

Winter / Spring 2017

# TAVERN TIMES



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE KEELER TAVERN MUSEUM AND HISTORY CENTER • RIDGEFIELD • CT 06877

## News About Your Newsletter...

This new, colorful edition of *Tavern Times* is also available electronically on our website [keelertavernmuseum.org](http://keelertavernmuseum.org), so you can choose to read it online, or download it as a PDF. The next issue will come to you via email, with significant savings in printing and postage for the Museum, and a more colorful and more timely newsletter for readers. For those who may prefer printed copies, a limited number will continue to be available from the Museum office at 203-438-5485 or [info@keelertavernmuseum.org](mailto:info@keelertavernmuseum.org).

**BARN TAG SALE**



The third annual Barn Tag Sale will be held in the Carriage Barn from Thursday, March 30 to Sunday, April 2 from 9am-4pm. You will be able to purchase everything from antiques to housewares and everything in between! Proceeds from the sale go directly into the Museum for restoration and maintenance of the campus. Space is limited for anyone wanting to donate items. Please call the museum office at 203-438-5485, and leave a message for Hilary to discuss donations.

*Hilary Micalizzi, Chairman*



## School Programs at KTHC

School programs are bustling. For the 2016/2017 school year, we expect to have most of the fourth-graders from Ridgefield come through for our “Esther’s Kitchen/Timothy’s Tavern” program, plus fun colonial activities like quill pen writing and dancing. We will also see all the 7th graders in Ridgefield. The Scotts Ridge Middle School 7th grade was just here for the Battle of Ridgefield program, where they saw important characters from that day interact with each other in scenes, studied primary sources, learned about field medicine, and learned about tactics and lives of Revolutionary War soldiers. The East Ridge Middle School 7th grade will be coming through in the spring for our Civil War program, which follows a similar format. New this year will be the 8th grade from East Ridge Middle School coming to us for a program on Ridgefield’s Gilded Age, which is currently under development.

We also have out-of-town schools on the calendar for this school year. In the fall, we had Sherman’s 8th grade come for the Battle of Ridgefield. We also had a visit from the fourth grade at Danbury’s Ellsworth Avenue School. In February, the 5th grade from New Fairfield will be here for two days for the Battle of Ridgefield program. We are in conversation with a couple of other out-of-town schools for a spring visit as well.

All told, we expect to see about 1500 students this school year. As a point of comparison, last year the number of students who came to KTHC for a field trip was around 900. We are grateful for the hard work and dedication of our school program docents who make this all possible!

*Sarah Blandford, Education Director*

Visit us at our web site [keelertavernmuseum.org](http://keelertavernmuseum.org)



## President's Report

Spring 2017



Dear members:

In January, I had the opportunity to observe the Scotts Ridge Middle school 7th graders as they explored our campus in a full day immersion program studying the Battle of Ridgefield. I watched the students engage in conversation with Generals Tryon and Wooster, discussed the importance of primary source documents from our collections, and found Ridgefield on an 18th century map (map reading is a lost art in my opinion). To watch those students have “light bulb” moments as they experienced history was so very meaningful to me.

Thank you to all of the wonderful docents and volunteers who make these programs come alive for students from Bridgeport to Sherman, and Ridgefield to the Bronx.

Thanks also to our dedicated team of educators led by Sarah Blandford as they continue to expand our offerings to reflect three centuries of lived experience. The work they do to tie KTHC stories and resources into programs that are relevant to curriculum at many grade levels is critical to our mission and vision.

If you are interested in seeing first-hand the impact that KTHC makes with our visiting students, I invite you to tag along with me during the next school program. Leave me a message at the office and I would be happy to coordinate a date.

Respectfully yours,

*Hilary E. Micalizzi*

Hilary Micalizzi

### TAKE NOTE OF US. TAKE NOTE OF HISTORY.



## The Year Ahead

As I write this column, snow covers the ground and winter reminds us that the year is still young. Our curatorial department uses the month of January to ready the Museum for the public season. Curator of Collections, Erika Askin, has thoroughly inspected and cleaned every object, artifact, piece of furniture, and room in the Museum. Meanwhile, Curator of

Exhibitions, Karen McChesney, has created a charming new exhibition titled “The Night Shift at the Museum” featuring delicately embroidered mid-1800 nightgowns from our collection. On February 1, the Museum re-opened for tours on Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays, 1 – 4 p.m. Stop in for a tour and a look at the “Night Shift” – it’s guaranteed to put a smile on your face.

Our school programs are growing in popularity. With school classes from Sherman to Bridgeport, we now cover all of Fairfield County. The Education Committee under the guidance of Education Director, Sarah Blandford, is currently developing our Gilded Age program featuring Cass and Julia Gilbert. They were members of the upper class that shaped the town’s history during the Roaring Twenties up

to WWI. As with others, this school program is being developed in partnership with teachers at East Ridge Middle School (ERMS). The Gilded Age school program will be the third in a row of full-day, hands-on and inquiry-based school programs that explore the lives of our residents and the events that shaped the town of Ridgefield as a way of teaching national history.

Another highlight this spring will be the 240th anniversary of the Battle of Ridgefield. We will be part of a town-wide celebration on Saturday, April 29, hosting the encampment of the Revolutionary War re-enactors and their entourage as well as offering free Museum tours and various family-friendly activities. Of course, the cannonball will feature prominently in this event – so be sure to check it out!

*Hildegard Grob, Executive Director*



# Keeler Tavern Museum and History Center

We begin our next 50 years with a new name and logotype:  
**Keeler Tavern Museum and History Center.**

The eventful lives of our residents provide a one-of-a-kind window on our shared national experience. Where we tell those stories has grown from a single building to a multi-location campus; how we tell them includes well-regarded tours for visitors from around the world, but also immersive learning for students from across the region, as well as classroom outreach and electronic access. What began as (and remains) Ridgefield's treasured house museum has evolved to become a regional History Center.

The iconic rider shown moving beyond the confines of the tavern's Colonial-era sign symbolizes that the American Revolution will always be central to our story. But so are narratives of the 18th century frontier; the transforming effects of the Industrial Revolution; our town's wrenching Civil War experience; and Cass Gilbert, the celebrated Gilded Age architect who made the property his own.

It's all here, and our new identity is an invitation to explore it.

*Charlie Pankenier*

## *Trivia Contest for History Buffs*



On Friday March 24th at 7 PM teams of up to six contestants will take part in a friendly competition to decide who is most up to date with history trivia about Ridgefield, the state of Connecticut, and the U.S.A. The winning team will take home the Fountain Trophy. Questions have been selected by and edited by Charlie Pankenier, chairman, Kay Ables, Joe Ellis, and Elise Haas.

This is a fun evening for all who enjoy history. The cost is \$10 per contestant. Call the Keeler Tavern Museum at 203-438- 5485 to sign up your team. Take part in the Battle of Ridgefield IV. It's educational, interesting and a lot of fun.



### **Additional KTHC Parking**

While the brick building at the recently acquired property at 152 Main Street is not ready for use yet, the parking area is. So when parking is tight around the Museum Building and Garden House additional cars can park at 152. The wall between the properties has been opened up, so access to all buildings, no matter where cars are parked, is convenient. Entrance/exit to this parking area is north of the Tavern Building and right off Main Street.





## Be A Guide!

Would you like to become a tour guide at the Keeler Tavern Museum? Guides in costume, are asked to work one afternoon a month, meet interesting visitors and discover a lot about Ridgefield's past. Cheryl Crowl, Guide Trainer will be pleased to arrange a training session for prospective guides. Call the KTHC at 203-438-5485 for further information about training.

## Where Would We Be Without Donors Like You?

Without our donors and members, we'd be in a pickle. Keeler Tavern Museum and History Center receives no government support. Generous gifts, including those of time and talent, are what started this museum 51 years ago, and contributions and memberships are what sustain it today.

Between mid-September 2016 and February 7, 2017, you and individuals just like you--129 donors in all--gave us gifts, small and large, to help pay for our everyday operating expenses. Particularly generous contributions were received from BMW of Ridgefield, Jeanne Cook, Fairfield County Bank, Margo McEachern, Missy and David Partridge, Joan Payden, the Sarah Tod Fund, and Carol and Richard Vazzana. Our funds to pay for school buses to bring students from under served communities grew, as did the Bettie Jane Third Scholarship Fund, which helps Ridge-

field high school and college students pay for further education.

Our Gala, which featured a remarkable performance by Danbury High School students, generated multiple donations, including \$10,800 raised to support our educational programs for school children.

Special recognition must be given to Suzanne Scoville and David Sederholt; Hilary and Frank Micalizzi; Strategic Funding Source and Diversified Brokerage, both of New York City; Litchfield Distillers; and GC Infotech of Stamford. Their generous donations for our October Lantern Light Tours supported not only the performers and costumes, but also a comprehensive marketing campaign and free admission to the event for children under 18—resulting in sell-out attendance at the popular two-day event.

We welcome your contributions at any time. You can easily donate at our website, [www.keelertavernmuseum.org](http://www.keelertavernmuseum.org). If appropriate, please send along your company's matching gift form, as it multiplies your contribution's impact on our everyday operations.

*Angela Liptack, Associate Director*

## Two Grants Fund Educational Programming

Recently the Museum was thrilled to receive two grants. A \$1,000 grant from the Wadsworth Russell Lewis Fund will enable us to hire a certified middle school teacher to work with our education director to develop and pilot half- and full-day programs that meet STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) learning objectives. A \$2,500 grant from M&T Charitable Foundation will support our work on a major commemoration of the Battle of Ridgefield, which occurred 240 years ago (see related article on page 6).

*Angela Liptack, Associate Director*

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

## NEW KTM MEMBERS

Below are the names of new members who have joined the Keeler Tavern Museum and History Center in the last several months. We welcome them and hope to meet them at upcoming events.

Rachelle Axel  
Brian Bligh  
Anne and John Blood  
Mr. and Mrs. James Coleman  
John Cornelius  
Marie Crai  
Jane Cupkovic  
Katherine Daigle  
Ms. Fantauzzi



Jo Frame  
Joseph Geary  
Susan and Paul Gillis  
Danielle Greenberg  
Joanne Hudson  
Ann Kopp  
Linda and Jeff Krulwich  
Mary Ann and Gene Lutz  
Debey and Dave Mitchell  
Marguerite and Wayne Reynolds  
Sally and Jack Sanders  
Jan Siegel  
Mary Sturges  
Jennifer Wallace  
Kim and Guy Welton

*Connie Fenton, Membership Chairman*

## Night Shift at the Museum

Several beautiful white cotton nightgowns trimmed with embroidery, a patchwork quilt, a paisley shawl and more, are on view at *Night Shift at the Museum* in this recently installed exhibit upstairs at the KTHC.

Perhaps they were made in an event such as described in an entry by Anna Marie Resseguie in her journal on September 25th, 1852:

*Arrangements were made by Mary & myself for a nice long sewing day. We act according to our intentions until eleven, beginning at nine, .....After dinner we are about resuming our work when polite hint is given us to assist Sister Sarah in her preparations for departure. Happy to comply. We lend our aid. And Sarah is almost two nightgowns richer, when we leave her this evening than before. We have a pleasant time.*

## Who Knew??

Way before the advent of the modern toothbrush, things such as sticks, bones, and/or feathers were used to clean teeth.

One recipe for cold cream in the 19th C. included 1 drachm each of melted white wax and spermacetti mixed with 2 oz. of rose water, ½ oz. of orange flower water and 2 oz. of oil of almonds. (A drachm is about 1/12 of a pound.)

A hair care routine might involve washing it and exfoliating the scalp, followed by brushing in oils or grease.

Karen McChesney, Curator



## What's Special about the Garden House

The Garden House with its brick walled garden continues to be a major asset to the Keeler Tavern Museum and History Center. Built by Cass Gilbert as a summer garden room for his family in 1915, the location and garden attract many brides as a place to hold their wedding. While now the garden sleeps under the snow it will awaken when the weather warms. The garden, tended so carefully by Connie Fenton and Sue Seifer and their committee will bloom with seasonal plants and flowers.

This Garden House and Garden does provide not only income for the KTHC, but a delightful location for meetings, concerts and other events. No doubt Cass and Julia Gilbert never conceived of their garden room being used in this way. The over 100 year old Garden House and Garden is provided with a service addition. The garden with its marble reflecting pool can be lighted at night. What an asset to not only the KTHC but Ridgefield.



## The Garden House

At the Keeler Tavern Museum

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.

132 Main Street, Ridgefield, Connecticut 06877  
keelertavernmuseum.org

## The 240th Anniversary of the Battle of Ridgefield



This year marks the 240th anniversary of the Battle of Ridgefield. On Saturday, April 29 KTHC will collaborate with the Ridgefield Historical Society, the Masons and many other organizations in town to commemorate the battle. A reenactment of the battle will take place at the original battle site followed by skirmishes as the troops move south on Main Street and fire on the Keeler Tavern.

The KTHC campus will be open to the public from 10am to 4pm on 4/29 where guests can meet soldiers of the 5th Connecticut Regiment, colonial artisans, view the can-

nonball from the original battle, listen to period music and tour the museum. Admission to the KTHC event is free.

Watch the KTHC website for a complete schedule of lectures and events that will take place during the month of April. These events have been organized to give a complete picture of the history surrounding this pivotal time in our country's history.

If you are interested in sponsoring this event please contact Hilary Micalizzi at the museum office.

*Hilary Micalizzi, President*



### *Cass Gilbert Appreciated Main Street*

Back in 1926 Cass Gilbert wrote a letter to William Keeler, who was in the insurance and real estate business in Ridgefield. Mr. Gilbert was very concerned about the future of Main Street. He did not want to buy more real estate but wanted to maintain the beauty and character of Main Street which he felt he had contributed to. He wrote to Mr. Keeler.



*I have learned recently with some anxiety that it is proposed to widen Main Street and pave it with cement to make it a more important traffic highway than it already is. I have also been told a number of times within the last year that the property at the corner of Main Street and West Lane owned Mr. Hoyt was likely to be used for a gasoline station and it has several times been suggested to me that I should buy it myself or join others in buying it to prevent this condition arising.*

Mr. Gilbert goes on to write that he loves Ridgefield for its lovely Main Street and that he and his family will sell the Cannonball house and buy elsewhere if the plan is executed. It was not and the Gilbert family stayed.

Currently a plan by the State to widen Main Street is under consideration. Many of the same problems appear to jeopardise Main Street. History tends to repeat itself.

## Fairfield County Contest

Fairfield County Foundation and Bank of America are holding their Giving Day on Thursday, March 9th. In this on-line 24 hour competition, the Keeler Tavern Museum and History Center hopes to raise \$6,000 to restore 19th Century children's party outfits which are part of the Museum's collection. These outfits are examples of what boys and girls wore for special occasions 150 years ago.

Help KTHC win a special prize before Giving Day, Tuesday March 7th, 7 AM to 4 PM. To win a prize up to \$500 LIKE our photo on Facebook. For further information call 203-438-5485 or visit KTHC's web site.



## Shopkeepers Wanted at Keeler Tavern Museum

If you enjoy retail and like talking to people, then consider volunteering in the Keeler Tavern Museum Gift Shop at 132 Main Street, Ridgefield. Shopkeepers have the opportunity to work in a unique building steeped in history and surrounded by lovely merchandise. They have a chance to help customers select their purchases, as well as the opportunity to shop for themselves with a 10% discount. Shopkeepers enjoy interfacing with the Museum guides who conduct tours on the same days that the Shop is open.

All shopkeepers attend a brief training orientation to the shop and its inventory. Shopkeepers volunteer to work one afternoon a month from 1-4 pm on Wednesday, Saturday or Sunday. Duties include assisting museum visitors in the selection of their purchases and processing their sales transactions. Shopkeepers also have the satisfaction of knowing that they have helped contribute to the support of the museum's programs and educational initiative.

For further information, call Margo Mc Eachern, 203-431-3094.



The mother and daughter combo of Connie Fenton and Carrie Warner again did a 1st prize winning job decorating the Tap Room entrance to the KTHC Museum building for the Christmas season. They also added seasonal decor to

the first floor rooms. All the many visitors to the Museum and the Holiday Boutique enjoyed the specially created holiday atmosphere. Connie tells us plans are already being discussed for next year.

## Keeler Kids



This summer Keeler Kids will return to the Museum with a new program for the older children. The Gilded Age will be its focus. In the late 19th Century and early 20th Ridgefield was the location of summer "cottages" built by wealthy residents of New York City. Some of the large estates, many on High Ridge, remain today, others are long gone. Many Italian immigrants settled in Ridgefield and worked on these estates. It was an important era in Ridgefield's history and one that had a permanent effect on the town. Of course the Colonial Day program will be available for the youngest children.

### Session I

Grades 1—3, July 10th – 14th

### Session II

Grades 4—6, July 17th – 21st

### Session III

Grades 7—8, Dates to be Determined

Contact the KTHC at 203-438-5485 for further information.

## The Gift Shop\*

Featuring Memorabilia & Books About the Gilded Age Period  
One of a Kind Unique Glassware, Toys,  
and a very large selection of Keeler Tavern Pottery



Open Saturday, Sunday and Wednesdays From 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM

# Keeler Tavern Museum and History Center 2017 Calendar



The Keeler Tavern Museum and History Center is open Saturday, Sunday, & Wednesday 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM (last tour begins at 3:30 PM)

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

Closed the Month of January

Visit our Web Site at [keelertavernmuseum.org](http://keelertavernmuseum.org)



## March 2017

**24** History Trivia Night *Friday, 6 PM – 9 PM*

**30 & 31** Tag Sale in Barn *Thursday & Friday, 9 AM – 4 PM*

## April 2017

**1 & 2** Tag Sale in Barn *Saturday & Sunday, 9 AM – 4 PM*

**2** Lecture\* Sybil Ludington, The Paul Revere of the Battle of Ridgefield by Vince DacQuino *Sunday, 4 PM – Admission \$10*

**9** Lecture\* Masonic Leadership During the Revolutionary War by Nick Ives *Sunday, 4 PM – Admission \$10*

**29** Battle of Ridgefield *Saturday, 10 AM – 4 PM*

## May 2017

**19** Ridgefield Independent Film Festival (RIFF) *Friday, 4 PM – 10 PM*

**29** Memorial Day Parade *Monday, 11 AM*

*\* Lecture followed by wine & cheese*

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