



As we close out this difficult year, the State Historic Preservation Office & Museum Division extends a heartfelt wish to everyone for a safe, peaceful, and happy holiday season. Be well and see you in 2021!

Prudence Crandall Museum



The Prudence Crandall Museum was already closed for upcoming renovations when the pandemic happened. Construction started a few months later than expected, but work is moving forward on the significant structural tasks necessary to continue to preserve the building for future generations.

Staff spent the summer months emptying the museum and securing the collections, and moved into temporary office space next door. An archaeology dig led by State Archaeologist Sarah Sportman, SHPO, and the Friends of the Office of the State Archaeologist added more excitement to the fall season, as artifacts untouched for centuries were unearthed, to possibly shed more light on the history of Crandall's Canterbury School.

While construction occurs, staff has been busy presenting talks, writing articles for professional publications, attending virtual conferences, and meeting with scholars and other museum colleagues to plan a broader interpretation of the site. The Museum eagerly waits approval on its application to the International

Coalition of Sites of Conscience. Speaking of international, Prudence Crandall was recognized with a temporary street sign in France for International Women's Day on March 8th. Also, the French graphic novelist Wilfrid Lupano completed a novel, *Blanc Autour*, based on the events of the Canterbury Female Boarding School published in several languages, including French, Italian, and English, for which the museum curator, Joanie DiMartino, wrote the afterword.



Eric Sloane Museum



Although 2020 has not been the year anyone expected, the Eric Sloane Museum has been very fortunate to have a safe, event-filled year full of generous support, progress and achievements. The year began with the completion of extensive multi-year renovations and facility improvements to the museum. Although the construction was finished, the task of reinstalling all of the exhibits had just begun. Throughout the year, the staff worked tirelessly to research, catalog, reinstall, and restore the collection of several thousand items while reimagining the museum's interpretation and spaces to better engage with our visitors. We were fortunate to receive several rarely seen original artworks by Eric Sloane as generous donations to the collection. At the same time, we watched with excited anticipation as the Noah Blake Cabin recreation came to life through the tireless efforts of the Friends of the Eric Sloane Museum. We had the privilege to work closely with our community partners to expand virtual programming, create new gallery spaces within the museum, and collaborate on an exciting list of programs for the coming year.

Even though the Eric Sloane Museum is grounded in the past, we know that history is being made every day. We are dedicated to listening, learning, and acting to help create an equitable United States and a better future for all people, holding a place for everyone to learn, share, discuss, challenge, dissent, unite, and grow.

When visitors are welcomed back for the Grand Reopening in 2021, they will experience the Eric Sloane Museum like never before; and we hope to see you there! Follow the links to [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) to stay up to date with everything going on!

Old New-Gate Prison and Copper Mine



It was a busy year at Old New-Gate Prison and Copper Mine.

First up, the New-Gate team devoted a lot of much needed time to the museum collection. We have been identifying, organizing, and documenting the items and archives in our care.

Part of this process has included transferring the information to a new database (Connecticut Collections), which will allow us to eventually make our collection available to the public.

Yes, we got a little dirty this year! Unanticipated down time gave us the brain power and manpower to clean out many of our extra spaces for better utilization. We now have space for a staff breakroom and education storage room. More to be done, but we made a great dent.

Of course, we were so excited to open the museum gates for a couple months this fall! With limited access and strict guidelines, we were able to welcome many enthusiastic visitors to New-Gate. Visitation this fall gave us an opportunity to test out new tour ideas and have wonderful discussions with our small groups!

Our museum season ended with the plaque unveiling for the first Connecticut Hall of Change. The Hall of Change is dedicated to honoring and memorializing previously incarcerated men and women who have made great impacts in their community upon reentry. We are honored to house the first installation of the Hall of Change in the visitor center at Old New-Gate!

Finally, we are very excited to report that the long-awaited project of new interpretive panels is nearing completion. These panels will be used to help guide visitors through the ruins and structures within and outside of the prison yard. They are a much-needed improvement from previous temporary solutions!



Hall of Change unveiling

Henry Whitfield Museum



With the museum's buildings closed due to COVID-19 in 2020, staff embraced this unusual time to develop and offer new and expanded experiences to the public, including:

- outdoor interpretive signs with photos and links to online material
- an outdoor scavenger hunt featuring clues to be deciphered and questions to be answered for a chance to win a prize at the end of the year
- Visitor Center "What Is It?"

window displays

- a Whitfield House virtual tour
- some museum collections information available on the Connecticut Collections website
- social media presence expanded from Facebook to include Instagram and YouTube
- digital jigsaw puzzles featuring images of the Whitfield House and museum collection items

Staff also began projects (that will continue for years to come) with the aim of making the museum more relevant in today's world:

- updates of the mission statement and collections policy, and evaluation of interpretation, exhibits, programs, and community engagement
- a conservation assessment of the museum collections, buildings, and buildings systems through the Collections Assessment for Preservation Program

In other news

- The National Trust for Historic Preservation's recently published [Preserving African American Places: Growing Preservation's Potential as a Path for Equity](#) is available for download now.
- Congratulations to State Historian, Walt Woodward, on publishing his recent book, *Creating Connecticut: Critical Moments that Shaped a Great State*. You can read a recent interview with him in the Hartford Courant [here](#).
- The Ridgefield Historical Society in partnership with the SHPO recently published a [Request for Proposals](#) for research related to the Battle of Ridgefield.

The Department of Economic and Community Development, including the State Historic Preservation Office continues to work remotely. We will be sure to inform our constituents when we plan to return to the office. In the meantime, staff contact information can be found [here](#).

Department of Economic and
Community Development

State Historic Preservation Office

Connecticut



