

Executive Search Profile

WILTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY, Inc.

Director

The Opportunity

The next Director will take this 73 year old Historical Society to new heights of excellence by expanding from its program base and developing new ideas to integrate into the fabric of this unique small New England town. Strengthening revenue sources, continuing to improve public and community relations, managing a small staff and oversight of key volunteers will all accommodate the desired growth that is necessary to fulfill our Mission.

The Society

In February 1938, the town of Wilton was more than 200 years old when a group of long-time residents met in the home of Julian Gregory Sr. to discuss forming an organization dedicated to preserving the heritage of the community. The result was the founding of the Wilton Historical Society, and the goals they set then have remained constant over 70 years of impressive growth: to discover the past, to enlighten the present, to enrich the future, and to enjoy our heritage.

In 1964, the Society purchased the old Lambert House, the iconic symbol on the Town's seal, and it became the Society's first headquarters. In 1970 Ralph Piersall donated the 18th century Fitch House, which became the Society's second headquarters and the site of its Heritage Museum. Over the next 30 years, Society volunteers managed the growth of the organization's collections and activities. Many programs and events were made possible by strong support from dedicated volunteers who sponsored an Antiques Show and Craftsman Show as yearly fundraisers, worked in the gift shop, assisted with membership drives, and served on committees or as Trustees.

In the 1980s, Dana Blackmar bequeathed his 1735 home on Danbury Road and his collection of antiques to the Society. After years of effort, Society volunteers were able to move the Fitch House to the Blackmar site in 2001. The addition of two barns and a blacksmith shop resulted in the existing museum complex, complete with period rooms furnished to show the evolution of styles, a large costume collection, a permanent exhibit of dolls, toys and dollhouses, a study library, special seasonal exhibits, a gift shop, and a unique museum of local tools. In 2005 it was designated as Wilton's Historic District No. 5.

Preservation of Wilton's past and its historic properties has been a major focus for Society volunteers; a total of five buildings at the Museum Complex, three at Cannon Corners, and nine at Lambert Corners have been saved by their efforts. Archival material and other historical publications compiled by Society volunteers are housed in the Wilton Library's History Room.

Educating school children about Wilton's history is another high priority realized through significant volunteer support. All 2nd and 4th grade Wilton students take a field trip to the Society to experience annual and seasonal programs on various aspects of 18th century life including an extremely popular train exhibit.

Our Vision: An enlightened community that enjoys our unique heritage and actively maintains it.

Our Mission: To help our community:

- **Discover the past**
- **Enlighten the present**
- **Enrich the future**
- **Enjoy our heritage**

Background

In 2006, the Board of Trustees adopted the report of its Long Range Planning Study Group “To Preserve our Legacy, While Building for the Future.” The report included the following recommended actions:

With regard to governance...

Review board member’s responsibilities & performance requirements effectively revitalizing the Executive Committee; implement a board review of the By-Laws with emphasis on Operations, management and responsibilities of all committees. These actions would create a broader, more involved volunteer organization better able to meet the Society’s fiduciary requirements and strategic objectives.

With regard to staffing – operations management...

Transition to a full time director, establish an organizational structure consistent with the committee revised By Laws and realign authorities and responsibilities, and accelerate the use of information technology. These steps would result in a more effective and professional organization that maximizes staff potential.

With regard to marketing and communications...

Establish a marketing and communications committee with oversight responsibility, empower an education committee to develop programs and strengthen the organization’s ongoing relationship with the Wilton school system, target membership growth opportunities, establish and maintain regular public visiting hours for the Museum. Clarifying and focusing our marketing efforts would expand community awareness of the Society.

With regard to financial issues and accounting controls...

Require the Finance Committee to exercise financial oversight, initiate program accounting for all Society activities especially for the major fundraising shows, implement an Endowment Committee mission and activities and engage an outside auditor while arranging for an annual audit and management letter for the Board of Trustees concurrence. By establishing greater financial discipline the Board of Trustees will better understand and control the Society’s financial position.

Pursuant to the report the Board has accomplished the following: reviewed board responsibilities; revitalized the Executive Committee which meets monthly; reviewed the By-Laws and realigned committee responsibilities; established an internet presence by developing a web site; contained communication costs by utilizing constant contact emails; established a Marketing & Communications committee; initiated a rolling membership; established regular visiting hours for the Museum; established an Endowment Committee; and strengthened our Finance Committee and outside audit oversight.

In April 2009, the long standing director left and a Transition Planning Committee was formed to help oversee and manage the Society's day to day operations. With monthly Executive Committee meetings and monthly Transition Planning Committee meetings the Society's Board of Trustees continued to work on the recommendations of Long Range Report. In addition, a staff member was promoted to interim Office Manager. Effectively the Board president / co-presidents assumed the role of CEO / COO.

In early 2011, the Executive Committee engaged Spearpoint Strategy Advisors to evaluate our preparedness to inaugurate a search for a new director.

In June 2011, the Board of Trustees unanimously agreed to set aside endowment monies to temporarily underwrite the cost of hiring a new director.

Major opportunities / challenges for the next director are:

Developing a Strategic Plan. A coordinated approach working with the Board to develop a short and long term strategic plan that addresses new and expanded programs to appeal to a broader audience and a more diverse constituency, assimilating staff and volunteer leaders into a course of action and focusing Board efforts.

Broadening our revenue sources. With the current operating budget facing declining revenues from the rental properties and fundraising efforts, it is essential that the Society establish a more visible presence in the foundation community, with grant writing, while pursuing private philanthropic support on a systematic basis. The coordination of the broad experience of the Board parlaying the network of relationships within the local community, coordinating efforts with membership, building on the existing endowment fund and focusing resources to provide alternative revenue streams.

Financial Balance. While fixed assets remain high, the spend rate of the operations necessitates the need to develop a strategy to restore program or event revenues, increase membership support in both numbers and participation.

Enhancing community relations. As the Society wishes to become a more integral part of the overall community, it is imperative to develop an enhanced marketing & communications plan to improve the image of the Society and expand membership and support.

Qualifications

The Board of Trustees is seeking a full time salaried Director who will function as the primary executive of the Society.

A successful candidate should have:

- *Proven executive skills and a commitment to excellence
- *Experience with fundraising & grant applications in a not-for-profit environment
- *Demonstrable communication skills
- *The ability to retain and recruit a collegial professional staff as well as expand a dedicated corps of volunteers

*Financial acumen including assisting with budget preparation and monitoring operating revenues and expenses

*A museum background is desirable

Salary Range - \$50,000 - \$80,000 (shall be commensurate with the applicant's experience)

Application Procedures

To be considered please send via email:

- a cover letter that addresses the challenges and qualifications listed above,
- a current resume, and
- the names, phone numbers and email addresses of three references to:

scotty@wiltonhistorical.org

Once these three items are received the applicant will be considered a candidate.

Applications are due by January 30, 2012.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

scotty@wiltonhistorical.org

Ms. Taylor is our staff archivist and if needed can also be reached at the Society at 203-762-7257

The Wilton Historical Society, Inc. is committed to the highest standards of professionalism in all dealings with candidates, sources and references. We respect the need for confidentiality and assure interested parties that their background and interests will not be discussed without consent of the applicant prior to her or his becoming a candidate.

Director Search Committee: Gregory Chann, D.M.D., Co-President
 Tierney O'Hearn, Esq., Co-President
 Rick Smith, 1st Vice President
 Helen Stauderman, Vice President Collections