



# Litchfield Historical Society

*A Case Study on the Impact of CT Humanities' Investment*

Since CT Humanities' founding 50 years ago, we have worked with cultural organizations and partners across the state to **share our rich history and culture, educate the public, and strengthen cultural tourism.** Connecticut's investment in the CT Humanities Fund has generated thousands of exhibits, programs, and events that have benefited millions of residents of and visitors to our state. This case study shows the **impact of long-term investment** in local organizations that have become our community anchors.

Litchfield Historical Society, established in 1865, is comprised of the Litchfield History Museum, the Helga J. Ingraham Memorial Library (including collections and research center), the Tapping Reeve House and Tapping Reeve Meadow. It is also home to the Litchfield Law School, America's first law school, which opened in 1784.

**CTH has provided 52 grants to the Litchfield Historical Society totaling \$880,936**

## ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF THE LITCHFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY: A 2023 SNAPSHOT



**Tax Revenue Generated** | **STATE: \$63,702**  
**LOCAL: \$40,866**

Source: 2023 Arts & Economic Prosperity 6: The Economic and Social Impact Study of Nonprofit Arts and Culture Organizations and Their Audiences in the State of Connecticut

## Their Challenges:

In 1987, the organization had limited staff, very little programming or community engagement, a facility in need of renovation, and only 750 annual visitors.

## Our Investment:

CT Humanities support and funding helped the Society:

- Create strategic plans
- Hire staff, including educators
- Create art exhibitions with humanities themes
- Renovate and restore historic buildings
- Enhance education with teacher trainings
- Become a tourism driver by increasing annual visitors to 13,596 (as of 2023)

**Investment from CT Humanities helped the Society leverage additional funding** from other sources, including the National Endowment for the Humanities, corporate funders, and donors.

## CASE STUDY: LITCHFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

When Cathy Fields took the reins of Litchfield Historical Society (LHS) 36 years ago, she was the only full-time staffer, the facility and grounds were in bad shape, and the entire slate of programming was only four lectures a year.

The challenges were daunting, but she, her two part-time staff, and a hardworking board were up for it.

“It was an organization ready to reinvent itself,” she said. “They were ready for a change.”

Starting from scratch, the team put a building project in place, and Fields connected with an early supporter – CT Humanities and its Executive Director Bruce Fraser. The facilities were closed for renovations for two years, and Fraser worked with the Society to find funding to supplement the capital campaign.

Once renovations were complete, Fields needed exhibits and a designer along with an educator to work with the community. Once again, CT Humanities provided necessary funding, and a revitalized LHS began working to reintroduce itself to the world.

Fields said, “We didn’t have a real relationship with the community. That changed as our relationship with CT Humanities changed and expanded.”

Everything increased after that – more programs, more attendees. LHS started programs with schools, began offering more adult programming.

CT Humanities provided funding for a high-profile symposium and teacher workshop on the Litchfield Female Academy, one of the country’s most important female education institutions that was founded in 1792 by Sarah Pierce.

More funding came from the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1992. That’s when the town took notice.

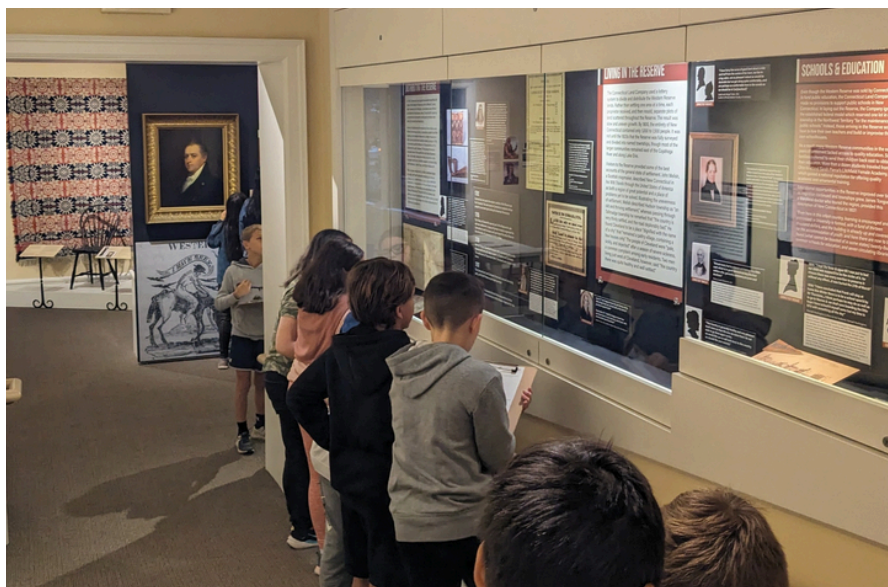
“We realized that we had a great, functioning, professional museum,” Fields said.

Up next, the renovation of the renowned Tapping Reeve House Law School on the Society’s property, supported by CT Humanities funds. Importantly, CT Humanities funded three strategic plans for LHS, allowing them to plan for and lay out a road map over several years. The Society was able to hire additional staff, build a curatorial center and collections storage, and move their paper files over to digital databases.

“The Humanities Council was our partner in everything we did,” Fields said. “We didn’t have any type of large project that CT Humanities wasn’t involved in.”

More recent improvements to the property itself included an outdoor pavilion, heirloom apple orchard, and development in the meadow that allowed for walking tours, pollinator gardens, composting, and other environmental activities.

During the COVID pandemic, the Society moved programs and entire exhibits to the Tapping Reeve Meadow and pavilion.



“

**Donors are not going to support you unless they believe the work you are doing is worthwhile. CT Humanities helped us do that worthwhile work.”**

– Cathy Fields, who served as executive director of the Litchfield Historical Society for 35 years

“The meadow was so important,” said Fields, who retired in 2023. “It was the linchpin for making us truly part of the community, it was the culmination of my vision.”

Altogether, CT Humanities has provided 52 grants to LHS, totaling \$880,936. In the early years, Fields said that they were lucky if they had 750 visitors in a year. Now, the organization sees more than 13,000 visitors annually.

Fields said that CT Humanities’ funding, guidance, and connections were key to connecting with other funders and donors, who were more inclined to give when they saw how successfully LHS was using CT Humanities’ grants.

“Donors are not going to support you unless they believe the work you are doing is worthwhile,” Fields said. “CT Humanities helped us do that worthwhile work.”