



Guilford's Historic Heritage

What Exists, Where to Find It & How to Protect It

Guilford's Historic Heritage

Guilford's outstanding cultural and architectural heritage includes one of the best preserved, intact central villages in New England and over 450 historic houses from the 17th through 19th centuries: a National Historic Landmark, four areas and ten individual structures listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and two local Historic Districts containing 226 buildings in the downtown area.

The National Register of Historic Place

The NRHP is an inventory of cultural resources designated by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior as worthy of preservation. Registration provides protection from unreasonable destruction and requires review of state or federally funded, licensed, or sponsored projects that might affect registered properties. It does not restrict the rights of private property owners to impair, alter, or even demolish significant features of the resource, nor does it curtail use, development, or sale of privately held historic property.

A National Historic Landmark: The Henry Whitfield House

A building, site, district, structure, or object that is designated by the United States Secretary of the Interior as a National Historic Landmark has been judged to possess exceptional value and quality in illustrating and interpreting our nation's history. Only the most important properties on the Register qualify for National Historic Landmark status. Built in 1639 by the founders of Guilford for their minister, the Henry Whitfield House is Connecticut's oldest house and earliest state museum.

Guilford's National Register Sites

Four locations, a lighthouse and ten buildings are listed on the National Register of Historic Places - see codes on map opposite.

Historic Town Center (6) is an area approximately four square miles lying between the East and West Rivers and bounded by I-95 on the North and Long Island Sound on the South. The Town Center includes 257 historic buildings.

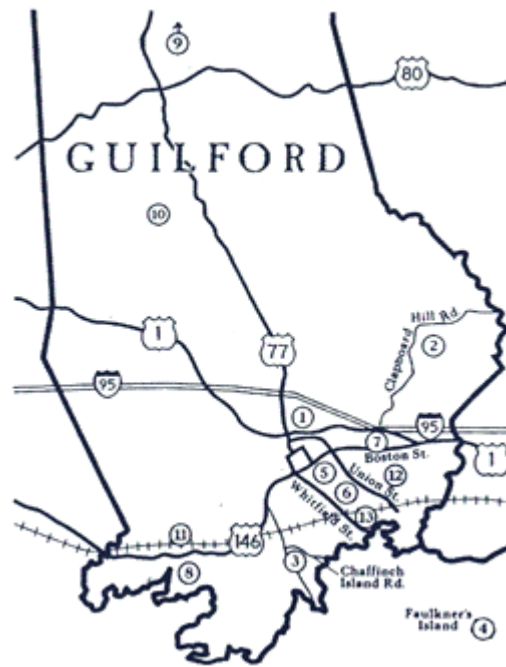
Meeting House Hill (9) Two churches, three church-related buildings, a section of road, a cemetery and a spectacular panorama of farmland comprise this historic hilltop site.

Leetes Island Road (8) includes portions of Leetes Island Road, Sachems Head Road and Lower Water Street that fall within the right-of-way of State Scenic Road Route 146 between Flat Rock Road in Branford and the western end of the West River bridge in Guilford. A total of 52 structures are listed, 43 of them in Guilford, 9 in Branford.

Dudleytown (2) is an eight square mile area straddling the East River and Clapboard Hill Road. It contains 60 sites.

Faulkner's Island Lighthouse (4) has been in continuous service as an aid to navigation on Long Island Sound since its construction in 1802. The island is 3.5 miles off the Guilford shore. The lighthouse is under the care of the Faulkner's Light Brigade.

LOCATIONS OF NATIONAL REGISTER SITES



- 1 Acadian House, 36 Union Street
- 2 Dudleytown
- 3 Jared Eliot House, 88 Old Chaffinch Island Rd.
- 4 Faulkner's Island Lighthouse
- 5 Griswold House, 171 Boston Street
- 6 Historic Town Center (see map on reverse)
- 7 Hyland-Wildman House, 84 Boston Street and Thomas Burgis II House, 85 Boston St.
- 8 Leetes Island Road
- 9 Meeting House Hill
- 10 Elisha Pitkin House, 173 High Woods Drive
- 11 Leete House, 575 Leetes Island Road
- 12 Sabbathday House, 19 Union Street
- 13 Whitfield House, 248 Old Whitfield Street

Architecturally Significant Buildings

In 1981, the Guilford Preservation Alliance (GPA) completed a two-volume listing of 450 buildings then more than fifty years old and considered to be of architectural significance. Two thirds of these buildings are within the boundaries of the four National Register areas.

In 2001, an amendment to Guilford's Zoning Code, requires that when reviewing a Special Permit application, the Planning and Zoning Commission will consider the possible adverse affects of any proposed development which would substantially affect an historic property on the GPA list or if it is within a local Historic District.

Village Districts

Connecticut General Statute Sec. 8-2j can aid historic preservation. A town's Planning and Zoning Commission may establish as Village Districts those areas of distinctive character, landscape or historic value that are specifically identified in the Plan of Conservation and Development. No approval is required either by property owners or the town's legislative body. Village Districts provide for compatibility of any changes with existing character, scale, space patterns, signage, massing, architectural detail and sight lines of vistas from within the district. An Architectural Review Board, or a certified architect, landscape architect or planner contracted by the PZC as the Village District consultant, reviews each application for addition or change, with respect to its harmonious relationship to the neighborhood. There are currently no Village Districts in Guilford as defined by this state legislation.

Town Designated Local Historic Districts

One of the most powerful tools for protecting historic buildings and areas and for preserving community character is to create local historic districts in accordance with Connecticut statutes and standards set by the Connecticut Historical Commission.

Unlike National Register listings, local Historic Districts provide concrete protections. Guilford has established two such districts within which any changes to the exterior appearance visible from a street or other public right-of-way require approval by the Guilford Historic District Commission (HDC).

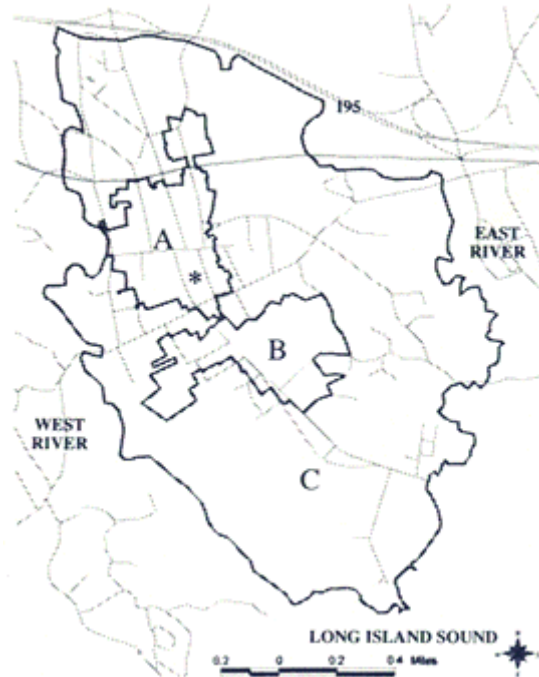
Also, the HDC, upon request by the Planning and Zoning Commission, may evaluate Special Permit or site plan application for property within or abutting National Register Districts. Such recommendations are advisory and not binding.

According to Guilford's 2002 Town Plan of Conservation and Development, town road improvements and other capital projects within the boundaries of local Historic Districts may be referred to the HDC for review and recommendations.

Guilford's Two Historic Districts

Town Center local Historic District (A) contains 156 buildings.

Whitfield Street local Historic District (B) contains 70 buildings.



- A. Town Center local Historic District
- B. Whitfield Street local Historic District
- C. Historic Town Center as listed on the National Register of Historic Places

* Guilford Green

Historical Resources

The Henry Whitfield State Museum (1639) features the National Historic Landmark stone house in a park setting. A visitor center includes galleries, research library, tourist information, and a gift shop. 248 Old Whitfield Street.

The Dorothy Whitfield Historical Society maintains **Hyland House** (c.1690-1710) at 84 Boston Street. Open seasonally.

The Guilford Keeping Society preserves **Thomas Griswold House** (c.1774), as a local history museum that includes a smithy, barn, and other outbuildings. 171 Boston St. Open seasonally.

Medad Stone Tavern (1803) on 17 acres, includes outbuildings, farmland and original home furnishings. 197 Three Mile Course.

Dudley Farm Foundation administers the **Dudley Farm Museum** which includes barns and the 1844 farmhouse at Routes 77 and 80.

Guilford Agricultural Society maintains the **Guilford Fairgrounds**, the annual fair, and a museum of farm tools and equipment.

Guilford Preservation Alliance (GPA) works to restore and preserve Guilford's cultural, architectural, and historic heritage. P.O. Box 199, Guilford 06437.

Guilford Free Library Historical Room houses unique local historical documents and images, 67 Park Street.

Guilford Land Conservation Trust is devoted to preservation of open space.

This brochure describes the organizations dedicated to preserving Guilford's cultural and historic heritage. It was prepared by the Guilford Preservation Alliance.

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<http://www.guilfordpreservation.org>



Artwork by Suzanne Krieger.