

**Essex Historical Society
Community Investment Program 2024, Essex Savings Bank
EHS in the Community**

Essex Historical Society (EHS) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, founded in 1955 in Essex, CT. EHS is a privately-funded, member-supported organization which provides history programming to the public with the goals of education and preservation. We maintain two historic structures, the Pratt House (19 West Ave.) and the Hills Academy History Center (22 Prospect Street), both in Essex. EHS offers year-round programming to adults and children, collaborating with more than 30 organizational partners in a calendar year, focusing on the history of Centerbrook, Essex and Ivoryton, the three villages within the Town of Essex.

Nearly all of EHS's public programs are free. All of our lectures and public presentations, community events, most social gatherings, tours of Pratt House, research visits to Hills Academy, and field studies for volunteers are all FREE and open to the public. **This programming model ensures that no one in Essex or our general audience of the Lower Connecticut River Valley will be denied access to history-based events.** We ensure that our annual programming includes events in the town's three villages: Centerbrook; Essex; and Ivoryton. **In doing so, EHS provides educational and community programming to low and moderate income families to achieve our mission of Engaging and Inspiring the Community.**



EHS provides **FREE in-classroom hands-on history programs** to Essex Elementary School's Fourth Graders as part of their year-long unit on Local History. The entire grade then visits Pratt House and Hills Academy for hands-on history learning. EHS feels so strongly about supporting this program, our trained volunteers and professional staff provide this program with no admission for the students, and we provide them with **take-away history booklets and scholarships for the buses** to transport students to our historic sites.

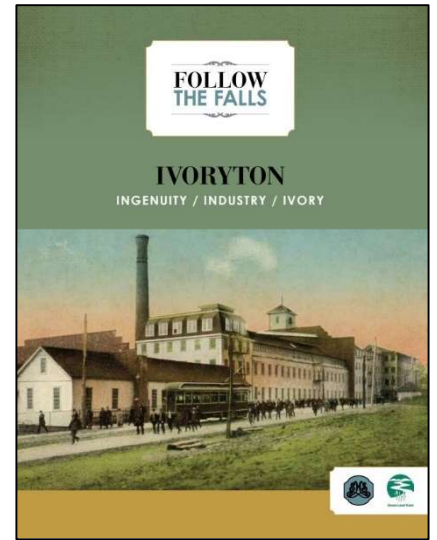
Fifth and Sixth Graders. EHS's volunteers and staff present an in-classroom, hands-on program each month of sharing objects from our collections to reinforce the students' learning, with no cost. **Students handle objects similar to professional historians and engage in activity-based walking tours in Centerbrook or Ivoryton.**

Our **collaborations** with the historical societies of Chester and Deep River also **offer free programming and with in-town partners at the Connecticut River Museum, Ivoryton Library, Essex Library and Ivoryton Playhouse.** With our long-term collaborator, **Essex Land Trust,** we developed the Follow the Falls project, exploring the historic and ecological significance of the town's three villages connected by the Falls River.

Both organizations produced the third and final phase of our collaborative **Follow the Falls** project with an online and printed version of the 90-page book,



Ivoryton: Ingenuity, Industry, Ivory. Richly illustrated with maps and 150+ images, the book explores Ivoryton’s development from a sleepy hamlet to a bustling factory village to today’s residential suburb. Our writing team explored the research and community conversations surrounding the village’s history, some of which may surprise our readers. This updated history explores the complex relationships within the 19th and 20th century ivory trade, concentrated in Zanzibar, East Africa, and its far-reaching impacts on global economics and human and animal populations. This history also explores the area’s geography, its use by Indigenous peoples and the stories of its ethnic neighborhoods.



A **free Lecture Series** in January 2024, focusing on three Ivoryton subjects and hosted at Essex Meadows, welcomed over 500 audience members over three afternoons – with rave reviews on the quality of the speakers and topics!



EHS collaborated on a **Pollinator Garden and expanded Historic Kitchen Garden** behind Pratt House, part of the Pollinator Pathway Northeast. Both gardens are open to the public at no cost. **Pratt House hosted large crowds** for the Connecticut Sea Music Festival, a historic blacksmithing demonstration and several visits from the Essex Parks and Recs Summer Camp, in addition to our regular touring season. We also coordinate the street parade for the Trees in Rigging festivities each Thanksgiving Weekend.

Our very popular walking tours are free to EHS members and have a very low-cost of \$5 per person for non-members to take an hour-long tour. These tours cover all three villages and the beautiful site of one of our contributing partners, River View Cemetery. **No one is ever turned away if they cannot afford admission.**

With free or low admission to almost all of our programs (fundraising events are the exception), EHS ensures that everyone who is interested in Essex history has access to it.

Thank you for including EHS in Essex Savings Bank’s Community Investment Programming to help offset the costs of these programs!

