Vision

To be the region’s preferred historic site for interpreting three centuries of lived experience and its larger meaning in the history of New England and the nation.

Mission

Keeler Tavern Museum and History Center (KTHC) is dedicated to assisting visitors, students, and scholars in understanding significant lives and events during the site’s 300-year history, including their meaning for citizenship and culture, now and in the future. We pursue this mission by preserving and protecting the museum’s physical and intellectual assets and sharing them with the widest possible audience, whether on our campus or through programs of outreach.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

People sometimes ask: what was it about Keeler Tavern Museum that drew you in as a volunteer more than 25 years ago? If memory can be trusted, I was attracted first by its historical importance to the town, and second by the fact that I could be part of a remarkable cultural asset.

Since that time, I have come to learn that it was the foresight and sacrifice of a handful of dedicated founders that brought this Ridgefield gem to life, and that it thrives through the dedication of its volunteer base and the generosity of its donors. With the benefit of 50 years of strong leadership, this institution has more than fulfilled its mission of preserving and protecting physical and intellectual assets while sharing timeless stories of citizenship and culture across three centuries.

As we begin our next half-century, the purchase of the red brick building at 152 Main Street promises to open an exciting new chapter in our history. This addition to our campus will enhance visitors’ experiences with a formal Visitor Center, including more expansive exhibit capacity, and additional (and much-needed) office space for our hard-pressed staff. It will also provide us with state-of-the-art archival space for our collection of artifacts.

In an era where many museums are contracting, we are growing to meet the expanding needs of our public and student visitors. Thank you all for your support of this wonderful treasure.

Hilary Micalizzi
President, Board of Directors

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

At our annual Cannonball Gala, we present the Anna Keeler Award for excellence in teaching history and civics using our site as a living classroom. The award is named for the youngest daughter of innkeepers Timothy and Esther, who defied female stereotypes of her time. As a young woman Anna taught and earned a salary—albeit modest, and a fraction of what male counterparts were paid. Later, she insisted on teaching her Irish immigrant maids how to read and write, perhaps motivated by a civic duty to help these girls assimilate into a new—and unwelcoming—society.

Our school programs are based on this premise: teaching local history is the best way to understand the meaning of national events. Through the lives of residents such as Anna Keeler, we can follow the thread of civic engagement that has enabled us to keep our republic vibrant for 230 years.

The chart on Page 3 shows the dramatic growth in students we are serving, drawn not only from Ridgefield, but from across Fairfield County. With the integration of 152 Main Street into our campus, we hope to double our student capacity by 2020. Our “faculty” of trained school docents make these programs possible, volunteering hours of time and untold energies.

Generous donors have supported reduced admission pricing and subsidized busing for hundreds of students from schools in underserved communities, such as Danbury and Bridgeport. Providing this experience to students from diverse backgrounds to help them understand the past as they build their own futures as citizens is very rewarding, and ultimately what KTHC is all about.

Hildegard M. Grob
Executive Director
Whether measured in student days, schools participating, program offerings, or professional regard, education in citizenship and culture continued to develop as a major strategic initiative for KTHC. Our collections provided primary source documents and artifacts as skilled docents led immersive, full-day programs on Colonial life, the Battle of Ridgefield, the Civil War, and Ridgefield’s Gilded Age, earning a growing area-wide reputation for educational excellence.

**KTHC School Programs by Grade Level**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM</th>
<th>PRE-K</th>
<th>1-3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5-6</th>
<th>7-8</th>
<th>9-12</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colonial Times: Esther’s Kitchen (Family Life); Timothy’s Tavern (Community Life)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colonial Times Extension Activities: Quill Pen Writing, Embroidery, Dancing, Tavern or Outdoor Games, Ice Harvesting, Farm Tools=STEM (18th C. &amp; 19th C. planting cycle and dairy farming), Ledgers=STEM (trade and barter transactions as the economic basis of early village life): Debate to join the Revolution</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Connections: The American Revolution</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Battle of Ridgefield</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Connections: The American Civil War</td>
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<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ridgefield during the Civil War</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Connections: The Gilded Age</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ridgefield, the Gilberts, and the Gilded Age</td>
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<td>Classroom Outreach: Colonial Keeler Tavern</td>
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<td>Classroom Outreach: The American Revolution and Ridgefield</td>
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<tr>
<td>Classroom Outreach: The Gilded Age and Ridgefield</td>
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<td>x</td>
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<tr>
<td>#HandsOnHistory: A rotating, interactive exhibition of Museum artifacts during the month of October</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
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</table>

*Esther’s Kitchen is all about Colonial family life, which includes learning about spices and herbs.*

*These 5th graders are practicing two lost arts: penmanship, and writing with a quill.*

*Our collection of Hartmann photographic plates provides today’s students with a portrait of lives in turn-of-the-century Ridgefield.*

*Ending a day-long immersion in the Gilded Age, 8th graders re-enacted Julia Gilbert’s Garden House receptions for departing doughboys.*
In the years ahead, the availability of our new Visitor Center will address one major challenge: sufficient classroom space, permitting us to accommodate more students from across the region, especially those from underserved Title I schools. And, we intend to expand the range of our offerings, including outreach programs in which we bring the Museum to the classroom, either as preparation for a visit, or as a stand alone learning experience. On campus or away, we will depend on committed and prepared individuals to join our “faculty,” where they will find a demanding but rewarding opportunity.

Moderated by Patriot Timothy Keeler, students debate whether or not to join the Revolution in the very same Assembly Room where the citizens of Ridgefield would have discussed this issue.

“This place is a treasure!”
– Ridgefield middle school teacher

“Thumbs up for history!” Generous donors have supported reduced admission pricing and subsidized busing for hundreds of students from schools in underserved communities.

KTHC school programs have tripled over the past three years.
The thousands of visitors to our campus each year come for a variety of reasons, drawn by the diversity and quality of our programs. Most have history at their core, although it may come wrapped in what can be described as diversion, or even entertainment that appeals to youngsters, families, and those old enough to have witnessed their share of history in person. What do we expect that they will take away? New insights into the meaning of citizenship in our American experience. In the words of noted author David McCullough: “History is who we are and why we are the way we are.”

At #HandsOnHistory, visitors could experience tools and techniques that years ago gave “farm-to-table” a very different meaning. The Holiday Art Show in the Carriage Barn featuring local artists has become a favorite with the public. The Phillip Burr Bradleys defended their History Trivia championship, capturing a second Fountain Trophy at our annual contest. Visitors to popular Lantern Light tours found our campus alive with characters from across three centuries, including a Halloween-themed party.
Visitors to popular Lantern Light tours found our campus alive with characters from across three centuries, including a Halloween-themed party.

Programs and events at KTHC throughout the year for all ages range from the town-wide reenactment of The Battle of Ridgefield, to the Reading of the Declaration of Independence on July 4th, Keeler Kids summer camp, the Barn Tag Sale, Scarecrow contest, and ’Twas the Night Before Christmas for families with young children, to name just a few.

“Wonderful historical experience…and knowledgeable guides with great stories to tell.”

– Visitor Review

“Twas the Night before Christmas for families with young children, to name just a few.
In FY 2016-17, KTHC’s income was stable, consistent with trends in recent years, and in contrast to many of our U.S. colleagues.

This is, in part, something of an irony: because we have historically received less than one percent of our operating funds from local, state, or federal sources (compared with the museum average of 24 percent), we are relatively unaffected by continuing significant reductions in government outlays for cultural institutions.

Our current financial situation requires well-above-average museum income earned from operations, which increased more than 15 percent from the prior year. Much of the growth is attributable to rentals of the Garden House, a sought-after venue for weddings and other celebrations. And we continue to rely on substantial income generated by our reserve to support our operations.

**Sources of Funds**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tr>
<td>Donations</td>
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<td>Education</td>
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<td>Fundraising</td>
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<td>Garden House Rental Income</td>
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<td>Grants</td>
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<td>Membership</td>
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<td>Other Programs and Events</td>
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<td>Reserve Withdrawal</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$473,523</strong></td>
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**Why a Reserve Matters**

Of the estimated 15,000 museums across the country—more than the number of McDonald’s—the vast majority operate at a deficit. So do we. That is one reason why professional groups advise non-profits to maintain a reserve that can support between 25 and 100 percent of annual operating expenses. We manage our own reserve so that it can reliably produce at least that minimum figure, year after year.

Moreover, while an art museum’s capital investments—acquiring a painting, or opening a new gallery—can be discretionary, a 300-year-old property’s failing roof or collapsing chimney are anything but. So, we perform a constant balancing act: sustaining reserve levels sufficient to generate essential operating income, drawing on principal as required to preserve a landmark, and pursuing once-in-a-generation opportunities.

“…can’t wait to tell everyone about a wedding day gem!” — A recent bridal couple
Expenses declined slightly in the fiscal year, even as the organization expanded education programming and staffing, maintained an active program calendar, and absorbed 12 months of carrying costs for the 152 Main Street building.

In part, this reflected a considerable reduction in Restoration expense, as we benefited from major capital investments in prior years, as well as a 28 percent decline in Administrative costs.

We will continue to treat 152 Main Street as a separate entity for accounting purposes, until such time as it has been fully integrated into our day-to-day operations.

### USES OF FUNDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<td>Collections</td>
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<td>Marketing</td>
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<td>Museum Restoration</td>
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<td>Operations</td>
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<td>Utilities</td>
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<td>152 Main Street Expenses</td>
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### SOURCES OF FUNDS

<table>
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<th>Source</th>
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<tr>
<td>Funding from KTM</td>
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<td>Rental Income</td>
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<td>Reserve Withdraw</td>
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### USES OF FUNDS

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<td>Ground Maintenance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>$6,735</td>
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During Fairfield County Gives in March, generous donors contributed enough in 24 hours to conserve these 19th century children’s party outfits.
More than just an historic landmark, Keeler Tavern Museum and History Center is a lively showcase, telling a sweeping, 300-year story... a window onto the American experience. Our plans for 152 Main Street will transform how we tell that story:

**A New Visitor Center** will also be dedicated to museum exhibition and classroom space as well as administrative offices.

**On-Demand Classroom Space:** Our strategic plan has education as its cornerstone, with one-of-a-kind learning experiences. Programs serving 80-90 pupils per day require multiple child-friendly spaces for rotating successive groups through learning stations.

**Ready Access to Documents and Artifacts:** The Visitor Center’s renovated basement level will provide a climate-controlled, secure and readily-accessible storage and work area for our archives and selected artifacts.

**Secure Exhibition Space:** With a well-designed, space-efficient exhibition area, we can expect visitors to return for multiple new experiences—an expansion of public service that is vital both to our mission and our financial sustainability.
This list recognizes the many people whose contributions are the heartbeat of KTHC, and which might take the form of finances, in-kind donations, volunteer energy—or all three. Capital contributions will be acknowledged separately in the near future.

### $10,000 and Over

Ms. Joan Payden ★

### $5,000 to $9,999

Olga B. Cohen Estate
Fairfield County Bank Corporation

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Union Savings Bank
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Mr. and Mrs. Robertson Bennett ★❤
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Mr. and Mrs. Doug Cushnie
Mr. and Mrs. Luke Daigle ★
Mr. and Mrs. Murray Darvick ★❤ continued
$100 to $499, continued

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Mrs. Sandra Dickinson ♥
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Mr. and Mrs. Jeff D’Onofrio
Dr. and Mrs. John Donovan ★ ★
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Mr. and Mrs. Fred Ernst ★
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Mr. and Mrs. Tom Fry ★ ★
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Mr. and Mrs. Brendan Gunderson
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Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Kelley, Jr. ★
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Mr. and Mrs. Tom Kozlark ★ ★
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Mr. and Mrs. Jeffrey Kruilwich ★
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Leavitt
Mr. and Mrs. Kurt Liddi ★ ★
Mrs. Joyce Ligi ★
Ms. Patricia Linnon ★ ★
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Mr. and Mrs. Gene Lutz ★ ★
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Mr. and Mrs. Robert Morris
Mr. and Mrs. Ron Mosiello ★ ★
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Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Mulvaney ★
Ms. Christina Nolan
Mr. and Mrs. John D. Noonan ★ ★
Mr. and Mrs. Gerald O’Hara
Mr. Sean O’Kane
Mr. and Mrs. George Orlan
Mr. and Mrs. Ronald Paltauf
Mr. and Mrs. Bart Pattie ★
Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas Perna ★
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Ms. Christina Phillips ★
Mr. and Mrs. John Pinchbeck ★ ★
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Mr. Charles Prescott and Ms. Shen-Zhuang Chien ★
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Mr. and Mrs. James Prusko
Mr. John Queirolo
Mr. and Mrs. Charles Reardon ★
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Ms. Kathy Richards
Ridgefield Independent Film Festival
Ridgefield Chapter, National Charity League ★
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Ms. Mary Ruggiero ♥
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Mrs. Raelene Ali ★
Ms. Arlan Anderson
Mr. and Mrs. Michael Anderson
Ms. Sue Bankes ★ ★
Ms. Julia Post Bastedo ✽
Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Beck
Ms. Ellen Becker ★
Mr. and Mrs. Randy Black ✽
Mr. and Mrs. Brian Bligh ★
Ms. Carol Anne Bootle ★
Mr. and Mrs. Donald Bostwick ★ ★
Mr. Thomas Broderick ★
Mr. and Mrs. Jeff Burns
Dr. Barbara Christen ★
Mr. Donald Ciota ★
Ms. Barbara Cmiel ★ ★
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Ms. Lisa Cooper
Mr. and Mrs. John Couri ★
Mr. and Mrs. Richard Crai ★
Mr and Mrs. Charlie Creamer ★
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Back cover: A drone’s eye view of the more expansive KTHC campus.