

## **Guilford: A Walking Guide, the Green & Neighboring**

**Streets [by] Sarah Brown McCulloch.**

**Text from 2006 printing, revised, with editorial notes in brackets from 2012.**

### **A Very Brief History of Guilford**

In May of 1639, a company of young, educated Puritans from Surrey, many of them prosperous landowners and farmers, sailed from England under the leadership of Henry Whitfield, minister of Ockley, and William Leete, a lawyer from Cambridge. At forty-two, Whitfield was the oldest of the group. While still at sea they drew up a covenant pledging to “be helpful each to the other . . . and . . . not to desert or leave each other” which was signed by twenty-five men of age on board the *St. John*. This came to be known as the Guilford Covenant. Apparently there were also two other small ships accompanying the *St. John*, so the entire company numbered about forty-nine men and their dependents. With the help of John Higginson of Saybrook, who spoke the Indian language, Whitfield and his associates negotiated the purchase of land in Guilford, then called Menuncatuck, from the sachem squaw Shaumpishuh, and by September the settlers had moved to their plantation. What immediate shelter they devised is not known, the earliest records having been lost, but their early living conditions must have been very primitive, certainly unlike anything they had been used to; it is thought that Whitfield’s great stone house was at least begun that fall. The church was formally organized in 1643 and by then the Green had been laid out, the first division of land made according to each man’s investment in a joint stock company, and a civil government established which gradually developed into its present form of selectmen and town meetings. In 1647 six of its young men died and two years later Henry Whitfield returned to England followed by several other capable young men, both events severe losses to the little colony. William Leete became the leader and Guilford struggled to survive. There followed some very lean years but gradually new settlers arrived, more land was bought which included the present-day Madison, North Madison, and North Guilford, and by about 1649, only ten years after it was settled, the town began to prosper. By 1774 at the beginning of the revolutionary period according to the historian Bernard C. Steiner, “Guilford is reported as having 2846 white inhabitants . . . 61 negroes and 23 Indians. . . . The greater part of the population entered heartily into the great struggle for independence and the Tories were a small though troublesome minority.” Guilford was generally prosperous during the eighteenth century and by the end of the nineteenth century, though still predominantly agricultural, it had developed additional industry—marketing seafood, canning tomatoes, quarrying Guilford’s

famous pink granite, and operating foundries. Trains had replaced the stagecoach and highways were built and improved, enabling the town to develop a tourist industry. The twentieth century saw the establishment of two interurban trolley lines and the arrival of automobiles. The completion of Interstate 95 in January 1958 was responsible for a dramatic increase in population, from an estimated 6,400 to 17,375 in 1980. Guilford is still growing, about 20,000 in 1989, and struggling again, but this time with the many decisions it must make as the town welcomes the new but cherishes the old.

### **A Brief History of the Green**

The Green today looks much different from when it was laid out in the earliest days of the settlement. Originally a parallelogram of about sixteen unkempt acres, it was the center of town activity. The early settlers dug gravel from its hilly spots, set up a saw-pit, hayscales, and a whipping post used until 1815, and practiced marching and drilling here. Cows, sheep, horses, pigs, and geese roamed freely, eating the growth and drinking from the pond holes. By the beginning of the eighteenth century public buildings were in place and a large section was used for the town graveyard. Stagecoaches ran diagonally across the Green from the northwest corner to the southeast side. Efforts were made early to beautify the Green. In 1646 citizens were forbidden to cut down trees in front of the meeting house. Digging gravel was first prohibited in 1735 and again in 1764 and 1775, pond holes were filled in, and some areas were leveled. When the borough was formed in 1815, the officials made concerted efforts to improve it at no expense to the town. In 1824, despite indignant protests, they voted to have the Green cleared of tombstones and the ground leveled in exchange for the soil and herbage. The idea of giving up free pasture was also resisted by townspeople for many years but finally, in 1837, the Green was fenced in, paid for by subscription. By 1838 the last building, Christ Church, was removed and in 1853 four citizens agreed to tend the Green for twenty years in return for the hay. Individual tree planting had begun early along Guilford's shadeless streets and by 1826 had reached the Green but the impetus for regular maintenance and improvement came in 1875. That year the United Workers for Public Improvement, a women's organization, was formed "to raise funds to light the streets, improve the condition of the village Green, and extend the work to beautifying and improving the village as necessity may demand and funds shall permit...Gentlemen are admitted to honorary membership." Every spring the ladies raked the Green and planted elm trees. Conducted with humorous ceremony, raking day became a popular event. The U.W.P.I. also provided eighty kerosene lamps for Guilford's streets. Granite curbing replaced the wooden fence in the early nineteenth century and the idea of concrete walks, built as memorials to replace the gravel walks, resulted in a network of five conveniently placed paths.

The cornerstone for the Soldier's Monument in the center of the Green, just about where the graveyards used to be, was laid in 1877 and the monument completed and dedicated in 1887. Five other monuments have been placed on the Green since. The fierce hurricane of 1938 destroyed most of its many elms and they have been replaced gradually with a variety of species; an identification list is available at town hall. In 1976 the Green and the town center, bounded by the West River, I-95, the East River, and Long Island Sound, were placed on the National Register for Historic Places.

### **Around the Green**

Guilford's Green is one of the largest in New England but in the beginning it was even larger—sixteen acres and about one mile around. What happened? In 1670 the town, in desperate need of a blacksmith, persuaded Nicholas Huges to come to Guilford and, since all the homelots around the Green had already been assigned, gave him a piece of the actual Green at the south end, “beside the original highway,” in exchange for his services for seven years. There, in the vicinity of the Markham building, he set up his forge. The road was then changed to the north side of his property creating a jog at the southwest corner. Huges did not stay his agreed time, so in 1676 the town prevailed upon Samuel Baldwin to come from Fairfield and deeded a long narrow strip of the Green on the east side to him in exchange for seven years of his valuable work. That agreement created another jog at the northeast end of the Green and eventually a new street called Park Street. Fortunately for the Green, which was now down to about eight acres, Baldwin stayed.

*The walk, a distance of about one-half mile, begins at the corner of Whitfield and Broad streets with No. 1 on your right. Follow Whitfield to Boston Street, Boston to Park Street, Park to Broad Street ending with 88 Broad Street on your right. The Green will always be on your left.*

### **Lydia Chittenden, 1 Whitfield Street, 1886.**



Imagine a stagecoach from New York, which has turned off the Post Road at Fair Street, pulling up here at Minor Bradley's Corner and coming to a stop in front of his columned “tavern house” built in 1750. The most famous visitor to stop at Minor Bradley's was General Lafayette who arrived in Guilford in 1824 on his

way to Rhode Island, and was entertained at a reception and dinner. In 1885 “Miss Lydia” bought the old tavern, had it torn down, and built her new house which she left to the First Congregational Church when she died in 1914, aged ninety. A 1938 photograph shows a Victorian porch apparently damaged in the hurricane of that year which was later replaced with columns reminiscent of the ancient building. A recent owner was Dr. Elisabeth Adams who practiced medicine here for many years. Grateful citizens named the middle school on Church Street for her. It is still a private home.

**George A. Fowler, 15 Whitfield Street, Greek Revival, 1829.**



Built for George Augustus Fowler and his wife, Anna Benton, this house is a good example of the Greek Revival style, the only one on the Green. The windows with shutters and bracketed heads and the powerful doorway with wide pilasters and sidelights, which may have been added later, present an important facade to the street. The Fowlers had seven children, one of whom, Annette, born in 1843,

continued to live here with her companion Mary Shepard. Their home became well known as a place where tourists and boarders could find gracious hospitality and excellent food. It was the meeting place of Wednesday Club, a literary society begun by “Miss Nettie,” and of the United Workers for Improvement, an important women’s organization in the 1870s which concentrated on beautifying Green. (See page viii.)

**Fowler’s Market, 17 Whitfield Street, c1850.**

George Augustus Fowler kept a little drug store and grocery here, next door to his



house. In 1869, his daughter “Miss Nettie” and her friend “Miss Mary opened a millinery and notions store that stayed in business for fifty years. The Victorian canopy with brackets and small pendants was probably added by William Weld (see page v) after the building was damaged by a great fire in 1872 that destroyed of this end of the block. That same year the Misses Fowler and Shepard established a

subscription circulating library for young people. A 1907 advertisement in the *Shore Line Times* listed for sale: “Children’s Patent Leather BELTS in Buster Brown & Teddy Bear Styles; HATS, New Hats and Flowers every week. Trimmer from New Haven every day; GLOVES, Long Black Gloves in three qualities. Long white gloves in Taffeta and pure Silk.” Their deaths in 1920 and the subsequent closing of the shop in 1922 were widely lamented.

**Dan Collins-Amos Seward, 21 Whitfield Street, Colonial, 1772.**



Built by Dan Collins where a shop had stood earlier, this is one of two eighteenth-century houses remaining on the west side of the Green. (See No. 81 for the other.) Collins and his wife, Amy Bristol, lived here for ten years before moving to Massachusetts. Among the house’s many other owners were James Cezanne (1792), a Frenchman from the island of Guadeloupe, and the Reverend

Israel Brainard (1804) who was dismissed from the First Congregational Church for holding beliefs too progressive for his congregation. Amos Seward and his wife, Sarah Hubbard, bought the house in 1814 and it remained in their family for many years. A later addition at the north end which causes the chimney to appear off-center shows how the building grew with its many uses. Primarily a residence, it also housed a post office kept by Seward, second postmaster of Guilford, and in 1880 a cobbler’s shop. The Greek Revival doorway is a nineteenth-century addition, a common way in Guilford to update a Colonial design. The house escaped destruction in the fire of 1872 when firemen, helped by a north wind, held the burning wall of the neighboring building with pikes until it began to crumble and then pushed it away.



**Henry Hale’s Store, 25 Whitfield Street, French Second Empire, 1873, reconfigured 2000.**

This was once a general store built on the site of a previous one destroyed in the fire of 1872. With its mansard roof of patterned slate, elaborate dormers, decorative windowheads, and line of brackets under the roof, it is a striking example of a style popular from about

1855 to about 1885. Artist Charles D. Hubbard remembered that Mr. Hale dispensed dry goods in front, conversation and advice around his stove in back. But more important to the young were the chocolate creams he sold for twenty cents a pound. Little tin horses, wooden elephants, and wondrously colored hard candies displayed in the front windows were on every child's Christmas list.

**Henry Hale, 29 Whitfield Street, French Second Empire, 1873.**



Hale's outstanding Second Empire house, next to his equally outstanding Second Empire store, is at least the third building to occupy this site. A store on the property was destroyed by that long-remembered fire of 1872, and an earlier building (1790) was the birthplace of the poet Fitz-Greene Halleck (see 25 Water Street). A sketch of this earlier house appears on the flyleaf of Wilson's *Life and Letters of*

*Fitz-Greene Halleck* (1869). Like the store, Hale's house has a mansard roof of patterned slate but its dormers are more elaborate. The windows have now lost most of their decorative trim but the two-story bay and a wonderful succession of brackets show a fine attention to detail. Look at the store to see how the windows might have been. The arched window in the front door and the porch with square posts are both original. Mr. and Mrs. Hale were married for fifty years and lived here for most of them.



**Julia Labadie, 33 Whitfield Street, Italian Villa, 1872; Builder: William E. Weld.**

Mrs. Labadie moved from Hartford to Guilford in 1870. Her original house on this site was burned in the fire of 1872 that destroyed so much of this end of the street (see Nos. 17, 21, and 25) and was replaced

by this grand Italian Villa where she lived until her death in 1881. Built by William Weld for \$3,720 in a style popular twenty years earlier, it is identical in design with 39 Boston Street by the same builder. The house is five bays wide instead of the three usually found in the Villa style. The monitor with wide overhanging eaves, arched windows, and brackets retains its original finial on top. A triple window with arched head balances the elegant entrance porch with its decorative square columns and front door with etched glass sidelights. The addition on the south side is a modern alteration.

### **Douden's Drug Store, 55-57 Whitfield Street, 1926.**



Frank Douden came to Guilford in 1910 from New York City. After his first drug store burned, he bought this site, tore down the old Woodward Tavern (c1800) which stood here and put up a new building of brick with all stone dressings, cornice, and brackets, and windows in metal casings, the glass interlaced with wire, that he hoped would be fireproof.

He topped it all with a stone mortar and pestle still visible. Douden gained a reputation for high standards in business but he was best known for his invention of the checkerberry soda which brought hundreds of people to his store, especially during Guilford Fair days. When he retired in 1947 the formula for the popular soda was included in the sale of the store. Douden's, now on the corner of Whitfield and Water streets, no longer has a soda fountain but you can still buy a bottle of checkerberry syrup and make your own. [2012-Douden's no longer in business]

### **Methodist Church, 65-67 Whitfield Street, 1839.**



One year after the Methodist Society was founded, its members were able to build a handsome Greek Revival building and, in 1869, to add an impressive portico with pillars. The building has now changed almost beyond recognition, but there are still signs of the church it used to be. If you look down the little street between it and the store on the north side, you can see where the windows were. Look up to

the second story and notice the tops of the original pilasters peeping out above the awning roof. The society was disbanded in 1920 and since then the building has housed many different businesses.

### **Music Hall, 69-75 Whitfield Street, 1849.**



This building, on the site of Brown's Tavern where Lafayette was entertained in 1784 during his first visit to Guilford, originally stood near Jones Bridge which crosses the West River at Water Street and housed a steam-engine factory. It was moved to the Green by oxen in 1866 and used at different times for the post office, savings bank, and many different retail businesses. On the second

floor was the large public hall that gave the building its name. Here entertainments of all kinds were presented including (as reported by the *Shore Line Times*) the appearance of a local man, Andrew Benton, making his debut to a full house: "I come not here, my friends, to boast, That I am the Guilford poet; I count it bliss to make a verse, But not such bliss to show it." Charles Hubbard, artist and chronicler, remembered the traveling shows, minstrel shows, concerts, magicians, and an exhibition of Kickapoo Indians with their amazing cure-alls. After the 1920s the building provided space for a dancing school and basketball practice. Originally the Music Hall had rounded triple windows at the second-floor level and a monitor on top.

### **Sarah B. Shelley, 81 Whitfield Street, 1749.**



Though barely recognizable, this house with center chimney is the other eighteenth-century Colonial building on Whitfield Street (see No. 21), where Sarah Bartlett lived with her husband, Robert Shelley, and three children. Joseph Griffing, first keeper of Faulkner's Island lighthouse, also lived here from 1812 to 1839. Converted to commercial use, it has housed many businesses including for

forty-six years Francesco (Frank) Cianciolo's fruit and vegetable store, and since 1982 has been the home of Breakwater Books.



### **Monroe Building, 85-87 Whitfield Street, Queen Anne, 1898.**



Although the original tower was a variation of an onion dome shape, this polygonal replacement is still a dominating feature of the southwest corner of the Green. Modern siding covers the decorative shingles that are typical of the style, but on the Whitfield Street side you can still see the outline of what was a second- story balcony. The “Monroe block” was built by J. Harrison Monroe

who bought the old Sherman Hotel which stood here and incorporated part of it in the west wing of this building. Hotel Halleck, named no doubt for Guilford’s famous poet son, occupied the upper floors. Monroe’s Pharmacy was here and space was rented to Markham’s Jewelry Store until 1902 and then to the post office until 1964 when its present building was erected on Water Street.

### **The Guilford Trust Company, 1 Boston Street, Classical Revival, 1912.**



The Beaux Arts style is unusual in Guilford and this building housed an unusual kind of business cooperation. Two banks, The Guilford Trust Company and The Guilford Savings Bank, shared the banking room, shared a number of trustees, and shared employees who, at the end of each day, sorted out deposits between them. That ended in 1951 when the savings bank moved to its own

building at 1 Park Street. In 1957 the trust company was taken over by a New Haven bank, and the building and the property were thoroughly remodeled in order to update the bank's image and modernize its facilities. Exterior changes included the addition of a low side wing with a new, low entrance; removal of the imposing front door and paired lamp standards with globe lights that had so long graced Boston Street; and removal of a Colonial house and big elm trees to the side to make way for a parking lot and drive-in. Years later the bank moved away to the Post Road and the property was sold. For what became of the Colonial house, see 65 Water Street where it is happily leading a second life.

**Jasper Monroe & Sons, 9 Boston Street, Greek Revival and Italianate, 1858.**



Although the style is mainly Greek Revival, the arched windows show a touch of the Italianate influence fashionable in the 1850s. The east section is a later addition, windows have been changed and shutters removed, but the building is still a well-maintained landmark. It has been a store from the time it was built by Jasper Monroe's son James. Jasper's son Beverly continued to

run the business after the death of his father and brother, and by 1886 he had expanded the stock considerably, advertising "dry goods, clothing, boots and shoes, hats, caps, paper hangings, carpets, crockery, paints, oils and choice FAMILY GROCERIES." The Guilford Savings Bank began here with Monroe as its first treasurer using a safe in the back to hold deposits. In 1896 the building became the E. H. Butler Hardware Store and has been Page Hardware since 1939.

**Albert B. Wildman Store, 11 Boston Street, Greek Revival, 1857; Builder: William E. Weld.**



This simple Greek Revival design replaced an earlier building of 1833. It has housed many businesses including, in the 1880s, a bakery and ice cream store; a saloon in the 1890s; a meat market in the 1900s; and three restaurants. Page Hardware expanded into the building in 1984 without serious damage to the facade, as has been the case with all of their acquisitions. Albert Boardman

Wildman, born in Guilford, was in business here for forty years and lived close by at 88 Boston Street. He was also a member of the state legislature and a county commissioner.

**Markham Building, 19 Boston Street, 1902.**

Clarence Markham came to Guilford in 1896 and in 1902 bought an ancient building then on this site. He moved one end to the back of his lot and built his new store in its place. Three full stories high, with a facade sheathed with stamped metal resembling stone, cast-iron columns, high granite platform out front, and



Markham with a building that housed a grocery store and now a dry-cleaning business.

plate-glass windows, the Markham Building was the first sign of impending urbanization in Guilford. Many townspeople were aghast, but they got used to it and soon were buying eyeglasses and jewelry and having their clocks and watches repaired. In 1935 the remaining section of the original building, after serving as a garage with gas pumps out front on the sidewalk, was replaced by

### **William Eliot's Store, 21 Boston Street, Greek Revival and Italianate, c1880.**



William Eliot built his dry-goods store on the site of an earlier store owned by his uncle, Andrew Eliot. Like Monroe's store west of it, it had both Greek Revival and Italianate features, but the charming canopy is Queen Anne. William seems to have had an adventurous streak underneath what was described in his obituary as a "retiring disposition." At the age of twenty-one he sailed to China on

the clipper ship *Rainbow*, intending to stay but returned with the ship which, as reported in the local paper, "made the quickest round trip ever known at that time." Later he went into business in Wisconsin, then joined the gold rush and worked in California before returning to his home town about 1880 to start his store and marry. In 1931 Peter and Charlotte Lazarevich, who had come to Guilford from Serbia not long before and started an automobile business selling Stars, Durants, and Flints, bought the building and turned it into an automobile showroom. Here they sold Graham- Paiges and later Peugeots for fifty-two years.

### **Andrew Eliot, 23 Boston Street, Federal, 1804; Builder-architect: Abraham Coan.**

Andrew Eliot, a merchant, built this house, lived in it for about twenty years, then traded houses with his brother Samuel, who lived in it another twenty years, bequeathing it to his son William. The house's most distinguished feature, which stands out in every old photograph and immediately identifies it, is the admirable



Greek Revival portico which was added probably in the 1840s. Here you see small, unfluted Tuscan columns used with delicate ornamentation. In 1931 the property was acquired by the Lazareviches along with their new automobile showroom next door (see No. 21). They built a garage in the back, moved the gas pumps to the sidewalk in front, and tastefully converted the house

for mixed commercial and residential use.

**Anna Kimberly, 25 Boston Street, Federal, c1821.**



This house has had many uses and alterations but retains its Federal-style windowheads and cornice. It is not known if Anna Kimberly ever lived here. It is known that from 1821 on she bought and sold several small parcels of the property and in 1855 sold this house and one-half acre to Charles W. Landon, a carpenter who worked for William Weld. Landon and his family lived here for many years.

**John Redfield, 1 Park Street, Late Colonial, 1780.**



Dr. John Redfield (1735-1813) practiced medicine in Guilford from 1758 until his death and served the town in several official capacities. He and David Naughty and Naughty's wife, Ruth, were good neighbors; in her will Madam Naughty referred to Redfield as her "trustworthy friend...and executor of my last will and testament." However, after his aunt's death, Naughty's nephew and heir David

II, who had waited thirty years to live in the house his uncle left him, immediately became involved in a lawsuit with his new neighbor. Redfield won the case and, acquiring possession of the whole property, promptly tore the Naughty house down and built this "mansion house" as it was called. Legend has it that nephew David

was so incensed that he requested at his death to be buried across the street on the Green with his head sticking out of the ground so that he could glare forever at his enemy. Owned since 1945 by The Guilford Savings Bank, the house has been converted to commercial use with rare sensitivity.

**Jared Redfield, 11 Park Street, Federal, 1792.**



The doorway of this house with its Federal details—triangular pediment, slender pilasters, decorative fanlight—was at one time obscured by the addition of a canopy in the Italianate style, popular during the Victorian period. The ornamental windowheads were lost when aluminum siding was put on. Two chimneys indicate a large central hall. The slightly off-center doorway and the

placement of one chimney back of the ridgeline may be an example of a house where sections were built at different time. Dr. Jared Redfield lived here until his death in 1821 and Dr. Lorenzo T. Bennett, minister of Christ Church, lived here for about forty years. Bennett's widow sold the house to the church in the early 1900s and it has been their rectory ever since.



**Christ Episcopal Church, 17 Park Street, Gothic Revival, 1838.**

Christ Church was organized in 1744 by Samuel Johnson, one of the most distinguished divines of his day in the American colonies. A native of Guilford, Johnson became the founder of Anglicanism in Connecticut. Because of the influence of the Johnson family (see 58 Fair Street), the Anglican community in Guilford increased, despite the hostility of the Congregationalists, and in 1748 they built a small church inside the Green. Hostility reached a peak during the Revolution when Anglicans were suspected, often rightly, of British sympathies but after the war, with the reorganization of the Anglican church as the Episcopal Church of the United States, Episcopalianism

became respectable and Christ Church began to flourish. In 1834 the old building and even the poplar trees around it were sold to help finance construction of the present church which cost \$8000 (the poplars fetched \$75). Begun in 1836, it was

consecrated on December 12, 1838. A chancel was added in 1872 (William Weld, builder) and an addition to house an organ was built in 1890. With its masonry construction, Gothic detail, and immensely tall tower, Christ Church was long the most notable Episcopal church among Connecticut towns. The architect is not recorded but Guilford's architect-builder Abraham Coan (see 29 Broad Street) is a likely candidate. Today the building has unfortunately lost much of its finery: window tracery has been changed, pinnacles and crockets at the corners of the tower and lacy battlements are gone, as are pinnacles atop the buttresses and the decorative iron fence in front. The majesty of the great stone tower, however, remains.

**Guilford Town Hall, 31 Park Street, Romanesque, 1893-94; Colonial Revival, 1947-48, Architect: Leoni Robinson.**



The first town hall was built in 1775 with private subscriptions and stood inside the Green on the north side. The second floor was used for town offices and the first was thriftily rented out “for a store selling dry and West India goods.” In 1820 the building was moved off the Green to a location on Church Street. As decay set in, repeated attempts were made to repair it or replace it, but it was not until 1892 that

the town meeting finally voted to put up a new building here “to cost not over \$13,500.” Built in the Romanesque style with typically irregular roof line and arched doors and windows, the new building had, besides offices, a 500-seat hall with stage and dressing rooms, where plays and musical programs were presented and where numerous organizations met. By 1947 when “Victorian monstrosities” had become hopelessly out of date and Colonial Revival was considered almost the only style suitable for civic architecture, the town suddenly took strong measures, wiped out all traces of its Romanesque past, and transformed it into something described as Georgian. In 1973 another vigorous remodeling produced a successful modernization of the interior.

**Heli Hoadley-Aaron Dutton, 37 Park Street, Federal, 1805; Builder-architect: Abraham Coan.**

This simple Federal house is distinguished by light touches of ornament-carved cornice, windowheads, and the doorway with fanlight. The great kitchen chimney has been removed, but the house retains its picket fence built of red cedar which is said to last forever. Hoadley and his wife, Ann Seward, lived here only briefly before moving to New Haven where he had a business manufacturing carts and



wheelbarrows. The house is better known for its next owner, the Reverend Aaron Dutton, distinguished pastor of the First Congregational Church from 1806 to 1842 when he was dismissed for his anti-slavery views, the church council believing that slavery was a political, not a religious, issue. Charles Hubbard, writer, teacher, and artist whose work can be seen in the Guilford Library and at the

high school, also lived here, working in a third-floor studio which he called Hobgoblin Hall.

### **Stephen Spencer, 43 Park Street, Colonial, 1754.**



Here is yet another colonial house updated by the addition of a Greek Revival doorway. Stephen Spencer was a blacksmith who plied his much-needed trade in his forge on the south side of the house. In the 1840s and 1850s an upstairs room was rented by a new owner to the South West School District for use as a schoolroom. In the 1870s the property was sold to Daniel Auger who “rented the two

sides of his house,” and added the south wing. Purchased by Elias Bates in 1894 soon after his marriage, this house was occupied by members of the Bates- Burton family for over 100 years.

### **Third Congregational Church, 49 Park Street, Greek Revival, 1844.**



This building has had an eventful life, from church to secular use and back to church. In the process it has lost its steeple and its shutters but it is still an important presence on the street and a characteristic example of the Greek Revival style so popular in its day. The church was founded in controversy when 123 members of the First Congregational Church who were strongly anti-slavery

petitioned to start a new Congregational Society which would reflect their views. The new church became an active force in the community, but by 1920 its dwindling congregation rejoined First Church and sold the building to Christ Church for use as a parish house. The main hall was used, briefly, as a movie theater, then a kindergarten, a dancing school, and a meeting place. By 1933 the building had been resold, renamed the Chapel Playhouse, and converted to use for summer stock and little theater productions. The Christian Science Society bought and restored it in 1951. Well maintained, the interior today is extremely handsome.

**Jedediah Lathrop, 55 Park Street, Federal, 1822.**



The first mention of Jedediah Lathrop in town records is on the occasion of his marriage to Mary Caldwell in 1793. Where he came from or how he made his money is still a mystery. He was prominent in town affairs as a warden of Christ Church, warden of the borough, master of St. Alban's Lodge, and a member of the reception committee for General Lafayette when he came to town

in 1824. Lathrop bought this property "and building thereon" in 1796 from Nathaniel Caldwell, tore down the existing house, and built a new one. With four chimneys, modillioned cornice, carved windowheads, handsome elliptical windows in the side gables, and an imposing porch unlike any other in Guilford at the time, it was and is outstanding and apparently a source of great pride to him. Legend has it that a small girl overheard him say to General Lafayette after they had dined at Bradley's Tavern, "The house with the four chimneys that you see across the Green is—er— mine." Judge Ralph D. Smith and his wife, Rachel Seward, bought the property from Lathrop in 1854. A later owner was Bernard C. Steiner, the author of *History of Guilford and Madison, Connecticut* which included material collected by his grandfather Smith. In c1960 a north wing was added with detail copied from the main house; the Ionic columns were said to have been shipped from San Francisco. At the same time, the barn was connected to the rear of the house and the interior divided into apartments and an antique shop. The house has been owned by the town since 1970.

**Guilford Free Library, 67 Park Street, Colonial Revival, 1933; Architect: G. Archer Quick.**

Early in the twentieth century this was the site of a busy feed, grain, and coal store, but Mrs. Frederick Spencer, who lived in the grand house across the corner at 122





Broad Street, was so bothered by the noise that her husband obligingly bought the property, removed the feed and grain store, and in due course gave the land to the town for a library— a quiet neighbor indeed! The new building was designed to blend in with the traditional architecture and residential scale of its neighborhood. The library outgrew its facilities and in 1970 plans were announced to demolish

the building and replace it with a flat, one-story modern structure covering the whole lot. A furor immediately erupted and at a packed town meeting, remembered to this day, hundreds of traditionalists and modernists fought it out with the traditionalists winning, giving the first intimation that townspeople intended to preserve the historic character of the Green and the town center. Ten years later when the library again proposed a plan for growth, it took the form of the present modern, two-story building, carefully preserving the old building and harmonizing with it in scale and color. (Gilbert Switzer and John Matthew of New Haven, architects). The front door was moved to the addition and the garden next door was turned into a charming entrance court. A tall window and balcony mark the site of the original door. A more recent expansion was accomplished in 2008. The Guilford Free Library has come a long way from its beginning in 1737, in one room that held books principally on divinity.

**Elisha Chapman Bishop, 122 Broad Street, French Second Empire, 1874;  
Architect: Henry Austin.**



This house is one of the few instances in Guilford where an architect's plans are known to have been used (see page v). The plans, now preserved by the Congregational Church, show that the original design is still almost intact. Missing are those touches that completed its grandness: an elegant fence, matching ones on the roof of the ample porch, and iron cresting around the top of the tower.

All in all this was the most sumptuous house Guilford had yet seen. Elisha Chapman Bishop, a Guilford native, had gone west as a young man and then to Titusville, Pennsylvania, in time for the oil boom, where he made his fortune. His house was inherited by his daughter Marilla, who was married to Frederick C.

Spencer, president of the Spencer Foundry (see 18 Fair Street), and today it is sometimes called the F. C. Spencer house. Both Mr. and Mrs. Spencer were active in town affairs and gave generously of their time, talents, and money. Mrs. Spencer left her mark on Guilford history as the first woman in town to ride a bicycle and to drive a car. When she died in 1962, aged ninety-seven, the Congregational Church bought the property for use as a parsonage; it now houses church offices as well.

**First Congregational Church, 110 Broad Street Federal, 1829-30; Builder-architect: Ira Atwater.**



This is Guilford's architectural masterpiece — the glory of the Green. The third building of the Congregational Church, it was the most splendid meeting house of its day on the shoreline, its builder already well known for Yale's chapel and other major buildings in New Haven. The building committee specified that the style should be "nearly the same" as that of the new churches in Milford and Cheshire, then the grandest in the New Haven area. They also wished to have a commanding site at the head of the Green and achieved this by buying a house already there and reselling it to Rossiter Parmelee who agreed to take it away; it was moved off in a grand procession drawn by 35 yoke of oxen down Whitfield Street to its present location near the sluice (see page 58). For the

raising, the town was divided into districts, the men of each district being assigned their day to help the carpenters, without charge, while "the ladies furnished a good supply of cake, and there were no accidents." The total cost was \$7500. The "Great Bell," cast in 1725 for the second meeting house, was hung in the new belfry and, recast four times since, is still there today. The clock built in 1727 by Ebenezer Parmelee, also for the second church, was installed in the steeple; replaced in the 1890s, it is now in the Henry Whitfield House Museum (see 248 Old Whitfield Street). In 1860-61 the interior was partially remodeled to plans drawn by Nelson Hotchkiss, a well-known builder-architect from New Haven then living next door; in 1898 the pulpit recess and its surround were built, and in 1908 a fine organ was installed which lasted until 1981 when it was replaced. The gallery columns with finely carved capitals are original. The spire was blown down in the fierce hurricane of 1938 but quickly replaced, weathervane and all. Various other additions are evident but the church exterior, dedicated in 1830, remains the same.