



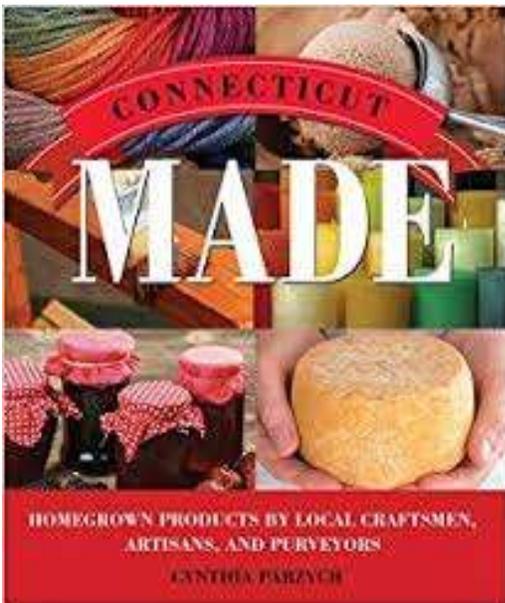
## Ellington Historical Society

P.O. Box 73

Ellington, Conn. 06029

### September 2019 Newsletter

The Ellington Historical Society will meet on Thursday, September 26, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. at the Hall Memorial Library at 93 Main Street.



After a short business meeting, Cynthia Parzych, the author of *Connecticut Made*, will talk about her book. It is a guidebook full of factories to explore, crafts to discover, and things to find and buy from all over our state. She lives in Glastonbury in The Old Parsonage, built in 1693, where she runs her business using the produce grown on her property and sourced locally to make sauces, soups, pickles and jams, all sold under The Old Parsonage label.

This program is free. Pre-registration is required for guests, but not for members of the Ellington Historical Society. To register, call the Hall Memorial Library at 860-870-3160 or go online at <http://library.ellington-ct.gov>

Regrettably, we will no longer be offering refreshments after our programs. Declining participation by our members to bake and host has been an issue for several years. We are also aware that our after-program gathering can stretch an already long day for the library staff in the building. Hopefully, our guests and members will consider arriving at 6:30 and have a chance to visit before the program begins at 7:00.

#### **News from the Curator—Nancy Long**

We experienced very poor attendance on our Thursday afternoon openings at the Nellie McKnight Museum in June, July and August.

Our next event at the museum will be *Winterfest* on Saturday, December 7. We will be open for tours from 3:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m.

## **News from the President-Tim Fahy**

Our sincere condolences go to the family of Connie Nichols, who passed away on August 31<sup>st</sup> at the age of 92. She was one of the members who worked on making Nellie McKnight's house into a museum. Connie continued to be an active member for years, including working at our bake sales as long as she was able. A book will be donated to the Hall Memorial Library in Connie's name.

## **State of the Nellie McKnight Museum**

Four years ago, this was my contribution to the June newsletter:

### **June 2015**

On May 3<sup>rd</sup>, interested members of the Ellington Historical Society met to discuss the state of our society and by extension, the fate of the Nellie McKnight Museum. We need an active, engaged membership to continue running both the EHS and the museum. As if to illustrate our problem, 20 members came to the meeting and only one person was under age 65, with the average age being over 75. Since EHS owns the museum, selling the building and much of its contents is an option that was discussed. The members voted to bring that option to our annual meeting for a vote.

Since that meeting, we have talked to the First Selectman to inform him of our situation. We also met with Sue Phillips at the Hall Memorial Library, who will look for appropriate space for the archives and other items from our collection. The McKnight family has also been consulted. We have yet to consult a lawyer, but we will do that soon.

Our first choice of course, would be to have a group of new, energetic, people join our society and be willing to be officers and committee chairmen and do the work needed to continue what we have now, and bring new ideas to fruition. Since that doesn't seem likely, we must be prepared to take alternative actions.

### **September 2019**

We delayed taking this drastic course of action, choosing instead to try some different approaches to attract visitors and new members. These efforts have failed, and the problems have gotten worse. The few people involved in preserving the museum are exhausted. We can no longer keep the building open. Insurance and utilities are over \$4,000 a year, more than our income last year. Our only options appear to be selling the building, or under the right circumstances, donating it.

- We have notified the neighbors on either side of our building of our intentions.
- We have consulted with two different lawyers.
- We have had a realtor provide us with an appraisal.
- We have had an additional meeting with Sue Phillips at the library about preserving the archives.

- We will be meeting with the 1<sup>st</sup> Selectman as soon as she is available.

Finding homes for the contents of the building will be a huge and expensive undertaking. There will be a need for volunteers who are willing to physically help and meet in advance to plan the effort within the guidelines for closing a museum. If you are willing to help, please contact me at [president@ellingtonhistsoc.org](mailto:president@ellingtonhistsoc.org) .

## **News from the Archivist-Lynn Kloter Fahy**

### **Rural Planning, Village Improvement, and the Early Urban Forestry Movement**

I just read a new book, *Spying on the South: the Forever Cotton Kingdom*, by Tony Horwitz, published by Penguin Press. Horwitz followed the path that Frederick Law Olmsted took through the South in the 1850s. Olmsted reported his travels in the New York Times under the pen name “Yeoman.” He became famous as the father of American landscape architecture and designed Central Park in New York City. Olmsted has a connection to Ellington that he shares with other men in the early urban forestry movement who also spent time in Ellington. The peripatetic Olmsted attended John Hall’s Ellington School from May to September, 1831.

Three key men in the early urban forestry movement, Birdsey Grant Northrop, Donald Grant Mitchell, and Nathaniel Hillyer Egleston (sometimes spelled Eggleston) also attended the Ellington School. All four men attended Yale. Egleston is also known in Ellington as the ninth pastor of the Ellington Congregational Church. He was responsible for planting a stand of trees in Church Park, across from the present church. His efforts and those of Ellington’s Village Improvement Society were praised in a 1935 article, *Rural Planning: The Village*, published in the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Farmers’ Bulletin No. 1441. Egleston went on to become the second chief of the Division of Forestry in the U.S. Dept of Agriculture from 1883 to 1886. John Hall’s interest in rural planning and village improvement may have influenced these four students before they all studied at Yale. I have heard that Hall was responsible for planting elm trees along Main Street, which, unfortunately, were knocked over in the Hurricane of 1938.



Post card of Church Park with Egleston’s trees. Cash Store and Post Office in foreground. Looking west toward the Hall Memorial Library

**October meeting, Thursday 24, 2019 at the Hall Memorial Library, 7:00 p.m.**



Bruce Henley, a tour guide and teacher at Wethersfield's Webb-Deane-Stevens house, will concentrate on the 17<sup>th</sup> century story of witchcraft in Connecticut, with a 21<sup>st</sup> century postscript. His talk will cover the Puritan religion, beliefs about witchcraft, the first and last witches accused, and the Hartford and Fairfield panics. It will be peppered with specific cases and personalities. He will also discuss how the Connecticut and Massachusetts colonies differed in their handling of trials.

**Winterfest, Saturday, December 7--** The Nellie McKnight Museum will be open from 3:00 to 6:00.



**January meeting, Thursday January 23, 2020 at the Hall Memorial Library, 7:00 p.m.**



Friendly's historian Rose Slate will talk about the founders of Friendly's restaurants, including S. Prestley Blake.

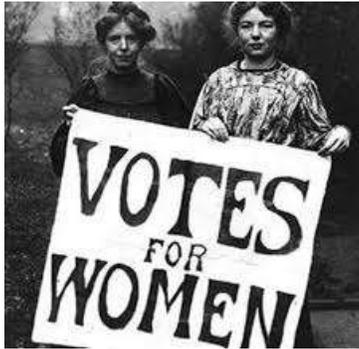
Photo: Friendly's Restaurants

**February meeting, Thursday February 27, 2020 at the Hall Memorial Library, 7:00 p.m.**



Joe Ouellette will present a talk titled "Was Mary Todd Lincoln Really Insane?"

**April meeting, Thursday April 23, 2020 at the Hall Memorial Library, 7:00 p.m.**



Mariann Millard will present a program on the "Centennial of Women's Voting Rights."

**June meeting, Thursday June 25, 2020, Members only potluck dinner at the Hall Memorial Library, 6:30 p.m.**

**ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE DUE IN SEPTEMBER**

**We need your dues now more than ever!**

**Membership dues are due in September and we have enclosed a form to fill out and include with your dues payment.**

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Ellington Historical Society Membership Dues

Class of Membership	_____	Individual \$10.00
	_____	Senior Individual \$8.00 (Over 62)
	_____	Family \$20.00
	_____	Senior Family \$15.00 (Over 62)
(Check one)	_____	Patron \$25.00
	_____	Business \$50.00

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address, if you want to receive your newsletter by email  
\_\_\_\_\_

Make check payable to: Ellington Historical Society

Mail this form and payment to: Ellington Historical Society  
P.O. Box 73  
Ellington, CT 06029