
Historic House
MUSEUMS
- How We Lived Then -

Ebenezer Avery House, c. 1750

Determining the need:

- Historic Sites & Historical Societies Roundtable
- Felt a need for increased visitation
- Recognized that small local historic house museums tend to pull from same visitor base
- Decision was made to collaboratively promote regional selection of historic houses
- Stephanie Lantiere, President of the Ebenezer Avery Memorial Association, spearheaded the initiative and served as Committee Chair

Ashbel Woodward House Museum, c. 1835

Initial Meeting:

- Approximately 25-30 sites were first contacted to attend preliminary meeting to gauge interest & discuss final product

- Sites were given a form to fill out, sharing information about site date, unique features, brief history, times open, accessibility, and other details to possibly include in brochure

- Goals were established & time commitments were explained

Beaumont House, c. 1790

Going Forward:

- Some sites never responded to initial invite, some chose to decline participation, a few new sites joined
- About 13 sites remained committed to the brochure project
- Wendy Bury, SECTCC, outlined organizational support
- Timeline was established, working backward from goal of 2016 summer tourist season

Avery-Copp House, c. 1800

Leadership:

- Chair sent out reminder emails, created agendas for each meeting, and served as liaison to SECTCC

- An individual in a leadership role was necessary, given the size of the HHT brochure Committee

- Everyone's voices & perspectives were heard and valued

- Chair also oversaw creation of task list, which was crucial to success of brochure development

Capt. Nathaniel Palmer House, c. 1853

Tasks Lists:

- surveying sites for current marketing practices
- Gathering information for brochure text
- Culling together photographs for each site
- Looking into funding possibilities
- Seeking graphic designers

Colchester History Museum, c. 1850

Tasks Lists pt. 2:

- Guaranteed commitment to project
- "many hands make light work"
- Created a synergy; all involved felt like we were creating something unique
- Investment = ownership = responsibility

Denison Homestead, c. 1717

Graphic Designer:

- Committee reviewed many different brochures from other collaborative efforts or multi-museum consortiums, such as Historic New England & CTLandmarks

- Preferred booklet-style brochure to fold-out map, easier to handle & can be kept in vehicle, tote, etc.

- Met with 3 graphic artists for short presentations of work; selected Rita Rivera, of Mystic Country

- Having graphic designer confirmed helped to solidify style, content, & shape of brochure

Hempsted Houses, c. 1678 & 1759

Decisions in Selecting a Designer:

- Average cost we were quoted for designers ranged between $750--$950
- This included logo design, brochure layout, final changes, digital file
- Cost for printing 10,000 brochures ranged between $2,800--$3,000
- Our brochure was 16 x 18, 4 x 4, 80 white gloss, 4 x 9 with 16 panels

Leffingwell House Museum, c. 1675

Collaborative Efforts:

- Through this process we received the support of the Eastern Regional Tourism District (also known as Mystic Country)
- The SECT Cultural Coalition was already an established partner
- The New London *Day* came on-board as an in-kind sponsor
- We became, for the remainder of the project, the Historic Homes Collaborative
- The Florence Griswold Museum became a sponsor, which added validation and cohesiveness to the project

Jabez Smith House, c. 1783

Rising Tide:

- At this point, other local museums & historic sites learned about the brochure and requested to be included

- The Collaborative had to define the scope of the brochure to encompass:
  --Historic house museums
  --Located in New London County
  --Open to the public

- This was defined by the title of the brochure: *The Way We Lived Then*

- Future printings may include expanding by site & region, but for the pilot it was decided to keep the brochure to a manageable and affordable size

Nathan Lester House & Farm Tool Museum, c. 1793

Collaborative Efforts, pt. 2:

- What we were offered by Mystic Country:

--development of logo/branding
--use of Mystic Country Map in brochure
--secured printer & handled brochures
--full distribution plan
--promotion of guide on CTVisit.com, social media outlets, trade shows, etc.
--development of ROI metrics
--assistance with launch event

- What the New London *Day* offered:

--discount in printing cost (15,000 brochures for $2,928.00; or, 20 cents per brochure)
--digitization of brochure & online host

Shaw Mansion, c. 1756

Funding Sources:

- At first, we thought we'd apply for a CTHumanities grant

- After much discussion, the Collaborative decided against this for these reasons:

--we couldn't confirm we'd have the funds before we went to print (we wanted to meet the June 2016 deadline)

--finding an alternate funding source would allow for fluidity of time and expenditures

--the museum that hosted a grant from CTHumanities would be limited in other granting opportunities from CTH while the Collaborative grant was open

Florence Griswold House, c. 1817

Finding Sponsorships:

- The Collaborative decided on locating sponsorships to help with the cost
- Sponsors would have their logo on the last page of the brochure
- The Avery Memorial Association served as treasurer for the Collaborative
- We needed a final house to round out the 4 x 4 panels (16 total) so it was decided to approach the Florence Griswold Museum as a sponsor
- The Florence Griswold Museum was offered the front cover instead of a back logo
- R & B Apparel Plus graciously offered to create tote bags as a giveaway for our launch

Thomas Lee House, c. 1660

Site Contributions:

- Sponsors were asked for $500 each
- We still needed funds to fully cover the costs
- It was decided to request $100 from each site
- At this point, a mock-up had been provided of the nearly-completed brochure, with images, overview text, map, & site descriptions
- This enabled small sites to "sell" the cost to their boards; even this tiny amount could be prohibitive, but pulling resources together and viewing final product generated excitement
- Which was important, as each site was then asked to contribute a second $100

Samuel Smith House, c. 1700

Planning the Launch:

- The Collaborative originally wanted the launch in a "neutral" location, a university or college, so the media attention did not feature just one house

- Since we wanted the launch in late May/ early June, it conflicted with college graduation schedules

- We found that colleges also wanted to place restrictions, such as the need to use in-house caterers, etc

- It was decided that, since the focus of the Historic House Trail brochure was historic houses, it would be best to host the launch at an actual historic site

Smith-Harris House, c. 1845

Planning the Launch, pt. 2:

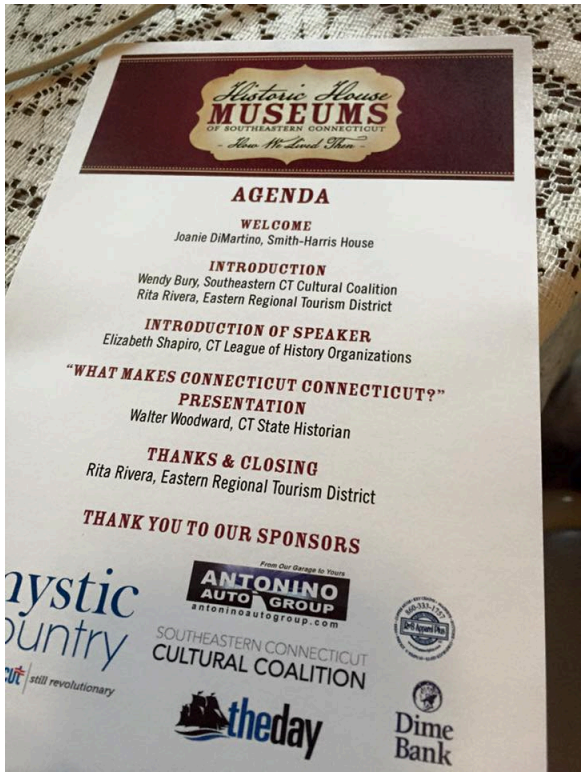
- The Smith-Harris House was selected because it was easy to locate off I-95, had plentiful parking, and a barn capable of holding over 100 people with chairs, electricity, etc

- The CT State Historian, Walter Woodward, was invited as keynote speaker (his honorarium $250 was funded from the site contributions)

- Town officials of participating sites, state legislators, and heads of local organizations were personally invited, and members of the general public were encouraged to attend through the usual promotional channels

- The tote bags were stuffed with items donated by each house: postcards, stickers, pins, brochures, calendar of events, etc

Launch Party!



Where next?

- Each site received approx. 750 brochures to distribute to local places: libraries, senior centers, etc

- An evaluation was generated by SECTCC to track use of brochure by museum visitors

- The sites have noticed an increase in 2016 summer attendance; some marked, some slight

- We have $1000 left over in our budget, some ideas have been to slate a second printing, or develop programs, such as a progressive series of lectures to take place at each museum

- It will be 3-5 years before significant changes are made

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