



Annual Report 2021 - 2022



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
Patty Linnon	Secretary
Paul Schmidt	Treasurer
Hilary Micalizzi	Past President/Trustee Chair
Karen McChesney	
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
Erika Askin	Curator of Collections
Katie Burton	Head of Communications & Grants
Ishaar Gupta	Operations Associate
Mandy Wall	Visitor Services Coordinator
John Bradley	Museum Interpreter
Roger Keller	Caretaker

In September 2021, KTM&HC Board President Rhonda Hill gathered with community leaders to officially unveil the Gilbert Walking Tour interpretive signage, which was generously underwritten by the Ridgefield Thrift Shop. From left to right: KTM&HC Executive Director Hildegard Grob; Ridgefield Arts Council member Amy Hall Casey; Ridgefield Economic and Community Development Commission member Susan Gessner; Ridgefield First Selectman Rudy Marconi; KTM&HC Chief Curator Catherine Prescott; Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum Executive Director Cybele Malone; KTM&HC Board President Rhonda Hill; Ridgefield Arts Council members Andrew Okrongly and Joseph Collin; and Ridgefield Thrift Shop President Patricia Hellman.



LETTER FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

Much energy has been dedicated this year to the reinterpretation of KTM&HC's history and to installing "back office" systems that enable better and more efficient processes to do the work that supports the museum – lots of changes, all with the goal of continuing to provide relevant and meaningful programming and education for our regional community.

This is nothing new for the Board of Directors. Through the years, each has worked to create a museum space that encourages visitors to learn about history. Changes through the years have laid the foundation for the work done in this past fiscal year. At the end of this June, five long-term directors retired from their tenure on the Board, and it is appropriate that I remind our members of some of the highlights of their contributions.

Karen McChesney was a member of the inaugural Board of Directors. She supported the vision for the organization and from the beginning has helped share KTM&HC's treasures with visitors through the exhibits that she arranged.

Elise Haas was the driving force behind the construction of the brick building that serves as an entrance to the historic Garden

House. The addition of that building provided restrooms, a dressing room, and a kitchen to support activities in the lovely Garden House. Elise was also critical to creating *A View from the Inn*, which brings Anna Marie Resseguie's diary to life and provides the basis of many of the stories we still tell today.

When Phyllis Robertson joined the Board, she recognized that KTM&HC was not sustainable without additional fundraising. She created the long-running Antiques and Treasures sale, chaired the Christmas Luncheons for over 30 years, and started Colonial Days, Camp for Kids (now Keeler Kids), and the Spring Gala. These activities have added hundreds of thousands of dollars to our treasury over the years, allowing our organization to grow.

Joel Third presided during a major restoration and improvement period, when significant work was done on every building on the campus. He also oversaw the purchase of the 152 Main Street lot, reuniting the site to the original Keeler property, and transformed the site's building from the former Cass Gilbert Library into the Visitor Center, business offices, and state-of-the-art archival spaces.

Hilary Micalizzi combined her love of history and creativity with impressive organizational

skills, creating annual programs such as the American Doll teas, 'Twas the Night Before Christmas, Polar Express, the WWI 100th anniversary celebration, and the Scarecrow Contest. She also brought the popular Ghosts of Ridgefield tours to their new home at KTM&HC and has been instrumental in providing quality programs to our community.

The people who left the Board at the end of this fiscal year provide great examples of how KTM&HC has evolved. Each built on what others had done and expanded and grew the programs and the stories we tell. I am confident that, when we look back on today, we will understand how the organization built on the foundation that they laid, continuing to grow and provide relevant programs for our audiences.

It has been my sincere privilege and honor to serve as the KTM&HC Board president these last three years. I know I am leaving it in better hands with Sara Champion as our new president.

Rhonda

Rhonda Hill, Board President

Throughout Fiscal Year 2022, KTM&HC staff and volunteers have been working on a major reinterpretation project, funded by a significant grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. As part of the project, the team – with the guidance of consultant Shannon Burke – conceptualized, developed, and prototyped a new tour. “War at Home” examines the Battle of Ridgefield from the perspective of the members of the Keeler household, including the experiences of Timothy and Esther Keeler and Betty Isaac. At right, interpreter Olivia Berenson leads a focus group of the tour – one of the ways we sought and incorporated feedback from the community.



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In Fiscal Year 2022, our world – and our museum – continued adjusting to the impacts of 2020: the pandemic public health crisis, the Black Lives Matter movement, and the contested elections. With these history-making moments in mind, we reassessed old assumptions, conventional narratives, and customary practices to chart KTM&HC’s “new normal.” We embarked on several initiatives across our organization that continue as priorities today.

With the support of a National Endowment for the Humanities grant, we began a major reinterpretation project, reimagining more inclusive, representative storytelling and building deeper commitment to diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion (DEAI). We identified themes and strategies to connect audiences, collections, the site, and our former residents’ stories in a cohesive and engaging narrative. Following museum best practices, we were

transparent about our journey and incorporated genuine community engagement, helping visitors know to expect critical thinking and discussion at our site.

To provide institutional foundations to support our reinterpretation, we spent time refining governance and undergoing board development – the latter generously underwritten by a grant from Connecticut Humanities. To grow and thrive, we must invest in our internal practices. The renewed emphasis on creating intentional governance and board practices has been a rewarding and clarifying effort.

This prioritization of strengthening our infrastructure took two other forms in FY22: installing a new digital platform for data processing and customer management, and a physical campus project. For the former, we adopted Altru, a platform that allows us to centralize, simplify, and make more efficient the work we do to manage information at our museum. Several staff and board members

underwent months of training to learn the new system and better configure our operational practices, with great results.

Additionally, and again in conjunction with our interpretive emphasis on DEAI, in FY22 we developed the master plan for our ambitious physical campus integration and accessibility project. These are both stated goals of our Capital Campaign launched in 2016 for the purchase of 152 Main Street. The master plan addresses driveways, parking, walkways, lighting, landscaping, and signage: elements that will make KTM&HC more welcoming and accessible for all visitors.

And finally, in FY22 we continued to look to the future, strategizing about how to best build lasting community partnerships and engage audiences in conversations about America’s upcoming 250th anniversary. We’re excited to move forward with the support of our staff, board, and volunteers. A special thank you to Rhonda Hill, whose board presidency during FY22 was crucial to our recovery and will leave a lasting impression for years to come.

Handwritten signature of Hildegard Grob.

Hildegard Grob, Executive Director



KTM&HC Executive Director Hildegard Grob and Thrown Stone Theatre Company Co-Artistic Director Jonathan Winn pose at the start of the “Suburbs” roving theater production, held in the KTM&HC historic walled garden, in September 2021.

FINANCES

In FY22, our operating expenses were about \$300,000 higher than the prior year – and that’s good news! Those increased expenses reflect our return to “normal operations” as well as some important transformations in how we fulfill our mission. We brought staffing back up to pre-pandemic levels and added part-time positions thanks to grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and Connecticut Humanities. We also committed to providing more diverse and robust programs, and we caught up with important maintenance initiatives.

We’re fortunate to have a variety of revenue sources – most of which have increased year over year – to support our efforts. Thank you to our donors, members, and grant funders who have helped us recover, grow, and thrive! In addition to revenue generated by ticketed events, we’ve been able to take advantage of a number of grants: the CT Summer at the



Museum grant that provided free admission all summer to Connecticut kids is a great example of this. Grants can be unpredictable in timing and amount, but we have solid relationships with grantors, allowing us to better plan.

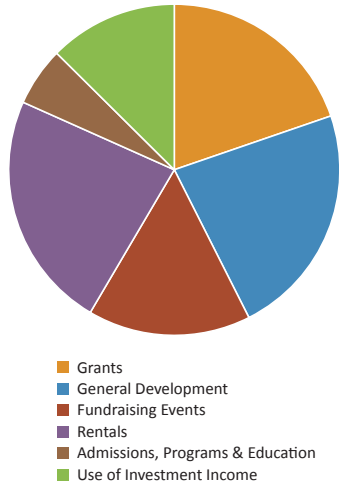
We do rely on investment income to cover our operating costs, while closely monitoring market volatility.

Looking to FY23, we’ve adopted a budget sim-

ilar to last year’s and are on track to maintain that. We’re excited to continue with a strong emphasis on reinterpretation and capacity-building, improving how we tell stories and serve our communities’ needs.

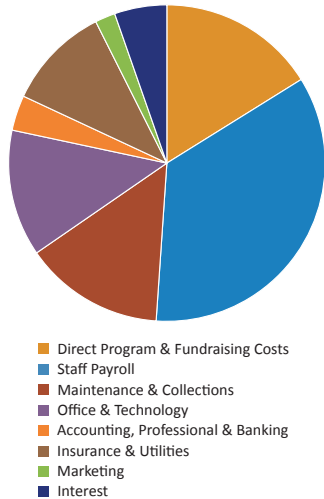
SOURCES OF OPERATIONAL SUPPORT

Grants	\$157,893
General Development	182,649
Fundraising Events	127,336
Rentals	185,746
Admissions, Programs & Education	45,969
Use of Investment Income	100,597
Total	<hr/> \$800,190



OPERATIONAL EXPENSES

Direct Program & Fundraising Costs	\$129,152
Staff Payroll	279,610
Maintenance & Collections	114,531
Office & Technology	103,630
Accounting, Professional & Banking	28,825
Insurance & Utilities	85,127
Marketing	16,527
Interest	42,788
Total	<hr/> \$800,190



The financial results charted here are for operations only and exclude overall investment activity, Capital Campaign contributions, and capital investments in property and equipment.



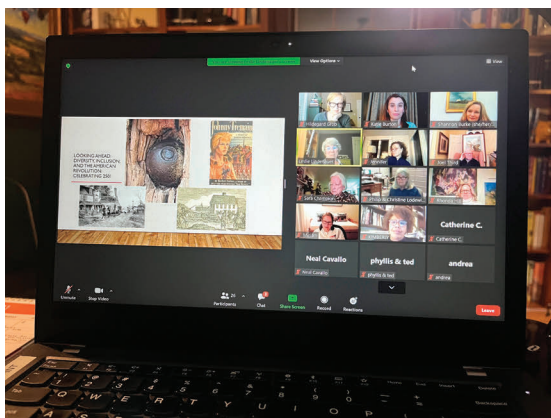
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1. KTM&HC Chief Curator Catherine Prescott, volunteer Vincent Conyers, and Curator of Exhibitions Karen McChesney welcome the first visitors to the *Tying the Knot: Ridgefield Weddings in the 20th Century* exhibit in October 2021.
2. At the May 2022 Gala – a major fundraising success for KTM&HC – guests Phillip and Christine Lodewick and Dan Sheehan enjoy dinner in the beautiful walled garden.
3. Director of Education Melissa Houston leads the “Colonial Life” school program for Ridgefield fourth graders in April 2022.
4. Students get ready for a fun day of programs at KTM&HC in May 2022. We were so excited to welcome students back onsite after a long hiatus due to the pandemic!
5. Dr. Leslie Lindenauer, professor of history from Western Connecticut State University, presents her site history to KTM&HC stakeholders in November 2021. Her research helped identify areas for interpretation and research that have informed our reinterpretation project.
6. Volunteer and school docent Beth Hancock demonstrates sachet-making to students in an April 2022 program.
7. Volunteer Hilary Micalizzi runs the popular Barn Tag Sale in the historic carriage barn, held in late March.
8. Attendees fill the historic garden for the September 2021 opening night of “Suburbs,” Thrown Stone Theatre Company’s innovative outdoor roving theater production.
9. We were excited to present highschooler Sara Hansen with the Bettie Jane Third Scholarship in May for her volunteerism at KTM&HC. Pictured: Joel Third and Sara Hansen.
10. Paula Curry and John Bradley, both KTM&HC interpreters, provide tours for visitors of all ages – even in snowy February!
11. Actor Gregg Cork portrays historic Ridgefield figure Ned Armstrong at the second annual Ghosts of Ridgefield in October 2021. These specialty tours highlight notable individuals in local history – and sell out every year!
12. At the 28th annual Cannonball Gala, held in May 2022, we honored Joel Third for his many contributions to KTM&HC over the years.
13. In August 2021, KTM&HC staff and board members listen to restoration specialist Jan Desiato talk about his findings as he restored siding on the historic tavern.

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, 2021 and June 30, 2022. 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

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 Donna Case
 Anne Cook
 Marie and Richard Crai
 Joann DeBlasis
 Chris DiElsi
 Alison Doucet
 Beverly Faulds
 Peter and Maryann Grierson
 Karen and Cliff Heidinger
 Gary and Nancy Holland
 Skylar Kleinman
 Kevin and Susan Lally
 Ursula Lombardi
 Gabby Martin
 Cora Meres
 Kathy and Robert Moriarty
 Mary Morrisroe
 Felicia Paduano
 Nancy and Thomas Riedy
 Naomi Shapiro
 Pearce Steele
 Joan Stefura
 Ginny Stoeffel
 Tamia Sullivan
 Anthony Villaneuva



Matching Gift Companies

Chevron Corporation
 GitHub
 IBM
 Mastercard

In-Kind Donors

Cheryl Patterson-Zaic
 Colonial Cleaners
 Hilary Micalizzi
 Josh Fischer Design
 Sean O'Kane AIA Architect, PC
 Sturges Brothers, Inc.
 Susan Scala

Friends Lost

We note with sadness the passing of the following friends:

Mary Anne Baldwin
 David Campbell
 Elsie Craig
 Michele Mahland
 Vincent Maneri
 Walter Slavin
 George Stueck
 Jane Troy
 Edna Weber
 Angelyn Williams

Tribute Gifts

In Honor of

Sara Champion
 Cheryl Crowl
 Joel Third

In Memory of

David Daubenspeck
 Charlie Pankenier
 George Stueck
 Jane Troy
 Edna Weber

“All museums should be like the Keeler! Love the incorporation of different perspectives. Thought-provoking and made me curious, which is what one hopes for in a museum.”

- A KTM&HC Visitor

Keeler Tavern



Museum
and History Center

