



Quarterly News and Updates

September 12, 2025 | Issue 17

Statewide Historic Preservation Plan Update

Good news! The National Park Service accepted the draft submission for Connecticut's statewide historic preservation plan (2025-2035). Finalizing the plan will require some light editing and design work, but the overall scope and direction, which was based on constituent feedback, will not change.

The theme of the Statewide Historic Preservation Plan, ***Weaving a Thread between the Past and Future***, is a recognition of the variety of places across the state that form the tapestry of Connecticut's personality. These places are woven into our communities to form our individual identities and to reflect our collective character. To that end, the following goals for historic preservation are set for the next 10 years:

Goal 1: Enhance citizens' quality of life by preserving and revitalizing our historic places, ensuring they remain vibrant, accessible, and integral to the cultural and economic fabric of our society.

Goal 2: Promote appreciation of our State's historic built environment and archaeological resources through educational programs that foster a deeper understanding of the importance of preservation.

Goal 3: Activate collaboration among government agencies, non-profit organizations, educational institutions, community groups, and preservation partners to collectively protect our state's historic places.

Goal #4: Use data to enhance identification, documentation, and preservation of cultural resources, contributing to more efficient and equitable resource management.

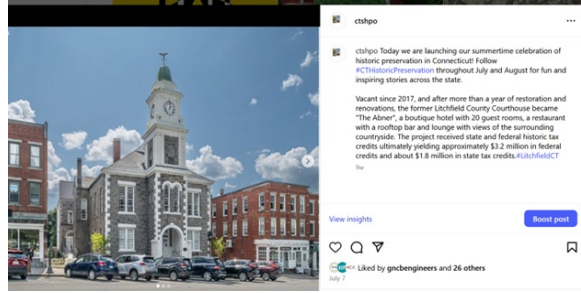
Goal #5: Promote adaptability in historic preservation practice. In recognition that the physical landscape, natural and built environment, building codes, available materials, and construction technology are dynamic, it is important to allow for innovation in historic preservation solutions, without damaging historic resources.

We will be sharing the draft soon for input from our partners and constituents before final publication.

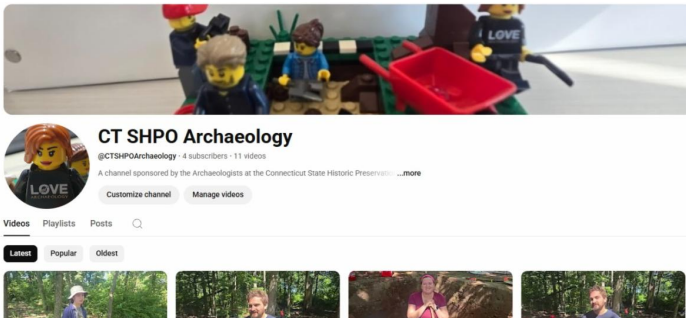
#CTHistoricPreservation Summer Campaign

A big "THANK YOU" to everyone who contributed to our social media summer celebration of historic preservation. We had enough content to post twice a week

for eight weeks on Facebook and Instagram. The response to the success stories was great - with most receiving over 1,000 impressions. If you missed the posts, just search #CTHistoricPreservation on Facebook or Instagram and catch up on all the recent preservation success stories!



Celebrating Archaeology



Every year, [LEGO Education](#) and [FIRST LEGO League](#) team up to sponsor a STEM-based challenge for school-aged kids around the world. This year's theme is *Unearthed*, and it will examine archaeology during the 2025/2026 academic year. As part of this challenge, the teams are required to do a structured research project.

Specifically, they are exploring the challenges that archaeologists face with the goal of teaching them about the process of doing research. This involves learning keywords about the field, interviewing professional archaeologists, and identifying/citing reliable sources. Teams have been reaching out to SHPO and although it would be great to meet with every group and have a field visit, the number of requests is more than SHPO can accommodate. Yet, we created a summary of archaeology and a resource list to help the teams get started, and we are crowdsourcing a YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/@CTSHPOArchaeology>). Right now, there are three playlists: Meet an Archaeologist, Challenges in Archaeology, and Why is Archaeology Important.

Also, October is **Connecticut Archaeology Awareness Month**. Come celebrate at the annual Archaeology Fair on Saturday, **October 4th from 11am to 3pm at the Eli Whitney Museum & Workshop in Hamden (915 Whitney Avenue)**. This family-friendly event will include games, exhibits, and other activities. Local professional archaeologists will also be giving talks throughout the day about archaeology in our state. This event is free and open to the public and is presented by the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office, Connecticut Office of State Archaeology, the Archaeological Society of Connecticut, The Eli Whitney Museum & Workshop, and Preservation Connecticut.

Spotlight on Museum Collections by Jodi Polsgrove, Curator of Collections

One of my favorites artifacts is in the collection of the Henry Whitfield State Museum. It doesn't date from the early days of Guilford or the Revolutionary War. Instead it is a reminder that not all interpretations of the historical record are included in the public narrative.

What historians are discovering is changing how we think about the



past, and the stories we tell.

In 1868, the Old Stone House underwent renovation. The house was over 200 years old and in need of repairs, especially after a fire in 1860. The house was well known in the state and its remodel was notable. At a ceremony on August 13, 1868 commemorating the laying of the cornerstone of the Ell section addition, several workers made a very unusual decision.

Unbeknownst to Mary Griffing Chittenden, the owner of the Whitfield House at the time, the

workers placed a metal box containing a “time capsule” within the wall of the Ell they were enlarging. Within the metal box was a newspaper from Lacrosse Wisconsin dated August 5, 1868, and a letter written by the workmen claiming that their contributions to the renovation were ignored. That they, *which bore the burden of labor and taxes, with greenbacks for pay and Gold at 40cts*, were not properly credited thus *do proclaim the privledge to dedicate this house with the true Spirit. With one quart of pure Whiskey*. They also note some of the people who attended the ceremony and that the Governor of Connecticut was James E. English, not William Buckingham. It is unknown why the workers felt compelled to make this statement. Governor English, a Democrat, had been elected in May of 1867 and won re-election in May 1868. Governor Buckingham, a Republican, had decided not to run in the 1866 election. At the time the Governor was elected every year until 1875 when the State Constitution was changed to allow for a two-year term. The current 4-year terms started in 1965. The letter ends with the names of the workmen. Census data shows that several of them were born in Ireland.

The time capsule was discovered during the restoration in the 1930s when the addition was removed.

I love this piece, because the workers took it upon themselves to include their side of the story, even correcting the historical record by noting who the Governor was at the time. We are continuing to research the reasoning behind this declaration.

This is a great example that reminds us that there are multiple sides to any story, sometimes they take a bit of detective work to uncover. Stay tuned for more!

Check out other items in the Whitfield collections at CTCollections.org.

Upcoming Events at the State Museums

Fall is a great time to visit our state museums! Here are a few upcoming events to check out before the museums close for the season.

Let's celebrate our cultural diversity and build a nation of neighbors! The **Henry Whitfield State Museum** will host **WelcomeFest on September 14th from 12:00-4:00**. This free, family-friendly event features a flamenco performance, Mexican

WELCOME FEST

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 14TH ~ 12-4 PM



folk music and dance, interactive UNITY art project, kindness rocks, free tours of Connecticut's oldest house and archaeology exhibit, and more. The museum is open to everyone and building a community that values all perspectives, backgrounds, experiences, and cultures.

Bat Appreciation Day is coming back to **Old New-Gate Prison and Copper Mine on September 20th from 10:00-4:00**. Learn about New-Gate's beloved bats as we team up with the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection to promote bat conservation. Engage with wildlife biologists and learn about how cool bats really are, and how you

can help support these important and amazing creatures. Demonstrations and hand-on activities for all ages. Free Admission!

The **Prudence Crandall Museum** will be open with free admission for self-guided tours during the Canterbury Historical Society's annual **Canterbury Old Home Day event on Saturday, September 27th from 11:00-4:00**. All ages are encouraged to participate in a Kindness Stones painting activity—visitors can leave their created Kindness Stones in the Peace Garden, or take them to share with others. For more information, contact Crandall.museum@ct.gov. *NOTE: Parking will be at the Helen Baldwin Middle School on Rte. 14. A shuttle to the Canterbury Green will be provided. The museum is across from the Canterbury Green.

Always a fan favorite, "**Light into the Dungeon: A Jack O'Lantern Experience**" will be at **Old New-Gate Prison & Copper Mine**. In the late 18th century, people incarcerated at New-Gate Prison were housed in the abandoned copper mine in total darkness. Celebrate the Fall season with us as we bring "Light into the Dungeon." Explore the 100-yard loop of the underground copper mine illuminated by a display of 400 professionally carved Jack O' Lanterns. **The exhibit will run from October 3rd-November 2nd. [Advanced Tickets Required](#)**

Make chocolate the old fashioned way at the **Henry Whitfield State Museum on October 19th from 10:00-4:00**. Robert Lecce and Edward Dirgo of Pewter Pot Fine Spiced Chocolates will be demonstrating how chocolate was made in the 1700s as well as selling their chocolate bars and chocolate drinking mixes. This free event includes admission to the Whitfield House and Visitor Center exhibit galleries.

The **Eric Sloane Museum** is thrilled to host the 4th annual **TradesUp Festival**. The free daylong event will take place on **October 25th 2025 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at 31 Kent Cornwall Road in Kent, CT**. TradesUp's mission is to support the development of the next generation of trades and craftspeople through dynamic learning experiences. This FREE event will allow youth and adults to safely learn about and participate in activities centered on the building trades, traditional crafts, and historic preservation. Planned activities include hands-on programs demonstrating carpentry, woodworking, masonry, welding, plumbing, electrical wiring, and traditional arts and crafts. More information is available at <https://www.tradesup.org/>

Celebrate **National Cat Day at the Prudence Crandall Museum on Monday, October 27th!** Free admission including a museum tour with a donation of unopened cat food (wet or dry, any brand/any flavor), brand-new cat toys and supplies (not accepting litter-related items at this time), or paper towels and garbage bags. All items will be donated to the Paws Cat Shelter, a no-kill shelter in Putnam, CT. In recognition of violence perpetuated against women, children, and animals, the museum honors National Cat Day by collecting food and supplies to keep our feline friends safe. For more information,

Recent Grant Awards

The following towns and organizations were awarded grants during the last quarter:

New London Landmarks received a \$50,000 **Local Preservation Partners Grant** to support one-year local preservation plan for New London Landmarks.

**** NOTE:** See application and guidelines for the new Local Preservation Partners Grant [local-partners-2025-final.pdf](#)

Town of West Hartford received a \$10,000 Survey and Planning Grant to hire a CFR-qualified Historian to prepare a comprehensive research report on the West Hartford Revolutionary War Campground (c. 1775), 2876 Albany Avenue, West Hartford.

Historic Neighborhood Preservation Program, Inc. in **Stamford** received a \$18,350 Survey and Planning Grant to hire a CFR-qualified Architectural Historian to prepare an Historic Resources Inventory of town-owned buildings in the City.

The **Town of Westport** received a \$20,000 Survey and Planning Grant to hire a CFR-qualified architectural historian to update approximately 125 Historic Resources Inventory survey forms for the Town.

The **Lake Waramaug Association, Inc.** in **Litchfield County** received a \$20,000 Survey and Planning Grant to hire a CFR-Qualified Architectural Historian to prepare a National Register nomination for the Lake Waramaug Historic District.

The **First Congregational Church of Willimantic** received a \$20,000 Survey and Planning Grant to hire a CFR-qualified Historical Architect to prepare a condition assessment for the First Congregational Church of Willimantic (1870), 199 Valley Street, Willimantic.

The **New London Cemetery Association** received a \$20,000 Survey and Planning Grant to hire a CFR-qualified Historical Architect to prepare a condition assessment for the Beckwith Administration Building (1924) in Cedar Grove Cemetery, 638 Broad Street, New London.

Farmington Village Green and Library Association received a \$20,000 Survey and Planning Grant to hire a CFR-qualified Architectural Historian to prepare a condition assessment of the Stanley-Whitman House (c. 1720) 37 High St., Farmington.

The **Griswold Chapel Association, Inc.** of **Wethersfield** received a \$15,000 survey and Planning Grant to hire a CFR-Qualified Historical Architect to prepare a condition assessment for the Griswold Chapel (1872).

The **Mark Twain House and Museum in Hartford** received a \$20,000 Survey and Planning Grant to hire a CFR-Qualified Historical Architect to prepare a condition assessment for the Mark Twain House and Carriage House (1874).

Calvary Episcopal Church in **Stonington** received a \$20,000 Survey and Planning Grant to hire a CFR-qualified Historical Architect to prepare architectural Plans and Specifications for priority needs for the Church.

The Town of Scotland received a \$5,000 Survey and Planning Grant for a Geophysical

**** NOTE:** See new guidelines for Grants for Geophysical Surveys of Human Burials:
[sp-guidelines-and-application-sfy-2026-web.pdf](#)

News from the Eric Sloane Museum



The Eric Sloane Museum had a busy summer and expects a packed fall schedule. The museum hosted various workshops, classes, and special programs throughout the season. The successful workshop series included historic trades and crafts for adult students, such as log hewing, blacksmithing and spoon carving, taught by expert practitioners. In partnership with TradesUp (formerly Touch a Trade), the museum also offered building trade-related workshops for students aged 10-17, covering topics like plumbing, carpentry basics, drywall repair, and electrical work. We also partnered with our colleagues at Old New gate Prison and Copper Mine and the Henry Whitfield Museum to host Trades

Days. The Friends of the Eric Sloane Museum sponsored summer youth programs focused on meteorology, aviation, and the arts. They are also progressing with creating the Eric Sloane Museum Education Center. For more information on this project, visit the Friends of the Eric Sloane Museum's website. Upcoming programs include the Connecticut Antique Machinery Association's Fall Festival on September 26-28 and the Spark Festival by TradesUp on October 25th. For additional information and updates about the museum, visit the link below.

[Additional Information and Eric Sloane Museum Links/Updates](#)

Prudence Crandall Museum



On Friday, September 5 the Prudence Crandall Museum hosted a formal unveiling of four newly-acquired books that were owned and signed by Prudence Crandall. The museum also announced the names of four students discovered during recent research by scholars. We were honored to be joined by Secretary of State Stephanie Thomas and scholar Dr. Jennifer Rycenga. These four books are now on display at the museum, and they provide us with some insight into Crandall's formative

years. They show her commitment to education by demonstrating how important reading and learning were to her. It is likely that the messages within these works shaped Crandall's own exploration into education, faith, and social justice.

News from Old New-Gate Prison and Copper Mine

New-Gate Facility Updates

We are continuing to work with Chris Williams Architects on our National Park Service grant funded project to Rehabilitate Viets Tavern. We have also posted the



Request for Proposal to hire a contracting firm to support our National Park Service grant funded project to Stabilize the Cell Block and Retaining Wall.

And Finally, check out these upcoming Historic Preservation Conferences

There are two historic preservation conferences coming to the area this November. First, the Association for Preservation Technology International is holding its annual international conference in Providence, Rhode Island from November 11-15. The theme is Revolution & Invention: The Power of Water, Craft, & Architecture. Some SHPO staff are planning to attend. For more information, visit [the conference webpage](#). We hope to see you there!

Next, is Historic New England's 2025 Summit at the Shubert Theatre in New Haven. The annual summit is a two-day event of "exiting conversations that explore how twenty-first century challenges and opportunities are transforming the fields of historic preservation, architecture, urban planning, conservation, arts and culture, museum studies, collections management, public history, and education." The summit offers a virtual and in-person option. For more information, visit [the Summit's website](#).



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