



BOX 363, GUILFORD, CT 06437 • (203) 453-2263 • SUMMER 2021 • REGISTERED 501(C)3 NON-PROFIT

## *Letter from the President*

Hello and welcome to our Summer Newsletter!

We're back! How wonderful it has been to hold events, see our members and visitors – and plan new events! We missed you all and hope you are keen to engage with GKS and see what we have been up to.

The Keeping Room in the Medad Stone Tavern has been refreshed and is well worth a visit for the first or 10<sup>th</sup> time. The windows restored in the Thomas Griswold House are a story in themselves. Did you know they had to be steamed in the traditional style to get the job done right? How fortunate we are to have had your financial support, along with a grant from the Guilford Foundation – and local craftsmen Jonathan Wuerth and Steve VanderMaelen, who are sympathetic to the culture and skilled in their art.

Our next big tasks will be to paint the Griswold House and do some restoration work on the wood-working barn on the property. Please consider donating to The Thomas Griswold House Campaign!

June 12<sup>th</sup> saw our first big event of 2021: Our Plant and Tag Sale – which has blossomed in size to over 30 vendors plus our own astounding collection of treasures donated by patrons. Does this imply antiques might be coming back into fashion? Hard to say but it was fabulous to see so many arrive for a good look and some brilliant bargains.

Saying that, special thanks go out to The Guilford Garden Club who do so much to beautify our wonderful museums, bring them to vibrant life with gorgeous floral arrangements and tending to outdoor plants and beds. It's as if the museums sigh with delight. You must see this!

This is being written before our next grand event – the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Picnic – and I hope you had a wonderful time. Next year we will resume our Memorial Day Picnic and invite you to follow the parade down Boston Street to join us at the Thomas Griswold House.

As we recover, we do feel the need for Volunteers! Please consider becoming part of the goings on at GKS, whether it be some help cleaning, some handiwork, or applying your skills in other ways at these historic museums. We do have fun!

It bears repeating: As we approach our 75th anniversary we believe it's more important than ever to continue our mission while maintaining our high standards and excellent reputation on behalf of this extraordinary community. Everything we have achieved thus far has been due to your generous support and we cannot thank you enough.

Yours,  
Bob Hartmann, Jr.

**MISSION STATEMENT:** The Guilford Keeping Society collects, preserves and shares the history and heritage of Guilford, Connecticut for present and future generations

## GKS Community Tag & Plant Sale

On Saturday, June 12<sup>th</sup>, the Guilford Keeping Society ran our annual Community Tag & Plant Sale in the field of the Thomas Griswold House on Boston Street. We have been having this event ever since the GKS Antique Show ended. We had 28 spaces rented out with the Guilford Garden Club and the Leetes Island Garden Club also selling their plants and garden-related items. The field was at full capacity. With Covid-related restrictions being lifted by the State, there was a crowd coming and going all day. The Guilford Keeping Society had many lovely and generous donations made to be sold at our individual tables to benefit the upkeep of both the Thomas Griswold House and the Medad Stone Tavern. A great thank you to all who donated items! With many volunteers and a day of weather that held out for us for the most part (though we had sprinkles in the morning), we were able to make over \$3,000 to help with the maintenance of these two historic homes. Thank you to all who helped in making this event happen and a special thank you to D&S Hot Dogs for feeding the crowd!



Tag Sale Customer

## Grants Received for the Thomas Griswold House

In early June 2021, the Guilford Keeping Society announced "The Thomas Griswold House Project" with a mailing to members and friends. This preservation program has two immediate goals. The first is the prep and painting of the exterior of the Museum. The second is the repair/restoration of the exterior and interior of the property's woodworking barn.

We have been fortunate to receive two prestigious grants to assist in our endeavors. Funds must be raised to match the \$5,000 1772 Foundation grant awarded by Preservation Connecticut. Further we hope to raise monies that will enable us to go beyond the repair of the exterior and to restore the interior as an 18th-19th century workshop which can be used for demonstrations of techniques and tools of that time period.

Your continued support is vital to preserve and share one of the pre-eminent examples of the history, character and culture of our community. You encourage us to work hard to keep the foundations of our beloved Guilford strong for all to experience now and in the future. We thank you and look forward to having you see the results you support!



Thomas Griswold House – Boston St.

## Guilford Keeping Society Spring Clean-up

After missing a season for the Museum's being open to the public, the GKS Board was excited to begin preparations for the opening of the 2021 season for the Medad Stone Tavern and the Thomas Griswold House museums. The museum openings took place the first weekend in June. The clean-up began at the Thomas Griswold House in the early spring. Several GKS Board members gathered to clean out the outbuildings and the basement. The dumpster was filled by noon. The GKS Board was assisted by a few members of GKS who were very generous with their time.

Later in the Spring, the Board did a clean-up project at the Medad Stone Tavern. Both the House and the grounds required a significant amount of work. The GKS Board was accompanied by volunteers from the Guilford High School Interact club and some other volunteers. GKS is very appreciate of these volunteers for giving up a beautiful Spring Day on a Saturday to get the Museum ready for the season opening.

### Keeping Society Board of Directors

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Robert Hartmann, Jr.  
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Director/Curator  
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**GUILFORD HIGH SCHOOL INTERACT CLUB AT MEDAD STONE TAVERN**



## The Thomas Griswold House Project

We are very excited to announce that the Guilford Keeping Society was awarded two competitive grants for the Thomas Griswold House and its woodworking barn, which will be named for Carl Balestracci and will house an amazing collection of period tools from the Hoff family.

The Society received a 1772 Foundation matching grant for \$5,000 from Preservation Connecticut to paint the exterior of the Museum, and a \$1,500 Guilford Foundation grant to be used toward the restoration of the Griswold House woodworking barn.

The 1772 Foundation Grant award was perfectly timed as Jonathan Wuerth (bottom right) and Stephen VanDerMaelen (bottom left) had just reinstalled the totally restored front windows of the Thomas Griswold House. The TGH front window project was made possible by a generous \$5,500 Guilford Foundation Grant.

The second grant was awarded by The Guilford Foundation to be used toward the restoration of the Balestracci-Hoff Barn. It is our hope that with additional funds this rustic building will be restored to become a woodworking display area and a viable working area for demonstrations and sharing Guilford's long history and techniques of 18th and 19th century master craftsmen.

We have gratefully received donations to The Griswold House Project Campaign from a number of individuals and families who generously support our mission to collect, preserve and share the history and heritage of Guilford for present and future generations.

Their vision sustains and encourages us. They have our undying appreciation. We invite more donations - the results of which will be seen by all - to help us complete this important work!



## Barn, Barns, Barns and Then There Are Ours

Barns have always been important outbuildings in Guilford since its founding in 1639. Since then, they have been essential structures associated with home life, farms and economics. Through the years many have become outmoded, been moved or lost through decay or being razed for urban sprawl.

"We're losing our barns by the droves," said Todd Levine, an architectural historian for the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation. "Many tumbled down because of decay or were torn down for new development. Others were simply too costly to maintain. And, as agriculture declined, barns no longer served a purpose."

"We're under the gun with the budget cuts," Mr. Levine said. "We've tried to show how important these structures are to our state's heritage and to its future. Years hence, when all we have left to offer in Connecticut is sprawl, the barns will already be gone. It will be too late."

As stewards of two historic museums and properties the GKS concurs. Our mission statement is "The Guilford Keeping Society collects, preserves and shares the history and heritage of Guilford, Connecticut for present and future generations".

The Guilford Keeping Society did a complete restoration of the Medad Stone Tavern barn in 2014-15. This year the Society has submitted a grant application to repair the deterioration of the woodworking barn and to create a viable working space at the Thomas Griswold House Museum. The barn named the "Balestracci-Hoff Barn", is located behind the house. It is in dire need of immediate restoration to save it and to create a highly desirable working woodshop space available for demonstrations and use of time-honored woodworking techniques which are slowly becoming a lost art.

We are delighted to inform you that the Guilford Keeping Society has received a \$1500 grant awarded by The Guilford Foundation to support the Balestracci-Hoff Barn Project.



### GKS Colonial Camp

A Colonial Camp will be held at the Thomas Griswold House Museum in August. What was life-like for a Guilford child in the 1700's? Campers at the Keeping Society's Colonial Life Camp will spend an adventurous week finding out. Campers will play games from the period, watch a blacksmith at work, and try some crafts that colonial boys and girls enjoyed. There will be hands on activities and colonial games. Campers will keep journals, as well as eat some popular Colonial dishes.

The Colonial Life Camp runs from August 2 -6 and a second week August 9-13 from 9:30 to 12:30. Please register your child for only one week. This camp takes place at the Thomas Griswold House Museum, 171 Boston St., Guilford.

The camps are open to children from seven to twelve years old. The cost for each camp is \$100, which includes project materials. To ask questions, or to register a child for camp, email [info@guilfordkeepingsociety.com](mailto:info@guilfordkeepingsociety.com) or call (203) 453-2263.



### Cranbrook Tower Ornament

This year's GKS ornament is the Cranbrook Tower built in 1869. It was initially built as a stone water tower with a windmill on top to supply fresh water to the summer estate of Simeon Chittenden. The tower is a Guilford landmark that was in use until 1915 when Guilford established its own water system, and the windmill was removed in 1927. During World War II and in the mid-1950s the tower was used as an observation tower by civil defense groups to detect airplanes. Identical plaques over the front and rear doors commemorate the 250th Anniversary of the founding of Guilford in September 1639.

The Cranbrook Tower Ornament is available for purchase at the Thomas Griswold House and Medad Stone Tavern Museums, at GKS events and at [guilfordkeepingsociety.com](http://guilfordkeepingsociety.com) for \$20 ea. A set of the six GKS Ornaments is available for \$105.

**WANTED: Administrator for photo archives website.** This is a volunteer/intern position to work under direction of the Guilford Keeping Society Library Committee to populate a dedicated GKS web site with old photographic images. The Administrator must have good organizational and computer skills that will allow mastery of software to post images that exist in digitized format. Photographic images are posted with accompanying meta data i.e., basic identifications. If interested, please leave a message at the GKS office: 203-453-2263.



### Early Guilford Days 2021



Early Guilford Days have been very different the last two years. Because of the Covid Pandemic the fourth graders could not come to the Griswold House and the Hyland House Museums in person. In 2020 a Virtual Learning page was added to the GKS website and videos, and activities were added to the Hyland House website. This year a video of the Griswold House Scavenger Hunt was added to our Virtual Learning page.

In 2021 the teachers decided to do Early Guilford Days at their schools. Using the virtual learning activities and activities and materials provided by the museums the students and teachers, dressed in colonial costumes, had a wonderful experience. The Artifact Trunk was presented to the students, and they were able to learn about early life in Guilford. We hope that next year we will all be back at the Museums and having the usual year long Early Guilford Days program. Thank you to the fourth-grade teachers for giving your students this year's Early Guilford Days!

### GKS Independence Day Celebration

The GKS Annual Memorial Day Community picnic was not scheduled this year as it seemed a bit too soon to organize a social gathering. This prompted the decision to hold an Independence Day picnic this year instead. The event took place at the Thomas Griswold House on Boston Street. GKS had the best laid plans for a community picnic scheduled for Saturday, July 3<sup>rd</sup>. However, some inclement weather required the event to be postponed until Sunday, July 4<sup>th</sup>. It turned out to be a beautiful day, and the people who attended enjoyed the food and music. The music was performed by the Shoreline Jazz Quartet. The children in attendance also enjoyed the games and pie eating contest. The museum was also open and attendees enjoyed taking a look at the house. GKS would like to thank the volunteers who helped at this event.



The Shoreline Jazz Quartet – July 4th

Guilford Keeping Society  
P.O. Box 363  
Guilford, CT 06437

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## Guilford Keeping Society Newsletter • Summer 2021



### Connecticut Summer at the Museums - Free Admission for Kids

From July 1 to September 6, Connecticut children age 18 and under plus one accompanying adult can our museums free of charge through the Connecticut Summer at the Museum program.

The Guilford Keeping Society is taking part in this program through a grant received from Connecticut Humanities. The web page below will take you to a list of all Connecticut museums participating.

[Connecticut Summer at the Museum - Free Admission for Kids | Visit CT \(ctvisit.com\)](https://ctvisit.com)