

# ALMANAC



THE WETHERSFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER ■ VOLUME 32 ■ NUMBER 3 ■ FALL/WINTER 2006

## HOLIDAY FLORAL SHOW HOUSE

### Local Floral Designers to Create Holiday Extravaganza at Hurlbut-Dunham House

"It's the most wonderful time of the year..." begins a favorite holiday carol as it captures the fun and festivities of the holiday season. This December, there will be no better place to get into the holiday spirit than the Hurlbut-Dunham House at 212 Main Street as the society opens its first Holiday Designer Show House from December 9-31. Some of the area's finest floral designers and landscape artists will transform the beautiful spaces of the society's historic house museum into a festive and exuberant tour de force!

Each designer will have a separate room of the house or exterior space in which to imprint their style. The designers will be drawing inspiration from the house's Victorian accents and 19th and 20th century furnishings to decorate their signature creations in each room. The Floral Show House will display the artistic talents of the area's finest designers:

B & B Landscaping, Cedar Mountain Florists, Cinnamon Bay Florist and Gifts, Floral Gallery, The Flower Box, Keser's Flowers, Out the Window Florists, Village Garden Club and Wethersfield Garden Club.

Society Director Doug Shipman expresses the society's

enthusiasm for the event, "The Hurlbut-Dunham House is the perfect showcase for a holiday event such as the Floral Show House. We are excited to offer this new holiday event to the Wethersfield community!"

The house will be open seven days a week during the holiday season, Monday – Saturday, 10am-4p.m. and Sunday 1-4p.m., Admission to the Holiday Floral Show House is \$10 for adults, \$5 for children aged 6-16 and free for children under 6. All tours begin at the Hurlbut-Dunham House, 212 Main Street.

In addition to regular tours, the society will be offering a number of fun events at the house. They will begin with a "Meet the Designers Opening Reception" on Friday, December 9 from 7-10p.m., featuring an opportunity to learn about the designers and their craft. Music and elegant desserts will accompany the festive evening for \$40 per person. A Family Fun Day on Saturday, December 16 will include crafts, a scavenger hunt and lively activities for all family members at \$5 per person. Special evening hours will be held on Fridays from 6-8p.m. and Thursdays will be Senior Discount Days for \$8 (over 65).

Stay tuned for upcoming mailings about the Holiday Floral Show House and its related events or contact the society staff at (860) 529-7656 or visit our website at [www.wethhist.org](http://www.wethhist.org). Please contact us if you would like to become involved with the Show House events or to volunteer to staff the building and see the house for free.



## WW II EXHIBIT OPENS

*V for Victory: Wethersfield and World War II*, the society's newest exhibition, opens with a Members and Donors Reception on October 27

from 7 to 9p.m. Lively conversation, refreshments and music from the 1940s will accompany the opening as the society celebrates the "Greatest Generation."



## ANTIQUES SHOW IN NOVEMBER

### Preview Party Kicks Off 6th Annual Show in Style!

The 6th Annual Wethersfield Antiques Show will be held November 17 and 18 at the Pitkin Community Center. With 49 of the region's finest dealers, this show is among the highest quality venues in the area. Plan to come to Early Buying or the Preview Party on Friday, November 17 and the show on November 18. Please see page 7 for more details and your coupon for discount admission.



# FORECAST

## VALUE, Values, and the Value of Knowing Who You Are

A casual read of current newspapers and magazines reveals the tribulations of many “heritage tourism” destinations. While some sites have contributed significantly to popular and academic understanding of American history and culture, many have become too reliant on admissions revenue from hundreds of thousands of visitors each year and have their share of troubles to show for it. Even the substantial admission fees charged by some of the larger attractions have not made up for diminishing numbers of visitors, and may have made matters worse. While not all museums are suffering financially, they must compete for audience share with everything from the cinema and iPods to the many options for popular culture and entertainment, inexpensive tour packages on cruise ships and overseas destinations. And sadly, perhaps, a diminished public awareness of, and interest in, (gasp) history.

What is a museum to do? Few have yet “broken the code” by providing a solution to the current trend in heritage tourism, but many are trying to do just that. Some seem to have abandoned their core principles in order to do so, with slick marketing approaches or by hosting events like “speed-dating nights,” sleep-over and IMAX features. Others have skated on ethical thin ice by selling off accessioned collections to pay for operations or capital expenses or, in the case of more than one museum, trespassing on sensitive cultural issues for the sake of attracting an audience.

Those cultural institutions that maintain the greatest respect and loyalty, and I would like to count Wethersfield Historical Society among them, do so by remaining true to their core purpose and institutional values. The society, formed almost 75 years ago, has maintained its commitment to **historic preservation** and **education** and to **servicing the Wethersfield community**. Along with this, the society has insisted on **quality** and another good Yankee value – **thrift**.

The society represents a very good value, it has done – and does – a great deal with precious little. Innovative agreements between the society and the Town of Wethersfield have set standards for adaptive reuse and preservation of important historic buildings. Further, on an annual budget of well under \$400,000, our staff and volunteers care for over 6,500 artifacts and manuscripts, oversee maintenance of six historic buildings, operate a full-service visitor center and gift shop, operate a research library, develop quality exhibits and provide engaging cultural and educational programming to over 10,000 adults and children each year. Sadly, more should be done, and could be done, with additional resources. Each year we find ourselves in the position of prioritizing and selecting which important preservation or maintenance project we can afford to accomplish with our limited funds.

Wethersfield is not Williamsburg – we are unique and have a great deal to offer our visitors and community. Remaining true to one’s values has a cost, however, and we do need your continued support to remain a viable preservation and educational institution. I hope you will continue to generously support the society for what it stands for in our community and in the broader world of historical and cultural institutions, as an organization that knows who we are and knows whom we serve. **Thank you for your continued support – and now on to the next 75 years!**



**Doug Shipman**  
*Director*

## WETHERSFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*The ALMANAC* is a quarterly publication of  
Wethersfield Historical Society,  
a 501.c.3, non-profit organization chartered in 1932.

**Wethersfield Historical Society:**  
**Preserving Wethersfield’s history and culture**  
**to inspire people today and tomorrow.**

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# \* Come To The Cabaret \*

## KEENEY CULTURAL SERIES

### Cultural Series Moves to New Cabaret Format for 14th Season

The  
Jan  
Jungden  
Trio



The society announces an exciting new format for the Keeney Cultural Series for 2007. The musical programs will take place in an **intimate, cabaret setting**, affording patrons the opportunity to bring along their own beverages with the society providing refreshments and setups. The four-part Series will be presented monthly on the second Thursday from January to April. Once again, talented acclaimed artists will be performing.

The **Jan Jungden Trio** kicks off the Series on **Thursday, January 11, 2007** at 7:30p.m. in Keeney Hall. Jan is not only a gifted jazz pianist, but can break into song, “a la Diana Krall,” and then surprise you with her versatility by switching to jazz on her flute. Jan is joined by sidekicks Fred Fagan on guitar and Justin Blackburn on drums. Together the trio performs with great spontaneity and delivers a lively performance.

3  
Swingin’  
Tenors



Three national recording artists come together as the **3 Swingin’ Tenors** on **Thursday, February 8, 2007**. Jack Alessi, Steve Marvin and Jim Porcella combine their vocal and theatrical talents to create a performance that will entertain audiences of all ages. With warmth and humor, they pay tribute to the Big Apple, the Mills Brothers, the songs of World War II and the Rat Pack. They also include musical impersonations of some of America’s most beloved entertainers. Talent abounds with this threesome!

The Wiyos



On **March 8th at 7:30p.m.**, hilarity will rule the evening with **The Wiyos**, a nationally-renowned trio performing Ragtime, Jugband, Blues and Hillbilly Swing. With infectious exuberance and theatrical skill, The Wiyos create a visual spectacle in the tradition of vaudevillian performers such as Fats Waller and Hoosier Hotshots. Their comedy recalls the silent films of Laurel and Hardy, Buster Keaton and Charlie Chaplin.

Acoustic  
Blend



The last performance of the Series, **Acoustic Blend**, will take place on **April 12**. Judy Handler and Mark Levesque have become renowned for their virtuosity on guitar and mandolin. They are joined by gifted bassist Genevieve Rose and drummer Gregory Caputo. The foursome create a unique sound – a dynamic rhythm that skillfully blends Brazilian, Latin American swing, gypsy and European musical influences.

The Keeney Series, in its new cabaret format, is offered to members at the reasonable price of \$60 for the whole Series and to non-members for \$75. Individual tickets are \$18 and \$20, respectively. Subscribers will be seated at front tables. As brochures will be mailed in early December, a series subscription can be a great holiday gift. For further information, please call the Society at (860) 529-7656 or Cindy Brown at (860) 529-7161.

## WEBB-DEANE-STEVENS MUSEUM ANNOUNCES NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Charles Lyle to begin new post in early December

I am pleased to share the good news of our friends “across the street” that Charles T. Lyle has accepted the position of Executive Director with the Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum. Mr. Lyle has led a distinguished 30-year career of director-level leadership at several prominent historical organizations, to include most recently Boscobel Restoration (Garrison, New York) as well as Maryland Historical Society, The Historical Society of Delaware and Monmouth County Historical Association (Freehold, New Jersey). We congratulate the Board of Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum and warmly welcome Mr. Lyle to Connecticut’s “Most Auncient Towne.” *Doug Shipman*

## Lee G. Kuckro – Why I Give.

**Leader in Historic Preservation,  
Supporter of Wethersfield Historical Society**

Lee and Anne Kuckro have long been active supporters of historic preservation and research, served as leaders in the society and continue to support the society generously each year. Lee, who has recently served as Chairman of the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation and currently serves as President of the Antiquarian and Landmarks Society, explains in his own words why he feels it is so important to support Wethersfield Historical Society.

*I support the Wethersfield Historical Society because the society is, and for three generations has been, a strong and persuasive voice for preservation. Today it is responsible for six buildings. The Cove Warehouse is the most tangible reminder of the town's maritime history. The Keeney Memorial and the Village Tavern, rehabilitated and restored by the society, are critical components of the revitalization of the old town center, enriching our civic and cultural life, and providing facilities for heritage tourism, which reinforces the town's historic character.*

*The Academy, with its library and research facilities, and the Hurlbut-Dunham and James Francis houses afford us, our children and our visitors opportunities to explore the past with an immediacy and authenticity that cannot be matched by any reality show or theme park attraction.*

*The society also offers programs, tours, exhibitions and a calendar of varied and appealing events. The Wethersfield Historical Society draws us together as townspeople, cutting across neighborhoods and other affiliations, reminding us of the history we share with our predecessors and with each other. It is the best hope we have of passing on to those who follow us the history, the perspective and the wisdom which have made Wethersfield this special place; it is our gift to the future.*

## IMPORTANT DONATIONS TO WHS COLLECTIONS

**Rochford, St. Onge Donate Fine Furniture, Objets d'Art**

The society receives dozens of donations to its collections every year through objects, manuscripts and photographs. While individual donors to the collections are acknowledged each year in the Annual Report, certain donations deserve special mention for their quality and importance to Wethersfield.

One such object belonged to former society member Margaret Rochford, who passed away in April 2006. Ms. Rochford bequeathed an 18th century mahogany Chinese Chippendale mirror with gilded detailing. As her notes claim that the mirror once belonged to the Anderson

family on Broad Street, we are pleased that it has once again returned to Wethersfield.



Society staff member and antiques collector Elaine St. Onge recently donated many objects from her personal collection to the society. Among the most important object were an Algonkian basket, a reproduction Windsor fan back chair by Wallace

Nutting and several pieces of Goodwin Brothers Art Pottery from the late 19th century.

Thanks to Ms. Rochford's and Ms. St. Onge's selection of the society as caretakers of their gifts, we will be able to preserve their objects to better understand the history of Wethersfield and Greater Hartford.

## SOCIETY BEGINS 75th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

**First Society Meeting Held February 27, 1932**

Wethersfield Historical Society will be celebrating its 75th Anniversary in 2007, living up to its combined mission of preservation and education for three-quarters of a century. As the society prepares for its jubilee year, a series of articles in *The Almanac* will chronicle that first year of organization, 1932.

The impetus to create a historical committee/group/society gained momentum in Wethersfield in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Within 15 years, important historical structures in town such as the Webb House, Cove Warehouse and Deming-Standish House were restored in order to preserve the historic character of the town. Simultaneously, the town began preparations to celebrate the 200th anniversary of George Washington's birth in 1932 and Wethersfield's own 300th anniversary in 1934, thereby raising historic awareness in town. The Wethersfield Business Men's and Civic Association created a Committee of Historical Matters in January, 1932 and later that month met to elect officers and create bylaws for a historical society.

They announced that a public meeting was to be held inviting, "All residents of the town interested in historical matters pertaining to Wethersfield." The first public meeting of Wethersfield Historical Society met in the Assembly Hall of the High School on February 27, 1932, the society's "birth date." More than 150 people attended, creating the charter membership. Many of them brought personal objects of historical significance for display. Newspaper accounts describe silk gowns, probate inventories, household articles and weaponry among the 200 objects, all from Wethersfield families. George Goddard, Superintendent of the Connecticut State Library, gave the keynote address and charged the society's membership with preservation of their collected objects.

Looking back on that night provides some perspective 75 years later. A few of those objects brought the night of the first meeting remain in the society's collections, continuing to educate the public about Wethersfield's history. The excitement from that first meeting inspired more people to join, requiring a large place to gather. Future society monthly meetings were held at the Assembly Hall at Center School, known today as Keeney Hall at the Keeney Memorial Cultural Center, the flagship museum of Wethersfield Historical Society.

Sources for this article included: "Minutes of Wethersfield Historical Society," Jan. 1932-May, 1933; *The Hartford Courant*, Feb. 28, 1932; and *Legendary People, Ordinary Lives*, background document by Brenda Milkofsky and Beverly Johnson, 1997.



## HATS OFF!

### In-Kind Services Give Society A Much-Needed Image Update

Advisory Board Member **John Oldham** and his team at Oldham Studios have updated the well-worn signs at the Old Academy, Hurlbut-Dunham House and Keeney Memorial Cultural Center. **Doug Simpson** has put an updated, user-friendly look to the society's website at [www.wethhist.org](http://www.wethhist.org). Both John and Doug have been part of the society's new imaging campaign in which we are striving for a unified, sophisticated look in everything we do.

### Structural Expertise Helps Stabilize Hurlbut-Dunham Foundation

Buildings and Grounds Committee Members **Bruce Bockstael** and **Tom Giardini** have implemented foundation improvements to the Hurlbut-Dunham House. Their donation of time and talent to this project is invaluable as we move forward with the house's multi-phase restoration.

### Talented Gardeners Beautify Society's Historic Landscapes

The members of the **Village Garden Club** maintain the colorful and beautiful gardens at the Hurlbut-Dunham House. Their efforts complement the lines of the house's gracious porches and create a lovely focal point on Main Street. Also, **Meg MacDonough** tends the herb garden at the James Francis House – often single-handedly. Thank you Meg!

## CONNECTICUT ROCKS! ROCKS ON

### Popular Exhibit Reopens in Watson Gallery

In preparation for the installation of *V for Victory* in October, the society's hands-on exhibit, *Connecticut Rocks!* was dismantled and reinstalled in the smaller Watson Gallery in the Keeney Center. In this condensed and value-packed format, this exhibit will continue to teach children and adults about the state's geology. See it for a second time and see something new!

## WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

### From Wethersfield:

Mr. & Mrs. Christopher Codeanne  
Jane Erickson  
Ann Foley  
Mr. & Mrs. John Maycock  
James and Anne Marie Ritter  
Mr. & Mrs. Anthony Servidone  
Burgess Speed & Kimberly Forbes  
Linda Yorton  
Mr. & Mrs. Edward Zito

### From Elsewhere:

George and Ann Bass, Texas  
George Chester, Jr., Virginia  
Peter and Emily DeFrances, Newington  
Mary and Alan Jones, West Hartford  
Lucy Rister, Newington  
Jane Seraphin, Rocky Hill

## BUILDING IMPROVEMENTS

### Town Supports Improvements to Historic Structures

Thanks to the support of the Town of Wethersfield and the hard work of its Physical Services Department, several improvements were made to the Town-owned, society-operated historic structures. The Deming-Standish House, which contains the Village Tavern Restaurant,



received a new wood-shingled roof and gutter system this summer. A new, safer handicap ramp was installed at the Old Academy and electrical service restored to the Cove Warehouse.

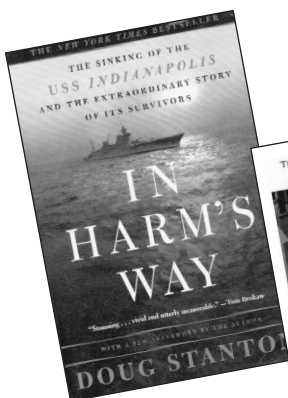
In addition, the Keeney Memorial Cultural Center received a much-needed facelift this summer.

Thanks to the Town's Head Painter, **Gerry Santerre**, the wooden window frames of this 1893 structure were scraped and painted period-appropriate colors. As seen in this photo, Gerry uses a mechanized lift to paint the trim along the Keeney's dramatic windows. Funding for the painting project was made possible through the Keeney Trust at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving.

## SHOP AT THE MUSEUM FOR YOUR HOLIDAY GIFTS

The Museum Gift Shop at the Keeney Memorial is stocked with great ideas for your holiday giving. There are special items relating to World War II for adults and children. We will also be carrying the CD by the Heartbeat Jazz Band that was recorded at the Keeney Memorial Cultural Center in June 2006. The proceeds from the sale of this CD will benefit the foundation that was started by Bill Logozzo, the leader of the band.

Don't forget the special discounts available at the **Old Wethersfield Shopkeepers Open House**, Thursday evening, **November 16** from 5:30-8:00 p.m. There will be refreshments and special offers at participating shops.



# SUMMER RECAP

## KEENEY KIDS

With its largest enrollment to date of 92 children, the third year of Keeney Kids Summer History Programs lived up to its motto of "history is fun!" Filled with field trips to historic sites, crafts, hands-on activities and games, the programs received rave reviews from parents and children alike.

The society implemented a new scholarship program of free admission and transportation for Wethersfield students who could not otherwise attend the program. In partnership with Wethersfield Public Schools and the Keeney Trust at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, the society offered a scholarship program to 10 Wethersfield children. The students enjoyed themselves thoroughly at Keeney Kids, making new friends and learning about their historic town.



Led by Volunteer Teen Helpers Joe Schuberth and Zachary Weinberg, a class of youngsters takes a ride in their homemade "Wethersfield Trolley." The society is grateful to all of its Teen Helpers, many of whom devoted 1 or 2 weeks of their summer to assisting the teaching staff (plus, they had fun themselves!): Caroline Bazinet; Jaelyn English; Katie Jambard; Celina Rogers; Joe Schuberth; Michelle Slater; Margaret Stack; Michelle Suconik; Monica Verma; Shafali Verma; and Zachary Weinberg.



The 30+ voices of the Silk City Chorus sing against the backdrop of the Town of Wethersfield's ShowMobile.

## KEENEY KOOLERS

The Keeney Koolers Outdoor Concerts provided a great way to beat the summer heat this year. Three twilight concerts in July and August attracted crowds up to 350 people each night for free entertainment and sociable fun. Funded by the Keeney Trust at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, the concerts featured performing artists such as the Silk City Chorus, the Dramaticks and Full Gael – something for every musical taste. Keeney Koolers are supported in part by the Keeney Trust at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving.

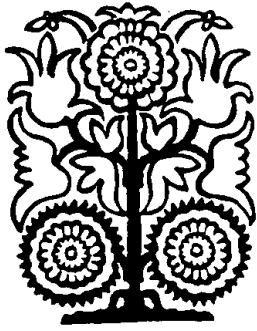
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## KEENEY KIDS DURING HOLIDAY VACATION

### Fun Children's Programming Offered During December Vacations

The society will be hosting two days of Keeney Kids during the **Holiday Vacation, December 27 and 28, 2006**. Children in grades 1 through 6 will learn that "history is fun" through hands-on activities, field trips to historic sites, crafts and games. The themes will be "Winter Wonderland" and "Home for the Holidays," which tie together the historic programming. For society members, admission is \$15 per day and for non-members it is \$20 per day.

Please call Education Coordinator Mary Pat Knowlton, 529-7656, for more information or to sign your child up for one or both days of these fun programs.



# Wethersfield Antiques Show

Saturday, November 18, 10 A.M. - 4 P.M.

Pitkin Community Center - 30 Greenfield Street

As we prepare for our sixth annual Wethersfield Antiques Show, we invite you all to join us either at the Preview Party and Early Buying which both take place on Friday, or at the Show itself on Saturday. This show promises to be better than ever with forty-nine dealers in decorative room settings. Although most of our dealers have been with us for several years, we will have fresh new faces, as well. Featured will be Early American antiques including furniture and decorative accessories, textiles, pewter, jewelry, fine paintings and prints, oriental rugs, glassware and ceramics and books. The dealers hail from all the New England states and New York. Last year's show was enjoyed by nearly 1000 visitors and we hope more will come this year.



**\$1.00 Discount Coupon for admission to Wethersfield Antiques Show**

*Clip and bring with you on Saturday, Nov. 18, 10 A.M. to 4 P.M.*

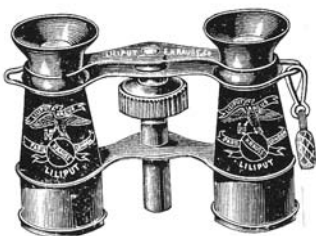


A new feature this year will be the Booth Chats on Saturday. There will be three of them spread throughout the day. Featured will be Ron Chambers, a specialist in American Pewter, Tom Landers of Palisades Trading Company, whose expertise is in oriental rugs and Donna Kmetz, who specializes in fine paintings. Each dealer will give a short talk on their area of expertise and entertain questions from the group.

Activities will get underway on Friday, November 17 with the Early Buying session from 4-6 pm. In its third year, this has proven to be very popular. For \$10 anyone may come in, browse the show and buy. At 6:00 pm, the building is closed and we prepare for the festive Preview Party which runs from 7:00-9:00 pm. Open to the public, this high-energy event features hot hors d'oeuvres, cocktails and the opportunity to purchase antiques the night before the show. This year there will be a special prize drawing for those who have supported the event at the Patron level.

On Saturday, the Sunflower Café will again offer coffee and muffins at 10 a.m. and a light lunch in the Fireside Room where you will also find the popular Attic Treasures booth. Proceeds from the show will benefit the Fountain of Service and Memorial Gardens at Keeney Memorial and the society's cultural and educational programs.

## ATTIC TREASURES



The Attic Treasures booth in the Fireside Room attracts dealers and patrons alike. The society depends on your generosity to keep this area stocked from year to year with fine smalls - antique, collectible and new. If you have something you want to donate, please call the society office (529.7656) or drop off your items at the Old Academy, 150 Main Street, Tuesday through Friday, 9-4. This is a great way to clean out your closet and help the society at the same time!



Wethersfield Historical Society  
150 Main Street  
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E-mail: [weth.hist.society@snet.net](mailto:weth.hist.society@snet.net)

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## CALENDAR *of* EVENTS



- 
- Oct. 27      **Members and Donors Reception for *V for Victory: Wethersfield and World War II***, 7-9 p.m., Keeney Memorial Cultural Center. The exhibition opens to the public on Oct. 28 and runs through fall 2007.
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- Nov. 16      **Museum Shop Open House**, 5:30-8:00 p.m. Special discounts, museum open, refreshments. Keeney Memorial Cultural Center.
- 
- Nov. 17      **Preview Party for Wethersfield Antiques Show**, 7-9 p.m. Pitkin Community Center, 30 Greenfield Street. 10-4. \$30 per person.
- 
- Nov. 18      **Wethersfield Antiques Show**, 10-4, Pitkin Community Center. \$6 per person. 49 dealers, Sunflower Café, Attic Treasures, Booth Chats.
- 
- Dec. 9      **"Meet the Designers" reception for the Holiday Floral Show House**, 7-10 p.m. at the Hurlbut-Dunham House, 212 Main Street. \$40.
- 
- Dec. 10-31      **Holiday Floral Show House at the Hurlbut-Dunham House**, 212 Main St. Hours are Mon.-Sat., 10-4, Sun. 1-4. Fri. evenings, 6-8 p.m. \$10. Special senior discount day on Thurs., \$8.
- 
- Dec. 27-28      **Keeney Kids Holiday History Programs** at Keeney Memorial Cultural Center, 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m.