

# Newsletter

Winter 2021

3 Villages • 2 Rivers • 1 History

A Publication of Essex Historical Society

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### Essex Historical Society

PO Box 123  
Essex, CT 06426  
www.essexhistory.org  
860-767-0681

### Hills Academy

22 Prospect Street, Essex  
Open Year-Round  
Tuesday & Thursday mornings  
and by appointment

### Pratt House

19 West Avenue, Essex  
Open weekend afternoons,  
June-September and by  
appointment



## Celebrating Centerbrook in 2021

Squeezed in between elegant Essex and artsy Ivoryton sits Centebrook, the Town of Essex's small, but mighty, village with a rich history of its own. While the pandemic temporarily redirected Essex Historical Society's (EHS) public programming schedule in 2020, we roared back with a determination to Celebrate Centerbrook in 2021. Thanks to EHS's ongoing multi-year collaboration with Essex Land Trust (ELT) known as Follow the Falls, we benefitted from rich historic material and research. Follow the Falls traces the historic and natural beauty of the Falls River as it ties together Essex's three villages. The collaboration addressed Essex's Falls River Cove area in 2018 and will progress to Ivoryton in 2022-23. Centerbrook received the spotlight in 2020 with a 50-page online and print booklet produced by our marketing partner Overabove as well as a 3-D virtual flyover of what the village looked like in 1910, thanks to the technical wizards at Centerbrook Architects. Both online productions received an Award of Merit from the Connecticut League of History Organizations this year!

EHS returned to in-person programming in 2021, many of which featured Centerbrook locations. Our education team hosted eight Centerbrook walking tours in May to 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade classes at Essex Elementary

School, serving over 150 students! In August, we offered a sold-out Centerbrook tour for adults, featuring several of the structures that are 'hidden in plain sight.' We partnered with two important village landmarks who were eager to learn more about their history. EHS contributed reproduction photographs and maps from our collection for mini-exhibits at Essex Steam Train and at the Lofts at Spencer's Corner, a site dedicated to affordable housing. We worked with collaborators at Essex Land Trust and our hosts, Centerbrook Architects, to host another Lobster Bake Gala right at the base of the famous falls. We concluded our village focus with EHS's Annual Meeting at the Centerbrook Meeting House, the oldest church structure in Middlesex County and center of religious, educational, social, financial and governmental life for over 150 years.

While we await in-person programming for 2022, you can still learn more about the town's oldest village and its transportation hub by visiting our website, [www.essexhistory.org](http://www.essexhistory.org) as our Follow the Falls page features the award-winning online booklet and 3-D flyover, two great ways to Celebrate Centerbrook!

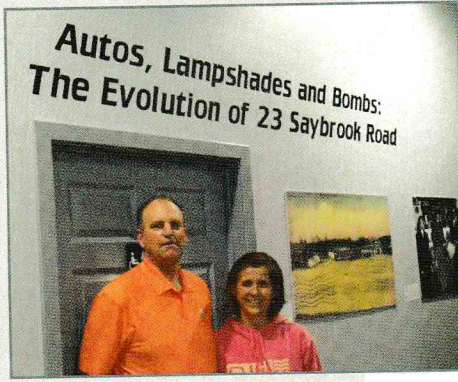


# Engaging & Inspiring the Community

EHS enjoyed marching in the Ivoryton Independence Day Parade with our giant model of the Centerbrook Meeting House. Thank you to Shoreline Appliance of Old Saybrook for donating the giant box to make the Meeting House!



EHS worked with Essex Land Trust and Deep River Historical Society to present a unique group tour for members of the Episcopal Church of Southeastern Connecticut, visiting historic sites connected to West Indies Trade and enslavement, such as the former shipyard at Osage Trails Preserve.



EHS partnered with Essex Indoor Golf owners Cheryl and Scott Harger to write labels and install a mini-exhibit of historic photos at their site, which once housed the Tiley-Pratt and the Verplex Companies. What a great way to reuse a historic structure!



EHS and Connecticut River Museum welcomed a cultural gathering of Indigenous peoples, including members of the Nehantic, Abenaki and Schaghticoke Native Nations, who shared Native crafts, heritage talks, presentations and an amazing drum group and dancing.



Ivoryton's Millrace, an Essex Land Trust Preserve, hosted an archaeological dig led by the trained volunteers of the Friends of the State Archaeologist (FOSA) in search of artifacts left by the ivory industry and later businesses. Connecting with State Archaeologist Dr. Sarah Sportman and FOSA President Scott Brady (both in center) helped inform EHS's collaborative Follow the Falls project with the Land Trust.

EHS Board Members Stacia Rice-Libby and Verena Harfst attended the opening night of Spencer's Lofts in Centerbrook, an affordable housing project overseen by HOPE Partnership. EHS mounted a permanent exhibit in the Lofts' lobby featuring early photographs of that area known as Spencer's Corner.

