

House Republican Press Release

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State Awards \$200,000 Grant for Katharine Hepburn Cultural Arts Center



Connecticut Historic Preservation Grant Caps Other State Grants and Private Donations for Performing Arts Center to Serve the Shoreline and Lower River Region

State and local officials participated in a check presentation ceremony for a \$200,000 state historic preservation grant to renovate the former Old Saybrook town hall into a regional cultural arts center.

The center has been named after the legendary film, stage and television actress and an Old Saybrook resident, Katharine Hepburn.

Karen Senich, executive director of the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism, said, “The restoration and reuse of the old town hall back to its former glory is terrific. The Commission is honored to support Old Saybrook and the other shoreline towns in their preservation efforts and their endeavor to bring their communities together to celebrate not only their history but also culture and arts.

State Rep. Marilyn Giuliano, R-23rd District, said, “The Lower Connecticut River Valley has long been a regional home to the visual and performing arts. We now look forward with great excitement to a new jewel in Connecticut’s cultural and artistic crown, The Katharine Hepburn Cultural Arts Center. Located west of Florence Griswold’s Old Lyme home and the epicenter of American Impressionism, the Katharine Hepburn Cultural Arts Center is poised to offer theater and stage performances of a caliber that honors Ms. Hepburn as the American film icon that we so watched and so enjoyed. Old Saybrook was Ms. Hepburn’s lifelong summer holiday, and her last real home. In the Katharine Hepburn Cultural Arts Center, we honor the spirit and talent that that so enthralled us all.”

Old Saybrook First Selectman Michael Pace said, “This grant represents yet another example of the collaborative effort of citizens, town government and the state, which will result in a Cultural Arts Center that will have a positive economic and quality of life impact for all age groups and arts interest of the region.”

Background on the Center

The restoration of the old town hall building on Old Saybrook's Main Street will be known as the Katharine Hepburn Cultural Arts Center. Hepburn, who died in Old Saybrook on June 29, 2003 at age 96, resided in the Fenwick area of town, a place she called paradise and where she spent much of her time since a child.

Built in 1911 by a local musical and dramatic club, the handsome building will once again provide community activities such as it did in its earlier days. Soon to be designated as a State and National Landmark it recalls the era when vaudeville, silent movies, live theater performances by Ethel Barrymore, Irene Rich, and others, were presented. The hall will once again offer programs and activities for all age groups.

The naming of the building for Miss Hepburn has been endorsed by the family and the executors of her estate. Working with East Wharf Architects of Madison, CT, the project is being funded in part by the town's annual budget and grants from the State of Connecticut. The renovations and addition will accommodate seating for 268 patrons. A million-dollar capital campaign is underway to raise funds to provide theater equipment and furnish the interior.

Background on Katharine Hepburn

Born May 12, 1907 in Hartford, Connecticut, she was the daughter of a doctor and a suffragette, both of whom always encouraged her to speak her mind, develop it fully, and exercise her body to its full potential.

Katharine Hepburn won four Academy Awards and numerous other acting awards. Appearing in more than 50 movies, she also acted extensively on Broadway and on television. Her trademark was playing strong independent women with minds of their own.

A more complete acting history and biography are available on the Internet Movie Database, located at <http://www.imdb.com/>.