


## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Chesterfield, Connecticut** | The Archaeological Conservancy and the New England Hebrew Farmers of the Emanuel Society (NEHFES) have completed the transfer of the synagogue parcel of the “NEHFES Synagogue and Creamery Site” in Chesterfield, Connecticut. This has gifted the parcel to the Conservancy, insuring the protection of the site in perpetuity. The second portion of the NEHFES site, which contains the stone foundation of the creamery, is currently owned by the Connecticut State Department of Transportation.

The history of the site began in 1891, when a small enclave of Russian-Jewish immigrant families purchased farmland in Chesterfield, Connecticut in the Town of Montville, nine miles north of New London. Just one year later, they established themselves as the New England Hebrew Farmers of the Emanuel Society and with assistance from the Baron Maurice de Hirsch Fund in New York, they built Connecticut’s first rural synagogue and a stream-driven creamery to process milk into butter and cream for the surrounding region. In 1894, the group wrote a stringent governing constitution and proceeded to thrive as a close-knit religious, social, and economic community of more than 50 Jewish families well into the 1930s.

This important step for one of the most extensive, well-studied American Jewish archaeological sites in the country is the culmination of several designations the NEHFES site has earned since 2006, when it was reactivated by President Nancy R. Savin and a small coterie of descendants. The NEHFES Synagogue and Creamery Site was named the State of Connecticut’s 24th Archaeological Preserve in 2007 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2012. That same year, the mikveh (a ritual bath) within the shoykhet’s (ritual butcher) house was the subject of a three-week University of Connecticut Archaeological Field School Excavation directed by Dr. Nicholas F. Bellantoni and Dr. Stuart S. Miller.

Kelley Berliner, the Conservancy’s Eastern Regional Director, stated, “Working with Nancy and the NEHFES community to further protect this site has been a delight, and I hope we have more projects like this in the future to protect all the unique parts of this country’s history. It is wonderful to see a descendent community so committed to learning and protecting their heritage.”

Catherine Labadia, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer for Connecticut, said “The Connecticut State Preservation Office is thrilled that the Synagogue parcel of the NEHFES Site is being acquired by The Conservancy. It will perpetuate years of excellent stewardship of the property, our chief concern, on a national level.” Ms. Savin added that the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office has been an absolutely invaluable preservation partner to NEHFES, the organization of descendants who today live in 13 States and Canada (<http://www.newenglandhebrewfarmers.org>).

Continued preservation of the NEHFES Synagogue and Creamery Site will contribute to public knowledge about the site’s significance and the importance of cultural resource preservation. The property, known as “The New England Hebrew Farmers of the Emanuel Society Synagogue, Shoyket’s House, and Mikveh Archaeological Preserve.” will be maintained as a permanent open-space research preserve and protected against any future development. The Conservancy will convene a management committee to oversee the future of the property.

### *About The Archaeological Conservancy*

The Archaeological Conservancy, established in 1980, is the only national non-profit organization dedicated to acquiring and preserving the best of our nation's remaining archaeological sites. Based in Albuquerque, New Mexico, the Conservancy also operates regional offices in Mississippi, Maryland, Wisconsin, and Nevada.