



Annual Report 2020 - 2021



From left to right: Joel Third, Patty Linnon, Paula Curry, Karen McChesney, Diana Martin, Hilary Micalizzi, Sara Champion, Rhonda Hill, Sarah Baudendistel, Jenn Hansen, Phyllis Robertson, and Paul Schmidt. Missing are Christine Boris and Elise Haas.

Vision

To be the region's preferred historic site for interpreting centuries of lived experiences and their larger meaning in the history of New England and the nation.

Mission

The Keeler Tavern Museum & History Center:

1. Explores the site's lives and events and the insights they provide into centuries of our national experience, and
2. Interprets their contemporary relevance for our shared citizenship and civic culture.

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.

Board

Rhonda Hill	President
Sara Champion	1st Vice President
Christine Boris	2nd Vice President/Governance
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Paul Schmidt	Treasurer
Hilary Micalizzi	Past President/Trustee Chair
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Joel Third	
Phyllis Robertson	
Diana Martin	
Elise Haas	
Jenn Hansen	
Sarah Baudendistel	
Paula Curry	

Staff

Hildegard Grob	Executive Director
Catherine Prescott	Assistant Museum Director & Chief Curator
Mary Ann Connors	Director of Private Events & Rentals
Melissa Houston	Director of Education
Erica Askin	Curator of Collections
Katie Burton	Head of Communications & Grants
Mandy Wall	Visitor Services Coordinator
John Bradley	Museum Interpreter
Roger Keller	Caretaker



In March 2021, Board President Rhonda Hill accepted a grant from Ridgefield Thrift Shop volunteer Christina Nolan to support the purchase of conservation-quality mannequins to properly exhibit KTM&HC’s collection of historic garments.

LETTER FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

Looking back on the 2020-21 fiscal year, the word “change” resonates. The pandemic created instantaneous and unwanted change. But it also made clear the importance of museums: museums as community gathering spaces; museums as places to learn and process; and museums as crucial economic drivers for their towns, their regions, and their states. Our board, staff, and volunteers have gone above and beyond to ensure KTM&HC maintained – and expanded – its important place in the lives of our audiences.

The changing conditions of the pandemic encouraged us to develop new approaches, like pivoting to virtual offerings and expanding the use of our campus. We developed new programs, like the virtual “Tavern Tastings” series and guided outdoor walking tours, and changed existing events, like moving the Holiday Boutique to the Carriage Barn and turning the Spring Gala into a Gala-to-Go. Many of these

changes proved popular and will continue after COVID protocols disappear.

Recent national and international events have reminded us of the importance of engaging in meaningful, respectful discussion, especially when the topics are uncomfortable. Keeler Tavern’s colonial-era origin was as a place of discourse and debate, and therefore it is clearly KTM&HC’s role today to enable and encourage these discussions, connecting them to our past to work toward a better future. Part of our emphasis on change has been, and continues to be, increasing opportunities for such dialogue.

I’m grateful for the continued support received from our members and donors, even when our doors were closed. We worked hard throughout the year to secure CARES Act funding in the form of grants and loans. Through these contributions, KTM&HC has

been able to continue to employ our top-notch staff, maintain and preserve our site, and expand our virtual offerings.

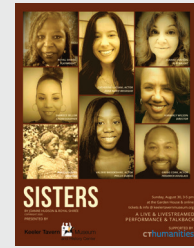
At the end of our fiscal year, in accordance with our bylaws, three dedicated, long-term members of the Board rotated off: another big change. We thank Cheryl Crowl (past president, guide trainer, cookie lady), Connie Fenton (membership chair, garden committee chair, shopkeeper), and Margo McEachern (gift shop manager, boutique manager, and volunteer extraordinaire) for their years of service and are grateful that they are continuing to help us in many and varied ways.

Looking ahead, change will continue to be a theme of KTM&HC, as we grow and expand our platform. I hope you will continue to be part of the journey!

Rhonda

Rhonda Hill, Board President

KTM&HC won two prestigious awards – the Award of Merit from the Connecticut League of History Organizations (CLHO) and the Leadership in History Award of Excellence from the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) – for SISTERS, a multi-program, interdisciplinary project about the complicated relationship between Phillis DuBois, a Black woman, and Anna Marie Resseguie, a white woman, who lived at our site in the nineteenth century. Staff adapted the project halfway through implementation as the pandemic struck, shifting in-person programs to widely attended virtual events.



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In a year that brought more challenges than anyone could have anticipated, Keeler Tavern Museum & History Center proved its resilience, relevance, and resolution. We have emerged as a stronger institution with a greater sense of purpose and direction, and this year's annual report reflects how we adapted and innovated to ensure KTM&HC continued to deliver on our humanities mission.

Our operations and budget were significantly impacted by the pandemic. All indoor activities, including tours, school programs, public programs, and events, stopped in March 2020 and staff shifted to remote work. The lack of in-person/on-site activities resulted in an almost fifty percent drop in income for FY 2020-2021, and pandemic relief funding,

though helpful, only offset revenue loss by half and left us with loans to be repaid.

In the face of uncertainty and stress, however, our team pivoted and found creative solutions. After the initial visitation loss, our school and public programming staff rebuilt, maintained, and even expanded audiences by quickly creating and implementing outdoor, hybrid, and virtual offerings. Interactive virtual learning field trips for students and collaborative public virtual program series such as "Tavern Tastings" were livestreamed from our historic tavern. In the wake of national racial justice protests last summer, we launched the "Let's Talk Hard History!" public program series, bringing panelists and audiences from a wide geographic area together over Zoom to discuss race and privilege in present-day

America using our site's history. In the spring, we celebrated Ridgefield's designation as the first Cultural District in Connecticut: our site anchors the southern edge of the District and emphasizes the humanities' importance as an economic driver. We were thrilled to resume tours and in-person events in June 2020, and by the end of June saw record-breaking attendance and revenue numbers.

Looking forward, we are developing an exciting five-year strategic vision focused on capacity-building, relevance, inclusivity, and accessibility. Fueled by decisions made during the 2020-2021 FY, our four priorities for the coming year are: reinterpretation; board development; physical campus integration and wayfinding; and the integration of a new customer relationship management system. I am deeply appreciative of the support KTM&HC received from the staff, board, and volunteers during this past year. Rhonda's steady leadership and understanding of change management has helped us weather this storm successfully.

Hildegard Grob, Executive Director



Executive Director Hildegard Grob joined Governor Ned Lamont as he announced Ridgefield's Cultural District designation in April 2021.

FINANCES

Fiscal Year 2021 financial results reflect both the impact of COVID-19 and the continued evolution of our programs. Public sector grants and loans (some of which do not require repayment) helped to fund operations, and strong financial markets enabled us to limit our use of investment income to about 3.5% of our investment portfolio. Maintenance of our campus buildings and grounds, as well as preservation of our collections, continued throughout the year, and we were able to invest over \$150,000 in facility improvements.

While the pandemic limited some of our traditional program and education activities, we continue to develop alternative programs (e.g., virtual experiences and self-guided tours) and expand our education outreach. Generous funding has supported these initiatives and we expect further growth in Fiscal Year 2022 and beyond.

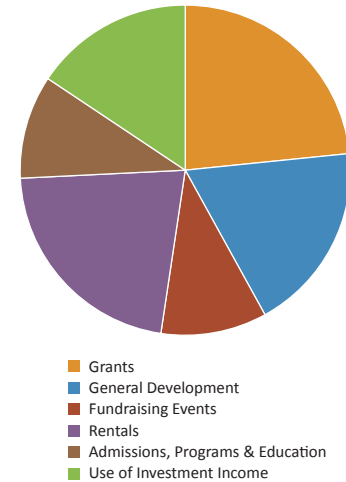
Continuing our objective of becoming a major regional history center and helping to anchor Ridgefield's newly designated Cultural District will require continued financial support. KTM&HC is a completely independent organization and receives no recurring financial support from public sources. We are grateful for the generous support of members, friends, and the community at large and look forward to working with everyone as we pursue an exciting future together.



The financial results charted here are for operations only and exclude overall investment activity, the Capital Campaign, capital expenses, and related depreciation.

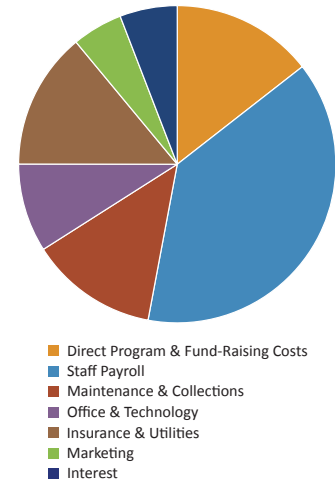
SOURCES OF OPERATIONAL SUPPORT

Grants	\$121,440
General Development	96,488
Fundraising Events	53,923
Rentals	113,480
Admissions, Programs & Education	52,634
Use of Investment Income	81,194
Total	\$437,964



OPERATIONAL EXPENSES

Direct Program & Fund-Raising Costs	\$ 70,888
Staff Payroll	188,744
Maintenance & Collections	63,918
Office & Technology	44,281
Insurance & Utilities	68,490
Marketing	25,281
Interest	28,712
Total	\$437,964





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1. Interpreter Olivia Berenson and Chief Curator Catherine Prescott led tours at the museum's reopening in June 2021.
2. Visitors enjoyed an outdoor concert at one of 2020's Music at the Museum events, an annual collaboration with the Ridgefield Symphony Orchestra.
3. Children visiting the award-winning #HandsOnHistory exhibit in October 2020 talked with Chief Curator Catherine Prescott about the interdependency of farms, families, and businesses across Ridgefield's history.
4. Jay Steele, longtime KTM&HC member, proudly showed off his gingerbread house, complete with cannonball stuck in the corner post, in December 2020.
5. Director of Education Melissa Houston, livestreaming from the Keeler Tavern, taught students from afar with interactive virtual learning programs that were supported by a grant from Connecticut Humanities.



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6. From left to right: Don Sturges of Sturges Brothers, Inc.; Chief Curator Catherine Prescott; Executive Director Hildegard Grob; Todd Levine, CT State Historic Preservation Office, CT Department of Economic & Community Development; First Selectman Rudy Marconi; and architect Sean O'Kane of Sean O'Kane AIA Architect PC marked the completion of the Collections Storage Research Facility, partially funded by a Connecticut state grant.
7. Our annual spring gala fundraiser became a Gala to Go, with ticket holders picking up packaged catered meals and participating in online programming. The gala committee, from left to right: Felicia Paduano, Christine Boris, Hilary Micalizzi, Mary Ann Connors, Rhonda Hill, Cheryl Crawl, and Kam Daughters.
8. The newly restored North Entrance of the Garden House in May 2021. In addition to improving the accessibility of the entrance, the project included the installation of a new glass roof, railings, and lighting, thanks to the generous support of an Anne S. Richardson preservation grant.



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9. Sara Hansen, in character as Max, King of the Wild Things from Maurice Sendak's beloved *Where the Wild Things Are*, at Ghosts of Ridgefield 2020.
10. Mark Blandford and Don Daughters ring in the Fourth of July celebration and Watermelon Fest in summer 2020.
11. Visitors came for seasonal gifts, décor, crafts, chutney, and more at the annual Holiday Boutique, which took place in the Carriage Barn to adapt to pandemic-era social distancing protocols.
12. Connie Fenton, head of the gardening committee, in the historic walled garden in April 2021.

This list recognizes the many people whose contributions are the heartbeat of KTM&HC, and which might take the form of finances, in-kind donations, volunteer energy—or all three. All gifts acknowledged here were received between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021. If your employer matched your donation, and/or you paid for membership, your name appears in the category that captures the combined total. Payments to the capital campaign made during the fiscal year are also reflected in these totals. Please direct corrections to the Museum office.

\$20,000 and Up

Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Foundation
 Anne S. Richardson Fund
 Connecticut Humanities
 Joan A. Payden

\$10,000 to \$19,999

Cheryl and Christopher Crowl
 Anita and Nick Donofrio
 Greg Jensen
 Fairfield County Bank

\$5,000 to \$9,999

Christine and Jeff Boris
 Robert Ellis
 Liz and Steven Goldstone
 Rhonda Hill
 Christine and Philip Lodewick
 Mary Ellen and Denis Loncto
 M&T Charitable Foundation

Sue Manning
 Brian and Diana Martin
 Hilary and Frank Micalizzi
 Lori and Walter Seibert Jr.
 Allison and Jon Stockel
 Joel Third
 Terry McManus and Brian Truskowski

\$1,000 to \$4,999

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 Laurice and Douglas D. Haynes
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 Miriam Martinez and Roger Restaino
 Margo McEachern
 Susanne McNelis
 Montanari Fuel Service Inc

Judi and Charlie Pankenier
 Ridgefield Rotary Club
 Ridgefield Thrift Shop, Inc.
 Phyllis and John Robertson
 Mrs. F. F. Randolph Jr.
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 Tina and Don Sturges
 Taylor-Zemo Foundation
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 Wadsworth Russell Lewis Trust Fund
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 Karen and James Wylie

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 William Beckwith
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 O'HDesign3 ★
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 Felicia Paduano ★♥
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Jackson Carter (center), a recent graduate of Ridgefield High School, was the recipient of the 2021 Bettie Jane Third Memorial Scholarship. Here, he posed with Chief Curator Catherine Prescott (left) and Board Member Joel Third (right).

Up to \$100

Ralph Ablon 🍷
 Lana Afanasieva
 Laura Agisim ★
 John Agnello
 Lynn Alexander
 Raelene Ali ★
 Susan Altorfer
 James and Joyce Andersen ★
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 Catherine and Graeme Lipper
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Matching Gift Companies

Chevron Corporation
 GE Foundation
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 IBM International Foundation/
 Matching Gifts
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Tribute Gifts

In memory of Jeanne M. Cook:
 Phyllis and John Robertson
In memory of Chris Crowl:
 Phyllis and John Robertson
In memory of Murray Darvick:
 Temi Bova
 Anna and Ted Cleveland
 Mary Kaletta
 Margo McEachern
 Judi Pankenier
In memory of Eileen Linnon:
 Margo McEachern
In memory of Maria Maley:
 Margo McEachern
In memory of Charlie Pankenier:
 Georgia Carrington and Rebecca
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 Mary Ann and John Connors
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Margo McEachern
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 Derrick Meyer
 Nancy Meyer
 Kathy and Robert Moriarty
 Phyllis and John Robertson
 Terrie Roese
 Patricia Swift
 Marylou Worrall

In memory of Leo Plum:

William Beckwith
 George Black
 Aileen and Joe Egan
 James Sias
 Patricia and Stephen Steinour
 Steven Walsh

In honor of Hilary Micalizzi:

Lauren Mariani

In honor of Joel Third:

Kathy Graham

Friends Lost

We note with sadness the passing of the following friends:

Henry Boucher
 Charlie Creamer
 Murray Darvick
 David and Anita Daubenspeck
 Barry Fisher
 Dorothy Hall
 Eileen Linnon
 Maria Maley
 Charlie Pankenier
 John Pinchbeck
 Leo Plum
 Violet Scala
 Dee Strilowich
 Kay and Ed Van Den Ameele
 Joan Williams
 Mary Lee Wolf

“Our families and communities are more connected when we have a shared understanding of our history, which is why museums and historical societies are so important. Keeler Tavern Museum & History Center is a historic landmark and a state treasure. I’m pleased that federal funding ensures the Keeler Tavern [Museum] keeps its doors open for years to come.”

- Congressman Jim Himes

Keeler Tavern  Museum
and History Center

