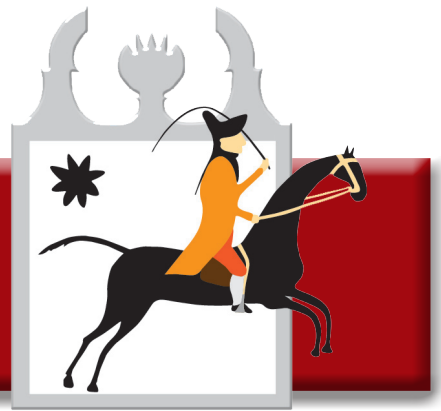




Fall / Winter 2019 - 2020

TAVERN TIMES



THE NEWSLETTER OF KEELER TAVERN MUSEUM & HISTORY CENTER • RIDGEFIELD • CONNECTICUT • 06877

Christmas Luncheons

Join us for Keeler Tavern Museum & History Center's annual luncheon tradition. It is a great way to begin your holiday celebrations. The tavern will be open for first floor informal touring. Christmas trees and other seasonal greenery will add to the holiday spirit.

This year's menu choices include chicken Madeira, a salad entrée (new!), or a vegetarian, vegan, and gluten-free eggplant dish. Dessert includes homemade Christmas cookies served with tea or coffee. And, of course, you can enjoy our famous homemade cranberry chutney. Lunch by prepaid reservations is \$30 per person Saturday, December 14th, children under 12 years, \$15. Single contact and payment requested for groups of six or more. Wine can be purchased at \$5 per glass. Reservations may be made online at keelertavernmuseum.org or by calling 203-438-5485. Payment can be made by MasterCard, Visa, AmEx or check.

A Holiday Fundraising Tradition
Two Seatings Daily
11:30 AM & 1:15 PM

CHRISTMAS LUNCHEONS and HOLIDAY BOUTIQUE

DECEMBER 10-14

Holiday Boutique

The Holiday Boutique is open December 10th through December 14th from 10:30 AM to 3:30 PM and Sunday, December 15th from 1:00 to 4:00 PM. Also open Wednesday, December 18th, Saturday, December 21st, Sunday, December 22nd, Saturday, December 28th and Sunday, December 29th all from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM. Choose from a bountiful selection of gifts and holiday decor in the Cass Gilbert Dining Room. Visit the Cass Gilbert Carriage Barn featuring 10 artists from December 7th to 14th. They will be selling one-of-a kind holiday gifts and original art each luncheon day.

The Holiday Boutique is open for early shopping November 22nd through November 24th, from 12 noon to 4:00 PM. November 29th and 30th, 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM, December 1st and 3rd - 8th, 12 noon to 4:00 PM. Special items will be for sale and in addition there will be a 15% discount for members and 10% discount for non members during this time only.

Visit us online for more information about our other holiday events.



HOLIDAY STROLL

Christmas at the Tavern - Friday, December 6th, 5:00 - 9:00 PM

FREE family event. Visit the festively decorated Tavern. I SPY game for kids. Hot drinks & S'mores. Holiday Boutique OPEN. FREE parking.

ALL ABOARD! THE POLAR EXPRESS FAMILY PROGRAM

A special holiday event for youngsters will be held Thursday, December 19th and Friday, December 20th from 6:30 PM to 7:30 PM. *The Polar Express*, the popular book by Chris Van Allsburg, will be read in front of the fireplace in the Cass Gilbert Garden House. Each child will make a craft to take home, games



will be played and light refreshments enjoyed.

Since space is limited all children must be registered. Call 203-438-5485 or visit keelertavernmuseum.org to make your reservation. Cost is \$20 per child. Families of three or more children \$15 per child.



Visit us at our website keelertavernmuseum.org

Letter from the President



You've probably seen the big sign in front of our Visitor's Center (the 152 Main building) announcing the Museum Collections Storage and Research Facility project. As the name implies, this project, which was partially funded by the Department of Economic Community Development, will enable the efficient storage and retrieval of documents, artifacts and artwork in an appropriately climate controlled environment. The finished space will also have a place for researchers to utilize the materials. The completed project will begin a chain reaction - the next step will be the movement of the archives into the space, which will empty the storage space where they are currently housed. And then that space can be re-allocated to other purposes. Which, in turn, creates other opportunities. . .

Which is a good description of many of the efforts at KTM&HC. Making an improvement in one area enables other, positive changes in another. If you have been paying attention to all that has transpired over the last few years, you will have seen an amazing increase in the number of school students participating in the offered programs, and the barn being used for HandsOnHistory, art shows, and children's programs. And, of course, all of the changes enabled by our Capital Campaign.

All of these changes have been accomplished with intention. The KTM&HC Board of Directors recently held a retreat to work on our new strategic plan. We will utilize our new plan, just as we did our previous one, to make sure we are all on the same page in our priorities and direction, and continue our goals of increasing visitors and expanding offerings.

If you haven't been to see us in a while, come check out the campus. Better still, while you're checking out the new self-guided walking tour, come to a Christmas Luncheon, go to an art show, bring your younger friends to the Polar Express and do your holiday shopping at the boutique.

Rhonda Hill
Rhonda Hill, President



After celebrating the grand opening of the new Visitor Center on July 4th cheered on by a record crowd, we have now embarked on reinterpreting this site for a 21st-century audience and visitor experience.

It starts with understanding the current visitor profile. To that end we have been conducting entrance and exit surveys to learn about visitor demographics, their reasons for coming as well as the quality of their visit. The data tells us as much about who is coming as it does about who is not coming to visit our site. (This project is underwritten

by a grant from CT Humanities and conducted by Aurora Consulting from Minnesota, MN.) Furthermore, we need to understand what themes we can speak to with clarity and authority and how best to deliver this information to make for the best possible visitor experience.

As a practical matter and to set visitors' expectations we have introduced a map. It provides an overview of the 4-acre campus with its five architecturally significant buildings (four of which were built by Cass Gilbert in the early 20th century), the walled garden, access roads, parking and walkways. Visitors pick up the map at the Visitor Center when they check in for admission, general information and to watch the orientation video. A big step in shaping visitors' expectations is having set hours for Museum tours that are advertised on our website and signage. This allows visitors to explore other points of interest either before or after touring the Museum. Our wonderful docents have been remarkably patient and resilient in adapting to these necessary changes.

Our educational offerings continue to grow at an impressive rate. Connecting young people to our history helps them to understand the ways in which our present is shaped by our past, engaging them in something larger than themselves. With K-12 grade educators, we continue to develop unique lesson plans that enhance and complement their curriculum. And, we don't shy away from addressing controversial and hard topics around race, gender, privilege and opportunity.

I would like to thank Hilary for a great partnership and for her dedication and leadership as Board President. Luckily, Hilary has agreed to continue her tenure as head of programming, a role she will continue to fill with flair, competence and creativity.

Hope to see you during the upcoming Holiday season!

Hildegard Grob
Hildegard Grob, Executive Director

the Fall Party @ Keeler

Keeler Tavern Museum & History Center was the place to be in town on Saturday evening, September 14, 2019, as the regional history center threw a spirited party and fundraiser to benefit its school programs. Some 150 attendees enjoyed cocktails, jazz, food, dessert, and entertainment throughout the gorgeous gardens and candlelit four-acre campus, including a hula-hoop fire-arts performance and a live auction hosted by comedian Christine O'Leary. These are just a few of hundreds of photos that captured the magic; please visit our events page at keelertavernmuseum.org for others.



A view from Main Street of the brilliantly lit KTM&HC Visitor Center where hundreds of guests registered and had their photo taken.



A beautifully adorned walled Garden and Garden House just moments before guests.



Comedian Christine O'Leary, wearing a three-pointed hat, or tricorne, had guests in stitches and raising their paddlestofund school programs.*



The Fall Party Planning Committee, from left to right: Josh Fischer, Lisa Terry, Jenn Hansen, and Christine Boris.*



Guests at the Fall Party enjoyed drinks and entertainment on the Rooftop Terrace Bar throughout the evening. From left to right, Fall Party committee member Josh Fischer, Hilary Aronow, Tina Malhortra, Amy Casey, and Kate White.*



KTM&HC rolled out the red carpet for its guests. Pictured from left to right are Chris and Jennifer Besgen, Jeff and Christine Boris, and Sarah and Mark Blandford.



KTM&HC Director of Education Melissa Houston, left, poses with Scotts Ridge Middle School teacher, Thomas Broderick, after Mr. Broderick accepted the Anna Keeler Award for Excellence in History and Civics Education from KTM&HC Executive Director Hildegard Grob, right.*



The Ridgefield High School Jazz Combo entertained guests at a fun-filled after-party in the Carriage Barn.*

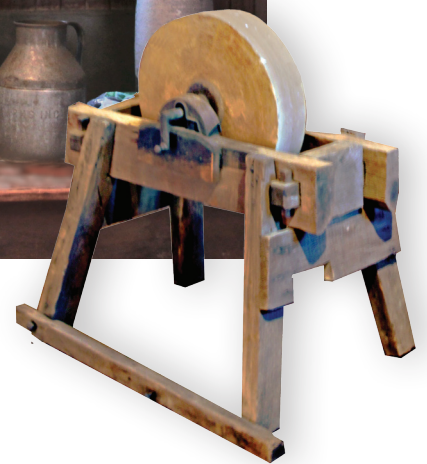


#HandsOnHistory, a program developed by Assistant Museum Director, Catherine Prescott, was presented in the Carriage Barn this fall. Many farm machines and tools from the Museum's collection were on display. Visitors were able to see how simple machines were used to plant and harvest crops to feed the 18th- and 19th- century families of Ridgefield. Lectures were held on Sunday afternoons discussing apples and apple orchards, American Indian farming, shipping container farming and hydroponics. They provided an important educational part of the program series. Many families with children enjoyed this HandsOnHistory touchable opportunity.

*Thank you to our partners:
High Ridge Hydroponics
Sherman Historical Society
Joel Third*

*Thank you to the volunteers who helped
make this exhibition possible:
Jackson Carter, John Somma.*

*Thank you to Barbara and Bill Wyman for
generously underwriting the exhibit video.*



Annual Meeting

On a lovely October evening, members, board members; and staff met for KTM&HC's Annual Meeting. Guests visited #HandsOnHistory in the Carriage Barn, with comments by Catherine Prescott, Assistant Museum Director. They then enjoyed cocktails and snacks provided by members in the Garden House, followed by dinner provided by the museum. Melissa Houston, Education Director, spoke about the many school groups that attended tours related to their studies. Hildi Grob, Executive Director, spoke about the financial status of KTM&HC and



Melissa Houston

the growth of the campus.

Rhonda Hill, President, presented the slate of Board Members for the 2019-2020 fiscal year. The slate was ratified unanimously by all members present. Hilary Micalizzi, retiring president, was thanked and presented with a bouquet of flowers. Coffee and desert ended a successful meeting.

2019-2020 Board of Directors

At the Annual Meeting of Keeler Tavern Museum & History Center the members present ratified the following slate as Members of the Board of Directors for the 2019-2020 fiscal year.

Rhonda Hill, *President*
Sara Champion, *1st Vice President*
John Wong, *Treasurer*
Patty Linnon, *Secretary*

Christine Boris, *Development*
Cheryl Crowl, *Guide Training/
Education*
Connie Fenton, *Membership/Gardens*
Elise Haas, *Newsletter*
Jenn Hansen, *Special Tours & Volunteers*
Karen McChesney, *Curator of Exhibitions*
Margo McEachern, *Museum Shop*
Hilary Micalizzi, *Programs*
Phyllis Robertson, *Maintenance/
Restoration*
Joel Third, *Development*

Thank you to these former board members for their contributions to the museum.

*Maureen Tucker
Shen-Zhuang Chien*

For much of the 19th century, the Keeler Tavern building featured a two-story addition called the North Piazza. It was added to the building probably early in the 19th century and remained there beyond the Gilbert years. Judy Bastedo, Cass and Julia Gilbert's granddaughter, recalled sleeping in its upstairs room as a young girl. Vernon Welch, who had purchased the property years later from Emily Gilbert, had it removed. The floor of the corridor on the second floor remains scarred at the former entrance to this room. The opening beneath the Piazza allowed entry through the north door of what became the museum and was enclosed by railings and provided with benches.

Anna Marie Resseguie wrote in her Journal that she and Phillis Dubois sat on the North Piazza and sang hymns. The period photograph shows the North Piazza with Abijah Resseguie standing outside. Two others, including a young boy, are nearby.



Visitor Center Archival Room

The new Visitor Center at KTM&HC will soon be home to its extensive collections of papers, letters, books, ledgers, photographs, and ephemera. The Hartmann glass photographic negatives that are now in the museum building itself will be transferred as well. The lower level of the Visitor Center is being renovated to form a climate controlled storage space, provided with museum-grade, high density movable shelves and racks. Space for researchers will be available.

The project was designed by Sean O'Kane AIA Architect.

The project is partially funded by a Good to Great grant from the State of Connecticut's Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD). The remainder is funded through the capital campaign. The terms of the grant require the sign gracing the front lawn.

The project is expected to be finished by early 2020.

The Garden House
At Keeler Tavern Museum & History Center

Available for weddings, rehearsal dinners, anniversary & cocktail parties,
 as well as business meetings. Suitable for up to 90 guests,
 with catering facilities and air conditioning.
 Call the museum office 9 am to 5 pm at 203-438-5485.

152 Main Street, Ridgefield, Connecticut 06877

For The Gentlemen



Now on view in the small exhibit room on the second floor of the Museum building are selections of men's and boy's clothing from infancy to adulthood. Visitors will discover the types of clothing worn by gentlemen and their sons in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. A fancy Christening outfit, a toddler's velvet suit, a military school uniform jacket, and a frock coat are among the items displayed. A group of bow ties, studs, and dressy suspenders add to the exhibit, as do several hats, including a collapsible top hat. Pictured are just some of the items on display. Be sure to take a look on your next visit.

Karen McChesney, Curator of Exhibits

Donors Respond to School Programming, Campus Integration

Since early June, KTM&HC has received many gifts, via events and our Annual Appeal, to help support its school programming, including funding to encourage immersive, full-day visits by students from Title I schools. Event sponsors and attendees at the Fall Party@Keeler, which specifically focuses on fundraising for education, were particularly generous (see article on page 3). Additional funding to sustain the Title I programming came in the form of grants. KTM&HC applied for and received a \$2,500 grant from Union Savings Bank, which over the years has also been generous with support for our benefit dinners. IBM Corporation gave KTM&HC a \$2,000 Community grant, made possible by former IBMers' reporting of hours they have volunteered here during the past year. KTM&HC is immensely grateful to Beth Hancock, Patty Linnon, Charlie Pankenier and John Somma, whose dedication and time commitment made this grant possible. Thanks to these generous contributions, we can continue to provide, either in the classroom or here

on our four-acre campus, exceptional history programming to 2,500 students each year.

KTM&HC is once again the grateful recipient of a generous grant from the Anne S. Richardson Fund. The \$75,000, two-year grant will further our effort to improve the visitor experience, which now begins at the new Visitor Center and fans out from there to the Garden House and garden, Carriage Barn, and of course the Keeler Tavern.

This most recent grant from Anne S. Richardson Fund joins other generous gifts to our capital campaign. Donations to the campaign continue to come in, both as new gifts—which we welcome through 2021—as well as payments to fulfill pledge commitments.

If you have not already given to our Annual Appeal or the capital campaign, please consider a donation to help us in our dual mission of preservation and education. You can donate online at www.keelertavernmuseum.org/join-support. Please remember to submit for a corporate match, if you can—and thank you!

*Angela Liptack, Associate Director,
Development and Grants*

Tavern Tidbits

A group of women in Moorehead, Minnesota raised funds to restore the roof of the Episcopal Church of St. John the Devine. Built by Cass Gilbert in 1899 it is on the list of Historic Places. Another early Gilbert project comes to light!

Garden House Manager, Mary Ann Connors, received an extremely complimentary letter from the parents of a recent bride about the Garden House, garden and entire experience. They wrote that it was “just fabulous.”

A big THANK YOU to Carrie Warner, Connie Fenton, Erika Askin and volunteer helpers for the holiday decor of the Museum entrance and for the yuletide cheer they are adding to the interior rooms.

Tavern Times is published three times yearly by the Keeler Tavern Preservation Society, Inc.
Elise Haas, Editor

New Members

Welcome new members of
Keeler Tavern Museum
& History Center

Lynn Felici-Gallant

Susan Fortunato

Eileen Hahnenkratt

Robert Ingraham

Anthony J. Molligo

Sandy Keeler Powell

Dr. Darla Shaw

We look forward to meeting you
at museum events.

Connie Fenton, Membership Chairman

Digitizing Hartmann

Joseph Hartmann took at least 7,000 photographs on glass plate negatives, now in the museum's collection, of Ridgefield residents and events in the early 20th century. Volunteer Terry McManus is digitizing these glass plate negatives. They will become part of KTM&HC database and will be available online. Purchase of the digital scanner was made possible through funds raised at the 2018 Fairfield County Giving Day sponsored by Fairfield County's Community Foundation and Bank of America.



Obituaries

Catherine "Kit" Baker,
who took part in the Antiques
& Treasures Sales and donated
many dolls from her collection
passed away in September
at the age of 102.

She was featured in our
winter issue
and will be missed.



Katheryn "Kathy" Plum,
long time guide, passed away
last Spring. Our condolences to
her husband and family.

NEW GUIDES

Two new guides have joined those who show visitors the over 300 year old tavern building and tell of its history.

Anthony Molligo

Tony is a recently retired, career Federal litigator and prosecutor, and served for over 20 years as U.S. Navy Intelligence Officer, retiring with the rank of Commander. A former resident of Long Island, NY, he also served as his village's police commissioner and judge.

He and his wife Jackie, are the current owners of the Josiah Keeler Homestead (circa 1765). From about 1882 until the early 20th Century, the home was utilized as the Town's Poor Farm. The house retains most of its original features and the interior bears a striking resemblance to the Keeler Tavern. The couple are avid history buffs and are enjoying learning more about the history of their home and Ridgefield.

Also joining as a new guide is—

Mary Beth McGarvey

Former Ridgefield elementary
school teacher.

Cheryl Crow, Guide Training

Museum Shop*



*Featuring seasonal
gifts throughout
the year!*

**Museum Gift Shop Always CT Tax Exempt*

Check our website for expanded holiday hours.

KTM&HC Garden Update



The lush, beautiful garden within the brick walls has once again been “put to sleep” for the upcoming Winter months. Our dedicated team of volunteer gardeners has worked through the early Spring rains, the heat and sunny weather of Summer into the coolness of Autumn. We have buried dozens of tulips, daffodils, hyacinths and allium in anticipation of a glorious Springtime. Already we have ambitious plans for next year and we

encourage anyone...men and women... to join our team for just two hours each Wednesday morning, weather permitting. As the saying goes, many hands make light work! We need more hands, so I can be reached at 203.240.8869 if you have questions or would consider weeding, planting, chopping, digging or pruning with our fabulous group of gardeners.

Connie Fenton, Garden Chairman

Scarecrows Scary Return

The Scarecrow Contest returned for a seventh spooky season. Business groups, families and individuals purchased wood frames from KTM&HC and dressed their scarecrows to startle and amuse Ridgefield shoppers and town visitors. After they were installed along Main Street October 18th to the 31st, a voting by ballot took place on Main Street and the museum Facebook page to pick the best of this year's scarecrows during the “Fall in Love with Ridgefield” weekend (10/18-10/20).



This special event has been managed and installed each year by Hilary Micalizzi, Program Chairman, with the help of the Museum Caretaker, Roger Keller.

Thank you, Hilary and Roger!



Keeler Tavern Museum & History Center is open Saturday, Sunday, & Wednesday
1:00 PM to 4:00 PM
(last tour begins at 3:15 PM)

Museum Gift Shop is open Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday
1:00 PM to 4:00 PM

Keeler Tavern Museum & History Center 2019 Calendar

November / December 2019

Nov. 22 - 24 Early Shopper Days in Gift Shop

Friday – Sunday, 12 Noon – 4:00 PM

Nov. 29 - 30 Museum and Museum Shop Open

Friday & Saturday 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

December 2019

1 & 3 - 8 Early Shopper Days

Sunday & Tuesday thru Saturday, 12 Noon – 4:00 PM

6 Christmas at the Tavern & Holiday Stroll

Friday, 6:00 – 9:00 PM

7-14 “Gift of Art” Holiday Art Show:

Saturday to Saturday 12 Noon – 4:00 PM

10 -14 Christmas Luncheons (Two Seatings)

Tuesday – Saturday, 11:30 AM & 1:15 PM

10 -14 Holiday Boutique

Tuesday – Saturday, 10:30 AM – 3:30 PM

15 Holiday Boutique

Sunday, 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

19 - 20 The Polar Express Family Program

Thursday & Friday, 6:30 PM – 7:30 PM

Keeler Tavern



Museum
and History Center

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