



GUILFORD PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

NEWSLETTER

FALL 2019

Letter From the President

GPA's mission is to preserve the built and natural environment of Guilford. I want to share with you some of the ways we have honored our mission during the past year.

- GPA has been awarded the prestigious Harlan H. Griswold Award by the CT Trust for Historic Preservation and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). The CT Preservation News states, "Historic and natural resources in the Town of Guilford have an effective and tireless champion in the GPA."

- The Witness Stones Project, whose mission is to bring back the enslaved to memory and to honor them as people, continues its educational focus, but now is broadening its scope to include increased involvement in the Guilford community.

- You may recall reading the article in this newsletter in Fall of 2017, "Saving the Moose Hill District Schoolhouse." Its salvation is now complete, and it has a new address in North Guilford. This is all thanks to Bill Butterly, a dedicated preservationist who has reconstructed the little one-room schoolhouse on his property at Bluff Head Farm. Read how GPA was involved from the start elsewhere in this newsletter.



*President Shirley Girioni accepts Harlan H. Griswold Award for GPA.
(J. Fiereck Photography)*

- Continuing our work with the Yale New Haven Health System to preserve the Davis House at 111 Goose Lane, Town Historian Joel Helander has prepared a detailed timeline of the Davis House history, and GPA is seeking to have the house placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

- Traffic to our website has grown by leaps and bounds and we're happy that visitors and residents alike are finding it useful. Some people prefer the personal contact with one of our 16 volunteers when they walk up to our Information Kiosk, as some 300 did during this our fifth year of service. Around the Green Walking Tours led by volunteers also originate at the Kiosk.

Please read more about GPA's efforts and achievements elsewhere in this newsletter. We ask for your support so that we may continue our important work of preserving Guilford for future generations. To contribute to our work, please use the enclosed remittance envelope or to use your credit card, visit www.guilfordpreservation.org

Sincerely yours,
Shirley Girioni
President

Guilford Preservation Alliance Wins Top Award

The CT State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the CT Trust for Historic Preservation have presented the Harlan Griswold Award to the Guilford Preservation Alliance under the leadership of President Shirley Girioni in 2019. The award recognizes individuals, corporations or organizations whose activities embody the dedication to preservation of the late Harlan Griswold, longtime chair of the CT Historical Commission and a founder of the CT Trust.

Historic and natural resources in Guilford have an effective and tireless champion in the GPA. In 1980 founders Betty Brown, an architectural historian, and former First Selectwoman Marjorie Schmitt gathered other dedicated and passionate residents to form the GPA. They recognized that development pressures and lack of awareness could and would erode the character of a unique town that dates back to 1639.

Three principles continue to guide the work of the GPA: First, that preservation is broad, encompassing not only dwellings and buildings but the landscapes, community histories and cultural and natural resources that shape town character and sense of place; Second, that education is crucial, for the sake of increasing knowledge as well as to build support for preservation; and Third, that almost every undertaking is a partnership with other organizations.

Most remarkable is that for nearly 40 years the GPA has operated as a volunteer organization. The depth and breadth of GPA's accomplishments would never have been possible without the time, talent and energy of generations of committed volunteers.

"Staffs of SHPO and the CT Trust agree that GPA deserves recognition for its creative and out-front use of preservation programs and its record of pushing the boundaries to expand the understanding and effect of preservation in the community." (Excerpted from Connecticut Preservation News, May/June 2019)

Moose Hill District School House: A Crowning Preservation Achievement

William (Bill) G. Butterly, III has done it again! The fall 2017 GPA newsletter reported Bill's dramatic preservation intervention to save an endangered school house--and now, the project is completed.

On September 23, Bill invited the GPA Board of Directors to view the circa 1811 Moose Hill School, lovingly relocated and re-erected on his Bluff Head Farm property in North Guilford. After the tour, Bill served a supper in his 1789 colonial home, followed by the monthly Board meeting.

Most people never realized that the shabby, one story dwelling house formerly owned by the Montana Family at 2772 Boston Post Road harbored an early nineteenth century school. The living room of their house was the original school building, enclosed on four sides by 20th century additions.



*Bill Butterly prepares to host the GPA Board at the re-erected Moose Hill District Schoolhouse on his Bluff Head Farm property in North Guilford.
(photo by J. E. Helander)*

When the schoolhouse lot on the southeast corner of Route One and Moose Hill Road was lost to mortgage foreclosure by the Montana Family in 2013, the Guilford Preservation Alliance went on

high alert. After all, there are only twelve (12) other surviving schoolhouses in Guilford. The fate of this little temple of learning was threatened. Once again, the GPA realized that early intervention for preservation is usually more successful than last minute actions taken when the town receives an application for demolition.

The hand-hewn, oak timber frame was all there, including tapered rafter sets (4x4"), plates (7x7"), end girts (7x7"), and chimney girt (7x7"). Corner posts and wall studs in chestnut wood were also original to the structure. Accordion type lath boards supported plastered walls and ceiling. The flooring system was comprised of hand hewn sills (7x7") and half-log joists. Under three layers of flooring, original, thick pine floor boards were uncovered.



The GPA Board listens to Bill Butterly explain his spectacular schoolhouse restoration. (Photo by J.E. Helander 09/23/19)

Over the summer of 2017, the Guilford Preservation Alliance coordinated communication between Jonathan Wuerth, restoration contractor, and the new Branford investment/developer. A formal agreement was forged whereby Jonathan would salvage the original schoolhouse by extricating its frame from surrounding additions. This was a tedious and laborious task, accomplished by Jonathan and his assistant, Kory Johnson. Every beam and timber was carefully dismantled, marked, and catalogued. During the process of dismantlement, Jonathan found telltale school relics i.e. a piece of slate, a broken blackboard eraser, the neck of an ink bottle, and hickory switches.

When Bill Butterly stepped in and forged a further agreement with Jonathan Wuerth, his objective was three-fold: 1) to relocate the original, all-intact frame of the school house; 2) restore it as a museum with appropriate period furnishings; and 3) allow limited public access for educational purposes.

Bill proceeded with his master plan after receiving site plan approvals from the Town of Guilford. Master Mason Ed Wettemann from North Guilford poured a concrete foundation slab with eight inch knee walls. Bill's own restoration workers laid down new 8x8" pressure treated sills and re-constructed the 16x24' timber frame structure, using other new wood only for the roof: sheathing (1" thick pine) and shingles (hand-split cedar shakes), and exterior siding.

Bill spared no labor or expense to capture true authenticity. Daragh McDonough from Madison plastered the interior school room using strips of wood lath, custom cut from red oak at the Marlowe Saw Mill. In lieu of horse hair, fashionable in the 19th century, nylon fibers were added to the plaster mix. Another master mason, Frank Wettemann of Killingworth constructed a chimney using old brick that Bill had acquired from an out-of-state market. An old pot-bellied stove has been set up in the middle of the room, plus a vintage schoolmaster's desk at the head of the room. Along the side walls, old school books, such as Webster's Spelling book and the New England Primer, are displayed in glass cabinets. Many of these books were used in Guilford school houses long ago, thanks to gifts from Deborah Rynn acting on behalf of the Estate of Susan Weady.

Thank you, Bill Butterly, for giving an old school house a new lease on life!

-Joel Helander

Witness Stones Project Broadens Its Scope in Guilford

The GPA's Witness Stones Committee is in a period of transition. Dennis Culliton has left GPA in order to pursue bringing his slavery curriculum to other schools. The educational curriculum he developed for eighth graders remains in place at Adams Middle School. The only thing that will change is that the unit on slavery has been switched from the Fall to the Spring which is when the installation ceremony will now occur. This academic year the three enslaved people to be studied lived and toiled in North Guilford where the installations will take place. The Witness Stone Project's Juneteenth celebration will remain in June, and the Committee will continue to have programs at the library.

Dennis Culliton will hold a two-day training for the community November 19th and 21st on how to research slavery in Guilford. Participants will use original documents to learn about Dinah, who was purchased by the Guilford Board of Selectmen. The training will be followed by an installation ceremony in front of the house where Dinah was enslaved, 65 Water St. at 11:00 am on Saturday November 23rd. To register for the training contact Guilford Free Library.



*Patricia Wilson Pheanious with Adams Middle School 8th graders after placing a stone for her ancestor Montros.
(Photo by Ellen Ebert)*

The November training and installation for Dinah broaden the scope of the Witness Stones Project. It is moving beyond being school centered to include increased involvement of the community. That process was already happening internally on the Committee. The Project's mason, Brad Leete, whose family was among the town's original settlers donates his time to prepare the ground for each installation. He says he believes his family had slaves, but no evidence of that has yet been found. In rebuttal, he notes his family is intermarried with the Chittendens who did own slaves. The Committee would gladly pay him for his work, but he refuses.

In a sense, Brad Leete personifies that remembrance is a form of reparation. So does Committee member Michael Winans who with Stephanie Brown helped plan and put on the Witness Stones Juneteenth Celebration at the Hyland House.

Being involved in the Witness Stones Project affected Michael so much that he started to research his own family. At the Juneteenth event he reported on his findings. Michael said that he had found that not only one, but several family members had owned slaves. In doing the research and reporting on what he had found he showed courage and modeled what others can do.

Last November, a stone was installed for Pompey at 320 Boston St., where he was enslaved as a carpenter circa 1775. Pompey was the last known slave in Guilford.

The second enslaved person honored with a stone in 2018 was Montros, a farmer, enslaved from 1728 to 1771. Dennis Culliton and Tracy Tomaselli found a descendent of Montros and Phillis who were enslaved where Guilford Savings Bank now stands. Her name is Patricia Wilson Pheanious; she was recently elected to the State Assembly and she spoke at the 2018 Witness Stone dedication ceremony and at Montros' installation.

As she spoke, mason Brad Leete was nearby. When she was finished, he would make sure the stones were properly seated. On his knees, his eyes teared. No one saw that. Few realized that the man on his knees and the African American woman standing near him were descendant from people who probably had seen each other on the streets of Guilford and who probably never imagined that their relatives would meet in different circumstances more than 200 years in the future, she an elected member of the state legislature, and he proud to be a part of the Witness Stones Project and its mission to bring the enslaved back to memory and to honor them as people.



The Witness Stones Committee with Nekita Waller and her band at the Juneteenth event. (Photo courtesy of Michael Negrón)

-Douglas Nygren, Witness Stones Co-Founder and Acting Chair

GPA Helps Preserve Chairs from Old Town Hall Auditorium



First Selectman Matt Hoey with Town Hall Auditorium seats before their restoration by "Furniture Doctor" Brett Gagne (left).

When Town Hall was built in 1893, the rear of the ground floor had an auditorium with seating for 300 people. It was used for performances, concerts, and high school graduation, but mainly town meetings. Over the years, the building was renovated and enlarged, and the auditorium was eliminated around 1947. Its ornate wooden seating was put into storage. When the building was again renovated in 1974 and the seating was "up for grabs," Town Historian Joel Helander moved three sets of connected seats to his family home, and they have been there ever since.

Now with the help of a grant from Guilford Preservation Alliance, one set of three wooden connected chairs has been restored and returned to Town Hall. First Selectman Matt Hoey has been a strong supporter of this project.

All town residents are invited to see the chairs and sit on a piece of Guilford history!
-Pat Kral

GPA Seeks Nomination of Davis House to National Register

Built by American Revolutionary War soldier James Davis, Jr., home to abolitionist Captain George Bartlett, and restored by renowned architect J. Frederick Kelley, the house at 111 Goose Lane is currently being documented for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. It has been recognized as an important cultural resource on every historic house inventory since 1939 and is recognized on the State of Connecticut's Freedom Trail honor roll. The nomination will be submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office by the end of 2019. Once submitted, the review process can take several months, but will be well worth the wait. National Register listing will not only open the door for greater preservation and restoration options for the house, but will shine a much deserved light on this irreplaceable Guilford landmark.

*-Elizabeth Holt, Director of Preservation Services
New Haven Preservation Trust*

GPA is underwriting this effort from its Hugh Jones Trust Fund for historic preservation and restoration.

GPA and Yale New Haven Health System Continue Work on Preservation of the Davis House

As the nomination process for placement on the National Register of Historic Places continues, GPA is working with the Yale New Haven Health System to preserve the Davis house. Guilford Town Historian Joel Helander prepared a detailed timeline of the house history, which begins with the following summary:

"The significance of the historical house reaches far beyond the borders of Guilford and covers at least three different historical periods: the 18th Century when it was built, slavery and the Civil War period, when its abolitionist owner George Bartlett made it a stop on the underground railroad, and the early 20th century – owing to its restoration and expansion by renowned Yale architect Frederick Kelly. In addition, the house was modified in the mid-twentieth century to become a restaurant that was a major community meeting and gathering place and an important part of the community."



*James Davis, Jr. House, September 1928, soon after Mr. & Mrs. Beecher Crouse (Utica, NY) restored the place as a country retreat.
(From: Collection of J.E. Helander)*

The detailed timeline, prepared for YNHHS by Joel Helander, will be posted on GPA's website in the near future.

-Howard Brown

Marjorie Schmitt Visitor Kiosk... Five Years and Counting

Traffic to our website, www.visitguilfordct.com, has been growing by leaps and bounds, and we're delighted that so many people, whether residents or visitors, are finding it useful. But we know people also enjoy the personal interaction they experience with one of our 16 volunteers when they walk up to our Information Kiosk, as some 300 did during this our fifth year of service.

Sponsored by the Guilford Preservation Alliance, 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. Now that we're closed for the season (we will reopen in May 2020), our website, accessible on our walk-up Electronic Kiosk or, of course, on smart phones and tablets, makes 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. We appreciate the continuing support of our many advertisers who also contribute to the enjoyable experiences of our visitors and residents. Find out more about them on our website, www.visitguilfordct.com.



The free Around the Green walking tours, which originate at the Information Kiosk, continued to be a success this year. Tours are led by volunteers and can be scheduled by appointment. Contact Tracy Tomaselli at (203) 671-9351, or email tomasellitracy@sbcglobal.net

GPA and Yale New Haven Health System

Continue Work on Preservation of the Davis House

The number of viewers visiting our website has increased every year since it went online in 2016. From January 1 to October 24, 2018 the site had 28,307 visits; over the same period in 2019 there were 39,783 visits, an increase of 40%.

Visitors' top ten website destinations from June 30 to July 6, 2019:

Jacob's Beach	717 visitors
Home Page	373 visitors
Lake Quonnipaug	236 visitors
Summer Concert Series	181 visitors
Guilford Green	106 visitors
Craft Expo	76 visitors
Things to Do	69 visitors
Community Picnic and fireworks Guilford Green and Fairgrounds	48 visitors
McMahon car show at Guilford High School	46 visitors

-Veronica Soell, GPA web team