sculpture and memorial busts for display in family parlors or libraries.

One such example in our collection is a bust of Ulysses S. Grant by Bernard Dreyfuss, signed with a June 1885 patent and copyright date on the back. Grant died in July of 1885 and Dreyfuss’s version is often referred to as “the mourning bust”. Although Grant is immortalized in numerous statues, the Dreyfuss bust was small and lightweight, making it perfect for a home, office, or school room.

The Society owns several other busts, both plaster and marble—some easily identified, others not. Matching names with faces is not as easy as it sounds when so many of the subjects are depicted clad in classical robes. Most of our busts reside in storerooms, awaiting further research and/or conservation.

Plaster and marble busts bring a new dimension to the concept of the image memorial. Who’s head would you want on your desk or in your home? Who’s face would inspire you?

From the Whitney Library:  The Dana Collection Digitization Project

By James Campbell, Librarian & Curator of Manuscripts

In the 1930’s and 40’s Arnold Guyot Dana devoted himself to compiling a 150 volume scrapbook collection which he called “New Haven Old and New.” This unique resource contains many original photographs, maps, booklets, and even some original manuscripts. It is arranged both by geography (there are seven volumes for Chapel Street) and by subject (businesses, schools, clubs, churches, etc.). Many of these pages contain items obtainable nowhere else.

This collection has been a part of the Whitney Library for many years. Mr. Dana’s daughter, Mrs. Philip English, arranged to have the scrapbooks microfilmed and his grandson, James D. English, spent much time in the 1980’s indexing the collection. It is used almost daily by researchers.

It was determined that another approach to the collection needed to be found. The originals seemed to be used too often and the quality of the copies made from the microfilm was poor. The Dana/English family continued their involvement with this collection and agreed to fund the digitization of the scrapbooks.

The rationale for this approach was three-fold:

1. Security – the originals and the microfilm were both stored in the same building. Having been scanned, the material can be kept on disks and easily stored offsite;
2. Preservation – the originals were overused and we could not expect them to hold up under such use, and;
3. Copies can be easily made from the digital version which are far superior to those available from the microfilm. Indeed, photograph quality copies can be made with this new technology. In addition, there is the possibility of additional enhancements in the future, even online accessibility.

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NHM&HS Calendar of Events for Winter & Spring 2007

February
27: New Haven Heritage Salon Series — An Evening with Edmund Sinnott: Slides & Conversation about New England Church Architecture & Preservation (see article on pg. 8) 5:30-7:30 pm

March
14: A&L Lecture Series — Beauty & the Beast: 300 Years of Connecticut Architecture  5:30 pm, Bill Hosley please call A&L to register**
22: Whitney Library Associates Program — Timothy Dwight’s Travels *  5:00 pm, Bill Hosley
28: A&L Lecture Series— Eighteenth Century Architecture Three Ways  5:30 pm, Dr. James Sexton (featuring the Pardee-Morris House) please call A&L to register**

April
4: A&L Lecture Series— Beyond the March of Styles: Architecture and Urban Space in Victorian New London  5:30 pm, Dr. Abigail A. Van Slyck
18: School Vacation Week Program – Mural Madness  10:00—11:30 am, ages 8–11 registration required
24: The New Haven Bar: From the Colonies to Today exhibit opens to the public

May
9: Whitney Library Associates Program — The Dana Digitization Project *  5:00 pm, James Campbell
23: The Era, Art & Legacy Lecture Series— A Decade in Contrasts: New Haven in the 1930s  5:30 pm, Amy Trout,
30: The Era, Art & Legacy Lecture Series— When Walls Could Talk: CT WPA & Section Murals in Their Historical Context  5:30 pm, Bruce Chambers

June
6: The Era, Art & Legacy Lecture Series— FAP Murals & Sculpture: Saving the Art & Celebrating Their Legacy,  5:30 pm, Patricia Garland & Francis Miller

Pre-registration encouraged for all programs, please call 203.562.4183 x. 10 or info@newhavenmuseum.org
*For Whitney Library Associates Programs please call: 203.562.4183 x.15  ($10 NHM&HS members, $15 non members)
**To register for Antiquarian and Landmark Society Lectures please call A&L at 860.247.8996 x.23
For more information on upcoming programs and events, please visit www.newhavenmuseum.org.

July 1, 2005 – June 30, 2006
New Haven Museum & Historical Society

Since its founding in 1862, NHM&HS has been a community organization. The success of its programs, exhibits and collections is dependent upon the support of individuals and businesses. The supporters listed below gave us the ability to offer changing exhibits, programs for children and adults and the opportunity for visitors to conduct research using one-of-a-kind archival resources. While this listing features those who gave significant funds during our 2005-2006 fiscal year, all contributions are critical to our success.

Thank you for your support.

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