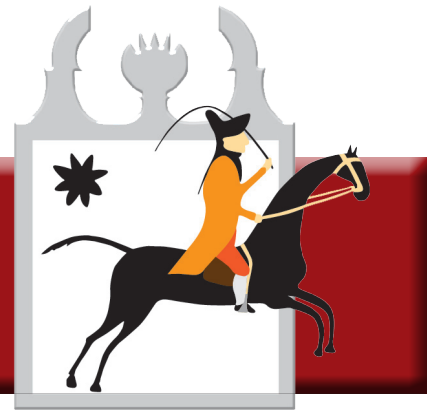


Spring / Summer / Fall 2020

TAVERN TIMES



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



Cranberry Chutney for the Holidays!

Even though it's not possible to have Christmas Luncheons this year, we are making sure that you will once again be able to enjoy Keeler Tavern's famous Cranberry Chutney with your holiday meals!

Chutney can be purchased for \$10 per container. For pickup before Thanksgiving, you can place your orders online beginning in early November for pick up Monday, November 23 to Wednesday, November 25 at the KTM&HC Visitor Center 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Chutney will also be available for purchase at the Carriage Barn during the Holiday Boutique.

Order early – our chutney is always a fast seller.

KTM&HC's Extraordinary Storage Facility



Keeleer Tavern Museum & History Center (KTM&HC) has received a \$96,575 Good to Great grant from the State of Connecticut's Department of Economic and Community Development. The grant has substantially funded KTM&HC's project which has turned the raw space in the lower level of the new Visitor Center into a state-of-the-art museum collections storage and research facility.

This grant has made it possible to have a secure climate-controlled, fire-protected storage area with museum-grade moveable shelves and storage racks with a dedicated HVAC system to preserve KTM&HC's thousands of fragile artifacts, documents, pamphlets, ledgers, journals, books and ephemera.

Some great examples in the collection are a British officer's hand-drawn schematic of the Battle of Ridgefield and Anna Marie Resseguie's nine journals detailing everyday life in Ridgefield during the Civil War. Also included are Cass Gilbert's notes on the destruction he saw in post-World War I France. And Joseph Hartmann's glass photographic plates.

An adjacent research area provides curators, scholars and visiting school program students with a secure space to look at these items and marvel at the history they tell.



In the President's letter for this newsletter about a year ago, I talked about the strategic plan we were working on, projects we had underway and upcoming activities. Little did we know that, a year later, those plans and projects would be significantly delayed or put on hold due to Covid-19. We have spent the last seven months adapting to the new environment and doing our best to make good use of the unexpected downtime. At some time in the future, as the country emerges from the Covid-19 restrictions, KTM&HC will have a wider breadth of offerings, with a catalog that includes the distance learning opportunities that our Education Department has developed over the last few months as well as on site experiences.

In the last few months, racial tensions have moved to the forefront of conversations, and KTM&HC is working to understand our role in the conversations. Our heritage is one of hosting difficult and meaningful conversations and debates, beginning in the 1700s with whether Ridgefield should remain Loyalists or join the Patriots' side in the growing tensions that became the Revolutionary War. Our plan is to build on this heritage, and host conversations and respectful debates that will help us all gain better understanding of important issues.

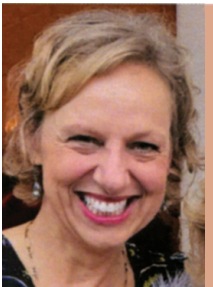
In order to be able to lead and support new focuses, we're making structural changes to the Board of Directors, continuing the transition from a Board responsible for an organization with no staff, to a Board directing and supporting an Executive Director and a small and capable staff. This transition will take some time, and the proposed slate of Officers and Board Members includes new members who have been recruited as we looked to the future needs of the organization. The recommended changes to our bylaws have the goal of enabling new perspectives to be interjected into the board on an ongoing basis. The membership will vote on the slate and the bylaw changes at October 19th's Annual Meeting.

I thank you for your continued interest and support of Keeler Tavern Museum & History Center, and look forward to being able to welcome you in person to the campus in the (hopefully) near future!

Respectfully,

Rhonda Hill

*Rhonda Hill
Board President*



A VIEW FROM THE SECOND FLOOR

It's been seven months since we first shuttered our site to cope with the coronavirus pandemic. We decided early on to pivot to digital platforms and virtual experiences, both for our school and public programming. Any in-person activities were offered outdoors or in a hybrid format following prudent pandemic-control guidelines. I feel we struck a tenuous pact with Covid-19 over the summer by pacing ourselves and sticking to outdoor and online offerings. We will continue to do so during the coming months with the hope that sometime next year we

will be able to safely re-open the Museum to visitors.

The current protests around racial justice forced us to re-examine the way we interpret our site's history to make sure that we tell the stories of ALL our past residents in a truthful, authentic, and complete way, irrespective of their race and gender. To that end, we have commissioned a comprehensive academic study of our site's history as a guiding document that will inform future interpretations with the goal of building a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable museum.

In late summer we staged the play *SISTERS* in the Garden House for a mostly livestreamed audience. *SISTERS* tells the story of Anna Marie Resseguie and Phillis Dubois who lived together at the Resseguie Hotel before, during and after the Civil War. Their relationship was shaped by racist societal norms and gender expectations. Following the play was a talkback with the playwrights, cast and crew that drew the audience into a deeper

conversation around systemic racial and gender discrimination in our nation's history. We plan to provide further programming to have these important talks.

On October 11 we open our award-winning *#HandsOnHistory: It Takes A Village* special exhibition - this year online and on-site - showcasing our historic tools, maps, daybooks, and ledgers. Chief curator Catherine Prescott has once again planned a fantastic exhibition. Visit our website for details and to register for a timed entry to see the Carriage Barn displays.

SAVE THE DATE for the return of the *Ghosts of Ridgefield* on October 23 & 24. We are thrilled to be able to collaborate with the former Discovery Center's cast of ghosts to bring back this popular program. Tickets will sell fast so make sure to get your spot!

Hildegard Grob
Hildegard Grob, Executive Director

Living with COVID-19



*Margo McEachern
offering curb-side shopping.*

Early on, Keeler Tavern Museum & History Center decided to pivot all programming to either outdoors or online as the best way to deal with the uncertainties of the coronavirus pandemic. The decision was also made NOT to open the Museum (historic tavern) until further notice out of concern for the health and safety of anyone being inside its tight historic spaces with inadequate ventilation. Another concern was the long-term effect of harsh cleaners on historic furniture and artifacts. Instead, visitors were invited to take the self-guided walking tour, Gilberts in the Gardens, and peek at the cannonball covered by plexiglass. A successful Gala-to-Go virtual fundraiser in May was followed by several popular family events, including

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8th Annual Scarecrow Contest Goes Virtual

The popular Scarecrow contest returned to Main Street for the 8th year supported by enthusiastic businesses and organizations in town. The frames were supplied by the Keeler Tavern Museum & History Center and were purchased for \$25. They were picked up at the KTM&HC's Visitor Center. Voting took place on the KTM&HC Facebook page from October 16 to October 31. The scarecrow with the most "likes" by 11:59 p.m. on October 31 will receive a prize. Following Covid-19 guidelines NO balloting will take place downtown.



#HandsOnHistory: It Takes a Village



Ralph Lapidus depicts 18th-century blacksmithing in an outdoor family demonstration of the 2017 #HandsOnHistory: It Takes A Village exhibition.

This fall join us in the historic barn for "It Takes a Village" - an award-winning exhibit that explores the interdependency of farms, families, and businesses across Ridgefield's history. An online exhibit - combining maps, narrative text, and media content - that takes visitors on a tour of the businesses on Ridgefield's 19th century Main Street will be supplemented by displays of featured trades on-site in the Carriage Barn.

Virtual tours of the exhibit, as well as interactive STEAM lessons, are available for school, scouting, and homeschool groups. Outdoor family demonstrations on weekends - see website for more details.

This exhibition is generously supported by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Prescott as well as CT Humanities.

Join us at
Keeler
Tavern
Museum &
History
Center
this fall for
digital
history
programs!

Our programs are a combination of pre-visit digital activities that teachers can tailor to their needs and live virtual field trips where students interact with a museum educator from our museum! For more information or to schedule a live virtual field trip, teachers can contact the museum at: education@keelertavernmuseum.org.

Programs available:

Colonial Life - Lessons, a pre-recorded tour, and activities are available on our website. These lessons look at how life was lived in the 18th century at Keeler Tavern. Teachers can schedule a 45-minute virtual field trip with a museum educator that includes a presentation of the site's history and discussion on artifacts in the museum's 1790 kitchen, also called Esther's Kitchen. Geared for grades 3-5 but adjustable for additional grades.

Battle of Ridgefield - Lessons, a pre-recorded PowerPoint, and activities are available on our website for grades 4-5. Digital lessons include an interactive Google Slides project and a Visual Thinking Strategies activity. Teachers can schedule a 45-minute virtual field trip in place of the pre-recorded PowerPoint that includes a discussion with a museum educator. Grades 6-8 participate in a QFT (Question Formulation Technique) through Google Forms so that the virtual interaction is based on their curiosity and questions!

Ridgefield, Race, and the Resseguie Hotel - This program is designed for grades 8-12 and uses art and history to examine race relations in the mid-19th century. Students, and teachers, are provided with a recording of the play *Sisters* which looks at life at the Resseguie Hotel (what is now Keeler Tavern Museum & History Center) through the eyes of two women who lived there - one black and one white. A Google Slides activity helps students understand historiography and how our views of history have changed across time. The accompanying virtual field trip is 45 minutes and includes a discussion of artifacts and primary sources in the museum's collections used in the writing of *Sisters*.



Betsy Perry Keeler

Several months ago a portrait of Betsy Perry Keeler was for sale through a auction house discovered by Jack Sanders, retired editor of the Ridgefield Press. He advised KTM&HC of the sale. The museum was able to raise funds to purchase it from the seller in Ohio.

Betsy was one of the daughters of David Perry. He was one of 3 generations of Dr. Perrys who treated Ridgefielders for over 100 years. Betsy married Thaddeus Keeler in 1815. He was the nephew of Timothy Keeler who operated the Keeler Tavern. Thaddeus was called "Quality Thad" to distinguish him from other Thads. He was probably the first to practice law in town.

He also had a corner store that was located at the south end of the Keeler/ Resseguie property where he sold medicines no doubt supplied by his brother-in-law, the doctor. No trace of this building remains. Thaddeus served as town treasurer in the 1830s, a selectman 1826-7 and represented Ridgefield in Hartford in 1839. Betsy died in 1859 and Thaddeus in 1878. They had no children.

The Museum has long owned a portrait of Thaddeus, but not one of Betsy. They are a pair – painted by Ezra Bisbee. It is not known how they were separated and how Betsy was found in Ohio. It is nice to know that Betsy and Thaddeus are back together again.

Once a year Fairfield County Giving Day is promoted by the Fairfield County Community Foundation and sponsored by the Bank of America to benefit non-profit organizations with special projects. This past February generous donors donated online \$4,000 to provide period-appropriate frames for the portraits of Betsy and Thaddeus, and for the cleaning and restoration of Abijah Resseguie and his wife Anna Keeler Resseguie.



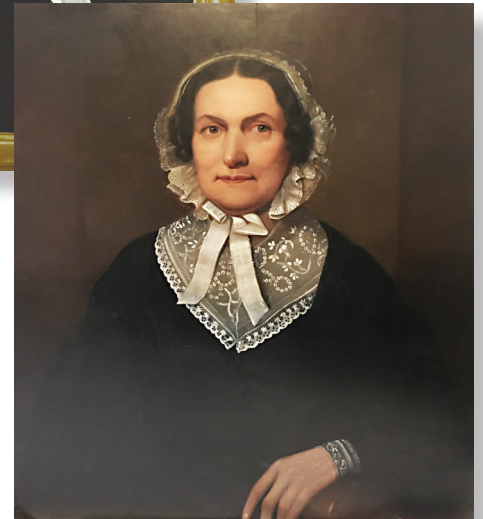
Abijah Resseguie



Anna Keeler Resseguie



Thaddeus Keeler



Betsy Perry Keeler

Our Garden

The Keeler Tavern Museum & History Center's Cass Gilbert Garden is a special treasure in this time of pandemic that we can all safely visit outdoors. Connie Fenton and her team of gardeners have provided a beautiful place that can be enjoyed by all. Connie is assisted by Marilyn Maneri, Alvin Spindler, Loretta McMaster, Roger Restaino and Roger Keller. Thank you to all the gardeners for their help creating this lovely setting.



Obituary

Jeanne Cook a long time friend of the Keeler Tavern Museum & History Center died last February.

Jeanne's travel agency on Main Street was familiar to many Ridgefielders and she was a supporter of many cultural organizations.

Marie Lutzius volunteer and guide at the Museum, passed away in May. She volunteered for Christmas luncheons and other events for many years. Our condolences to her husband Bill and family.

Dorothy "Dottie" Hall long time member and past president (1980-84) of the Museum passed away in Austin, Texas, at 98. Both Dottie and husband, Al, were active volunteers at the Museum and contributed much to it in its earlier years.

Tavern Tidbits

Long time board member and guide Patricia Stephens has retired and moved to be near one of her daughters. She gave the museum the one costume she wore, her four daughters wore and her grand daughter also wore. It has become part of KTM&HC history. Thanks to Pat and her family.

Catherine Prescott shown working virtually with Keeler Kids on her computer this past summer.



Musicians from the RSO and other groups played outdoors on Sunday afternoons on the Visitor Center Patio to the delight of all.

Weddings in a Time of Covid-19

The KTM&HC Garden House and the flower filled brick walled garden had been booked for many weddings and other events when the virus changed everything. Some brides changed the date of their wedding, some canceled it and some reduced the size to make the event compatible with Connecticut's outside/inside pandemic regulations.

The beautiful open garden and the obliging weather provided the perfect setting for several of these weddings. One such event was featured in the Sept/Oct Ridgefield Magazine. Mary Ann Connors, Director of Events for the Garden House did everything she could to accommodate these brides and their families at this difficult time. Her success is demonstrated by the several events that have been booked for 2021.

Changes to the Board

During the Annual Meeting the following members have been elected to join the KTM&HC Board of Directors.

Paul Schmidt has an extensive background in finance, history and music. His expertise will be a great addition to the Museum Board.

Christine Boris is a valuable member of the education staff assisting with school programs and chairs the Fall Party committee.

Diana Martin is a volunteer with experiences at MOMA and the NY Historical Society and will address KTM&HC visitor experiences.

Miriam Martinez will be KTM&HC's first board member tasked with address-

ing issues relating to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

Treasurer **Shen-Zhuang Chien** resigned for family reasons in 2019. We thank her for all the work she did organizing the KTM&HC's finances. Fortunately **John Wong** stepped up to replace her and has been serving as treasurer for several months. A welcome to John. His financial background is much appreciated.



A laptop view of the KTM&HC board



**Reservations are now being taken for future events!
Call the Museum at 203.438.5485 ext. 12**

152 Main Street, Ridgefield, Connecticut 06877
keelertavernmuseum.org

Holiday Boutique in the Carriage Barn



The Holiday Boutique has a new look, a

new location, and a new time frame. This year, the Boutique will be held Friday, November 13 to Sunday, November 22 daily from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. in KTM's historic Carriage Barn. You can get a head start on shopping for both Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Entering the barn, you will find both watercolor paintings and cards designed by Tina Phillips and her Founders Hall class of artists; cards by Ridgefield's Pat Scott as well as Paul Siegels' Main Street Prints. There will be fiction and historical fiction books by Ridgefield Authors, George Hancock, Keith Jones, Charles Pankenier, Jack Sanders, and a new book by Douglas Haynes. Ira Joe Fisher has a new poetry book and Peter Rose has a new cookbook. And, of course, we have books for children.

Crafters include Erica Askins' rosettes, handmade fair trade Christmas ornaments and felted Christmas stockings made by artisans from Nepal and India, hand loomed pillows by Chandler of Vermont, Marie Crai's hand knit gloves, hats and scarves, a unique Santa crafted by Karen Mc Chesney, Liz Mackie's quilted items, jewelry by Suzy Singer, Ridge-

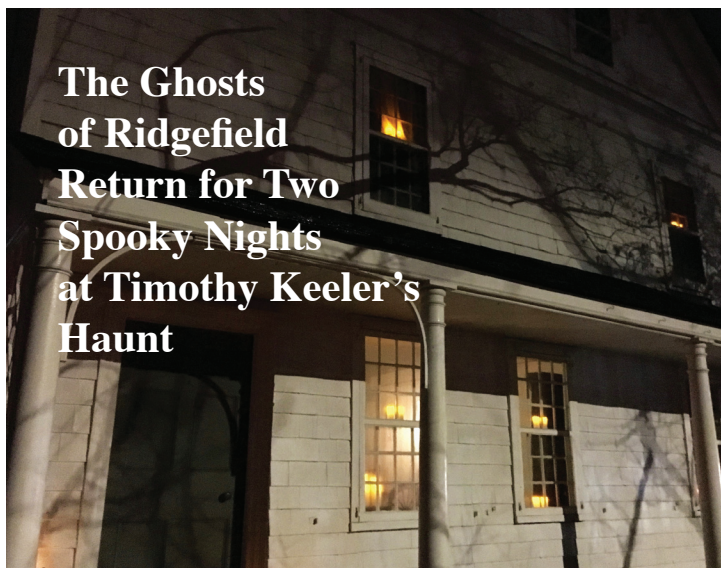
field painted signs by Carrie Warner, and even more surprise crafters.

Museum gifts include our famed KTM and Ridgefield Stoneware mugs, crocks, and wine chillers, our new KTM horse and rider socks, candles and accessories, hunt scene and waterfowl glass sets, Stonewall Kitchen jam and dessert sets, scarves, hostess sets, baby gifts, toys, Christmas decorations and more. And of course we have jigsaw puzzles, games, and bridge sets, as well as beautiful wireless crystal charging pads for your cell phones.

So join us and see for yourself the myriad of gifts for the whole family. You may shop safely, knowing that all Covid-19 protocols will be observed from face masks to social distancing, one-way flow with a maximum of eight customers at a time.

Margo McEachern, Museum Shop Manager

The Ghosts of Ridgefield Return for Two Spooky Nights at Timothy Keeler's Haunt



Keeler Tavern Museum & History Center is the site for the return of the Ghosts of Ridgefield, a guided walk of Timothy Keeler's Haunt, for two nights Friday, October 23 and Saturday, October 24.

Visitors will meet some of the ghosts of Ridgefield's past from across three centuries going back to its founding days in the early 1700s. These ghosts come from all walks of life, some wealthy and influential, others from the fringes of society. But all left their mark on our town's history and their stories live on forever. This is the time to hear their voices and meet them – in the flesh!

Appropriate for families with children ages 7+. Dress warmly, wear good shoes (we have uneven walkways), and plan to walk about 1 hour 15 minutes.

The charge is \$10 per person, regardless of age. The tours will go on unless there is a torrential rainstorm. Parking is located at 152 Main Street. Tickets and additional information can be found at our web site www.keelertavernmuseum.org. We hope to see you – if you dare!

2020 Museum Grants to Date

Anne S. Richardson Fund	\$75,000 (over 2 years)	Garden House North Entry Renovation
Ridgefield Thrift Shop	\$20,000	Gilbert Walking Tour Signage
CT Humanities/CARES ACT Relief Grant	\$10,000	General Operating Costs, Digital Platform
CT Humanities Quick Grant	\$4,950	Digital Platform for Virtual Programming
Society of the Cincinnati of CT	\$2,500	Widow's Walk on Tavern
Wadsworth Russell Lewis Trust Fund	\$2,000	Votes for Women brochure and Virtual Programming

Living with COVID-19

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a virtual July 4th celebration and a reprise of the Lamb Contest. Keeler Kids was offered remotely for three weeks in July and supplemented by outdoor family games on Wednesday afternoons. A special exhibit celebrating women's suffrage was on display in the carriage barn in a hybrid format strictly following COVID protocols. Another hybrid program was the staging of the play SISTERS for a majority livestreamed audience from as far away as New Zealand. Growing our audience reach beyond the geographic boundaries of Ridgefield has been one of the great silver linings of COVID-19. A series of very successful outdoor concerts dubbed Music at the Museum was offered in collaboration with the Ridgefield Symphony Orchestra on Sunday afternoons. And the Museum Shop offered curbside shopping and pick-up on Wednesday afternoons. We will continue to adapt and pivot to thrive in the age of COVID-19 by offering more online programs to a wider audience during the winter months when outdoor activities are limited.

Hildegard Grob, Executive Director

The Bridal Room

Refurnished



Through a generous donation from Ethan Allen Global, Inc. and the design skills of Marta Eriquez, Senior Director, Interior Design Creative Services at Ethan Allen the Museum's brides room has been redesigned, refurnished and installed at no cost to KTM&HC. In addition the hallway leading to the brides room has been re-wall papered to match. Shown are the newly designed room and hallway.

MEMBERSHIP

We welcome these new members to KTM&HC and look forward to meeting them at future events.

All membership have been extended for one year due to the pandemic.

Patricia Butler
Janet G. Ingraham
Karen Kopec
Lesley Lambton
Maryfrances Metrick
John M. Papa

Connie Fenton, Membership Chairman

TRUSTEES

The Trustees of the Museum's Endowment Fund meet four times a year, currently by Zoom, with the bank advisors to review the Museum's investments.

They are:

Rob Ellis
Elise Haas
Rhonda Hill
Hilary Micalizzi
John Papa
Phyllis Robertson (chair)
Joel Third
John Wong
Cheryl Patterson-Zaic



FASHION OF SUFFRAGE

Though they shared the same goal, suffragists disagreed when it came to women's clothing. Many women's rights activists were anti-fashion, claiming fashion was the acceptance of female oppression. Suffrage leader Elizabeth Cady Stanton believed fashion kept women from achieving their full potential and was a way to keep women subservient to men. Other suffragists followed the example of Susan B. Anthony, a stylish woman who followed the current trends in fashion and insisted on maintaining her femininity through dress. These women maintained that a woman did not have to mimic a man to achieve the same rights. No matter which side they stood on, this much is clear—suffragists used their clothing to communicate their message. Women were often encouraged to wear white in suffrage parades, suggesting the purity and high-mindedness of their goals. The clothing shown in the photo below are prime examples of what suffragists wore.

Karen McChesney, Costume Curator



Keeler Tavern Museum & History Center 2020 Calendar



For updates, please check the website <https://keelertavernmuseum.org/events/calendar/> and our social media Facebook, Instagram, Twitter.

October

Scarecrow Contest - vote by Oct. 31

November

Tavern Tastings, virtual chat, Nov. 5

SISTERS virtual talkback, Nov. 7

#HOH: It Takes a Village - thru Nov. 8

Holiday Boutique in the Barn, Nov. 13 - 22

Keeler Tavern



Museum
and History Center

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