



GUILFORD PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

NEWSLETTER

FALL 2018

Letter From the President

2018 has been another rewarding year for GPA, as we continued to pursue our mission of preserving the built and natural environment of Guilford. Here are some of our accomplishments this year:

- Our most recent project is working on protecting the historic Davis House (ca1792), located on Goose Lane at Exit 59. We have entered into discussions with Yale New Haven Hospital regarding the protection, restoration and reuse of the building. The house has a very rich history connected to the history of Guilford, of Connecticut, and the country as a whole.



The James Davis Jr. house, 111 Goose Lane, built ca 1792. The north and south wings were added later.

- The Sustainable Guilford Task Force has recently formed, and will work not only on reducing energy needs in public buildings and schools, but will use cost effective environmental management strategies that will help protect the health and safety of Town residents, and protect our fragile coastal and inland resources. Howard Brown is representing GPA on the task force.
- The Witness Stones Project aims to acknowledge the history of slavery in Guilford and to honor the humanity and contributions of the enslaved people here by placing engraved stones where they lived, worked or prayed. The Project is gearing up for year two, with the stone installation ceremony planned for November 15th on the Green.
- The Marjorie Schmitt Visitor Kiosk, located at 32 Church St., had its fourth successful season this year, giving visitors information on the five house museums, local events, hiking trails, and other recreational activities, shopping, services, and more. Visit our website at www.visitguilfordct.com
- Visitors and residents alike took the free Around the Green Walking Tours this season. On the tour, volunteers explain the history of the Green, and the surrounding homes, businesses and civic buildings, most of which are on the National Register of Historic Places. Tours originate at the Visitor Kiosk.
- The State of Connecticut has approved the design and content of the "Welcome to Guilford" signs, to be placed at the end of each exit from I-95. The next step for the Guilford Tourism Committee is to present the plan to the Board of Selectmen for their approval.
- Guilford's Hyland House and Griswold Museums hosted the annual Early Guilford Days, as well as Early Guilford Family Days this past year. Representatives from the Five House Museums meet 4-5 times a year to plan collaborative projects.

You may want to read in more detail about our accomplishments in this newsletter. To contribute to our preservation efforts, please use the enclosed remittance envelope or to use your credit card, visit www.guilfordpreservation.org

Thank you,

Shirley Gironi, President

GPA Works to Protect Historic Davis House

GPA has entered into discussions with Yale New Haven Hospital regarding the protection, restoration and reuse of the historic Davis House, which is conspicuously located in front of the hospital's medical center property on Goose Lane at Exit 59 in Guilford. The house, which was last used as the Sachem Country House Restaurant and closed in 2003, has an extraordinarily rich history connected to the history of Guilford, of Connecticut, and of the country as a whole.

James Davis, Jr., who served in the American Revolutionary War, built the house ca 1792. In 1781, Davis was wounded in the British raid on Leete's Island in Guilford. But the house's history took on a dramatic new significance during the Civil War, when it was owned by Captain and Mrs. George Bartlett who resided there from the time of their marriage in 1821 to 1893. The Bartletts parented 10 children in the house, one of whom was killed at age 20 while serving in the Union Army. Most remarkable was the additional role that the Bartletts and the house played in the fight against slavery.

George Bartlett became a radical abolitionist, whose strong religious values and conscience put him and his family at risk in standing up against slavery. Distraught by the stance of the First Congregational Church, he founded and led construction of the Third Congregational Church of Guilford (now the First Church of Christ, Scientist) at 49 Park Street. The Third Church resolved that the "Fugitive Slave Act is unconstitutional and condemns innocent men to perpetual bondage without due process of law or trial by jury..."

The 9th resolve of the Third Church stated that, "As Christians, we will not only protect the fugitives, but by our prayers, our votes and all legitimate means we will labor for the deliverance of those who are yet pining in bonds and writhing under the lash of Southern oppression." Bartlett publicly prayed and pleaded for the enslaved. He broke the law to protect escaped slaves.

In a 1968 taped interview, a granddaughter of the Bartletts, Bessie Hall Watrous, told now Town Historian Joel Helander of her Grandfather Bartlett's pride for the role he played in the Underground Railroad. Watrous said the Bartlett House was a "station", where Ruth and George hid and fed runaway slaves in their cellar until people from Old Saybrook would take them on the next leg of their journey to freedom.

The third phase of the house's significance came just after the turn of the century. Beecher and Louise Crouse, a wealthy Utica, New York couple, acquired the farmhouse in 1925 as a country retreat. As ardent preservationists during the Colonial Revival period, they retained renowned architect and architectural historian J. Frederick Kelly of Yale, to restore the house and add north/south wings to the structure.

Great grandchildren of the Crouses who live in Florida and Colorado, were contacted by Joel Helander and subsequently came to Guilford in July of this year. At a ceremony organized by the GPA, the Crouse family presented original family photographs, architectural drawings, and specifications to the hospital officials.

Lastly, the house became a Guilford icon in 1950, when it was converted to a restaurant by Andrew Valente and was closed in 2003, while under the proprietorship of the Khorsandi Family.

The large addition was added to the front of the building as a cocktail lounge and event space by Valente. The house has been vacant for 15 years.

Research about the house and its residents used for this article was conducted and assembled by Guilford Town Historian, Joel Helander. Howard Brown also contributed. The GPA committee working with the hospital also includes Dennis Culliton and GPA President Shirley Gironi.

Sustainable Guilford Task Force Is Formed

In September of this year, First Selectman Matt Hoye reconstituted the Guilford Energy Task Force, which worked for several years to evaluate Town government energy use and needs, and to construct a plan to reduce energy use and costs in all public buildings, including schools. That plan also included using solar energy wherever practical on Town buildings. Implementation has already begun.

The new Task Force will be called the Sustainable Guilford Task Force and will continue the work already begun, but will also expand its scope to include a much wider range of cost effective environmental management activities that will protect the health and safety of Town residents, protect our fragile coastal and inland environmental resources, and join hundreds of cities and towns across America that are doing their part to slow climate change.

To achieve the goals, the Task Force, with the support of the Board of Selectman, has decided to participate in a program called Sustainable CT, designed by Eastern Connecticut University with assistance from the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities. Guilford has begun the process to become certified in the Sustainable CT program, joining 22 other towns across Connecticut. The GPA is proud of the number of sustainability initiatives we have already undertaken with the Town and with other organizations in the community, and is eager to assist in helping the task force succeed. GPA board member Howard Brown is representing GPA on the task force, which is co-chaired by Guilford residents Terri Cain and Mark Allegrini.

We will report on the task force's progress in future newsletters and you can learn about the Sustainable CT program at sustainablect.org.

-Howard Brown

Witness Stones Project Flourishes

The Witness Stones Project has had an active year in 2018. The project received two major grants to support the continued work in Guilford. The Guilford Fund for Education awarded a grant to support educational and public programming. We also received our first grant from a statewide organization, Connecticut Humanities, for outreach of the project in partnership with the Noah Webster House in West Hartford, West Hartford Public Schools, the Middlesex Historical Society and Middletown Public Schools.

This past June Stephanie Brown, Michael Winans, and Michael Negron organized and held Guilford's first Juneteenth Celebration hosted by our friends at the Hyland House. Juneteenth is a holiday celebrated annually on June 19th to commemorate African Americans' emancipation. Guilford's own Mo Pleasure was the featured entertainer and speakers included descendants of enslaved persons and descendants of slave holders.

Witness Stones first teachers' workshop was held mid-summer in Guilford, West Hartford, and Middletown. Historian Dr. Tracey Wilson, teachers Tom Bushnell and Lauren Gulette, and author Anne Farrow were among the

presenters. Witness Stones co-founders Douglas Nygren and Dennis Culliton led many of the discussions.

Along the way, committee members Marcia Safirstein and Ellen Ebert have found a new source for our stones and we look forward to using them in this year's installations.

Right now, the project is gearing up for year two in Guilford with the installation ceremony planned for November 15th on the Guilford Green at 9:30 AM. This year we intend to remember Jouschim, Pompey, and Montros. We are excited to have as a keynote speaker former Commissioner of Social Services for the State of Connecticut and descendant of Montros and Phillis, Patricia Wilson Pheanious as our keynote speaker! We look forward to the continued growth of the project and the support of the GPA, the Guilford Foundation, the Guilford Fund for Education and the entire community.

-Dennis Culliton



Witness Stones summer workshop on the Guilford Green



Dennis Culliton showing Patricia Wilson Pheanious research on the story of Guilford's enslaved, which included her ancestors.

Marjorie Schmitt Visitor Kiosk Has its Fourth Successful Season

It's been another rewarding year at the Visitor Kiosk on the Information Plaza sponsored by the Guilford Preservation Alliance. Located at 32 Church Street, the Kiosk's 15 volunteers helped nearly 300 visitors and residents between May and September find just what they were looking for in our historic town.

The Kiosk is stocked with literature on Guilford's five house museums, local events, historic places, hiking trails and other recreational activities, shopping, services, and more. Our website, www.visitguilfordct.com, can be accessed right on our walk-up Electronic Kiosk or, of course, on smart phones and tablets, making it easy for anyone out for a stroll on or around our famous Green to readily see what's nearby. There are even a number of self-

guided tours on the site, including Fair Street and Alderbrook Cemetery.

Our newest addition this year is a map of hiking areas within Guilford. Mounted on the back of the Visitor Kiosk, the map highlights areas for which we can provide more detailed trail maps. Also displayed are recreation areas such as parks, schools and beaches.

We appreciate the continuing support of our many advertisers who also contribute to the enjoyable experiences of our visitors and residents. We encourage you to find out more about them on our website, www.visitguilfordct.com.

-Allison Alkire



Descendants of Guilford Founders Visit

Will Franklin, of Austin, Texas, and his family enjoyed the Around the Guilford Green free walking tour on July 5, 2018. Will, a descendant of several Guilford founding families including the Bishops, Bentons, Halls, Goldhams and Bushnells, was interested in the tour to see the homestead locations of his ancestors, several of which were located around the Green. A 1645 map of Guilford was used to help identify those areas. During the tour, when participants take on the role of Guilford inhabitants through prepared scripts, Will portrayed Andrew Leete.



Will Franklin and his family on the Around the Green tour.

Leete was born in 1643 and lived where 88 Broad Street is now located. In 1687, when Leete was in Hartford, he helped preserve Connecticut's Royal Charter. This charter, granted by King Charles II in

1662, had granted the colonists a high degree of self-government. But, by 1687, the then King, James II, wanted more centralized control and assigned Sir Edmund Andross to take back Connecticut's charter.

After hours of debate with CT Governor Robert Treat and other colonists, darkness encroached and candles had to be lit on the table with the document. Leete knew he had to do something, so he feigned an illness, threw his hands up in the air, grabbed his chest, fell forward on the table, and knocked over the two candelabras on the table, plunging the chamber into darkness. Captain Joseph Wadsworth, who was positioned outside the tavern, then conveniently found himself in possession of the charter during the ensuing chaos. He took the Charter and hid it safely inside a majestic white oak tree, which was afterward called the "Charter Oak."

Around the Green Walking Tours are available Saturdays at 11:00 a.m. during the kiosk season, and by appointment. Contact Tracy Tomaselli, 203-671-9351.

-Tracy Tomaselli

State Approves “Welcome To Guilford” Signs

The Guilford Tourism Committee, convened by Brian McGlone, Economic Development and Tourism Coordinator, with the Guilford Preservation Alliance and the Shoreline Chamber of Commerce, met on Thursday Sept. 20. The State of Connecticut has approved the design and content of the proposed “Welcome to Guilford” signs to be placed at the end of each exit from I-95. The exact location of

each still has to be approved. The next step is to present the plan to the Board of Selectmen for their approval. Then will come planning for funding for the design and manufacture and installation of the signs. We have started to identify sources for funding.

-Veronica Soell

House Museums Collaborate

Early Guilford Days for Guilford’s fourth graders continues to be very popular after more than 20 years. The students spend half their day at the Griswold Museum and the second half at the Hyland House Museum—each school has their own day.

At both sites, volunteers create a variety of workshops that engage students and adults alike. The children go to great lengths to dress as children long ago, creating a wonderful parade as they move from one museum to the next. Thanks to the GPA for its continuing support.

For the fourth year we entertained, informed and educated visitors from near and far at the Early Guilford Days Family Festival at the end of July. And at each site we focused on storage solutions specific for 17th, 18th and 19th-centuries.

We are now working on our shared theme for 2019. Our major project this year will be a new twist on the Family Festival in the Spring.

-Katherine Frydenborg

A Guilford Perspective



The John Parmelee V House, 605 Nut Plains Rd, built ca 1763. Photographed Jan. 5, 1922

After our family moved here in 1996, I quickly began to discover and appreciate the many beautiful old homes throughout Guilford. I felt incredibly lucky to live in a place with so many well-preserved houses from the 19th-, 18th-, and even 17th-centuries. Later, when I was invited to be on the Guilford Preservation Alliance Board, I was thrilled to join other like-minded people working to preserve the built and natural environment of our town.

Over the years as I drove into the village I would often think that I should count the wonderful old houses on my path, to more fully appreciate our town and the wealth of history preserved in the homes.

So I have finally made my count, with the help of The Guilford Keeping Society’s house markers, and GPA’s Inventory of Architecturally Significant Structures.* As I travel from my house in Nut Plains to the Green on State St. and Nut Plains Rd., I pass three 17th-century homes, eighteen 18th-century homes, and fourteen 19th-century homes: a total of thirty-five historic houses in little more than two miles. What an amazing collection to view on my way to do errands! Among the residents of these homes was a butcher, a cooper, two farmers, a sea captain, a postmaster, and three Civil War soldiers, one a musician in his regiment. A state representative/poet also once lived on my route. And most remarkable of all, another home was owned by a founding citizen who signed the Covenant of Guilford.

For those of us who love old houses and the stories they silently hold of our history and the people who lived it, nothing could be better than living in Guilford.

-Ellie Green, Editor

**GPA’s inventory lists 680 significant structures in Guilford.*



GUILFORD PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

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2018-2019**

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