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# Telling Guilford's Story

Report on Interpretation and Signage Prepared for  
the Heritage Tourism Initiative of the Guilford  
Preservation Alliance

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# Telling Guilford's Story

## *A Report on Interpretation and Signage*

### Project Background

#### Introduction

Guilford is a vibrant historic community that fronts the Long Island Sound and stretches into the rolling Connecticut farmland of New Haven County. The town is blessed with a history that stretches nearly four centuries into the past, the Guilford Green and architecture that define an incredible sense of place, and forward-looking citizens who appreciate the town's legacy and are thoughtfully building upon it.

Since 2011, the Guilford Preservation Alliance (GPA) has been engaged in a Heritage Tourism Initiative under the leadership of Shirley Girioni and Rob Vavasour. Over a period of two years, GPA undertook an assessment and planning process in conjunction with the National Trust for Historic Preservation to guide the development of sustainable heritage tourism in the historic community. To accomplish planning, GPA forged a network of 26 partners including local government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and individuals throughout the community, as well as state nonprofit and governmental agencies. In April 2013, GPA completed the *Guilford, Connecticut, Heritage Tourism Strategic Plan: A Five-Year Plan for Heritage Tourism Development, 2013-2018*.

*The Guilford  
Green (courtesy  
of Guilford  
Patch.com)*



The *Heritage Tourism Strategic Plan* focuses on activities in five different areas: Visitor Experience, Events, Visitor Services, Infrastructure, and Marketing. The current project, "Telling Guilford's Stories," is based on activities recommended under "The Visitor Experience: Sharing Guilford's Story and Sense of Place." GPA was awarded a grant from the Connecticut Humanities Council to accomplish the development of an interpretive framework and a Visitor Center information digital kiosk, and to evaluate Guilford's current conditions specific to the need for interpretive and wayfinding signage. The Guilford Foundation also awarded GPA a grant for kiosk development.

## **Telling Guilford's Story: Project Scope**

The overarching goal of the current project is to develop a framework that organizes Guilford's history into themes through which the community can connect the individual stories and the historic and natural sites in which those stories are expressed in the community. The project entailed a series of public and stakeholder meetings in Guilford, analysis of existing signage, development of a thematic framework, design of an information kiosk, identification and analysis of target audiences, and preparation of a report of findings and recommendations. GPA retained Point Heritage Development Consulting (Point HDC, Nancy Morgan) to facilitate the meetings, create interpretive themes, and author the report. GPA also engaged Campaigne Kestner Architects to design the information kiosk; the National Trust for Historic Preservation (Carolyn Brackett) to prepare the analysis of existing and potential target audiences; and Dawson Associates (Jeffrey Dawson) to conduct a field survey evaluation of the existing conditions and to make recommendations for signing the community.

## **Summary of Meetings**

The "Telling Guilford's Story" project is based on a series of five meetings held in Guilford in September 2013. Nancy Morgan (Point HDC) and Jeff Dawson (Dawson Associates) worked closely with Shirley Girioni and Rob Vavasour (GPA) to develop a plan for the series of meetings. The primary purpose of each individual meeting varied, but collectively the meetings provided input from a variety of perspectives for use in developing interpretation and signage to enhance visitors' experience in Guilford. In addition to the meetings, described below, GPA board members Girioni, Vavasour, and Ellen Ebert toured Morgan and Dawson through the area, orienting them and providing an opportunity for Dawson to conduct a signage conditions analysis.

### **Elisabeth C. Adams Middle School Meeting**

GPA board member Dennis Culliton, Social Studies teacher at Elisabeth C. Adams Middle School, organized a lunchtime meeting for interested 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Twenty-three students chose to attend the meeting facilitated by Nancy Morgan. During the meeting, students learned about the scope of the interpretation and signage project, as well as why civic engagement in community projects is valuable. This built on students' previous lessons in civic engagement and exposed them to their potential role as long-term stewards of the community and the special cultural and natural places within it.

The students were knowledgeable and engaged. The hour-long meeting included a discussion of the places and attributes that students value or find interesting about Guilford. Among the resources they mentioned specifically are the town's five historic house museums, the Guilford Green, and natural spaces such as Westwoods and the East River Preserve. They expressed a fascination with cemeteries, and also with the details of life a long time ago in Guilford. Several specifically mentioned "Early Guilford Days" for expanding their knowledge of their community. Students expressed appreciation for the town's historic architecture and other reminders of the town's history, noting that Guilford is "different compared to other towns." They also liked how the past remains a part of the present, from dressing up the statue on the Green, to holding graduation and other ceremonies there, to the fact that people live in the historic houses in town.

In closing, Morgan invited the students and their parents to the community meeting in the evening—one student, Andrew Chapman, accepted that invitation and brought his mother.

### **Information Kiosk Meeting**

Shirley Girioni and Rob Vavasour, Russell Campaigne, Jeff Dawson, and Nancy Morgan met to discuss plans for the Visitor Information Kiosk planned for the front of the Guilford Community Center. The site is on State Highway 77, a state-designated scenic road, serving as a gateway to—and also visible from—the Guilford Green. The meeting centered on the current design proposed by Campaigne for the Visitor Information Kiosk, its new location, and the digital media displays initially located on the back of the building.

Dawson recommended that the interactive components be located in front of the kiosk, and that a small freestanding touchscreen unit be presented for design review. Dawson agreed to provide Campaigne information on equipment sources for both a large back wall display and for the smaller freestanding touchscreen discussed at the meeting.

The content for the kiosk was discussed, and it was agreed that the most economical solution to providing content would be the current GPA website as long as the information could be accessed through the touchscreen displays. The group decided that content of the digital touchscreen unit should include historical information, a map, a calendar, historic sites, and links to commercial information (shopping, dining, and lodging). “Cultural heritage” information, “commercial” information, and “City government ” information should be considered separately, with each providing their own content that could be accessed through a kiosk home page. Campaigne suggested that he would contact a local website developer for additional advice on how to network the kiosk.

### **Historical Experts Meeting**

In order to ensure historical accuracy in materials prepared for interpretation, GPA established a committee with expert knowledge of Guilford’s history and resources. For the current project, the primary role of the Historical Experts Committee is to provide guidance and oversight concerning accuracy and appropriateness of content as Morgan crafts interpretive themes based on public input and existing historical sources.

The three committee members are:

- **Carl Balestracci**  
Balestracci is a historian, former educator and former First Selectman in Guilford.
- **Dennis Culliton**  
Culliton is a historian, educator, current GPA board member, and developer of the Historic Guilford Walking Tours.
- **Joel Helander**  
Helander is a historian, probate judge, and author of several books on Guilford, including *A Treasury of Guilford Places*, published in 2008.

Two members of the Historical Experts Committee attended a meeting, the purposes of which were to introduce Nancy Morgan and the experts, establish expectations for the role of committee members, and discuss important concepts in Guilford history. Participants in the one-hour meeting were committee members Carl Balestracci and Dennis Culliton; Nancy Morgan; Shirley Girioni and Rob Vavasour; Megan Vanacore, Dillon Beers, and Hope Culliton (high school and college-aged student representatives who are interested in Guilford’s history and involved in the community’s promotion).

The majority of the meeting was given to discussion of important aspects of Guilford's history and the resources—the special places—that are the tangible expressions of that history. Ballestracci and Dennis Culliton began to group Guilford's important stories into proto themes, as follows:

- **Guilford on Purpose**

From the establishment of the town itself—including the covenant and the Green—in 1639, to the preservation of architecture and conservation of open space that began in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and continues today, residents of Guilford have a long history of actively creating their community. Over and over again, residents have consciously planned for a successful future, assessing their current conditions and asking themselves, “Where do we want to go from here?”

- **400 Years of History**

The town's four centuries of history offers a window into the history of our nation. Important time periods can be viewed in Guilford's historic architecture and in the stories of the town's residents. Guilford holds stories of the colonial past, *all* of the nation's wars, abolition, immigration, the shift from agriculture to industry... In discussing this subject, the historians also noted that Guilford underwent a significant shift from an agricultural and maritime community to an industrial immigrant community in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

- **From Farmlands to Open Lands**

Agriculture has been an important industry in Guilford since its founding. This story is especially evident in North Guilford. In the middle of the last century, there were still 100 farms in the community. Although most farms are gone today, the long history of agriculture has left a legacy of open lands/greenspace in the community.

- **Women's Leadership**

Women have led many of the activities that shaped Guilford's identity and sense of place, from the Native American sachem, Shaumpishuh, to the preservation of the Green, to the conservation of open space today.

Discussion also focused on the success of the Historic Guilford Walking Tours, currently completing a second year. Dennis Culliton led the development of the tours created and led by high school students, and Megan Vanacore was one of the students who conducted research, authored information, and led tours. Vanacore also created a step-on bus tour. Dennis Culliton and Vanacore shared their thoughts on the success of the tours. People who have taken the tours seem to enjoy the connection of the past to their lives today, humorous stories, and places where there are strong visuals to support the stories (such as the variety of architectural time periods represented on Fair Street). They appreciate the tour experience and the “densely textured” architectural history Guilford has to offer. Tour goers have primarily been empty nesters, people visiting friends and family, and daytrippers.

The meeting provided an excellent opportunity for some members of Guilford's younger generation to discuss the community's past and future with leaders in preservation, research, interpretation, and heritage tourism. The students expressed varied interests for themselves and their peers. Vanacore enjoys involvement in research and writing, as well as providing direct visitor services. Beers mentioned an interest in planning for the upcoming 375<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the community, as well as the possibility of serving as a youth representative on the GPA board.

## Guilford Community Meeting

GPA hosted a public forum at the Guilford Community Center on the evening of September 24, 2013. Nancy Morgan and Jeff Dawson facilitated the 90-minute meeting, which was attended by 22 people. Morgan and Dawson informed the public about the current project and shared signage standards from historic communities with similarities to Guilford. In addition, the facilitators engaged the public in discussions about Guilford's history and signage needs.

Morgan posed a series of questions to the public to promote discussion, including:

- What are Guilford's important stories?
- Where can those stories be told? What do you want to share with the public?
- What is being done well and what remains to be done?

Stories and the places associated with them are outlined in the Thematic Framework (below).

Dawson presented best practices used for branding and signage projects in Cane River National Heritage Area Natchitoches, Louisiana, and the City of Norfolk, Virginia, to illustrate how two very different demographics shared the very same concerns for branding and signing. His presentation provided examples of the various types of signs that can be included in community signage programs; appropriate materials and other concerns related to branding signing historic communities; and the importance and impact of having a coordinated graphic effort that extends beyond signage into maps, brochures, displays, and the overall presentation of a place.

The public's priorities for developing a signage program include discrete, elegant signage; consistency of design, font, and colors; integration with existing signage and collateral materials; and an emphasis on the primary route from Interstate 95 to the historic town center. The public expressed concern about sign size (they did not want large signs), the use of appropriate materials, and how other areas of town might be identified (North Guilford and specific neighborhoods). When asked what places should be signed, participants answered: the Green and the town center; the five museums; visitor amenities (parking and bathrooms); public buildings (Town Hall, Guilford Free Library, Guilford Community Center); churches and cemeteries; North Guilford and other neighborhoods; and the beach and the marina. Additional suggestions set forth in the meeting are finding a use for maps from Joel Helander's *A Treasury of Guilford Places*, development of small interpretive signs, and expanding the use of the Keeping Society plaques.

*Henry Whitfield  
State Museum (left)  
(courtesy of  
PageIns.com)*



*Storefront on the  
Guilford Green  
(right) (courtesy  
of afar.com)*



## Heritage Tourism Initiative Stakeholder Meeting

GPA's Heritage Initiative Stakeholders met at the Guilford Community Center for a 3-hour workshop on the morning of September 25, 2013. Twenty five partners in the initiative participated in the workshop, including representatives of the City of Guilford; the Guilford Chamber of Commerce; Guilford's 5 museums; the Connecticut Humanities Council, which provided grant funding for the project; the State Historic Preservation Office; trails and arts organizations; and members of the GPA board and the Historical Experts Committee.

The purposes of the meeting were to:

- 1) Share results of the previous day's meetings with students, the Historical Experts Committee, and the public;
- 2) Build on the information gathered in those meetings, considering signage needs and creating a thematic framework; and
- 3) Provide an update on, and discuss the future of, implementation of the *Heritage Tourism Strategic Plan*.

Nancy Morgan and Jeff Dawson facilitated the portions of the meeting dealing with interpretation and signage. Shirley Girioni and Rob Vavasour, GPA co-chairs and initiative leaders, facilitated the discussion related to implementation of the *Heritage Tourism Strategic Plan*.

Morgan summarized the results of the previous day's meetings, beginning by grouping information on Guilford's stories and special places into like categories. She then posed the questions to begin analysis of information from the previous day:

- What are Guilford's key stories?
- What secondary stories fit beneath or within those?
- What places can help tell those stories?

Results of this discussion are captured in the Thematic Framework, below, as the information generated by the questions above forms the basis for Guilford's interpretive themes.

Dawson provided an overview of signage standards in communities that share similarities with Guilford, summarizing input from the community meeting and the conditions assessment he had completed up to that point. The priorities expressed by the Heritage Initiative stakeholders are similar to those identified by the general public. Stakeholders emphasized the importance of consistency and the integration of existing signage and collateral materials. They discussed signing the route from the interstate to the historic town center, focusing on key decision points along the way. They discussed how North Guilford and the important museum and farming community it offers should not be forgotten. They expressed the value of the Keeping Society's plaques and shared a prototype for another sign type for historic commercial properties. Business owners voiced a need to help in building an increase in visitation. Finally, they offered a suggestion that technology be considered for interpretive signage as it would help increase access to information that cannot be presented through traditional signing.

The workshop was the first opportunity for the Heritage Initiative partners to meet since the completion of the *Heritage Tourism Strategic Plan* in April. Shirley Girioni and Rob Vavasour led a brief discussion about accomplishments to date and looking ahead to implementation. Girioni and Vavasour reported on the progress of kiosk development, the primary focus of their activities over the last several months. The kiosk is currently working its way through design review, and the co-chairs anticipate breaking ground in the next year. Guilford's five historic house museums have met monthly since planning was completed. They have developed a new brochure that provides information on all five museums. Finally, Vavasour asked for individuals to serve as leaders/points of contact within the various sectors involved in implementing the *Heritage Tourism Strategic Plan* (preservation, tourism, government, arts, trails).

*Guilford's  
Commercial Dock on  
the Long Island  
Sound (courtesy of  
Town of Guilford)*



## Telling Guilford's Story

Some places in our nation have a special character—an intangible *sense of place* arising from the history, traditions, and cultural and natural resources found there. Guilford is one such place. The community possesses a history that spans four centuries and an amazing array of properties, landscapes, and historical records that illustrate its history in generous detail.

One of the primary purposes of the current project is to develop a structure, or framework, within which Guilford's stories and resources together describe the community's history. That organizing framework is comprised of four themes that express ideas critical to people's understanding of Guilford. The National Park Service describes themes as:

...the bridges to increased public understanding of the importance of a region and its theme-related resources... Themes represent the broad stories that integrate the collection of individual resources so that they may be viewed within the context of the whole.<sup>1</sup>

Themes include concepts that reach beyond the details of a particular place, providing a broader perspective that people can relate to their own lives and to larger patterns of history. The four themes below may not describe everything that will be interpreted in Guilford, but rather they serve as a structure within which to understand the people, processes, and events that shaped the community. The development of themes is an exercise of deciding the best way in which to organize information. This requires subjective decisions to be made about the way in which information is “lumped” or “split.” The discussion portion of the stakeholder workshop greatly informed these decisions.

Themes can be used in a variety of ways. In exhibits or collateral materials whose purpose is to provide a general orientation to the community and its history, the four themes together give the public an overview of why Guilford is important and what they might expect to learn more about. One example of this application is the information kiosk that is currently in the planning stages and will eventually be located in front of the Guilford Community Center. Another example in which the themes might be incorporated into an existing program as an orientation tool is the Historic Guilford Walking Tours. The themes should not be used to change the current information or structure of the tours, nor does precise wording need to be used. Rather, the central concepts of the themes may be helpful in connecting the tour stops to one another and to the broader history of the community.

Similarly, the themes may be used to inform interpretive programs at the five historic house museums and other site-specific places. Not all sites can or should express all four themes, nor should themes dictate the stories told at each site. Instead, themes should be viewed as providing general concepts to which individual sites may connect their detailed stories. This helps people understand the importance of each site within a broader context, and also enhances their understanding of how the various sites connect to one other.

Regardless of the specific application, themes give the public a holistic understanding of Guilford's history and pique their interest to explore a variety of sites within the community.

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<sup>1</sup> National Park Service, National Heritage Area Feasibility Study Guidelines, 2003: 8.

## **A Thematic Framework for Guilford**

The following pages include four themes that collectively express Guilford's history. They were developed in consideration of the region's history, related resources (places, activities, and archival records), and the results of community engagement described previously. Following each theme is a list of stories and resources that support that theme, as well as a brief description of the resources that most closely reflect each theme. The descriptions are *not* meant to be comprehensive, but rather are intended to highlight the resources that will be most useful in sharing each theme with the public.

### **Theme 1: *Our Story, America's Story—Four Centuries of History***

**From its founding in 1639 to the vibrant community it is today, Guilford embodies nearly four centuries of American history. European and Native American worlds converged in Guilford. The community has sent soldiers to every war our nation has fought on this continent and abroad. In this place, enslaved people followed paths to freedom and hopeful immigrants followed dreams to prosperity. Through time, Guilford has been a place of farmers, mariners, mercantilists, industrialists, and vacationers, all of whom have left their mark. The Guilford Green lies at the center of the community's four centuries of history, and churches, cemeteries, and homes from every era convey the rich details of life here.**

#### **Stories Within This Theme**

- Guilford as a window into American history, the Guilford Green as the focal point that helps focus this story
- Participation in (and home-front understanding of) wars, from Pequot War to the present
- The abolition movement and use of local churches and homes in the Underground Railroad
- Economic shifts in society (the rise of industry)
- History of the business community, including independent and family-owned businesses
- Transportation, including the Post Road, the trolley, the railroad, and the Long Island Sound as corridors that reflect different periods of development
- Immigration, including the immigrant laborers who carved the granite base for the Statue of Liberty
- Stories of famous individuals tied to the community, including (but certainly not limited to) patriot and scholar Abraham Baldwin, poet Fitz-Greene Halleck, and abolitionist and author Harriet Beecher Stowe
- Life in Guilford today

#### **Resources that Express this Theme**

- The Guilford Green
- All five historic house museums (Henry Whitfield State Museum, Hyland House Museum, Thomas Griswold House Museum, Medad Stone Tavern Museum, Dudley Farm Museum)
- Architecture from every era (including 4 National Register Districts, 10 individual National Register listings, and properties in the GPA Inventory)
- Churches
- Cemeteries
- Granite quarries

- Businesses on the Green (e.g. Page Hardware)
- Records in the Guilford Keeping Society Library Collection and other collections, Edith B. Nettleton Room, Guilford Free Library
- Historic Guilford Walking Tours
- Early Guilford Days

There are many significant places in Guilford that demonstrate how the community is a metaphor for our nation's history over a span of four centuries. The most important of these is the Guilford Green, a 9.7-acre plot of open space that dates to the earliest years of Guilford's founding and still forms the heart of the community. From the common grazing area and burial ground of the past to the park-like setting today, the Green's evolution, people's changing perceptions of its function, and the activities carried out upon it through time provide a focal point for this story.

The Green anchors Guilford's Historic Town Center, a historic district listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The closing paragraph in the statement of significance, as presented on the nomination form from 1976, clearly underscores the theme presented above. It reads:

While the large number of structures of historic interest contribute to the value of this area as an historic place, its real significance is in the way these buildings relate harmoniously to each other and to the natural landscape to create an environment illustrative of 300 years of history<sup>2</sup>. The value of this environment is further enhanced by the fact that it is today a thriving community in a very human sense.

*(Guilford Historic Town Center National Register Nomination Form, National Park Service, July 6, 1976, available at [pdfhost.focus.nps.gov/docs/NRHP/Text/76001988.pdf](http://pdfhost.focus.nps.gov/docs/NRHP/Text/76001988.pdf))*

Guilford has an incredible array of historical architecture from all time periods. The community boasts houses, churches, cemeteries, and commercial properties from the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. *A Treasury of Guilford Places*<sup>3</sup> contains a building survey including more than 675 properties that predate 1911, one of the largest collections in New England. This survey, along with older survey materials and new listings that include all properties older than 50 years can be found on the Guilford Preservation Alliance's website ([guilfordpreservation.org/WordPress/historic-guilford/gpa-survey-of-historic-places](http://guilfordpreservation.org/WordPress/historic-guilford/gpa-survey-of-historic-places)). Many of Guilford's historic properties are showcased in the designation of four National Register Historic Districts—the Historic Town Center (described above), Meeting House Hill (most notable for 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century structures), Route 146 (most notable for 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century structures), and Dudleytown (most notable for 18<sup>th</sup> through 20<sup>th</sup> century structures).

Also critical for this theme are the five historic house museums. Architecture and interpretation at the museums provide windows into different time periods, including Colonial America (1639 Henry Whitfield State Museum and early 18<sup>th</sup> century Hyland House), the Revolutionary Period (1774 Thomas Griswold House), the New Nation (the Griswold House and the 1803 Medad Stone Tavern), and Western Expansion and Reform (1844 Dudley Farm).

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<sup>2</sup> At the time the nomination was written in 1976, the community had yet to reach its 350<sup>th</sup> birthday. Since Guilford is celebrating its 375<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2014, the community chooses to round its age up to 400 years in the rest of the document, especially since we know a significant amount about the Menunkatuck who inhabited the region before the 1639 arrival of Henry Whitfield and his followers.

<sup>3</sup> Helander, Joel. *A Treasury of Guilford Places*, Guilford, CT: Joel Helander, 2008.

The community's churches also demonstrate change over time. The church was a foundational part of early Guilford and expanded into new areas as the community expanded. Furthermore, the churches reflect philosophical and intellectual shifts in the community. As nearby Yale University's influence grew, the churches and their well-educated ministers became conduits for new schools of thought. One example of increasingly independent thought is seen as the churches began to separate from the governance structure in colonial Guilford, reflecting a wider process in the American colonies. In succeeding centuries, the churches remained an agent of social change and responsibility. In 1844, a schism over abolition resulted in the establishment of a new church, which was reunited with the original congregation more than 70 years later. The churches also anchored immigrant experiences, serving as a touchstone to lives left behind and a solace in a new land.

The Keeping Society retains archival resources at the Medad Stone Tavern and in the Edith B. Nettleton Room of the Guilford Free Library. Other extensive collections are also found in the library's historical room. Resources such as photographs, newspaper articles, census documents, diaries, books, letters, and maps provide insight into the lives of Guilford's residents across time.

Dr. Elisabeth C. Adams Middle School 8<sup>th</sup> graders' discussion emphasized the importance of how the past and the present remain connected in Guilford. They observed this in the existence of lots of historic buildings in which people today still live, work, or worship, as well as in traditions like dressing the Soldier's Monument for contemporary celebrations such as high school graduation.

### ***Theme 2: Coming Together—Life in Early Guilford***

**Guilford offers a clear window into colonial history from a shipboard covenant, to the convergence of two cultures, to the new paths forged by each. In 1639, Rev. Henry Whitfield led a band of Puritans who sought religious freedom to a place where the Menunkatuck people of the Quinnipiack tribe lived. The Squaw Sachem Shaumpishuh met the English in peace and ceded land for trade goods to aid in her people's survival. The Native Americans moved west. The English established the colonial village that would become Guilford, a community that has survived and thrived for nearly four centuries.**

#### **Stories Within This Theme**

- Puritans and the quest for religious freedom
- Journey from England
- The Covenant
- Guilford's founding families
- Convergence of cultures
- Deeding of land by Shaumpishuh and the Menunkatucks
- The Guilford Green, the four stone houses, and the Congregational Church of Menunkatuck Plantation
- Rise of church societies and expansion of the town
- Colonial daily life and history
- Native American culture and history, including the histories of Shaumpishuh, Uncas, and others
- Whitfield's return to England and the impact of counter-emigration

- William Leete’s leadership
- The Regicides
- Colonial wars (Pequot, French and Indian, American Revolution)

### **Resources that Express this Theme**

- The Guilford Green
- Town Center National Register District
- North Guilford/Meeting House Hill National Register District
- Leetes Island Road/Route 146 National Register District
- Clapboard Hill/Dudleytown National Register District
- Henry Whitfield State Museum
- Hyland House Museum
- Thomas Griswold House Museum
- Acadian House
- Jared Eliot House
- Elisha Pitkin House
- Pelatiah Leete House
- Thomas Burgis II House
- Sabbathday House
- The Regicide Cellar
- 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century homes, churches, and cemeteries
- Records in the Guilford Keeping Society Library Collection and other collections, Edith B. Nettleton Room, Guilford Free Library
- Historic Guilford Walking Tours
- Early Guilford Days

This theme recognizes Guilford’s rich colonial history, beginning with the Menunkatuck tribe who lived in the region before Europeans arrived and also including the English homeland of the Puritans and the context that prompted their emigration. From the cultural convergence of these two different worlds to the American Revolution, the stories of Guilford’s founders and their colonial era descendants come alive through a multitude of archival records, annual activities, and historic places. Their struggles and successes are well-documented and can be shared in a variety of settings across the community.

On June 1, 1639, 25 men signed their name to a covenant that set forth their intentions to settle as a group east of the settlement that became New Haven. Although the original document is gone, its contents endure. The covenant and the Guilford Green are the most tangible expressions of the founders’ intentions and the earliest history of Guilford.

Three of the five historic house museums date to the colonial era. The Henry Whitfield House, a National Historic Landmark, is the oldest house in Connecticut. One of four stone houses erected by the founders, likely for defense, the Whitfield House represents medieval English construction. The early colonial Hyland House and the late colonial Thomas Griswold House both have architecture and artifacts from throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The community’s churches also provide important insight into the community’s early development. While the covenant did not emphasize religion to the same extent as the

Mayflower compact, the first church was part of the community's foundation. It was mentioned in the covenant and constructed on the Green, and church leaders governed Guilford in the initial generations. As the community expanded, so did the churches, anchoring settlement in East Guilford (Madison), North Guilford (North Bristol), and Cohabit (North Madison).

The records in the Guilford Keeping Society Library Collection and the other collections housed in the Edith B. Nettleton Room of the Guilford Free Library provide important primary sources detailing this time period.

The 8<sup>th</sup> grade and high school students that participated in the current project spoke of the importance of Early Guilford Days in helping them to learn about and appreciate their community. For more than 20 years, all 4<sup>th</sup> graders in the community have participated in Early Guilford Days (originally "Colonial Guilford Days"), in conjunction with retired educators, the Guilford Keeping Society, the Dorothy Whitfield Historic Society, and the Guilford Free Library. A year-long curriculum focused on Guilford's history and colonial life culminates in a day of hands-on activities at the Thomas Griswold House and the Hyland House.

An impressive number of homes that are listed in the National Register of Historic Places or in the GPA inventory date to the colonial era. Colonial properties in the Town Center Historic District, Leete's Island Road (Rte. 146 National Register District), and North Guilford (Meeting House Hill National Register District) all contribute to the significance of these National Register historic districts. A few individual properties also deserve to be recognized here. The Sabbathday House speaks to a common practice in the colonial era of coming in from rural farmsteads to attend day-long worship services in Guilford. The Regicide Cellar is a link to a very specific story—that of Englishmen who had signed King Charles I's death warrant and the colonists who protected them when they fled to the American colonies after the king's son regained the throne.

### **Theme 3: *Guilford on Purpose—Creating Community***

**Before Guilford's founders reached the New England shore, they bound their lives to each other in a covenant, setting forth their vision for the community they would create together. These early settlers established the Guilford Green, and later their descendants saved it. Guilford's residents have cared for each other through a long history of social activism, and cared for their surroundings by preserving historic properties and natural spaces. In the past and the present, the citizens of Guilford have imagined their community and found ways to make it just so.**

#### **Stories Within This Theme**

- The Covenant
- The Guilford Green as the metaphor for thinking ahead
- Story of survival in early years after settlement
- Transformation of the Guilford Green through time
- Historic preservation
- Natural resource conservation
- Education in Guilford
- Guilford's churches

- Women of Guilford, their roles in making the town what it is (ie. Shaumpishuh, Dorothy Whitfield, Harriet Beecher Stowe and her abolitionist-minded family, United Women’s Public Improvement Society, Ann Conover, Edith Nettleton, Shirley Girioni, etc.)
- Social activism (e.g. Underground Railroad and the use of Covenant Day to stop KKK demonstration on the Green)
- “Guilford takes care of Guilford”—from the covenant to today, residents in the community have a long history of helping each other
- Planning for the future

### **Resources that Express this Theme**

- The Guilford Green
- Town Center Historic District
- Henry Whitfield State Museum
- Churches
- Schools
- Westwoods
- East River Preserve
- Olmstead Outlook
- Anne Conover Nature Education Trail, Guilford Salt Meadows Sanctuary
- Menunkatuck/New England Trail, Shoreline Greenway Trail
- Municipal planning, preservation and development ordinances
- Conservation and open space planning, the *Natural Resource Inventory and Assessment*
- Records in the Guilford Keeping Society Library Collection and other collections, Edith B. Nettleton Room, Guilford Free Library
- Historic Guilford Walking Tours

The shipboard covenant created on June 1, 1639, as families came to begin a new life in a New World states:

*We whose names are herein written, intending by God's gracious permission, to plant ourselves in New England, and if it may be in the southerly part, about Quinnipiack,<sup>4</sup> we do faithfully promise each, for ourselves and our Families and those that belong to us, that we Will, the Lord assisting us, sit down and join Ourselves together in one entire plantation and be helpful each to the other in any common work, according to every man's ability and as need shall require, and we promise not to desert or leave each other on the plantation but with the consent of the rest, or the greater part of the company, who have entered into this engagement...*

(Excerpt from The Guilford Covenant, available at [teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/guilford-covenant/](http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/guilford-covenant/))

Of the many aspects of Guilford’s history that demonstrate measured consideration of the future, none is greater than this covenant in which the Puritan founders set forth a vision for their new land and how they would live together upon it. Also showing careful calculation on

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<sup>4</sup> Later named New Haven.

the part of the new arrivals is the land deed in which the Squaw Sachem Shaumpishuh and her Menunkatuck people not only permit *use* of the land to the English, but also agree to remove themselves from the land.

The Guilford Green, surveyed to align with natural features in the region in 1643, remains a tangible expression of the intentional creation of community in a specific place. This first act of town planning, hundreds of years before modern planning and zoning was conceived, set an important precedent for thinking ahead and acting communally. Residents have shifted the Green's purpose and its appearance to fit the changing needs of society and the community. They have stood up to protect it and celebrate it. Nearly 400 years after its establishment, the Green's survival as the focal point of the community is nothing short of remarkable.

The churches are another tangible expression of the covenant. Their buildings, their congregations, and the works they have accomplished in the community are the social and structural representations of the commitment set forth in the founding document.

Education is another central tenet of Guilford history's of taking care of its citizens. Space was set aside on the Green for Guilford's first school and meeting house, demonstrating a link between education and community that is evident to the present day. Guilford's schools have sheltered Guilford citizens during floods and other times of trouble, and the new high school continues this tradition, built to serve as an emergency evacuation center. In their value of education, Guilford's citizens have shown their capacity for growing the future. An example is the 19<sup>th</sup> century establishment and endowment of the Guilford Institute, open to boys and girls of any color and religion.

Guilford has been preserving its historic houses since the community was founded. The existence of four National Register historic districts and more than 675 (pre-1911) entries in GPA's historic buildings survey demonstrate that Guilford residents have always valued the community's past and have been good stewards. In recent decades, the Historic District Commission and numerous municipal ordinances support continued preservation of the community's special historic resources, especially the anti-blight, anti-tear-down, and delay of demolition ordinances. Furthermore, GPA and many other community organizations are active partners in preserving the town's character and amenities. In *A Treasury of Guilford Places*, Helander notes that only 35 dwelling houses were razed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. When he contrasted this with the daunting fact that more than 20 properties were razed in the opening decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Helander followed the well-worn path of the many organizations and individuals in Guilford who have championed special places and records through time.<sup>5</sup>

The protection of a number of natural areas is another example of sustainable planning for the community's future. Guilford can trace its history of conserving open space for public use to the establishment of the Green. Furthermore, farming occupied much of the land around Guilford for more than three centuries, contributing to its rural character. In the latter portion of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as farming declined and conservation and recreation were on the rise, some Guilford residents took initiative to protect natural places. Anne Conover, whose name is given to a trail in the Guilford Salt Meadows Sanctuary she helped conserve, is but one example in a long line of women who have taken initiative for creating a community in which they wanted to live. The community's value of the natural environment is expressed through

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<sup>5</sup> Helander 2008: 299.

Guilford’s extensive conservation and open space planning, and in the *Natural Resource Inventory and Assessment* completed in 2005.

Part of the covenant that has become part of the mentality of the community is that of caring for and helping “each to the other... according to every man’s ability and as need shall require.” The early Abolitionist Society, the Underground Railroad, and the celebration of Covenant Day on the Green to dissuade a Ku Klux Klan rally are historic examples of Guilford’s compassion for equality. Through time, numerous other socially responsible programs have borne out this ideal, including Guilford Daycare, which has served the community since the 1960s, the Guilford Food Bank, and the ABC (A Better Chance) program for girls.

Not every decision or action in Guilford has measured up to the vision set forth in the covenant. More often than not, however, the intentional creation of community has embodied the communal spirit, forethought (and perhaps a bit of luck) of Guilford’s founders.

#### **Theme 4: *City on a Hill, City by the Sea—The Legacy of Place***

**Guilford’s history is etched on a landscape that stretches from open fields and rolling hills to the rocky shore and salt marshes of Long Island Sound. This “long water land” began as territory of the Menunkatuck, part of the Quinnipiack tribe. After the English arrived, agriculture flourished in this setting from the 17th to the 20th centuries. In the 18th and 19th centuries—from the Age of Sail to the Age of Steam—Guilford thrived on shipbuilding and maritime trade. As the 20th century dawned, vacationers sought the Sound, and hotels and cottages grew up along the shore. Today, the farmlands have left a legacy of farmers’ markets, open space, trails, and recreation. Along the waterfront, lovely homes look out upon the kayaks and sailboats that ply the Sound on summer days.**

#### **Stories Within This Theme**

- The physical landscape
- Quinnipiack territory (“long water land”)
- Puritan vision of the New World
- Settlement patterns
- Agricultural history
- Maritime history
- Tourism history
- Today’s open space, trails, and recreational opportunities

#### **Resources that Express this Theme**

- The physical landscape (the Great Plain of Guilford, Long Island Sound)
- The Guilford Green and the Historic Town Center
- Faulkner’s Island Light House
- North Guilford/Meeting House Hill National Register District
- Leetes Island Road/Route 146 National Register District
- Clapboard Hill/Dudleytown National Register District

- The Dudley Farm
- Hyland House Museum
- Medad Stone Tavern Museum
- Thomas Griswold House
- Properties in the GPA inventory with a tie to agricultural or maritime industries
- The Guilford Fair, the Green, and the Guilford Fairgrounds
- Early Guilford Days
- Records in the Guilford Keeping Society Library Collection and other collections, Edith B. Nettleton Room, Guilford Free Library
- Westwoods
- East River Preserve
- James Valley Preserve (Northwoods)
- Braemore Preserve
- Timberlands Preserve
- Olmstead Outlook
- Ann Conover Nature Education Trail, Guilford Salt Meadows Sanctuary
- Shoreline Greenway Trail
- Menunkatuck/New England National Scenic Trail

The story of the land, itself, stretches deep into geologic history, with volcanism, continental drift, and the erection and erosion of mountains all playing a role. However, the landscape the Menunkatuck inhabited and the English first saw—that which we know today—results primarily from glaciation. When the Wisconsin glacier began its retreat 18,000 years ago, it deposited moraines at its southernmost reach near Long Island Sound and left glacial till across most of the region. Rivers and sea-level rose as the ice retreated, eventually turning the Sound from a freshwater lake into a tidal, saline arm of the Atlantic.

This theme celebrates the landscape upon which history has played out in Guilford, including the vastly different perceptions and activities associated with the land and water through time. For Native Americans, this place was their homeland and land was something that was “used” not “owned.” For Puritans, this place was a savage wilderness to be civilized into a biblical paradise. Immigrants found this to be a land of new opportunity, and tourists found escape here from the pressures of urban living. The land was well suited for agriculture, and the sea for maritime industries. All of these aspects contributed to making Guilford the place it is today.

Many places in Guilford illustrate the area’s agricultural history, or ‘field husbandry’ as it was called by early residents. The Green’s initial use was as common ground for livestock. Much later, it was the site of the Guilford Fair, which has celebrated agriculture since 1859, and remains an annual tradition. Today, the fair is held at the Guilford Fairgrounds, where the Guilford Agricultural Society has erected traditional buildings that help educate the public about Guilford’s past.

All five of the historic house museums incorporate some aspects of farming into their interpretation. Agriculture was important to the Puritans who settled Guilford, as many of them had been farmers in England. Furthermore, prior to the Industrial Revolution of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the United States was an agrarian society.

Among Guilford's museums, the Dudley Farm is especially notable for its interpretation of agriculture. Built in 1844 by Erastus Dudley, descendant of one of the founders, the farm illustrates farm life in 1900. The museum grounds include the farmhouse, barns and outbuildings, livestock, period gardens, and the surrounding meadows and woods.

Agriculture remained common in Guilford through the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, meaning that much of the rural landscape escaped development. Today, while few farms remain in operation, open space is an important part of the community. Natural areas such as Westwoods and the East River Preserve have been critical in helping the community retain its rural sense of place. The Shoreline Greenway Trail is partially complete, and eventually will connect the East River on the Madison boundary to the Stony Creek boundary with Branford to the west. Also, the Menunkatuck Trail, part of the New England National Scenic Trail, stretches from the junction of the Mattabesett Trail in North Guilford south to the Chittenden Park on the Long Island Sound.

Through time, Guilford's legacy of open space has helped protect historic and archaeological resources found on former Native American lands and historic farmsteads. Shell mounds, stone walls made of glacial till, quarried ledges, and remnants of old mills and house foundations are among the many surviving features that retain valuable information about Guilford's storied past.

Agriculture and harbor commerce went hand and hand in Guilford's past. As urban populations grew on the East Coast, so did the need for food grown by others. Guilford was well-placed to take advantage of coasting commerce, shipping agricultural products in the Sound. Shipbuilding and other maritime industries also shaped the town's economy from the mid-18<sup>th</sup> to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Three and a half miles offshore, Faulkner's Island Lighthouse stands proudly as it has since 1802, the heart of the maritime boom. One of the state's oldest surviving lighthouses, today it is in the care of Faulkner's Light Brigade, formerly a GPA commission.

By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, urban dwellers were seeking solace on the coast. Hotels and boarding houses served the earliest generations of tourists. Later, summer cottages along the waterfront served urban visitors from the late 1800s to the present. In the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, summer visitors began to give way to year 'round residents, and today the shore boasts a comfortable mix of both.

## A Selected Bibliography for Telling Guilford's Stories

This brief bibliography is intended to provide relevant information for understanding the many diverse resources that help tell Guilford's story. This is not meant to be a comprehensive list, but rather a point of departure. Please visit the Guilford Free Library for more detailed information.

This bibliography relies on the Guilford Preservation Alliance's website ([www.guilfordpreservation.org](http://www.guilfordpreservation.org)), the Town of Guilford's website ([www.ci.guilford.ct.us](http://www.ci.guilford.ct.us)), and the document *Early Guilford Days: A Guide to Historical Resources at the Guilford Free Library*, compiled by the Guilford Free Library, the Dorothy Whitfield Historic Society, and the Guilford Keeping Society in 2011, with funding from the Connecticut Commission on Arts, Tourism, Culture, History, and Film (available at [guilford.203hosting.biz/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/Early-Guilford-Days-Bibliography-updated-2009.pdf](http://guilford.203hosting.biz/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/Early-Guilford-Days-Bibliography-updated-2009.pdf)).

“The Edith B. Nettleton Historical Room (located on the second floor of the Guilford Free Library) holds materials documenting Guilford's history and genealogy, past and present. This includes books, diaries, letters, maps, photographs, scrapbooks, high school yearbooks, and early tax lists. Also included are microfilm reels of the federal census for New Haven and Middlesex counties from 1800 to 1920, the Shore Line Times newspaper from 1877 to date, and the Guilford Courier newspaper from 1998 to date... Transcribed Guilford diaries are an important part of the Historical Room Collection. These include primary source materials written by townspeople mainly in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Secondary source information on citizens of early Guilford is available in pamphlet and other holdings.” (*Early Guilford Days: A Guide to Historical Resources at the Guilford Free Library*, 2011: 25, 27)

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# Identifying Target Audiences for Guilford’s Heritage Tourism Experience

The development of a thematic framework and plans for a visitor information kiosk and signage emerged from the Guilford Heritage Tourism Initiative. They are included as strategies in Guilford’s *Heritage Tourism Strategic Plan: A Five-Year Plan for Heritage Tourism Development – 2013-2018*. In addition to the historic sites, tours and events available in Guilford, when implemented, the elements created through this project will contribute to a unique visitor experience by sharing the story of Guilford’s history through a variety of interpretive media. Through the planning process’s public engagement and research, four themes were created to help guide the development of interpretation. The themes, which are discussed in detail in the previous section of this plan, are:

**Theme 1:** *Our Story, America’s Story—Four Centuries of History*

**Theme 2:** *Coming Together—Life in Early Guilford*

**Theme 3:** *Guilford on Purpose—Creating Community*

**Theme 4:** *City on a Hill, City by the Sea—The Legacy of Place*

The themes reflect Guilford’s four centuries of history and convey the many stories that will be shared with visitors as new interpretation is developed.

## Section Overview: Identifying Target Audiences

Identifying target audiences is a critical step in the success of Guilford’s Heritage Tourism Initiative. This section considers potential audiences in the following ways:

### *Current Traveler Profiles*

- **Characteristics of cultural heritage travelers** – Characteristics of cultural heritage travelers identified through a national study identifies interests and activities of these travelers.
- **Current visitation to Connecticut** – Reviewing visitor research from the Connecticut Office of Culture and Tourism provides insights into who is currently coming to the state.
- **Current visitation to Guilford** – Examining visitation reports from four different areas – a historic site, historic walking tours, a bus tour of Guilford’s historic neighborhoods, and an annual race – creates a picture of who is coming to Guilford.

### *Potential Target Audiences for Guilford*

- **Geographic origins** – Based on current visitation, geographic areas are identified to target for promotions about Guilford’s heritage experience.
- **Traveler characteristics** – A profile is given of the types of visitors who can be targeted to enjoy Guilford’s heritage experience.

## Current Traveler Profiles

### National Study: Characteristics of Cultural Heritage Travelers

A national study of the characteristics of cultural heritage travelers includes many findings that are important to consider as Guilford seeks to attract this tourism market segment. The study by Mandela Research LLC, *The Cultural and Heritage Traveler 2013*, identifies interests, activities and desires of these travelers. Key findings about cultural heritage travelers include:

- 87% want trips that combine a variety of activities – culture, shopping, nature, exercise, dining
- 81% want to bring back local memorabilia to share with friends and family
- 80% want to taste local food and wines
- 72% want to visit places where the destination, buildings and surroundings retain their historic character
- 66% want travel to be educational so they make an effort to explore and learn about local arts, culture and environment
- 55% are willing to pay more for travel experiences that do not harm the environment
- 52% spend more money on cultural and/or heritage activities while on a trip
- 49% give back by donating money, volunteering, etc. to cultural and/or heritage destinations they have visited
- 49% would pay more for lodging that reflects the cultural and/or heritage destination that they are visiting

The study also identifies demographics for cultural heritage travelers:

- Gender: 52% are female; 48% are male
- Generation: 22% are Gen Y (also call Millennials – age 18-33); 33% are Gen X (age 34-49); 31% are Boomers (age 50-68); 14% are Matures (age 69+)
- Region: 19% are from the Northeast; 36% are from the South; 22% are from the Midwest; and 23% are from the West
- Children – 40% have children under the age of 18 in the household (compared to 26% of non-cultural heritage travelers)
- Marital Status – 55% are married; 25% are never married; 9% are divorced/separated; 8% are living with a significant other; 3% are widowed
- Household Size – 34% - 2; 21% - 3; 17% - 4; 8% - 5; 15% - 1; 2% - 6 or more
- Education – 27% have a bachelor's degree; 27% have some college with no degree; 15% have a graduate or professional degree; 15% are high school graduates or have a GED; 14% have an associate's degree
- Household income – The largest segment – 22% - have an income of \$50,000-\$74,999; 16% have an income of \$35,000-\$49,999; 15% have an income of \$75,000-\$99,999
- Employment – 44% are employed full-time; 13% are employed part-time; 9% are full-time homemakers; 4% are full-time students; 7% are self-employed; 15% are retired; 6% are unemployed

There are a wide variety of activities that these travelers consider to be part of a cultural and heritage travel experience as shown on the following chart:

<b>Cultural and Heritage Places and Activities</b>	<b>% of Travelers Engaged</b>
Visited historic buildings	42%
Visited historic sites	40%
Attended cultural and/or heritage fair or festival	40%
Visited Native American sites	39%
Visited art museums/galleries	38%
Visited history museums/centers	38%
Attended historical re-enactments	38%
Participated in organized tour of local history or culture	37%
Visited living history museums	37%
Visited natural history museums/centers	36%
Took a tour focusing on local architecture	34%
Researched family history	32%
Visited science centers/museums	28%
Visited children's museums	26%
Toured wineries or breweries	23%
Attended a food/wine fair or festival	23%
Attended a music fair or festival	21%
Visited state/national parks	21%
Visited a local farmer's market	19%
Shopped at museum stores	18%
Took a scenic drive	16%

Additionally, it is important to consider how cultural heritage travelers gather information when planning for or taking a trip. The following chart shows the primary sources of information used:

<b>Information Source</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Website of the destination	55%
General web search	50%
Recommendations from friends and family	46%
Research on 3 <sup>rd</sup> party travel website	30%
Request brochures and information sent by mail	25%
Read online reviews by official sources of the destination	25%
Read user-generated sources	22%
Read travel and travel-related magazines	21%
Read independently published reviews in magazines and newspapers of the destination	16%
Ask friends on Facebook	14%
Read travel section of newspaper	14%
Contact convention and visitors bureaus	13%
Consult with a travel agent	10%
Search on Facebook	9%
Other	5%

## State Visitor Research: Visitors to Connecticut

In FY2012, the tourism division of the Connecticut Office of Culture and Tourism (part of the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development) was allotted a budget of \$15 million for tourism marketing. In the previous two years, the department had no funds for tourism marketing (\$1.00 was posted in the state's budget as a place-holder for this line item.) Funding for FY2013 was set at \$9,475,000. Projections for FY2014 and FY2015 are for \$15 million for each year.

With this increase in funding, the tourism division created a new brand – *Connecticut: Still Revolutionary* – and developed new promotional campaigns. Strategies included increasing short-term visitation, emphasizing Connecticut's uniqueness, highlighting Connecticut's regions and towns and increasing the pride of residents in their home state.

Research to determine the effectiveness of the promotional campaigns found positive results:

- 18% increase in awareness of Connecticut as a destination
- 53% who saw the campaign were interested in visiting, visited or said they plan to visit
- 6.8% increase in visitation to major attractions
- \$161 million in new spending by visitors
- The top consumer searches on the state's tourism website (ctvisit.com) included sections for This Weekend, 52 Getaways and Travel Deals. Top page visits included shoreline driving, fall foliage driving tours, top 10 hiking trails, summer inspiration, Connecticut Wine Trail, weekend getaways, top 10 dining favorites, Connecticut Chocolate Trail, charming towns and Mystic Magic.

Promotions in 2012 were targeted in the top states of visitor origin: Connecticut, New York, Massachusetts, Maine, Vermont, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New Hampshire and Rhode Island.

Campaigns in 2013 focused on New York; New Haven/Hartford; Providence, Rhode Island; Philadelphia; and southern Massachusetts.

In addition to tracking responses to promotional campaigns, the tourism division offers tourism attractions and events the opportunity to participate in an annual visitor intercept study called "Vision." The study is conducted by Witan Intelligence Strategies Inc. of Avon, Connecticut to measure tourist activities and identify visitor origins. Participants share in the cost of the study. Each participant receives a comprehensive report measuring specific data about their destination or attraction which can be compared with the data in the summary report.

The 2012 Vision Intercept Study analyzed information gathered from more than 2,500 tourist interviews. Findings include:

- Travel frequency – Connecticut's visitors are traveling more often than in recent years – 9.5 trips in 2012 vs. 7.8 trips in 2011. The share of those trips to Connecticut held at 57%. The average number of visits to Connecticut was 7.1 (increased from 5.3 in 2011 and 4.8 in 2010).
- Connecticut residents – 66% of tourism parties included a Connecticut resident. Residents travel within their state more frequently than out-of-state visitors and also act as hosts and ambassadors to out-of-state guests.

- Out-of-state visitors – 65% of out-of-state visitors spent overnights - 41% stayed with family or friends. Out-of-state visitors contribute 37% to overall spending – particularly in lodging and dining.
- Tourist spending – During each of their 7.1 visits, the average party spent \$660. Each household visiting Connecticut in 2012 spent nearly \$4,680 – a sizeable increase from the \$3,500 spent in 2011.
- Traveling with children – 38% of travel parties included children. Out-of-state parties with children were more likely to stay overnight and more likely to stay with family and friends.
- Satisfaction with visit – 74% gave top ratings for their visit to Connecticut; 76% said they were highly likely to visit again soon.

## Current Visitors to Guilford

Guilford’s historic and cultural attributes are already attracting visitors from within the state and across the country as well as international visitors. Development of an ongoing visitor research program is a strategy included in Guilford’s *Heritage Tourism Strategic Plan: 2013-2018*.

Currently, information on visitors to Guilford can be gathered from various sources that will allow for identification of both current and potential audiences. This report examines four different areas – a historic site, historic walking tours, a historic bus tour and an annual race – to garner insights on visitors to Guilford.

### *Henry Whitfield State Museum*

This site is a National Historic Landmark and a designated State Archaeological Preserve. It is owned by the State of Connecticut and is managed by the State Historic Preservation Office in the Department of Economic and Community Development’s Offices of Culture and Tourism. The centerpiece is the Whitfield House which dates to 1639. It is the oldest house in Connecticut. The site’s Visitors Center (currently the only visitor information center in Guilford) provides travel information, a gift shop and changing exhibits.

A visitor origin survey was conducted from May 1-October 6, 2013 and included staff inquiries of visitors in the Visitors Center and visitors signing the guest book in the Whitfield House. (Data will be updated by Whitfield Museum staff at the end of December 2013 when the site closes for the season. Compilations are provided through early October for the purposes of this report.)

The visitor origin survey found that visitors came from the following places:

- In-state - 104 of Connecticut’s 169 towns/cities
- United States - 46 of 50 states, plus Washington D.C.
- International – 24 countries

### *Historic Guilford Walking Tours*

In 2012, Guilford Preservation Alliance board member and history teacher Dennis Culliton led the creation of Historic Guilford Walking Tours as an early implementation activity of the Heritage Tourism Initiative. Students from Guilford High School were hired to give tours from the beginning of June through the end of September 2012. Two themed tours were offered, one on the history of Guilford and one on historic architecture. Culliton was assisted in researching and developing tour

scripts by a team of local historians. Students were engaged to assist in the research and received extensive training to give lively and informative tours.

In 2012, more than 300 people took the tours, including Guilford residents and visitors from New Haven, Hartford, Metropolitan New York and other places.

In 2013, approximately 240 visitors took the walking tour. Data collected shows that visitors in 2013 came from a variety of places:

- 40 visitors came for Connecticut Open House Day (an annual event sponsored by the Connecticut Office of Tourism)
- 60 visitors were from children's summer camps
- In-state visitors – 60 visitors - approximately 20 each came from Middlesex County, Hartford County and Fairfield County
- Out-of-state visitors came from Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New York, Texas, California, Kentucky and Illinois
- International visitors came from France, Great Britain, Italy as well as a group of 35 exchange visitors from Turkey
- The remainder of visitors came from Guilford.

#### *Historic Guilford Bus Tour*

In 2013, Megan Vanacore, one of the tour guides for the walking tours, created Historic Guilford Bus Tours as a Girl Scouts of America Gold Medal Project. She created, marketed and led tours of Guilford's historic neighborhoods. The Guilford Department of Parks and Recreation made their bus and driver available for the tours. The tours were offered at no charge and attracted 150 participants. Most were from Guilford with some from surrounding communities.

#### *Bimble's Bash 10K Race*

The group Bimble's Sound holds an annual 10K race, Bimble's Bash, following an off-road loop of interconnecting hiking trails through Westwoods, a 1,200 acre site owned by the Guilford Land Conservation Trust. Proceeds from the race support the work of the GLCT. The bash currently has the largest number of participants of any trail race in Connecticut.

The 2013 race attracted 268 participants. Registration data shows the following origins:

- Guilford had the highest number of participants – 48.
- In-state participation came from 88 towns/cities. After Guilford, towns/cities with the most participants were Branford, New Haven, Milford and Madison.
- Out-of-state participation in order of the highest number of registrations was New York – 10; Massachusetts – 5; Rhode Island – 4; New Hampshire – 1; Maine – 1.

## Potential Target Audiences

Based on an assessment of national, state and local travel trends and visitor data, potential target audiences for Guilford's heritage tourism experience can be identified in two areas – geographic origins and traveler characteristics.

### Geographic Origins

Four areas are identified as geographic origins for potential audiences:

- **Guilford residents** - Guilford residents have been enthusiastic supporters of heritage tourism development in Guilford, both as participants in the planning process and as “visitors” to their own town – taking historic walking tours, visiting historic sites, attending festivals and other activities. Residents also act as ambassadors for their town when friends and family visit, making them a critical part of Guilford's success in heritage tourism. (Statewide visitor research showed that 41% of out-of-state visitors stayed with family and friends.) As each phase of the heritage tourism plan is implemented, Guilford residents will continue to be engaged both as volunteers for projects and activities, as “visitors,” and as ambassadors who will enjoy hosting friends and family in touring the town.
- **Connecticut residents** – In-state travelers will be a key part of Guilford's promotion to attract cultural heritage travelers. Statewide research showed that 66% of tourism parties included a Connecticut resident and that residents travel within their state more frequently than out-of-state visitors. The state's office of tourism also targets part of its promotional dollars to market to in-state visitors – in 2013 this marketing was directed to the New Haven/Hartford region. Data from the Whitfield Museum, walking tours, bus tours and 10K race also show that Connecticut residents are currently the primary visitors to Guilford. Guilford's promotional plans will include strategies to continue to reach and expand this audience.
- **Nearby states** – Visitors to Connecticut and to Guilford also come from surrounding states. The primary states that appeared in the state tourism office's research as well as the visitor counts from Guilford (discussed in the previous sections) are Massachusetts, New York and Rhode Island. Also appearing are New Jersey and New Hampshire. As Guilford's heritage tourism program expands, plans will include promotions to these states through coordination with the state's tourism office and through other venues discussed in Guilford's *Heritage Tourism Strategic Plan: 2013-2018*.
- **International visitors** – Data from the Whitfield Museum and the historic walking tours shows that visitors from other countries are coming to Guilford. Although this will not be a primary target audience, as Guilford develops and implements a visitor research program in the coming years, information will be gathered on how these visitors learn about and decide to visit Guilford. This information will give insights into the possibilities of further promotion to selected countries in coordination with the state's tourism office.

### Traveler Characteristics

In addition to considering geographic origins, identifying target audience characteristics will aid Guilford in its heritage tourism development and promotion. National research shows travelers who enjoy visiting historic and cultural sites often have a variety of interests that complement their cultural heritage interests. For example, an amateur photographer may enjoy taking pictures of historic buildings or

scenic landscapes. Or a hiking enthusiast may enjoy following the route of a historic road or trail. Looking at these interests by travel segment, several potential audiences can be identified:

- **History Buffs** – A large number of tourists enjoy exploring various aspects of history during their travels. Studies show that 14% of travelers could be classified as “passionate” about history meaning they plan their trips specifically to experience a destination’s culture and heritage. Another 12% are considered “well rounded active” travelers who are open to new experiences of a destination’s heritage. This could include everything from taking tours, enjoying hands-on activities, staying at a historic property or participating in a historical re-enactment.
- **Families with children** – According to the U.S. Travel Association, 30% of leisure travelers in the United States are traveling with children. These families take an average of 4.5 trips per year. (*Source: Travel Horizons™, U.S. Travel Association, 2009*). In Connecticut, research shows that 38% of visitors are traveling with children. Additionally, there has been significant growth in multi-generational travel – families with children, parents and grandparents traveling together. (*Source: Preferred Hotels study, 2012*). Most of these trips are planned around family events such as anniversaries, family reunions or weddings. Families may combine these events with sightseeing while they are in a new area.
- **School groups and youth organizations** – Guilford’s historic walking tours drew 60 children from summer camps in 2013. Additionally, Guilford’s historic house museums have a long tradition of offering programs to appeal to youth, such as Early Guilford Days which engages fourth graders to learn about Guilford’s history, and educational exhibits at Whitfield Museum. A strategy included in Guilford’s heritage tourism plan is to “plan programs to increase involvement of children at historic house museums.” Combining this strategy with continued promotion of the historic walking tours, installation of interpretive signage and creation of a visitor information center will provide resources to support outreach to school groups and youth organizations.
- **Baby Boomers** – *The Cultural and Heritage Traveler 2013* (Mandela Research LLC) shows that baby boomers (age 50-68) make up 31% of the cultural heritage travel market. Studies by the AARP and Baby Boomers Traveling show that 54% of this age segment has already retired. Additionally, the studies show that more than half of all baby boomers say that traveling to explore new destinations is one of their life goals. With more of the nation’s 79 million boomers retiring each year, the number of baby boomer travelers can be expected to increase in the coming years.
- **Photographers** – With the growing interest in photography, Guilford provides an ideal setting to attract photographers. In addition to photographing the area’s scenery, the area offers many interesting historic structures and events such as fairs and festivals that would also appeal to photographers.
- **Hikers and racers** – The popularity of Bimble’s Bash 10K race and seasonal walks offered by the Guilford Land Conservation Trust confirm the interest among hikers and racers in Guilford. This audience can be introduced to other activities and sites in Guilford as heritage tourism plans are developed.
- **Bicyclists** – According to a 2010 study by the Outdoor Industry Association, 43.3 million Americans six years and older participate in bicycling, making it one of the top five outdoor recreation activities. (This includes bicycling, road biking, mountain biking and motocross.) Guilford’s trail system and greenway plans offer options for attracting visitors to enjoy outdoor recreation and to also experience Guilford’s culture and heritage while in the area.

# Signing Guilford

For the signage component of the Telling Guilford's Story project, Jeff Dawson (Dawson Associates) conducted a two-day site visit to survey existing conditions, get a visitor's perspective of the community, talk with key individuals about the project, and facilitate community and stakeholder meetings. The site survey (described below) and the community meetings (see *Meeting Summaries*, above) allowed Dawson to gain a better understanding of Guilford and comprehend the challenges and opportunities the community faces concerning signage. Based on the results of these activities, coupled with extensive experience in other historic communities, Dawson formulated potential action steps for the GPA, the Connecticut Department of Transportation, and the City of Guilford. The following pages summarize the results of the survey and provide preliminary recommendations on a plan of action for GPA and its state and community partners.

Initially, the signage component of the Telling Guilford's Story project focused on the development of interpretive signs for the community. Following the site survey and discussions with key stakeholders, however, Dawson felt it was important to consider signage holistically. Guilford is a small town with a sensitive historical environment. Adding a new layer of signs is not something that should be done without first considering existing signs and some of the issues they present. As such, the recommendations in this report are aimed at identifying actions that could be taken to streamline signage, making it safer and easier for visitors to navigate and enhancing the community's aesthetic appeal.

Currently, the recommendations in this report are focused on the Historic Town Center, the core of Guilford's heritage assets. Once a system is defined in this area of the community, its application may eventually be expanded—with careful consideration—to the three National Register districts that lie outside of the town center. In the meantime, if identification or interpretive signage is developed for the historic house museums as part of the initial phase, it would be appropriate for all five of the museums to utilize the same system, regardless of their location.

## Site Visit

The Signing Guilford survey focused on issues related to wayfinding, circulation, destination priority, and identification. Dawson identified typical trip patterns, key motorist decision points, and other orientation factors that impact travel in Guilford. With Rob Vavasour as a guide, Dawson visited various destinations during a field trip aimed at familiarizing him with some of the important cultural and historic sites, streetscapes, and interpretive opportunities. The orientation was necessarily short but thorough.

## Site Visit Considerations

Signage is one of the key media used by a destination to help build its brand to make itself visible. Thus, it is important that signage identification programs have a controlled set of design standards that is easily recognized by the visitor, promotes the destination, is consistent and cohesive, is simple to manufacture and maintain, and is in visual harmony with the community. The set of standards must also remain as flexible as possible in order to adapt to future needs, as the future will always include further growth, pattern changes, and increased traffic.

It is important to take into account the following parameters when conducting a site visit to determine existing conditions, as well as in considering what would make an effective, user-friendly wayfinding and interpretive signage program:

### **Design Vocabulary**

Do existing signs have a consistent application of design, graphic layout, materials, type font, and color scheme that complement the architecturally sensitive historical environment of Guilford? If not, what kind of design vocabulary might be used for a signage program?

### **Design Consistency / Visibility / Readability**

Is sign design consistent and are sign messages visible and easy to comprehend? Many existing efforts to design area-wide tourism wayfinding systems that work on all classes of roads are less than successful because they lack visibility and are inconsistent in design from one class of road to the next. The cause of failure may be a combination of jurisdictional conflicts, lack of funding and limited sign capacity. The framework for a successful signing program must therefore be based on a realistic understanding of each of these factors.

### **Sign Capacity and Destination Priority**

How is sign capacity balanced with the issue of prioritizing destinations? Intersections on public roads (decision points) require safety, traffic control, and regulatory and state-mandated guide signs before tourism-related signs are considered. On heavily traveled roads, traffic control signs as a whole are approved in a receding order of priority. The capacity for tourist signs at any given intersection will likely be limited.

All interstate highway signage follows a highly controlled set of design standards. The *Manual for Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (MUTCD) and the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CDOT), determine what these signs will look like, messages, and locations and capacity. State policy often follows federal, but the exact standards may differ by state and by road type.

Local municipalities have options to adopt the state highway standards, modify them, or develop new. Often, transportation policy is very conservative. Transportation experts say when innovation by city planners results in lackluster performance, they are quickly maligned—and public scorn makes transportation officials wary of experimenting with new ideas.

### **Wayfinding Routes and Circulation Patterns**

What are the specific issues related to travel routes and circulation patterns that influence wayfinding? Consideration must be given to identify typical travel patterns, key motorist or pedestrian decision points, and other orientation factors that impact a visitor while trying to find and navigate to various destinations and public facilities. Auto wayfinding and pedestrian wayfinding have very different requirements. Auto wayfinding and identification signs are those most valued by visitors.

# Survey of Existing Conditions

Site images courtesy of Ellen Ebert



At the Exit off of I-95 directional signs are not consistent, are undersized, and have poor site placement for traffic patterns and viewing distances. On the interstate, there is a heritage brown sign directing people off the exit. Once a traveler exits, however, heritage brown signs are lost in a maze with other important regulatory and wayfinding signs.



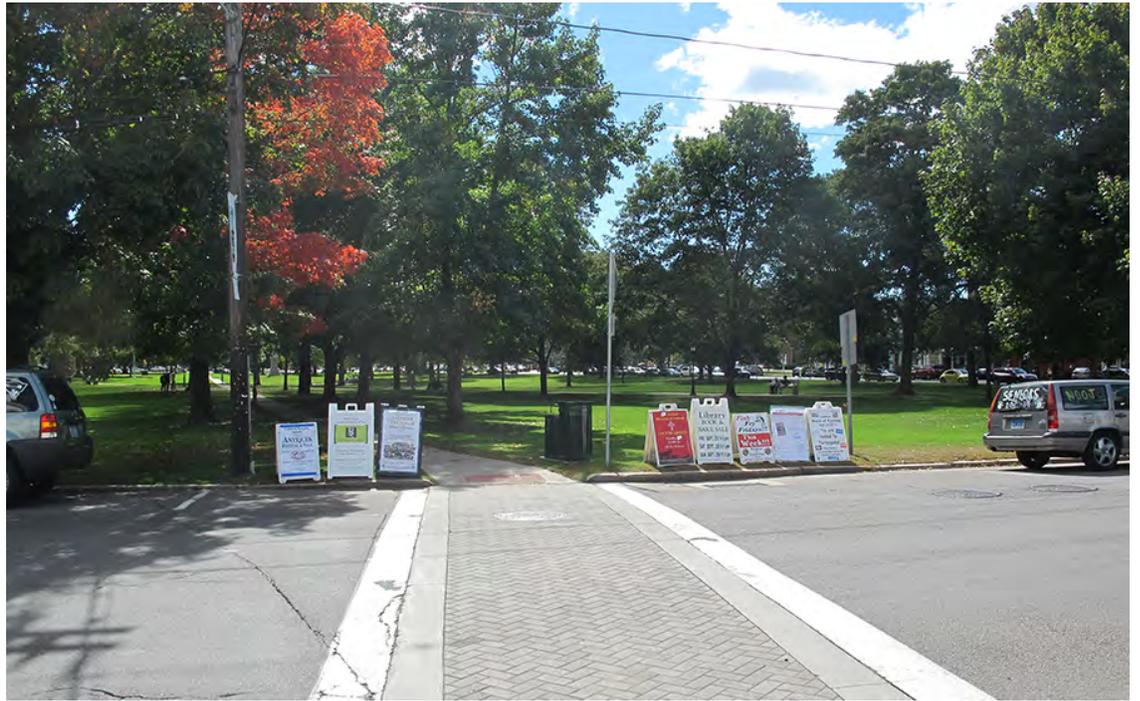
Various signing programs with different sign standards and messaging are being combined and layered onto the same poles for a disarranged and cluttered appearance. This process repeats itself throughout the community. The various signing programs should adopt a single sign standard with panel size, color and typeface that is consistent with standards for MUTCD and Tourist Orientation Destination Signs (TODS, or blue signs). Signs that are unnecessary or that do not have approval by CDOT should be removed.



Gateway signs marking the entrances are showing wear. Replacing them at the same locations should be a high priority. Long-term, new materials should be considered and new design could also be discussed.



Throughout Guilford, there are travel routes that are over signed and have a variety of sign shapes, colors, and messages. Poor placement makes them even harder to read. The location shown above is also scheduled for another sign to point visitors to the Guilford visitor information kiosk. This will conflict with directions to Tourist Information at the Whitfield Museum.



Temporary signs on the Green create visual clutter and potentially hazardous driving conditions. Placement by the organizations suggests they want motorists to read the content from across the street when stopped and waiting to make a turn.



This is an example of various signs types competing for space and attention in the same small location. This can be avoided by better programming. Too many messages results in confusion for drivers and contributes to visual clutter. Further down the street there are regulatory signs attached to separate poles of different heights adding to the disorganized appearance throughout the area.



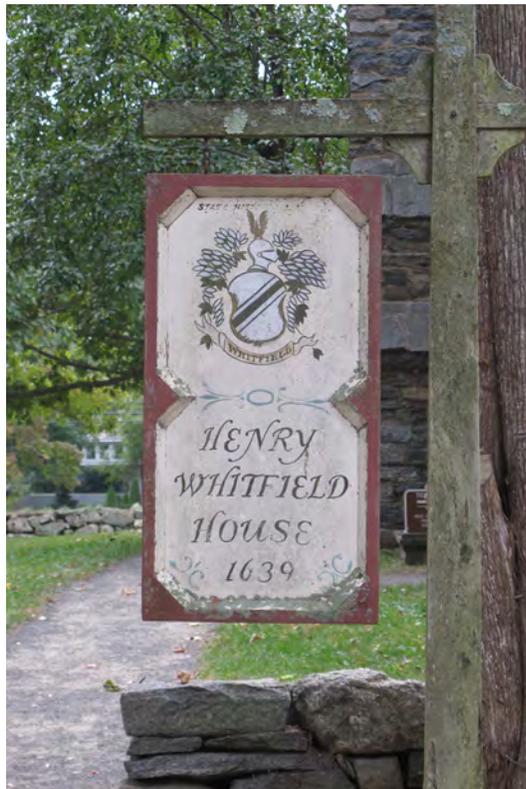
Older wayfinding signs such as the boat ramp with type that is unreadable from a car conflict with new versions of that sign system, such as Whitfield Museum sign in the background. Priorities should be reconsidered and all signs should be placed on one pole to lessen clutter, increase consistency, and clarify the message.



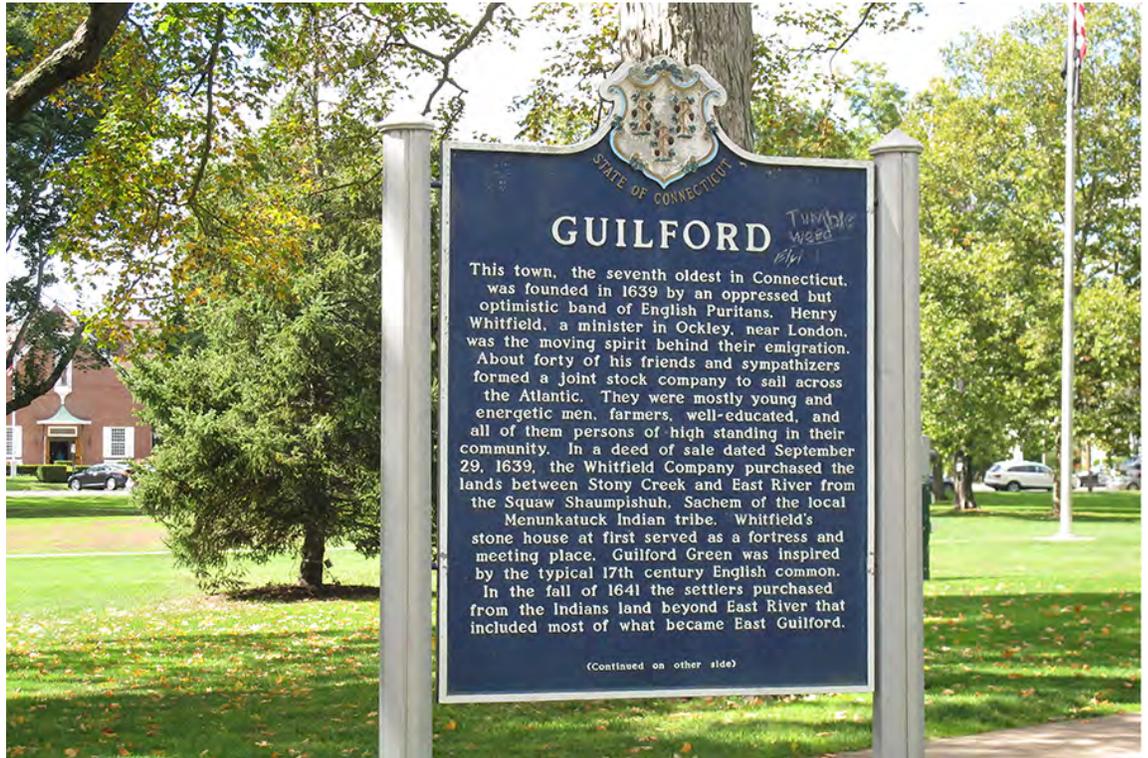
State signage standards are not wholly compatible with the sensitive historic environment. Long-term, perhaps the state identification sign can be complemented by new historic wayfinding and identification signs, and the other information signs can be removed.



The information kiosk that an Eagle Scout built on state property is not compatible with the historic setting of the Henry Whitfield House, a National Historic Landmark. The simple weathered frame without the excess signs and bulletins may appear appropriate if it could house a simpler interpretive display.



The site sign above is the only identity sign reflective of the historic nature of this National Historic Landmark. This sign could be refreshed or restored using the same graphic elements.



Both of the heritage interpretive signs above exhibit quality design. Furthermore, placement of the small interpretive sign on the fluted pole works well. The small sign is consistent with heritage signing such as that used by the National Register of Historic Places.

The fluted pole should be used for other streetscape applications such as new street signs with larger font that better reflects the town's heritage on major corridors that visitors use.



When older interpretive signs need to be replaced, they should be replaced with a higher quality design standard material such as brass or porcelain enamel. To replicate the same sign with painted white wood is a short-term solution that requires maintenance and does not express the permanent quality a heritage site should have.



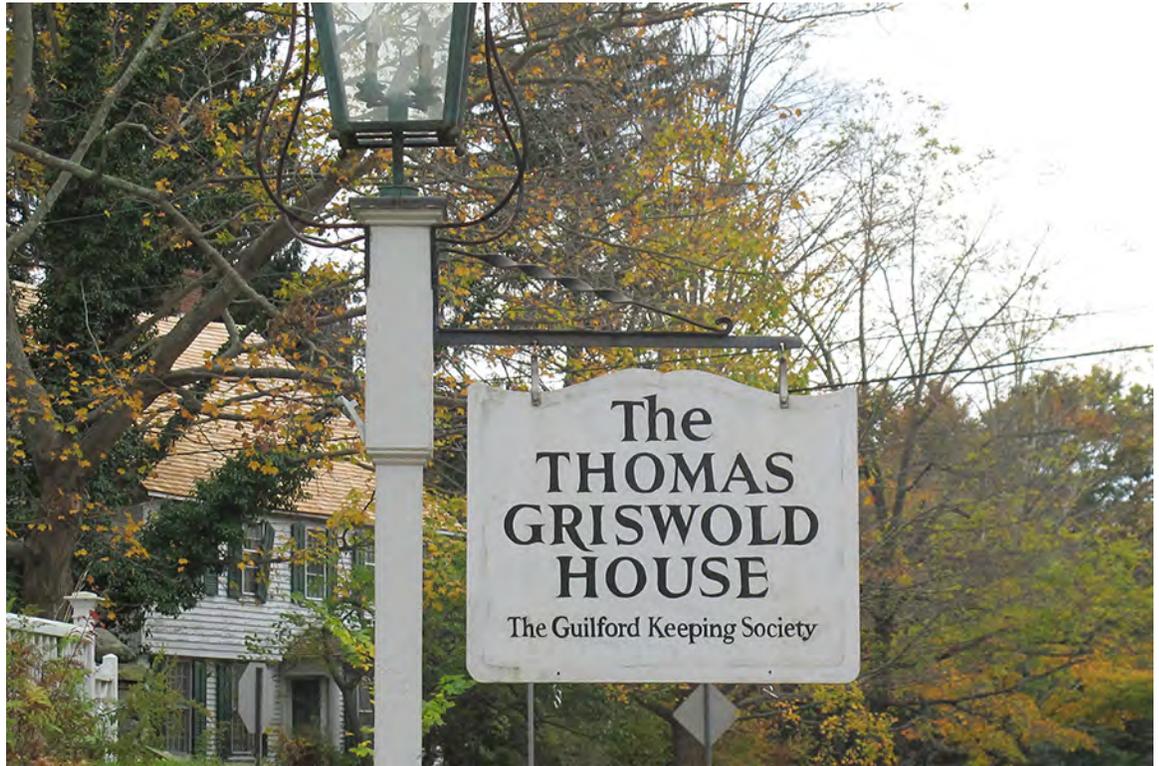
The size and placement of the Guilford Keeping Society house plaques work well for the community. Other interpretive efforts should follow this practice of an appropriate size ratio of sign to structure.



Bronze is the metal most frequently used for heritage signage. National Register design and quality fabrication standards are done to maintain a consistent brand and long lasting sign. Today, this look can also be effectively replicated with less expensive alloys.

While all properties that deserve recognition are not listed in the National Register of Historic Places, utilizing signs that reflect the same quality and permanence helps maintain Guilford's heritage integrity (see *Examples of Other Communities*, below).





These types of heritage identification site signs are what visitors expect to see in New England. Signing of historical sites should have a “Good Practice Policy” so new signs and interpretive efforts do not destroy or detract from the site. Over signing a site with regulatory, information, and interpretive signs can spoil the sense of place.

## **Summary of Challenges and Opportunities**

Guilford is a beautiful historic community that has found itself burdened by years of signs accumulating at crosswalks and key intersections. The result is that the community lacks clear wayfinding to its most valued and important historical, cultural, and natural destinations.

An overload of signs and the lack of consistent standards have caused visual pollution that is in complete contrast to the beautiful heritage streetscapes. Signs appear at every turn in the road, and on many corners there are old and new signs, overlapping signs, and signs in disrepair all competing on a small piece of ground. This congestion has a negative impact on visitors, and in some cases makes signs unreadable (and therefore unsafe). Further complicating the area are current plans to add additional signs for interpretation, map kiosk displays, and visitor center signs (which are needed) without having a Master Signage Plan. A master plan can integrate controls that contain and reduce signage, identify how and where to place new wayfinding and interpretive signage, and also allow other municipal, state, and commercial signage to be woven together in a way that complements the community's historic setting.

The list that follows includes a series of recommendations for the Guilford Preservation Alliance and its state and community partners. These recommendations are based on the site survey and public involvement, as well as best practices in other historic communities. The recommendations below are components that, when taken together, are the basis for a signage master plan for the community of Guilford.

### **Suggested Improvements for State DOT Signage**

- Improve quality of brown highway signs on I-95 “Historic Guilford - Next Exit”
- Update Tourist Orientation Directional Signs (TODS) with consistent standards to provide clear directions
- Remove State brown wayfinding signs from the Historic Town Center
- Provide guidelines for placement and size, and reduce other signage

### **Suggested Improvements for City Streetscape Signage**

- Improve signage placement selection criteria at intersections to reduce sign congestion
- Develop new policy standards for City regulatory practices
- Develop new policy to eliminate signs, “less is best policy”
- Adopt the fluted pole used in the Green for other applications
- Improve street signs with larger type on fluted poles for primary travel routes
- Change the policy and remove displays on the Green at Church and Broad Streets
- Straighten crooked poles, replace worn or damaged signs

### **Suggested Plan of Action for the Guilford Preservation Alliance and Community Partners**

#### **Design New Gateway Identification Signs**

- Design and install new gateway identification signs
  - Route 77 Church Street
  - Boston Post Rd. East and West

### **Develop Needs Analysis to Determine Directional Signage**

- Historic District Auto Directional Signage
  - Historic Sites, Districts and Neighborhoods (i.e. Dudleytown and North Guilford)
  - Municipal Buildings
  - Visitor Center and Visitor Information Kiosk
  - Recreational Areas
- Historic District Pedestrian Directional Signage and Map Kiosks

### **Develop Historical Site “Good Practice” Guidelines**

- Henry Whitfield State Museum, an NHL, should lead by example

### **Develop Interpretive Signage Guidelines**

- Define three sign types for different locations with site restrictions, content requirements with internet download capabilities

### **Develop Historic District Signage Design Standards Determined by Needs Analysis**

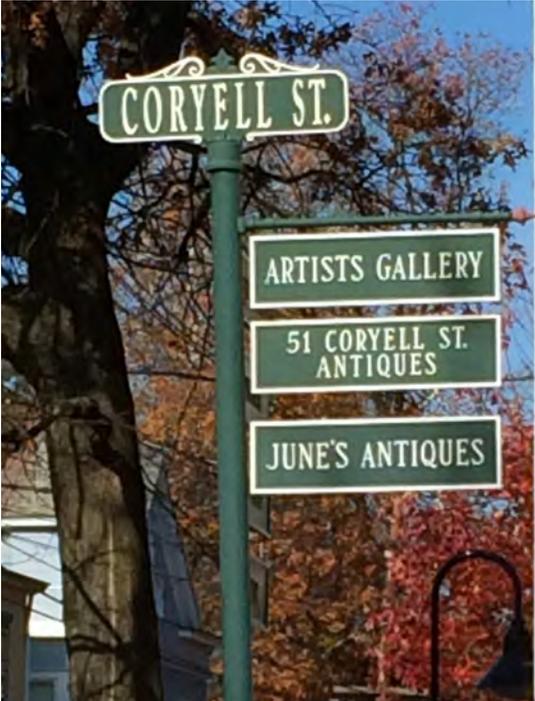
- Auto Wayfinding and Directional Signs
- Gateway Identification Signs
- Guilford Visitor Center Signs
- Pedestrian Directional Signs
- Pedestrian Information Map Kiosks
- Interpretive Signs

### **Business Streetscape Improvement Around the Green**

- Encourage businesses to create interesting signage and storefront displays that contribute to an atmosphere that is visually exciting, fun, and inviting, while maintaining a level of sophistication and quality. Consider accomplishments in other like-minded historic communities that have successfully increased visitation.

# Examples from Other Communities

File Reference: Lambertville Historic District Business Signage



**Dawson Associates Project  
Natchitoches Historic Landmark District**



Identity Site Sign



Walking Trail Directional

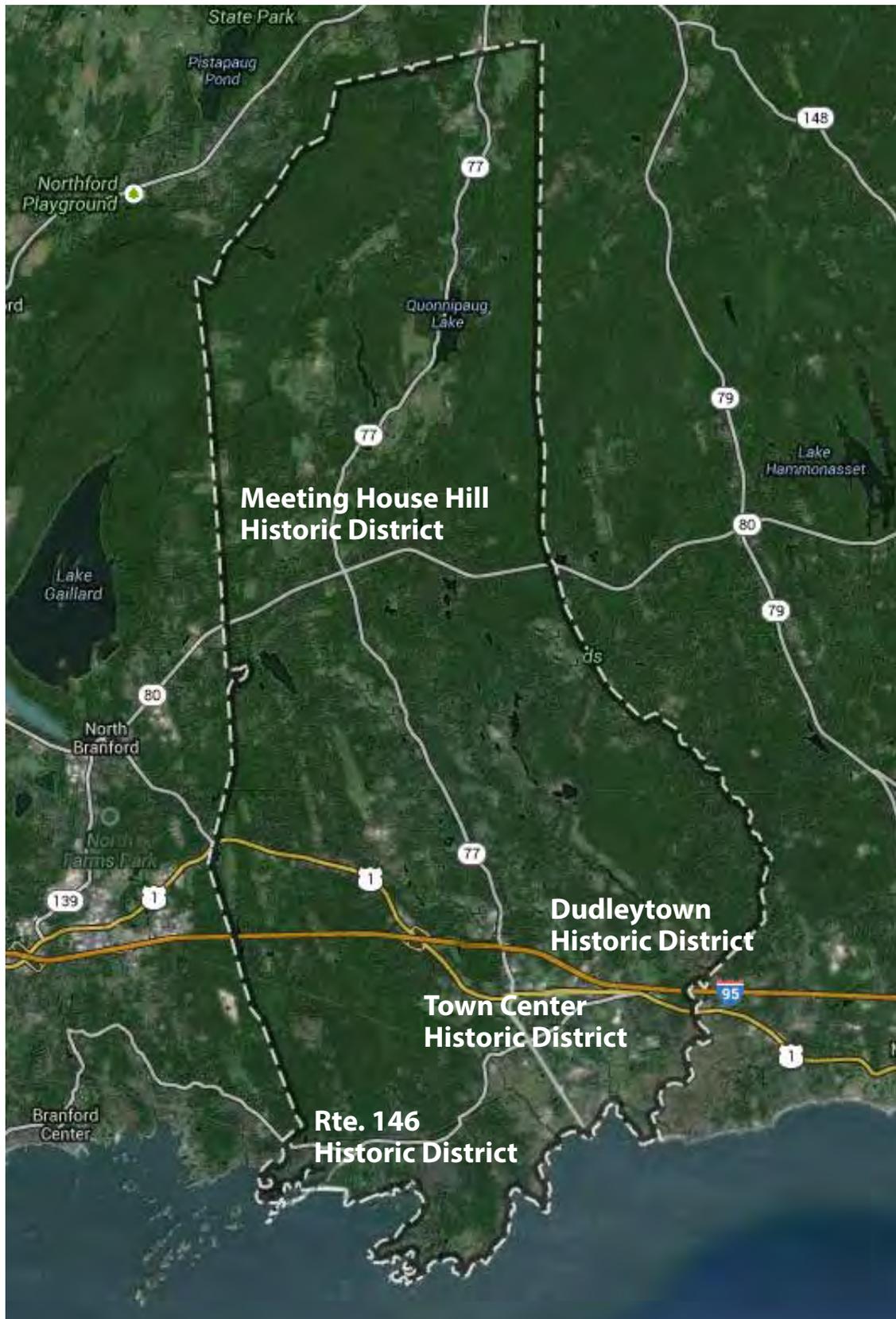


Interpretive Display



Auto Directional

# Guilford Historic Districts



## Wayfinding

Define and Sign Major Automobile Routes with DOT Signing Standards and Transition into Guilford Historic Signing Standards

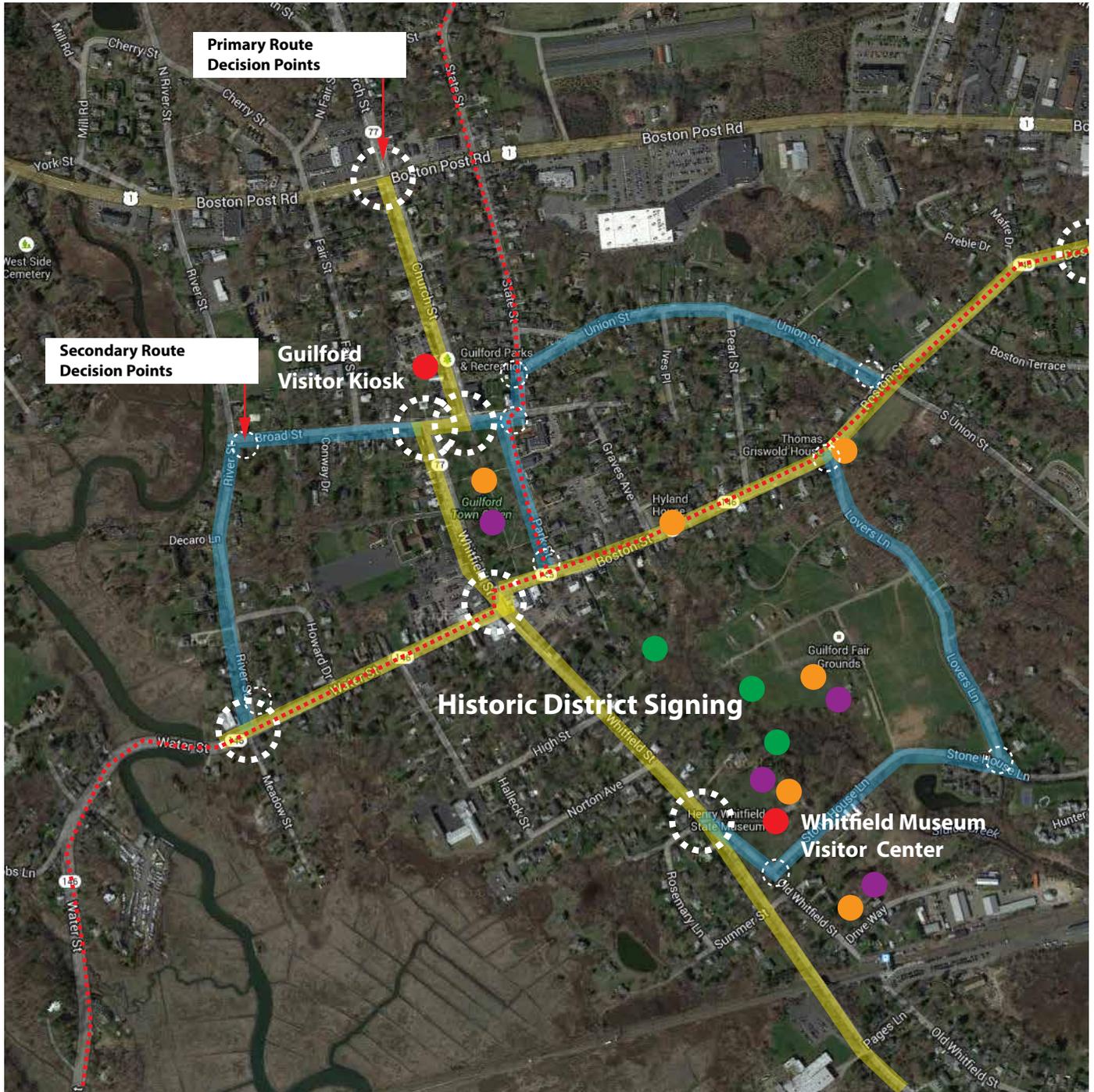


State DOT Sign Standards Apply - Red Highlight

Historic District Sign Standards Apply - Yellow Highlight

# Wayfinding

Define Automobile Travel Routes with Directional Signs to Historical, Natural and Cultural Destinations and Define Pedestrian Travel Routes and Bike Trails



- |   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
| <span style="color: red;">●</span> Visitor Information        | Primary Route - Yellow Highlight |
| <span style="color: orange;">●</span> Historical Destinations | Secondary Route - Blue Highlight |
| <span style="color: green;">●</span> Natural Destinations     | Bike Route - Dotted Red          |
| <span style="color: purple;">●</span> Cultural Destinations   |                                  |