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Greenwich Historical Society to Restore and Expand Impressionist Era Gardens

*Grant from Hortulus Enables Conte & Conte, LLC to Reestablish Historical
Fruit, Vegetable, and Flower Gardens*

FEBRUARY 6, 2018, COS COB, CT--Greenwich Historical Society is excited to announce a new grant from the local garden club Hortulus to enable the restoration of the ornamental flower gardens, kitchen gardens, and grape arbor as part of the overall master plan for the Society's dramatic campus transformation. The artist colony Impressionist period gardens of the National Historic Landmark Bush-Holley House provide critical interpretive information for visitors, as they convey both daily life routines (growing food provisions for the residents), as well as inspiring many subjects in the plein-air painters' tableaux.

When the reimagined campus opens in fall 2018, garden improvements will include relocation and expansion of the Impressionist-era fruit and vegetable garden that supported the Holley boarding house and the creation of a new Impressionist-era perennial flower garden along both sides of the walkway that will link the new building to Bush-Holley House and the Vanderbilt Education Center. The current grape arbor will also be replaced with a more durable structure to support the existing grape vines, some of which are 120 years old.

In producing these historical gardens plans, the Society is collaborating with design consultants, Greenwich-based landscape architecture firm Conte & Conte, LLC, and the award-winning historic preservation architectural firm David Scott Parker Architects.

In generating the planting plan, Conte & Conte, which has experience working with historical landscape projects, carefully examined the historical primary and secondary sources (including *Garden Calendar* of Holley House proprietors Elmer and Constant MacRae for the years 1918-1919 and the additional information compiled in the *Historic Landscape Report: Bush-Holley House, Storehouse and Brush Properties*, 1996). For the grape arbor reconstruction drawings, David Scott Parker Architects carefully examined all physical and documentary evidence.

For the technical and careful installation of these historical landscape features, Fairfield House & Garden Company, which is the sister construction company of Conte & Conte, has been selected to carry out the work. The firm has the particular skill combination of working with sensitive landscapes as well as vast experience in the realm of sustaining the appearance of such types of gardens over time. In addition, the firm's owners, John and Kim Conte, hold a personal interest in the success of the Society's vision as both of their families have resided in Greenwich since the artist colony was established.

During the 30-year period from 1890 to 1920, Cos Cob and the Holley House (now Bush-Holley House) became the setting for Connecticut's first art colony. Today, Bush-Holley House visitors can view works by Impressionist artists depicting the house and gardens.

The generous Hortulus grant will enable the Greenwich Historical Society to further its mission and long-term vision for preserving and presenting local history and art in a dynamic and beautiful site dedicated to lifetime learning, connecting us to our past and each other.

Founded in 1930 and a member of The Garden Club of America, Hortulus' mission is "to stimulate the knowledge and love of gardening and creative design; to protect, restore, and improve the quality of the environment through education, programs and action in the fields of conservation and civic improvement."

Hortulus hosts flower shows, garden trips, workshops, and lectures, and has a long tradition of civic service. The club's contributions include landscaping at Greenwich Library, The Mews, and the YWCA as well as grants to Nathaniel Witherell, the Greenwich Land Trust, Boys & Girls Club of Greenwich, Bruce Park, the Garden Education Center, and Greenwich Audubon. Hortulus and the Greenwich Historical Society have a long-standing relationship dating back to the Hortulus Conservation Award designed by Bush-Holley House proprietor Elmer MacRae in 1945.

Greenwich Historical Society is in the home stretch of its Reimagine the Campus Campaign, a bold and ambitious initiative that will expand and provide better access to its facilities, and enrich its education and preservation programs. The visionary plan will enable the Historical Society to advance its mission by making a greater contribution to the cultural life of Greenwich and surrounding areas, while ensuring the preservation of its historic buildings and grounds for the future.

The new building will have a glass lobby, two state-of-the-art exhibition halls to showcase the permanent art and history collections, an expanded research library and archives, museum store, and café. The reimagined campus will welcome the community with more than double the parking and provides universal access to the entire site, including an elevator. It will enable more dynamic programming and experiences for bringing Greenwich history alive to a larger audience.



Rendering of new Impressionist era fruit, vegetable, and flower gardens at the Greenwich Historical Society that will be made possible by a grant from Hortulus and by the work of landscape architecture firm Conte & Conte.



Rendering of the new gardens and renovated grape arbor as seen from the covered porch of the new building opening fall 2018 at the Greenwich Historical

Society. The reimagined campus will be accessible for people using wheelchairs.

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