ANNUAL REPORT

2025

LITCHFIELD
MUSEUM | INGRAHAM LIBRARY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
TAPPING REEVE HOUSE | LITCHFIELD LAW SCHOOL

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Message From the Director



At the heart of every organization are the values guiding every decision they make. At the Litchfield Historical Society, we lean on our values every day when assisting visitors, providing programming, and developing exhibits. While many people know us simply as "the Historical Society," we are more than a singular entity. We are comprised of multiple offerings – the Litchfield History Museum; Helga J. Ingraham Research Library; Tapping Reeve House and Litchfield Law School; and Tapping Reeve Meadow. With four distinct elements across two sites, our values ensure our offerings are aligned, consistent, and indicative of who we are.

On the pages of this year's Annual Report you'll find stories highlighting how we put our values of Inclusion, Inspiration, and Sustainability into practice this past year. Through partnering with community members, challenging ourselves and others to hear old stories in new ways, and working to ensure the future of our historic collections, the Litchfield Historical Society lived out our values daily.

I hope as you read and explore the highlights of our 2025 operations you can also see yourself in what we do. As always, your participation, your gifts, and your partnerships form the basis of these stories. The Litchfield Historical Society is your organization and together we work to connect our community and audiences with their history.

With many thanks,

Jessica

Jessica Jenkins
Executive Director

Inclusion



Neal D. Benedict

At the Litchfield Historical Society (LHS) we value shared experiences and believe in the importance of growing together. As a local history organization our community members are invaluable partners – some volunteering countless hours to share their knowledge and skills. For years, East Litchfield resident, Dan Keefe, has researched and sought photographs by Litchfield photographer Neal D. Benedict. Working in the 1880s and 1890s, Benedict's work ran the gamut. He captured rural landscapes, street scenes, portraiture, and even left us with documentary photos of the devastating destruction and rebuilding of West Street following two 19th century fires.

While LHS staff knew of Benedict and his work, hours spent with Dan deepened our knowledge significantly. Photographic scenes in our collection were identified, Benedict's business pursuits came into clearer focus, and the shared goal of documenting his life in Litchfield was jointly pursued.

As the Historical Society became excited by the information Dan shared with us, we wanted to share that enthusiasm with others and highlight Dan's important work as a local historian. With Dan's research as the foundation we developed the 2025 exhibit, *Litchfield Through a Lens – The Photography of Neal D. Benedict*. This exhibit provided the opportunity to share many photographs from our collection, while also encouraging

We create safe and welcoming spaces. We strive to remove barriers that prevent audiences - and potential audiences - from engaging with integrity.

visitors to consider the role of photography as art, documentary evidence, and a major part of their lives. Without Dan's partnership this project would not have connected with audiences in the same ways. By bringing community members to the table we can share authority in telling the stories of our shared history and ensure that all visitors are able to see themselves reflected in LHS's offerings. This culture of inclusion deepens and enriches all we do.


Come to Litchfield
for
Cabinet Photographs.
SATISFACTION GUARANTEED
OR
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COPIES
Cabinet or Card Size
CARD PHOTOGRAPHS
N. D. BENEDICT.

Newspaper Advertisement
Litchfield Enquirer, 1889



View of the corner of West St. and South St. Looking southeast from the west
Neal D. Benedict, 1886

Inspiration

When William Grimes published *The Life of William Grimes, the Runaway Slave*, considered to be the first fugitive slave narrative in American history, he was doing something revolutionary. For the publication's 200th Anniversary, the staff at the Historical Society were inspired by Grimes's indomitable spirit to plan a commemoration that was both a celebration and an opportunity for meaningful reflection and learning. Building on our longstanding collaboration with his descendent, Regina Mason, we organized a weekend of programs, the highlight of which was a dramatic reading and accompanying panel discussion.



Cover of the republished *The Life of William Grimes, the Runaway Slave*

Held on the site that Grimes and his family once lived, an audience of 80 people – including many descendants of Grimes



Storyteller Andre Keitt reading excerpts from *The Life of William Grimes*

himself, gathered to hear excerpts of the narrative read out loud by the talented storyteller Andre Keitt. Keitt was joined by a panel of leading experts, including Regina Mason, Bill Andrews, and Kari Winter. The innovative format combined performance with scholarship and gave the audience opportunities to connect both emotionally and intellectually. When Keitt performed, the audience could feel the power in Grimes's words, and when the panel contextualized the excerpt, it was an opportunity to understand deeper.



Grimes' descendent and leading authority Regina Mason (right) with Sean Durant, Producer/Director of *Gina's Journey: The Search for William Grimes*

The weekend's success was made possible through the contributions of our speakers, partners, and the many members of the Grimes family who traveled to Litchfield for this commemoration. In addition to the dramatic reading, the weekend included walking tours and a screening with Q&A of *Gina's Journey the Search for William Grimes* at the Bantam Cinema.

An accompanying exhibit on Grimes' narrative is on display through the Summer of 2026. Even after the weekend, Grimes's words continue to inspire audiences to "Think what [he] has felt."

We work to spark curiousity. We invite new ways of thinking. We ask hard questions of our audience and of each other.

Sustainability

With our work at the Litchfield Historical Society (LHS), we focus not only on serving our community in the present, but also on meeting the needs of our community members in the future. As a repository, the LHS pursues this mission by intentionally cultivating our archival and object holdings, keeping our collections resilient and adaptable for the present and future needs of the museum and our community members. A key part of this process has been our Collections Development Plan (CDP): a strategic plan for our collecting activities.

Formally approved in 2024, the CDP was produced not only with current collections scholarship and best practice in mind, but also in conversation with a variety of community stakeholders. This dialogue identified several points where the collection could be developed. In particular, the plan defines two key areas for growth: collecting essential Litchfield stories and developing further partnerships within our community



Litchfield High School
Letterman Jacket, c. 1960
Gift of Charles A. Hyres



Wamogo Letterman Jacket,
c. 1960
Gift of John C.N. Kilbourn

We plan for the future. We invest strategically. We anticipate and evolve.

Using the CDP as a foundation, we have taken steps to meet these two objectives. In 2025, we opened and filled two seats on the collections committee with emerging professionals in the museum field. They have already injected fresh voices into our collecting discussions, and we have been able to support budding local professionals as well. The collections committee and staff also approved the implementation of a collections tiering system. Once implemented, this new system will allow us to better evaluate new acquisitions and existing holdings. Combined with our use of the CDP to identify narrative areas for growth, this allows the LHS to be more thoughtful with its collecting activities and storage spaces. Planning also took place for the creation of a sustainable digital preservation and access program in anticipation of the burgeoning digital age.

By pursuing these goals laid out in the CDP, we've laid the foundation for a more robust and accessible collection, one that will be available to Litchfield and LHS stakeholders for many generations.

The full Collection Development Plan can be found on our website at litchfieldhistoricalsociety.org/about-us/policies-and-reports/ or by scanning this QR code:



February

LHS kicks off a series of community conversations exploring memories of the past.

March

38 attendees compete in our “More than Just History” Trivia Night at the Litchfield Distillery





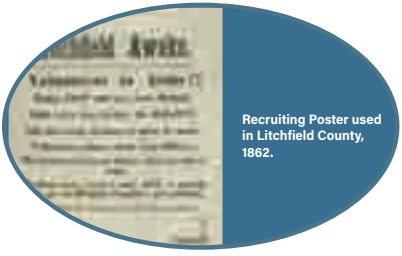
April

Litchfield Through a Lens and *Litchfield Remembers* open at the Litchfield History Museum

May

Descendants of William Grimes join us in Litchfield to commemorate his life and work.





Recruiting Poster used in Litchfield County, 1862.

June

LHS’s pop-up exhibit in Goshen at the premier of the award-winning play *A Goodnight Kiss*

July

The 27th Annual 4th of July Pet Parade brought 51 pets, and their humans, to the Tapping Reeve Meadow.





August

Using our collection and the museums as inspiration, summer campers explored art, science, and history.

September

Our Fall Fundraiser brought the party to the Litchfield Community Center with *Changes in Latitudes*.





October

Nearly 7000 people enjoy the 58 scarecrows on display at the Tapping Reeve Meadow.

December

We hosted a community reading of the U.S. Constitution with the League of Women Voters of Litchfield County.



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$10,000 and Above

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Board President Tina Reardon welcomes former Acting and Deputy Director of the CIA at *American Intelligence: Then and Now*

$250 to $499

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Barbara Ann Cook
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Mary Floyd Tallmadge Chapter, Daughters of the American



United States Court of Appeals Judge William J. Nardini examines Litchfield Law School notebooks

Revolution
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Marietta Kefauver-Moore



Director Jessica Jenkins tours the Helga J. Ingraham Research Library with Leslie Mueller, host of *Museum Access*

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In memory of Marty and Jane Moraghan
Rudolf Morgan
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John and Robin Willink
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Brett Zuraitis

$1 to $99

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James and Nancy Amrich
Ellen Baker
Rita Barredo
Keith Benson
Laurie Blackwell
Clayton Blick and
Linda Canfield Blick
Mandi Bokman and Bradley Cost
Ann and Miles Borzilleri
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Lori Ann Brass and Allan Phillips
Timothy Breslin and
Susan Clarkin
Perry and Troy Brown
Robert Burns and Gary Schiro
Peter and Susan Carpenter
James and Dona Casey



LHS Summer Intern Cecelia works with Curator Nicole Carpenter

In memory of Phoebe
Susan Cheney
Frank Chiaramonte
Laura Coffill
Wendy J. Costa
Deborah Cronin
Pat Damiani
Cheryl C. Dickinson
Dominican Sisters of Hope
Nancy Doty
Alex Dubois and Cyndi Tolosa
Steve Dunsky
Gail Fairclough
Diane E. Field
Doyle Finan
In honor of April and Matt Blasavage
Sharon Fisher
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Yvonne Reynolds
Mark Graf
Rosemarie Greco
Debora Hanna
Richard Hershner
Maria and Tim Hill
Tom Hines and

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Janet Hooper
Rand Hubbell
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Wendy Wentworth and
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Don Wilkes
Ann Williams
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6th Annual Scarecrows in the Meadow
Opening Celebration

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William Bucklin
Sarah Dalton-Morris
Debra-Lynn E. Fritch
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Eric Stowe Hatch (1902-1973)
Oil on Canvas by John Wycliffe Lowes Forster
Gift of Eric K. Hatch



Litchfield Preparatory School Yearbooks
Gift of Susan Read

Community Partners

Town of Litchfield Park and Recreation
Susan B. Anthony Project
Bantam Cinema
Plein Air Litchfield
Litchfield Community Center
Northwest CT Arts Council
Litchfield Land Trust
Litchfield Garden Club
Region 20 Schools
League of Women Voters of Litchfield County



Lecture on stone walls with the Litchfield Land Trust



Arts Night Out in the Tapping Reeve Meadow with NWCT Arts Council



Summer Camps through Litchfield Park and Recreation



Plein Air Litchfield Quick Paint in the Tapping Reeve Meadow

Volunteers

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David Bill
Edie Foster
Bette Geci
Jerry Geci
Brigid Healy
Steve Healy
Maria Hill
Jane McDermott
Humphry Rolleston
Lynn Skokan
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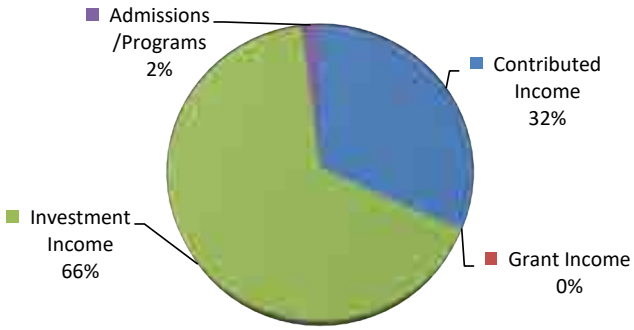
Financials

Support and Revenue	
Contributed Income	$216,778
Grant Income	-
Investment Income	$453,293
Admissions / Program Fees / Shop	$13,783
Total Support and Revenue	**$683,854**
Expenses	
Salaries and Taxes	$360,869
Benefits	$33,475
Exhibits / Programs / Research	$12,415
Utilities	$51,528
Maintenance / Repairs	$58,073
Operating Expenses	$137,102
Total Expenses	**$653,462**
Net Surplus	**$30,392**
Grant Income - Restricted 2010-2025	
Capital Projects	$1,470,825
Collections / Database	$200,784
Programs	$219,028
Long-Term Planning	$8,000
Total Grant / Restricted Income	**$1,898,637**

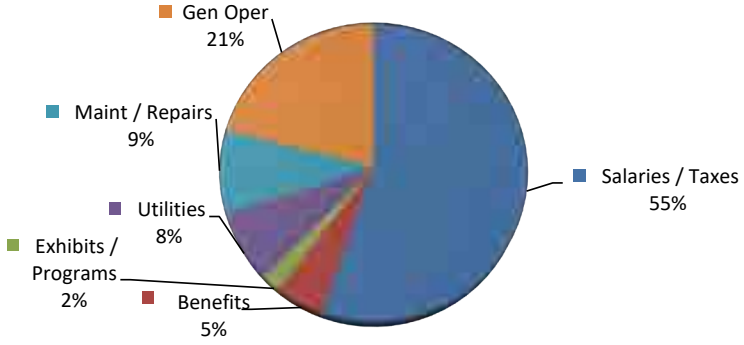


Crafting Musket Balls
Oil on Canvas
by James Calvert Smith
Gift of Union
Savings Bank

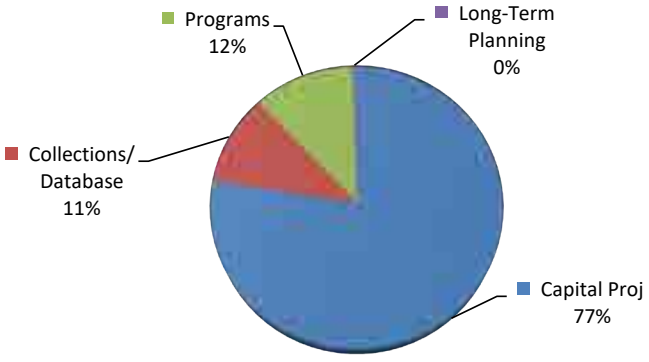
Operating Revenue - 2025



Operating Expenses - 2025



Restricted Grants - 2010-2025



2025 by the Numbers



4460
Museum Visitors



44
Donations to the Collection



214
Researchers Assisted



11,278
Program Attendees



112
Member Households



1,079
Region 20 Students Served



1431
Total Students Served



332,280
Social Media Impressions



453
Hours Watched on YouTube

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