

The Historians

In 2023 not far from Robin Hood's Sherwood Forest in Nottinghamshire, England, a wooden chest filled with about 250 wrapped, bound, and protected documents was found, in of all places, an outhouse. While this tickles the ears with old jokes about reading in the bathroom, this find was no laughing matter. The chest was filled with documents, some that originated in the seventeenth century. And the outhouse was not a toilet, but an outbuilding used for storage by a farmer who bought the farm in the 1960s or 1970s. It was his son, Nick Connors, who donated the chest and its contents to the local historians.

It turns out that not all finds of historical records are made by some unnamed figures from the long distant past. Take, for instance, another find made about the same time Nick Connors was carrying his wooden box up to the Upper Boughton History Group.

As Care & Share historian, Tracey Mirsky, recollected in the closing days of 2025:

After settling into our new home, we wanted to become involved in the community and area surrounding our new life by the sea. Care & Share beckoned, as we were always involved with community service. At Care & Share, we volunteered in several capacities over the years. Along the way, we met one volunteer who was especially protective of a scrapbook and a photo album. She carried them to many public programs and fundraisers, opening both and beckoning attendees to have a look. Time passed. Old pantry shelving began to sag and tip with old age (sort of like what happens to people over time). New shelves were ordered for the pantry, the conference room, and the front room. There was a huge, coordinated effort to empty the old shelves, scrub the walls and floors, seal up a number of mouse holes, check the electrical outlets, etc. In the process of emptying one shelf area, I came across 3 plastic tubs - heavy tubs - that had been stored there collecting dust. Curious, I opened them. Wow! There they were: 2 photo albums (bursting at the seams in a haphazard display of the past), the scrapbook (crammed with fading newspaper articles about C&S events and community involvement), C&S folders and meeting minutes dating back to the early 1990s. I had literally unearthed a gold mine of Care & Share's history. I asked what I should do with these treasure tubs, and was told that no one was interested in "that old stuff." REALLY?? So, I immediately became the protective mother and lugged them all home. With my husband Tom's help, we put them into one of C&S's storage units. There they sat for a few months. I was obsessed by their contents: who started this organization? Why? How did it grow? There's a story here and I want to learn about it. It needs to be shared. With whom? How? After several tortured months of brain drain, I recruited Tom to help bring those tubs into our home so I could take a closer look. I read and

read and read I could not believe those early, formative years, from the founders through to C&S's permanent place in 2012 (and beyond). It was the tenacity of THAT group of early volunteers, THAT unbelievable involvement by the community, THAT strong belief in the purpose of Care & Share, leading me to think about where and how and when this story could be told. It NEEDED to be told, as it represented, and STILL represents, a beautiful piece of fabric to be woven into the town's historical tapestry. I simply contacted the former presidents. About 2 years ago, in 2023, we met for the first time at the pantry. I came with a notebook, the photo albums and scrapbook in tow. The first few meetings were spent exchanging stories while I took notes. I loved listening. I was so blown away by their casual, focused recollections about their persistence to acquire a permanent home. I began to think "Oh how I wish I could have known them and worked with them!" And so, our Care & Share Historian working group was formed.

Simultaneously, just prior to the close of its third dozen of years (2013-2024) serving the communities of East Lyme and Salem, Care & Share contemplated an appropriate 35th anniversary observance. During that moment, as Tracey recounted, several veterans of the early years became motivated to crystalize their growing sentiment to document that history. Thus, the loose-knit group, the "Historians," began to assemble materials and mementos of the early days and met to revel in verbal reminiscence to gain a momentum. The period of 1989-2012 was their initial point of focus, with the opening of the Roxbury Road pantry, at the end of 2012, perceived as a watershed event.

Active historians had previously served as committee chairs, board members, and presidents of Care & Share. Among those engaged in the activities were: Norm and Sally Bender, Barbara Buzzelli, Jim and Steffie Hall, Mae Hills, Jan Logozzo, Angie McLean, and Tracey Mirsky.

When asked why she thought it was important to capture the C&S story in a contemporary format, such as a website, Historian Jan Logozzo offered this insight:

Concerning the question of why I think it is important to do a Care & Share history/website, I think info from the past is critical to our growth. Examples of what has worked in the past can stimulate thoughts of what could be added to our services today. Or where C&S services are in high demand. As those who may not be familiar with C&S see such examples from our history on our website, they may be stimulated to consider participating in some like form or fashion.

C&S is a community project, so info should be easily available to all community members - individuals, businesses, churches, schools, organizations, etc. Including such data and

recollections on the website serves this purpose nicely as it brings the organization to life in both historic and personalized ways.

In 1947, Bedouin shepherds accidentally and unknowingly discovered many clay jars in a cave, holding fragments of written documents containing scriptures, hymns, legal documents, dating back to the 3rd century BCE to the 1st century CE. They are known as the Qumran or Dead Sea Scrolls. Sixty years later in March of 2021, yet still more dozens of fragments, also almost two thousand years old, were unearthed by archeologists in The Cave of Horror, in the nearby caves in the Judean desert.

So, in this spirit, the Care & Share historians extend an invitation . . . let's keep looking. Who knows what was moved from one itinerant pantry location to another? Or from one volunteer's home out of which food was parceled into a pick-up truck or a family sedan's trunk. When food supplies were shifted from shelves or tabletops or benches or boxes in some unrecorded pantry corners, was there a different vessel carrying food-for-thought that was set aside, unrecognized or underappreciated or lesser valued in the moment?

We hear of such discoveries all the time, but seldom of the unheralded hand that secreted the valuables away. That is, until, illuminated by one ray of daylight or a flashlight, an attic or garage or, yes, even an outdoor storage unit yields a treasure just waiting to be found that reveals the heroics of the not-so-distant past of Care & Share of East Lyme. Is there yet to be found some other box, or bin, or data file? Let's keep looking.