

# Connecticut Horticultural Society

# NEWSLETTER

Volume 64, Number 1

Serving Horticulturists Since 1887

September 2021

## Ensuring Their Garden Gifts Grow On

By Jody Morgan—writer and CT Hort Member

The story of how the Garden Conservancy came into being was a favorite feature of tours I led as a docent at the Ruth Bancroft Garden (RBG). Inevitably someone in the group would point to the residential neighborhoods sprawling along Bancroft Road and inquire whether Ruth's creation too would one day succumb to development. Because friends dragged a reluctant Frank Cabot and his wife Anne to see Ruth's then private dry garden in 1988, an organization that has helped save and restore more than 100 outstanding North American gardens was established, keeping the RBG and other amazing properties from being bulldozed.

Although Ruth Bancroft's Walnut Creek, California garden had already received recognition in a few well-known publications, Frank Cabot wondered how a bunch of prickly cacti and heat-loving succulents could possibly be relevant to his own gardens in Cold Spring, New York and Murray Bay, Quebec. Overwhelmed by the scope of Bancroft's collection and her incredible talent for artfully combining drought tolerant specimens from around the world, he tactfully asked his 80-year-old hostess what would happen to her garden when she was no longer able to tend it. Ruth (as we docents told the tale) immediately responded: "When I go, the garden goes too." Frank Cabot countered, "We can't let that happen!"

Ruth had discussed the issue with her family. She was personally spending 12 hours a day gardening. Her offspring admired her dedication, but felt unable to commit to keeping the garden growing. Kathy Bancroft Hidalgo once remarked to

me, "Don't give me a plant. It only leads to guilt." Nina Bancroft Dickerson always preferred the company of animals to caring for plants. But they worried that Ruth would live to see her creation fall apart.

Ruth already had an extensive garden of roses, heirloom iris, flowering and fruiting shrubs and trees when her husband Phillip suggested she plant her collection of succulents



The RBG water feature Lester Hawkins said every dry garden needs highlights the iconic folly Ruth Bancroft designed.

where he was removing the orchard of diseased walnut trees. Few gardeners in Northern California were using succulents in-ground at the time. During the summer of 1972 the pot-nurtured plants went into the garden only to have 90% succumb to a rare freeze. Always philosophical, Ruth went back to planting and experimenting, learning what needed the winter covers she designed. She viewed a plant that failed to thrive as an opportunity to try another specimen in its place.

Yet she also gave struggling plants time to bounce back. The next disastrous freeze occurred during the winter of 1990-1991. The Silk Floss, aka Kapok, tree had outgrown its cover. Every branch with a diameter exceeding eight inches died, leaving a sparse skeletal presence to slowly recover. Today the tree, properly named *Ceiba speciosa*, still catches the attention of fall visitors with a full canopy of orchid-like pink flowers.

Frank and Anne Cabot were treated to the full effect of Ruth's remarkable design that included allowing plants to overhang the curved pathways, giving visitors a sense of wandering through a

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Connecticut  
Horticultural Society  
P.O. Box 330966  
West Hartford, CT 06133-0966  
(860) 529-8713

email: [office@cthort.org](mailto:office@cthort.org)  
website: [www.cthort.org](http://www.cthort.org)

Phone Hours  
Tuesday & Thursday  
11 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Tracey Weiss  
CT Hort Director of Communications  
[news@cthort.org](mailto:news@cthort.org)

*All announcements, advertising news  
and articles for publication should be  
sent to: [news@cthort.org](mailto:news@cthort.org).*

Send Membership Information  
& Direct General Questions To:  
Mary Anna Martell  
Office Administrator  
P.O. Box 330966  
West Hartford, CT 06133-0966

Membership Dues:

|   |                |
|---|----------------|
| Individual.....                           | \$55           |
| Family.....                               | \$75           |
| Senior Individual (65+).....              | \$50           |
| Senior Family (65+).....                  | \$70           |
| \$30 under 30 years.....                  | \$30           |
| Student (full time with<br>valid ID)..... | FREE           |
| Horticultural Business<br>Member.....     | \$100 or \$250 |
| Organizations.....                        | \$80           |

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## President's Letter Garden Follies

Dear Members

As gardeners we are a tough bunch; working bent over, stretching over trees, hauling away debris, running away from the wasps that nested in the ground cover. Two years ago, I ended up in the hospital after heart palpitations and trouble breathing from five yellow jacket stings.

Last year walking across the yard my pruners slipped from my hand and ended up stabbing my calf, it was rather deep, after six stitches I was good to go.

Gloves are always a good idea, this year my fingers got tangled up with the hedge trimmers ending with seven stitches on two fingers. I figure it would have been double that without the gloves.

When I had my small business maintaining personal gardens I got locked in a gated yard after the mowing service locked the gate, leaving me in there. My phone was in the truck and the owners were away. The fence was nine feet tall around the front, in the back it was six feet. The pool had chairs which I employed to help me jump. I successfully landed in another gated yard which happened to be the governor's mansion. Looking for some assistance I met a most unfriendly person wearing fatigues. Looking back, I think it was just his style, not related to combat in Hartford. In a lucky turn of this event a grounds employee in a pick-up truck came to the scene, and it happened to be my husband's cousin who convinced our combat ready soldier I was no threat to the governor's security. Never underestimate the value of a large family.

Have you been watching our scholarship thermometer? It is well over the top of our goal; without auctions, during a difficult season for the organization, YOU did it! Thank you all for your commitment to our mission and your generosity to deserving students.

With great enthusiasm we will meet in September for our first in-person lecture in over a year with Bill Noble, and his making of a New England garden. If you prefer, the meeting will also be available via Zoom. Hoping to see you there!

Warmly,  
Cheryl Marino

Thank you to our generous business members and contributors!



FRIENDSHIP TOURS  
THE SHIP SHOP



Hollister House Garden

McVane, Bellobuono,  
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White Flower Farm  
PLANTSMEN SINCE 1950

Bartlett Arboretum  
Earth Tones Native Plant Nursery

The Garden Barn Nursery  
Go Organic LLC





Bill Noble

# Spirit of Place

*The Making of a New England Garden with Bill Noble*

Thursday, September 23, 2021 – 7 p.m.

Emanuel Synagogue, West Hartford

How does an individual garden relate to the larger landscape? How does it connect to the natural and cultural environment? Does it evoke a sense of place? Bill Noble—a lifelong gardener, and the former director of preservation for the Garden Conservancy—helps us answer these questions by sharing how they influenced the creation of his garden in Vermont.

For 30 years Bill Noble has worked as a garden designer and professional in garden preservation. As Director of Preservation for the Garden Conservancy, he was instrumental in the preservation and restoration of dozens of gardens throughout the United States.

In his newly released book, *Spirit of Place: The Making of a New England Garden*, he describes the pleasures and

challenges—both aesthetic and practical—of creating a garden that feels deeply rooted to its place. His garden is included in the Smithsonian Institution's *Archive of American Gardens* and has been featured in *Martha Stewart Living, House & Garden, The New York Times, Washington Post* and the Garden Conservancy's *Outstanding American Gardens*.



We look forward to seeing you IN PERSON at the Emanuel Synagogue Auditorium in September for the start of the 2021-22 Season!!



## Speaker Feedback

After you attend a speaker meeting, please take a moment to tell us what you thought of the presenter. Your candid feedback helps us to arrange for speakers that will hold your interest. Take the six-question survey on our website – [cthort.org](http://cthort.org). Click on the survey icon found on any page then chose the speaker you want to rate. Thank you for your feedback.

## Save the Date for the Bulb Sale! October 21



Every October we sell bulbs to help offset the expense of the Flower Show display. So on October 21, when we meet for our program speaker, we will get you in touch with some bargains, some old loves, and some sparks of 'hope & joy' in the form of bulbs! Stay tuned for details...

## Have a Garden Room? Send us a photo!

### A request from Gordon Hayward for his October talk on GARDEN ROOMS

Gordon Hayward, writer, designer, and lecturer, is asking members of CT Hort to e-mail him a single picture of a garden room they have created. Between now and late September, Gordon will gather these images and include a dozen or so in his October lecture. Gordon's presentation will also include garden rooms that he and his wife have on their property as well as others he has designed across the country. With this real-life cross-section of photos, Gordon will explore the principles behind the garden room in a way that will encourage listeners to create their own rooms.

Send your best photo (only one per person) to [Office@CTHort.org](mailto:Office@CTHort.org).  
Subject line: GARDEN ROOM

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*Almost killed by the 1990 freeze, Ceiba species, the Kapok Tree, recovered, blooming beautifully in its most northern location at the RBG.*

colorful wilderness. Nowhere else on earth could the same combinations of sculptural plants be seen growing together. How had she managed to stage the amazing display?

RBG Curator Brian Kemble began working for Ruth one day a week in 1980. He was able to travel to remote places to bring back seeds and unusual plants. He helped Ruth take each new arrival around the garden, studying it from all angles in various locations until she was certain it had an appropriate placement. The random effect she favored was achieved by studious design. After consulting Lester Hawkins about laying out the paths and beds, she accepted his advice that a water feature was essential, but overruled his objection to installing the whimsical wooden folly that became the signature entrance to the garden for decades. She supposedly told Lester, “Well, it’s my folly!”

Frank Cabot was already thinking of ways to preserve his own gardens when he proposed establishing a Garden Conservancy with Ruth Bancroft’s garden as the pilot founding project. In 1989, the initial arrangement was finalized, but the RBG did not officially open to the public until 1992. The transition from enthusiastically received concept to practical enactment took its toll on everyone involved.

The process, outlined by Richard Turner, hired in 1993 as the RBG’s

first Executive Director, began with establishing a conservation easement (never previously used to protect private gardens from development) followed by transferring three acres of Bancroft property to the non-profit Ruth Bancroft Garden, Inc. Ownership of the Bancroft house and surrounding land remained in the family. At first, the garden was open limited hours to allow Ruth to continue caring for it. Ruth was in her late 90s when an advisory committee was established to continue her work. Although members of the committee were familiar with her aesthetic principles, design by committee was not the same as design by a single visionary individual.

Kemble found diverting time previously spent generating new specimens for the garden to fundraising, providing articles for the website, and accommodating visiting dignitaries burdensome. Nevertheless, he managed to continue adding acquisitions from his travels and hybrids he developed to the garden. When Brian asked our docent group what we would call his aloe hybrid covered in luscious orange flowers with creamy centers, I suggested the name he also had in mind: “Creamsicle.”

Ruth lived to see small specimens she planted grow into mature trees. Never satisfied until she knew more about the category of plants she was collecting than anyone else in the world, she was happy to share her knowledge with interested individuals.

RBG docent Ersten Imaoka bravely invited Ruth to comment on his own garden. He describes her arrival as a sprightly 96-year-old in 2006. “The first thing I noticed about her was how she dressed for our get together,” he recalls. “Talk about attention to detail: she was completely color-coordinated - her shoes, purse, watch, pants and blouse were all in shades of brown or gold. She was the perfect guest, only speaking compliments as I showed her around my garden.”

Ruth lived long enough to witness ground-breaking for the long-planned



*Ruth Bancroft visited RBG docent Ersten Imaoka in 2006 to advise him on his garden choices. (photo courtesy of Ersten Imaoka)*

RBG Visitor and Education Center but missed the Grand Opening of the Coit Family Visitor Center on June 26, 2019. She passed away November 26, 2017 at the age of 109.

Each of the Garden Conservancy’s projects is a unique expression of the individual creator’s personal horticultural passions. I discovered Hollister House Garden (HHG) in Washington, Connecticut as soon as I moved back to New England. Seven years after Ruth Bancroft began her dry garden, George Schoellkopf started translating his interpretation of classic English estates into a series of artfully integrated garden spaces complementing the dignified progression of additions made over the course of centuries to his 18th century house. Recognizing the virtue of preserving and sharing his incredible and still evolving gardens, George entered into an irrevocable agreement with the Garden Conservancy in 2005, retaining lifetime tenancy and responsibility for maintenance during his lifetime, but gifting ownership of the 25-acre property and house over time to the non-profit Hollister House Garden, Inc.

Ruth felt her plants were the sculptural elements of her garden and avoided including artificial ornaments. But a major annual fundraiser for the RBG started as Art in the Garden has continued as Sculpture in the Garden.

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Joe Bologna's sculpture is so realistic garden visitors ask why the plant died.

Artists are endlessly impressed by the way the plantings highlight their pieces. When

one of Joe Bologna's rustic metal creations didn't sell, he decided it belonged in the garden and left it concealed in a bed of similarly shaped dyckias with a note: "To Ruth from Joe." When Ruth finally found it, she telephoned to chide him before admitting she wanted to keep the piece. Visitors often asked me, thinking it was an actual plant, what had caused it to turn so brown.

By contrast, Schoellkopf, who ran a gallery specializing in 18th and 19th century American antiques and folk art in New York City for many years, has placed many carefully chosen pieces throughout the HHG. Changing light and successive bloom sequences give HHG visitors fresh

perspectives on every visit. Educational programs and evenings in the garden add opportunities to enjoy the gardens. Garden Conservancy Open Days, initiated in 2005 in Connecticut and New York, invite participants to tour private gardens in many states across the country. Sunday, September 12th, Hollister House invites visitors to enjoy a glass of wine while shopping the plant sale featuring selections from premier New England growers and strolling through the garden.

For more information, visit  
[www.gardenconservancy.org](http://www.gardenconservancy.org)  
[hollisterhousegarden.org](http://hollisterhousegarden.org)  
[www.ruthbancroftgarden.org](http://www.ruthbancroftgarden.org)

## Help us welcome David McCarthy

We're thrilled to introduce you to David McCarthy, who just joined our CT Hort team! David is our new Director of Marketing & Community Relations. He will be expanding our brand to create multimedia content in various platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube) to reach a wider audience. He'll be working closely with Tracey Weiss, our Communications Director, to maintain the consistency of our message in our emails and Newsletter.



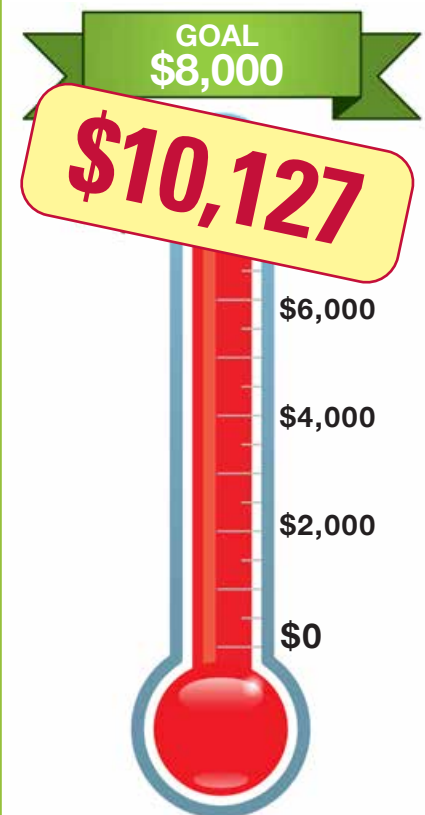
David with wife, Kelly, and daughter, Clara.

David is a multi-media specialist who focuses on working with environmental organizations and land trusts. Currently, he is also the executive director of the Wilton Land Conservation Trust and on the board of directors for the Edgerton Park Conservancy in New Haven. A photographer, teacher, filmmaker, lecturer and exhibitor of photography and communicatory arts, he has provided photography for environmental not-for-profit organizations.

Prior to his current positions, he was assistant director and tree warden for the Town of Branford's Department of Inland Wetlands and Natural Resources, and Digital Media and Engagement Manager for Yale Program on Climate Change Communication, among other positions.

David received his undergraduate degree in Psychology from Southern Connecticut State University and has two master's degrees, from Albertus Magnus College (Clinical Masters of Art and Art Therapy) and Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies (Environmental Management). He lives in Litchfield with his wife, Kelly McCarthy, and his daughter, Clara. The family is expecting their second child in January.

## Scholarship Fund Status



**We have exceeded our goal!**

Thank you all for helping us to help students achieve their dreams!

## Join our merry band of book reviewers!



We're thinking ahead to winter...but only because we are looking for volunteers to read and review gardening books for our winter marketplace edition of the newsletter. We're looking for 300-400 words on your opinion of the book. We only have two books left, but they look wonderful!

If you are interested, please call Tracey at 860-796-0185 or send her an email at [news@cthort.org](mailto:news@cthort.org) and we will assign you one of our books!



## Membership dues will stay the same as last year!

With the cost of everything increasing because of the effects of Covid, we want one thing in your life to stay the same! This spring, the board of directors decided to keep the cost of membership the same as last year.

You can go online to renew your membership. If you are a lifetime member, and you would like to make a donation, that's easy to do online as well.

And don't forget: a membership for a friend or family member makes a great gift!



## Horticultural Happenings & Announcements

*Note: Happenings are listed on a space-available basis. To submit an event, send details to [news@cthort.org](mailto:news@cthort.org). Please format the announcement to resemble the entries below. Deadline for September issue is September 15.*

**Sat., Sept. 11 from 10 am – noon — Fall Plant Swap, Manross Memorial Library, Bristol. Fall Plant Swap.** As the growing season winds down, divide your perennials and swap them at the library for something new! We will also swap houseplants. Label each plant with basic information & care instructions. Books and information about fall gardening will be available. Please register in advance. Questions? Call the library at 860-584-7790 or go to <http://www.bristollib.com/events>.



*Hollister House's Double Border interprets traditional English gardens with an exuberant New England flair. Photo courtesy of Hollister House.*

**Sun., Sept. 12 from 3-6 pm — Plant Sale & Wine in the Hollister House Garden, Washington.** As summer fades into fall folks at the Hollister House have invited some of the premier growers in New England to set up shop in the Garden. This is a special opportunity to purchase choice plants from Broken Arrow Nursery, David Burdick Bulbs, Cricket Hill Garden, Falls Village Flower Farm, Issima and McCue Gardens. Enjoy a glass of wine and nibbles as you shop and visit the garden. Hollister House Garden Members \$30 | Non-Members \$35. Register at [hollisterhousegarden.org](http://hollisterhousegarden.org).

**Thurs., Sept. 16 from 7-8 pm — Fall Soil Health and Preparing the Garden for Winter, online event presented by the Springfield, MA City Library.** Anna Muhammad of the Northeast Organic Farmers Association leads this online series on basic gardening practices designed to help novice and experienced gardeners alike. Preparing a garden bed for winter is as important as at the start of the season. This session will guide gardeners on soil health and fertility in the fall months and will look at soil testing in the later part of the fall. Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3544522825>

**Sun., Sept. 19 from 11 am-3 pm — Honey Harvest Festival, Bartlett Auditorium, Stamford.** You're invited to Bartlett Arboretum for a special day dedicated to celebrating honey. Filled with bee-themed fun and education for everyone to enjoy. Free admission. Call 203-487-5264 or go to [www.bartlettarboretum.org](http://www.bartlettarboretum.org).

**Sun, Sep 19, 4 – 8 pm — Bloomfield's Artful Gardens Tour, Bloomfield.** Immerse yourself in an outdoor tour combining nature, art history and gardening. The tour will have "art surprises" planted along the way. Tour begins at the Fannie Gabriel History Center at the Bloomfield Historical Society, 151 School Road, Bloomfield. Register at [www.bloomfieldcthistory.org](http://www.bloomfieldcthistory.org). Tickets are \$20 in advance and \$25 at the door.



Visit [cthort.org](http://cthort.org) for the MOST CURRENT listings and links.

# CT Hort Travel



## Gardens of Splendor: Tour New York's Untermeyer Gardens Conservancy & Wave Hill

with Special Guest Tom Christopher

Wednesday, September 29, 2021

Enjoy the spectacular landscapes of some of New York's most beautiful gardens on Wednesday, September 29, when CT Hort, along with Friendship Tours, offers a guided day-long tour of New York's Untermeyer Gardens Conservancy and Wave Hill's gardens. Joining the trip is special guest and horticulture expert Tom Christopher, who will share his expertise and insider's knowledge during the tour. He is a long-time member of CT Hort, the winner of the Society's 2017 Mehlquist Award, and one of our most popular meeting speakers. His most recent discussion for CT Hort was in May, when he introduced discussion-goers to Wave Hill.

Once called "America's Most Spectacular Garden," Untermeyer Gardens is a 46-acre former estate that is now a public garden.

A 28-acre public garden and cultural center in the Bronx overlooking the Hudson River and Palisades, Wave Hill's landscapes also serve as the backdrop for its programs in horticulture, education and the arts. It is also the subject of one of Mr. Christopher's books, *Nature Into Art*.

The trip costs \$120/non-members or \$116/CT Horticultural Society members and includes round-trip motorcoach transportation, admission, guided tours of both gardens, a Friendship Tours tour director and a boxed lunch.

Tour-goers can either meet at 7:30am in the Manchester Park & Ride Commuter Lot at Buckland Street & Pleasant Valley Road\*, or at 8am at Emanuel Synagogue at 160 Mohegan Drive (park in the rear along the back-tree line).

The trip is non-refundable.

To reserve, go to [www.friendshiptours.net](http://www.friendshiptours.net)  
or call Friendship Tours at 860-243-1630.

\*This is a new pickup point for CHS trips instead of East Hartford

## 2021 Christmas in Cape Cod

Saturday-Sunday,  
December 4-5, 2021



Although unable to make this overnight in 2020 due to travel restrictions in place at the time, this trip was so well received that we have brought it back in 2021. The weekend will be escorted by Brett Isaacson and includes:

### DAY 1:

- A stop in **Brown & Hoskins Country Store**—one of America's oldest country stores and it will be dressed for the season.
- Enjoy an appetizer tasting at **Yoleni's Greek Market** in Providence—modeled after its flagship store in Athens—followed by lunch on your own.
- Arrive at the **Cape Codder Resort** in Hyannis in the afternoon with time to enjoy their incredible grounds, decorated as an enchanted village.
- Freshen up for dinner at the **Hearth & Kettle Restaurant**, known for its commitment to 'fresh, wholesome food, thoughtfully prepared.'
- After dinner the day is concluded with a visit to **Gardens Aglow** at the **Heritage Museums and Gardens** in Sandwich to delight in a 9-mile wonderland trail of lights, marshmallow roasting, music, and model trains.

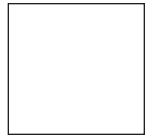
### DAY 2:

- Following breakfast, a local garden shop—**Country Gardens**—will host a workshop to make an air plant ornament. There will be time to shop as well.
- The historic **Dan'l Webster Inn** will be our spot for lunch before enjoying a live holiday cabaret performance by Jody Ebling.
- Before leaving the Cape for home, the final stop will be to the **Sandwich Glass Museum** to experience a **Glassblower's Christmas**. The museum will feature glass blowing demonstrations along with the creations of local Cape Cod glass artists.

A deposit of \$75 per person will hold your spot with final payment due October 1, 2021.

Cost: \$439 per person, double occupancy  
\$519 per person single | **Non-members must add \$50**

**To reserve your spot or for more information, please call Friendship Tours at (860) 243-1630 / toll-free (800) 243-1630 or visit [www.friendshiptours.net](http://www.friendshiptours.net).**



*Dated Material* 🌿 *Please Rush*

### CT Hort Calendar at a Glance

- Thurs., Sept 2** – Board of Directors  
Remote Meeting, 7 p.m.
- Weds., Sept. 15** – Deadline for October  
*Newsletter*
- Thurs, Sept. 23** – CT Hort IN-PERSON  
and virtual Program Meeting,  
Emanuel Synagogue  
Auditorium, West Hartford  
7:00 p.m., **Bill Noble**  
presents *Spirit of Place:  
The Making of a  
New England Garden*
- Sat., Sept. 25** – Kaminski's Garden Tour  
9 a.m.–noon

Printed on recycled paper.



## Kaminski's Garden Tour

A private garden located at 4 Davis Road, Oxford  
**Saturday, September 25, 9 am–noon**

Once you visit Sue and Dick Kaminski's garden, you'll see that it is so much more than just a garden. There are features to delight all—topiaries, perennial gardens, bonsai, espaliered apple trees, gazebo, a pond complete with frogs, a completely landscaped miniature train town and more! Visit and relax in this playful, uplifting outdoor space.

The garden will be open on Saturday morning, September 25 with a rain date of the next day. Sue and Dick have asked that guest fees collected will be donated to The Scholarship Fund. Cost: Member-\$15, Non-member-\$20, student-\$5.

**Please note:** The property is built on levels and as such may be a challenge for some to manage. There are no restroom facilities available so please plan accordingly (there is a Dunkin Donuts nearby).

To register, visit [www.cthort.org](http://www.cthort.org). You can choose to pay online OR to pay at the door. Please register online even if paying at the door so that we have an accurate count for refreshments. Thank you.

Register for the tour at <https://tinyurl.com/3racv8tn>.

