

August 21, 2020

Preserve the Past...Build the Future



To say this has been a year to remember, is to many, an understatement. For many of our members, in Ellington and beyond, lives have been upended and changed over the past six months. As students finished the school year at home, many parents joined them, and the search for quiet spaces to work became the new norm. Little did we know, history was in the making.

For those new to our Ellington Historical Society, you at least know change is in the air; as we have set out to, once again, invest in the infrastructure of the Nellie McKnight Museum. Maintaining and building our membership has been one way to help with the rising costs associated with trying to save an 1812 home from literally crumbling down. Thanks to your generosity of both time and money, enthusiasm is in

the air and we have much to report that is positive.

Membership

First, our membership drive continues to bring in caring new members that have added new and exciting energy to our society and museum. Membership is up to 120 individuals, families and businesses combined, and we look forward to continuing our momentum through our September Membership Drive. Renewal of membership takes place in September...we need you and appreciate your continued support and voice! Notice of the new dues structure will be sent out soon. Renewal may be done via our [website](#). Our town has well over 15,000 residents, and there is no reason to believe we cannot find at least another 200 new members to not only join, but actively participate in preserving the wonderful history that has been left to us by so many former, and long-time members. My challenge to YOU: encourage a friend or family member to [join](#) you in making our Ellington Historical Society and Nellie McKnight Museum an exciting place to be a part of. We are making history!

Porch Renovation

As you can see, our front porch has been restored and hopefully will last for many years to come. Many hours of thought and consideration went into the final details as to what materials should be considered and used. Finally, with the help of architect and former EHS President and longtime member, Rob



Dawson, historic home owners on Main Street, area business owners familiar with newly available building products, Doug Flamino (acting material advisor) and builder, Bob Socha, a plan was underway. The key concern was, “How do we maintain the integrity and look of the front porch while constructing it in such a way that it could survive years of relatively low maintenance. Keeping up with yearly power washing, painting, etc. was something that needed to be addressed and considered. The committee was torn between using the original Douglas Fir or a composite material called Trek. Ultimately the supply chain helped with our decision and a high quality, low maintenance, and long lasting Trek flooring was used. The floor was installed from below (no screws were exposed) and it will last for years to come without any applications to preserve it. As for the “skirt” around the bottom, a product called Azek was used. This also will not need maintenance. Underneath the porch, high quality beams were constructed out of seasoned pressure treated Southern Pine.

The beams were secured to the original two granite posts that have remained at the entrance since its construction over 200 years ago. Finally, in order to maintain the look and details of the original column, a new product called, Life Span was used. This will hopefully provide long life to the structure and maintain the look of wood that was created years ago. The doorway entrance to the porch has also been opened six inches on each side to provide space for patrons to walk in and out of the front entrance. Local welder and longtime Ellington resident, Roger Maynard of H.D. Welding is currently searching for materials to rebuild two new railings that will have the same look and feel of the large, round, tubular railings from the past.

Painting

Turning to the exterior of the Nellie McKnight Museum itself, some repairs have been made to trim and clapboards in preparation of having the house painted. It has been several years since Nellie’s home was painted, for the first time, a shade of beige. After long consideration, our painting committee advised that we should go forward with looking for a licensed, responsible, and historic home-experienced painter. When you look closely at the museum, it is clear the south side above the back porch has taken a beating, along with the west side facing the First Congregational Church. Clapboards need to be re-nailed and windows need to be reglazed (All 27 windows need some-sort of special attention). The first estimate came in at \$10,000 and, as you can imagine, the thought of putting it off came into our minds. Did it really need to be painted...this year? Yes! Too many signs of neglect

over the recent years have put Nellie's home into a state of vulnerability. Dry rot, insect infiltration, and water penetration will only add to future trim, clapboard, and window replacing. A second local painter came in at \$7,500 dollars, but was unavailable until, at best, late October-early November. A third estimate proved to be one we look forward to working with, Melting Pot Painters, with Ellington roots owner, Kenny Hill. Kenny recently painted Mrs. Vaughn's historic home across from the Ellington Fire Department on Main Street, and he has extensive experience painting and restoring old homes. Melting Pot's estimate of \$6,800 dollars includes a complete power wash, sanding, renailling of clapboards, reglazing of windows, prime where needed, and two coats of brushed on latex paint, and the staining of the back porch. The price also includes primer and paint materials for our new Farm Exhibit building in the rear of the property. Adding to the cost is approximately \$2,000 worth of cedar clapboards and trim to replace rotted and disintegrated wooden exterior. Both structures will be painted their original white. A consideration of subtle accent colors on the front entrance is ongoing, along with bringing back the look of the original black shutters to the front. Let us know how you feel.

Farm Exhibit



Speaking of the back barn, work on the Ellington Farm Exhibit is well underway, preparing for an **October 17th grand opening**. As you remember, items were removed on a bristly cold day in February, and the interior was cleaned and many items were "dusted" off. Since that time, volunteers have been hard at work removing the interior concrete. (Photo on left shows Lori Spielman removing the old floor) as well as lugging the heavy slate stone slabs (thank you to Danny and Tommy Walker, photo below). Both rooms are currently being prepared for a new, brushed concrete floor that will provide a safe surface for both display and walking. The east entrance to the old barn will also undergo a much needed transformation.



Over the years both corners have sunk due to the deterioration of the stone foundation (or what was left of the wooden foundation). This has caused the two doors to sink well below the grass line making them impossible to open. The oversize doors are completely rotted at the base and both need to either be replaced as is (which is cost prohibitive) or redesigned. We have decided upon the later and will be working with Mr. Dawson and with our contractor, Bob Socha, to design a period door that will open with a slider. This will allow for additional space for display within, along with a door that can be managed safely (no more worries about doors blowing shut and injuring potential patrons).

We are very excited to work with Mr. Chucky Davis, from Bad Ass Tools, LLC. Chucky was highly recommended and has given us an outstanding price (under \$6,000) to prep two rooms with several inches of hardened base, and then pour a 4 ½ inch floor with reinforced wiring. Bob Socha will then concentrate on the south rear side and the east side of the museum. As for the interior displays, Kay Luginbuhl has been hard at work, as has Dianne Trueb. Dianne has worked with Donna Baron from the Hebron Historical Society, closely documenting items and working on the historically accurate display information throughout the one-story exhibit.

Banners

As you may have seen, we have secured two banners to each side of the porch, along with one above the entrance. The banners were designed with the help of local Ellington High School Art Teacher, Katherine Lanz. On the left side of Nellie’s front porch, a photo displays a visit from one of her classes this past February. Right before the Covid-19 outbreak, high school students filled our museum as they researched connections to their town’s history. We sincerely appreciated their enthusiasm and look

forward to Ms. Lanz’s ongoing participation in our museum. Already she has talked about future visits; along with special volunteer projects with her AP students. The banners, along with the behind the scene work of Hillary Brady and Caitlyn Francis on Facebook and Instagram, and Dianne Trueb’s work maintaining our website--have helped to bring a new sense of hope to our deep financial challenges. Every dollar donated is sincerely appreciated, along with the ongoing generosity of local businesses.

Preserving
YESTERDAY

for
TOMORROW

DONATE
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JOIN US
BUILD

PRESERVE

REMEMBER

Members Meeting August 24th

A members meeting will take place August 24th in the backyard of the Nellie McKnight Museum at 6:30pm. The Executive Board has held several meetings there, (due to the Covid-19 Pandemic) we have maintained social distancing, worn masks when interacting, spread out on the lawn with our chairs, and braved the heat and humidity. Relatively speaking, meeting in Nellie’s backyard isn’t all that bad. It has given us a chance to check in on ongoing projects, like the front porch, landscaping, and our new exhibit. It also has provided us with great and lively discourse amongst our board. Back and forth discussion that is often limited and awkward using Zoom. **When you come on the 24th, please bring a chair**, beverage of choice, snack for

yourself if you like, and pencil/pad, iPhone, or tablet. PLEASE come early and check out the front porch,



along with the wonderful job our Beautification Committee did mulching the beds around the museum. Our focus during next week's meeting will be to discuss and vote on changes and updates to our Certificate of Incorporation; changes that will bring us closer to the standards non-profits use today. These changes are intended to make it possible, legally speaking, to make decisions like those previously discussed in this newsletter: spending money on repairs, changing displays, what color do we paint the museum, etc.. Putting each decision to vote, amongst all of our members, is neither time saving nor realistic. Your voice will always count. Your suggestions will always be considered, and your ability to participate in the nomination of officers will always be a part of your right as a member of the Ellington Historical Society. We have worked with volunteer, Pro Bono Lawyers, for the past several months to ensure our new Certificate of Incorporation works for everyone. None of us want to be making decisions that do not comply with current, non-profit, laws and regulations. Active board members

must feel confident that we are in compliance with all State of Connecticut laws and regulations. **We look forward to your support on August 24th.**

Share your story...record history



We are still seeking submissions on how the Covid-19 Pandemic has affected you to be included in "Nellie's Time Capsule. We have made a template to make it easier to record your experiences and thoughts. It can be found on the HS website under blogs or this [link](#)

I look forward to seeing as many of you as can attend the August 24th meeting at the museum.

Mark Maciolek, President Ellington Historical Society