

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Chesterfield, Connecticut** | The Archaeological Conservancy and the New England Hebrew Farmers of the Emanuel Society (NEHFES) will cosign a Donation Agreement in the offices of the Connecticut State Preservation Office (SHPO) at 1:00 P.M. on October 15, 2021. This agreement will gift the synagogue parcel of the “NEHFES Synagogue and Creamery Site” in Chesterfield, Connecticut to The Conservancy, insuring the protection of the site in perpetuity. The portion of the site containing the Creamery is currently owned by the Connecticut State Department of Transportation.

The history of the site began in the Spring of 1892, when a small enclave of Russian-Jewish immigrants established themselves as the New England Hebrew Farmers of the Emanuel Society. With the assistance of 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 democratic 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, “We are really excited to be working with Nancy and NEHFES to ensure this site will be preserved in perpetuity, given how critical it is to protect a diversity of prehistoric and historic archaeological sites to represent the different communities that have shaped this land and country.”

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>).

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 preserve will be maintained as an open-space research preserve and protected against any future development.

### ***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 California.