

Keeler Tavern



Museum
and History Center

152



Annual Report 2016 – 2017

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*Seated (l to r): Pat Stephens, Hilary Micalizzi, Elise Haas.
Standing (l to r): Phyllis Robertson, Charlie Pankenier, Teri Fischer, Rhonda Hill,
Cheryl Crowl, Karen McChesney, Constance Fenton, Joel Third, Margo McEachern.*

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.



*Seven former presidents joined to celebrate the Museum's 50th anniversary in 2016
(l to r): Elise Haas, Pat Stephens, Kam Daughters, Clara Horaj, Carol Vazzana,
Cheryl Crowl, Joel Third.*

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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.

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.

KTHC School Programs by Grade Level

PROGRAM	PRE-K, K	1-3	4	5-6	7-8	9-12
Colonial Times: Esther's Kitchen (Family Life); Timothy's Tavern (Community Life)	X	X	X	X		
Colonial Times Extension Activities: Quill Pen Writing, Embroidery, Dancing, Tavern or Outdoor Games, Ice Harvesting, Farm Tools=STEM (18 th C. & 19 th 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	X	X	X	X		
National Connections: The American Revolution <i>The Battle of Ridgefield</i>				X	X	X
National Connections: The American Civil War <i>Ridgefield during the Civil War</i>				X	X	X
National Connections: The Gilded Age <i>Ridgefield, the Gilberts, and the Gilded Age</i>					X	X
Classroom Outreach: Colonial Keeler Tavern	X	X	X	X		
Classroom Outreach: The American Revolution and Ridgefield				X	X	X
Classroom Outreach: The Civil War and Ridgefield				X	X	X
Classroom Outreach: The Gilded Age and Ridgefield					X	X
#HandsonHistory: A rotating, interactive exhibition of Museum artifacts during the month of October	X	X	X	X	X	X



Ending a day-long immersion in the Gilded Age, 8th graders re-enacted Julia Gilbert's Garden House receptions for departing doughboys.

EDUCATION NEXT

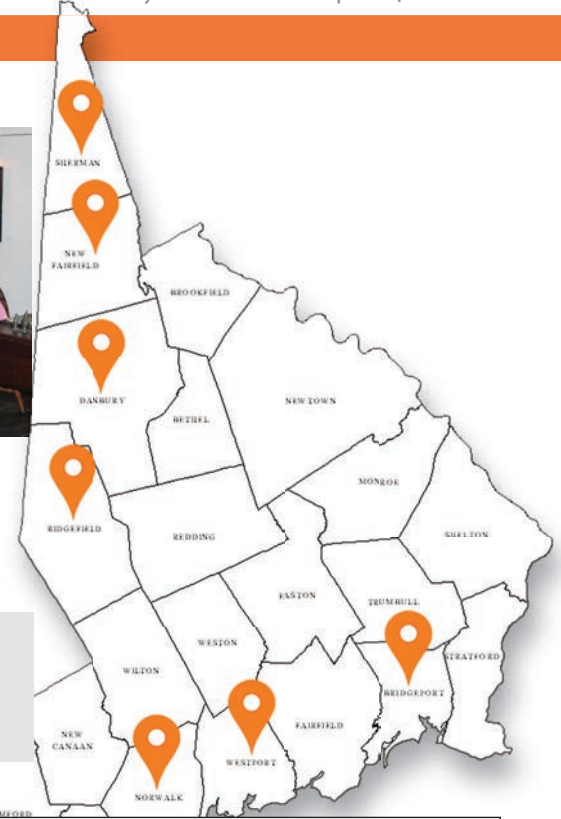
In the years ahead, the availability of our new Visitor Center will address one major challenge: sufficient classroom space, permitting us to accommodate more students from across the region, especially those from underserved Title I schools. And, we intend to expand the range of our offerings, including 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.



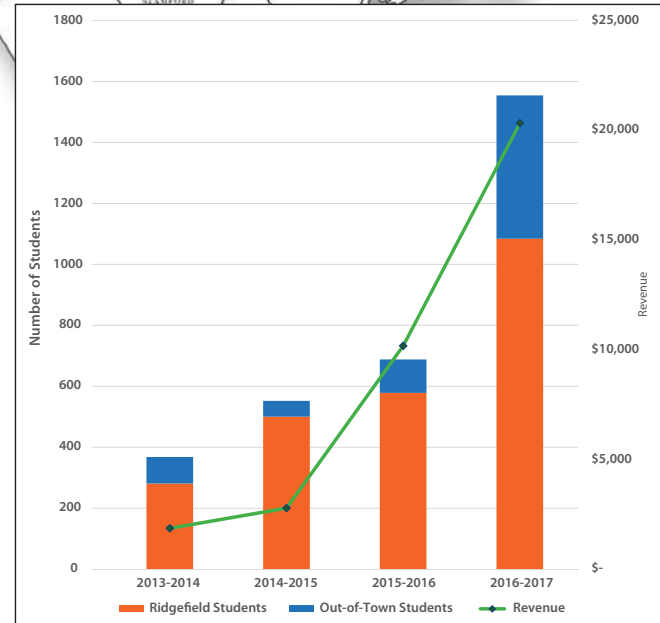
Moderated by Patriot Timothy Keefer, students debate whether or not to join the Revolution in the very same Assembly Room where the citizens of Ridgefield would have discussed this issue.

“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."



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.



At #HandsOnHistory, visitors could experience tools and techniques that years ago gave "farm-to-table" a very different meaning





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

– Visitor Review



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.



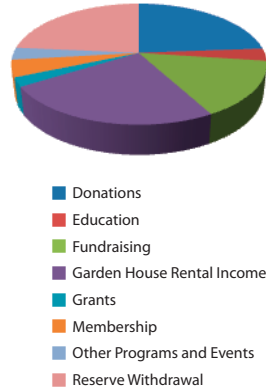
In FY 2016-17, KTHC's income was stable, consistent with trends in recent years, and in contrast to many of our U.S. colleagues.

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.

SOURCES OF FUNDS

(net of expenses)

Donations	\$ 112,782
Education	\$ 15,671
Fundraising	\$ 70,464
Garden House	
Rental Income	\$ 114,545
Grants	\$ 11,503
Membership	\$ 21,391
Other Programs	
and Events	\$ 15,513
Reserve Withdrawal	\$ 111,655
	<hr/>
	\$ 473,523



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.

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

USES OF FUNDS

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

Collections	\$ 3,931
Marketing	\$ 38,044
Museum Restoration	\$ 30,087
Operations	\$ 356,784
General Administration:	\$ 41,701
Insurance:	\$ 28,212
Personnel:	\$217,141
Repair & Maintenance:	\$ 44,630
Utilities:	\$ 25,100
152 Main Street Expenses	\$ 44,677
	\$ 473,523



During Fairfield County Gives in March, generous donors contributed enough in 24 hours to conserve these 19th century children's party outfits.

152 MAIN STREET PROPERTY

SOURCES OF FUNDS

Funding from KTM	\$ 44,677
Rental Income	\$ 19,225
Reserve Withdraw	\$ 26,428
	\$ 90,330

USES OF FUNDS

FCB Loan Interest	\$ 40,483
Ground Maintenance	\$ 2,747
Property Tax	\$ 17,605
Repair & Maintenance	\$ 3,350
Site Development	\$ 19,411
Utilities	\$ 6,735
	\$ 90,330

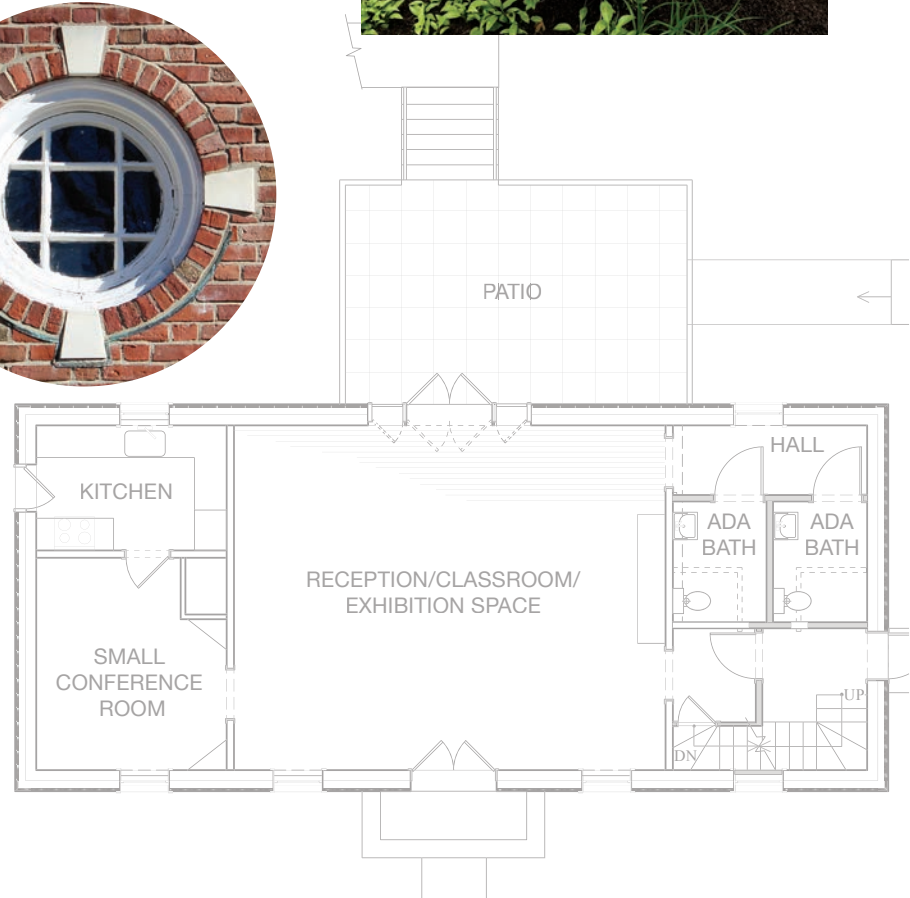
More than just an historic landmark, Keeler Tavern Museum and History Center is a lively showcase, telling a sweeping, 300-year story... a window onto the American experience. Our plans for 152 Main Street will transform how we tell that story:

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.



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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.

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What Your Gift Can Do

Contributions from our friends and supporters are critical, because we receive no federal, state, or local government support for operations, and rely on donations and fundraising for nearly 40 percent of our operating budget. Here is how your gift can make a difference:

\$5,000 A portion of our Education Director's salary

\$2,500 Restoration of two 18th-century double-hung windows on the Tavern building

\$1,000 Restoration of 76 square feet of historic brick walkway

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\$500 Two family workshops for #HandsOnHistory, our month-long look at Ridgefield's village life

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- Go to our secure donation page
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It will, if you join others in remembering KTHC in your estate planning. Your legacy gift means that new generations will benefit from a one-of-a-kind window on three centuries of our citizenship and culture and their lasting relevance. Contact our Executive Director Hildi Grob (203-438-5485 or hgrob@keelertavernmuseum.org) to discuss how your bequest can help make history.

Back cover: A drone's eye view of the more expansive KTHC campus.



Keeler Tavern  Museum
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