

# November 6, 2023, GCNH Archival Moment

## Debbie Edwards and Billie Ladd

### American Elms in New Haven

In 2009 The Horticulture Committee of The Garden Club of America announced an organization- wide project as part of its Centennial commemoration. All clubs were asked to develop a local tree project. Nationwide, 200 clubs planted 23,500 trees as part of this celebration. The GCNH began its GCA Centennial Project as a collaboration between the Horticulture and Conservation Committees; Debbie Edwards chaired the project. The committee decided to focus on American Elms. This project was intended to educate the public about the New Haven Green and American elms and to plant American elms in the community. The Committee of the Proprietors of the Common and Undivided Lands in New Haven partnered with us on this project and assumed half the cost of the project (\$34,000).

The project had three major components – fostering and planting American Elms, producing a documentary film about the New Haven Green and producing two walking tours of the New Haven Green (one focusing on the trees and the other on the history).

The club purchased 225 bare root saplings of Jefferson American elms and collected 50 seedlings from beneath large American elms that appeared to be disease resistant. Members then gathered to pot all of these elms that were then given to members and community organizations to “foster”. After 3 years about 65 elms were ready to be given to their “adoptive” homes. The availability of the elms was publicized and members of the Garden Club assisted citizens in planting their new elms.

GCNH club member Karyl Evans produced The New Haven Green: Heart of a City. The film was narrated by Paul Giamattei and had its premiere showing at the Yale Whitney Humanities Center amid great fanfare. Copies of the DVD were available for sale to members and the public; copies were given to the history departments of local schools.

Two walking tours were written and made available to the public. The first was an audio walking tour of the New Haven Green, written by Mikey Hirschhoff and Debbie Edwards, that focused on the history of the New Haven Green. The tour was narrated by Jim Andreassi, the founding Artistic Director of the Elm Shakespeare Company. Flyers were distributed with a phone number to call and be connected to the audio tour that began at the Center Church on the Green and walked participants around the Green while relating the interesting history of the Green.

The second tour of the New Haven Green focused on the trees on the Green. A detailed map of the Green identified the great variety of trees. The flyer contained detailed drawings of a leaf of each variety of tree and a written description of each variety of tree.

This project drew great recognition to the Garden Club of New Haven as we collaborated with over 20 New Haven organizations and received outstanding press coverage.