

*Exhibit*  
*Commemorating*  
*75 Years*  
*of the*  
*Guilford*  
*Keeping Society*

*"Keepers of Our Past"*

*At the*  
*Thomas Griswold House*  
*Museum*

*171 Boston Post Road,*  
*Guilford, CT*

*From June 4 to Sept. 24,*  
*2022*

*Prepared by John Plant*

# THE GUILFORD KEEPING SOCIETY

## What's in the Name?

When the *Society* was founded in January 1947, the original name was the “*Old House Group*”.

The *Society* initially sought to foster appreciation of early New England homes and family values.

It was renamed to the *Guilford Keeping Society* after two months, in March 1947.

The name is derived from the *keeping room* - that fireside gathering place in the homes of early American families.

Secondarily and in a figurative sense, the name refers to the *Society's* early slogan as the “*Keepers of Guilford's heritage*”.

The *Guilford Keeping Society* is a non-profit historical society that collects, preserves and shares the history and heritage of Guilford, Connecticut for present and future generations.

The *Society* maintains and operates two house museums – the *Thomas Griswold House Museum* and the *Medad Stone Tavern Museum*.





One of the Society's earliest movers and doers of the *Keeping Society* was Mrs. Dorothy Davis, who remained vitally interested in the affairs of *GKS* until her death in 1987.

When Dorothy visited fourth grade classes at the A. W. Cox School in 1971, she told the children that the *GKS* chose "*keeping*" in its name because it means one who keeps, guards, watches, and has custody.

*Guilford Keeping Society, tea party 1947*

# Past & Current GKS Presidents

1. Dorothy Glen 1947-1948
2. Kenneth N. Herlin 1948-1949
3. Louise Mazzocchi 1949-1951
4. Dorothy Davis 1951
5. Mary M. Phinney 1951-1953
6. John E. Irwin 1953-1955
7. Jack Welty 1957-1959
8. Frederic G. Davis 1959-1964
9. Robert B. Gordon 1964-1970
10. William H. Goldrich 1970-1972
11. Dr. Howard Hornstein 1974-1979
12. James Lindsay 1979-1983
13. Merle Hornstein 1983-1990
14. Jeanette Goldrich 1990-1993
15. Sandra Rux 1993-1999
16. Edward B. Ayres 1999-2001
17. Sandra Rux 2001-2003 (2nd term)
18. Robert B. Gordon 2003-2006 (2nd term)
19. Thomas G. Black 2006-2012
20. Winnie Seibert 2012-2018
21. Robert Hartmann, Jr. 2018-

**THE  
MEDAD STONE  
TAVERN**

**— 1803 —**

**The Guilford Keeping Society**

**171**



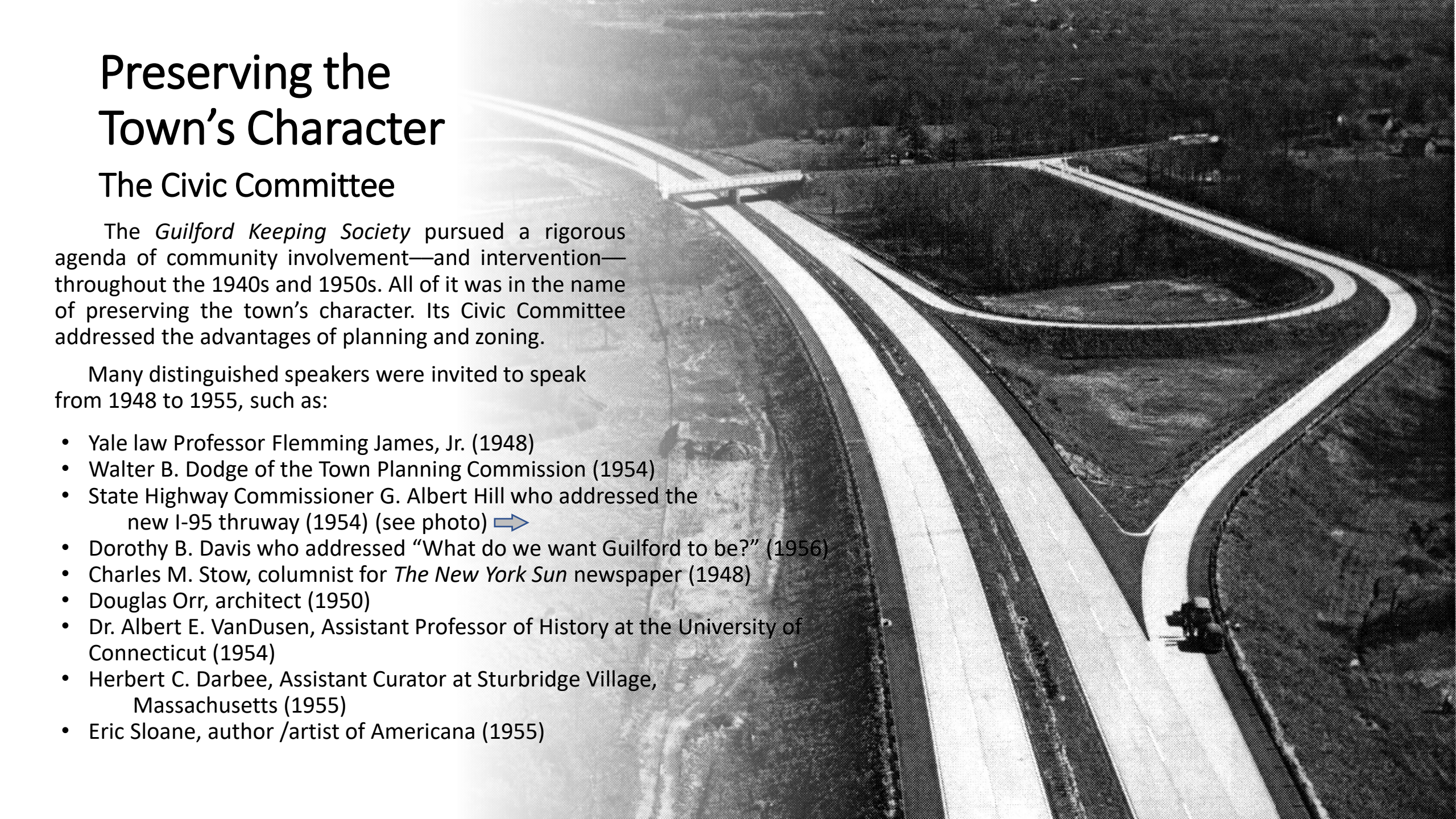
# Preserving the Town's Character

## The Civic Committee

The *Guilford Keeping Society* pursued a rigorous agenda of community involvement—and intervention—throughout the 1940s and 1950s. All of it was in the name of preserving the town's character. Its Civic Committee addressed the advantages of planning and zoning.

Many distinguished speakers were invited to speak from 1948 to 1955, such as:

- Yale law Professor Flemming James, Jr. (1948)
- Walter B. Dodge of the Town Planning Commission (1954)
- State Highway Commissioner G. Albert Hill who addressed the new I-95 thruway (1954) (see photo) ➡
- Dorothy B. Davis who addressed “What do we want Guilford to be?” (1956)
- Charles M. Stow, columnist for *The New York Sun* newspaper (1948)
- Douglas Orr, architect (1950)
- Dr. Albert E. VanDusen, Assistant Professor of History at the University of Connecticut (1954)
- Herbert C. Darbee, Assistant Curator at Sturbridge Village, Massachusetts (1955)
- Eric Sloane, author /artist of Americana (1955)





# House Preservation & Creation of Historic District

When the Federal government drafted architectural plans for a new post office, the *Keeping Society* stood in opposition (1950) since the plans were not compatible with the new colonial façade of Town Hall.

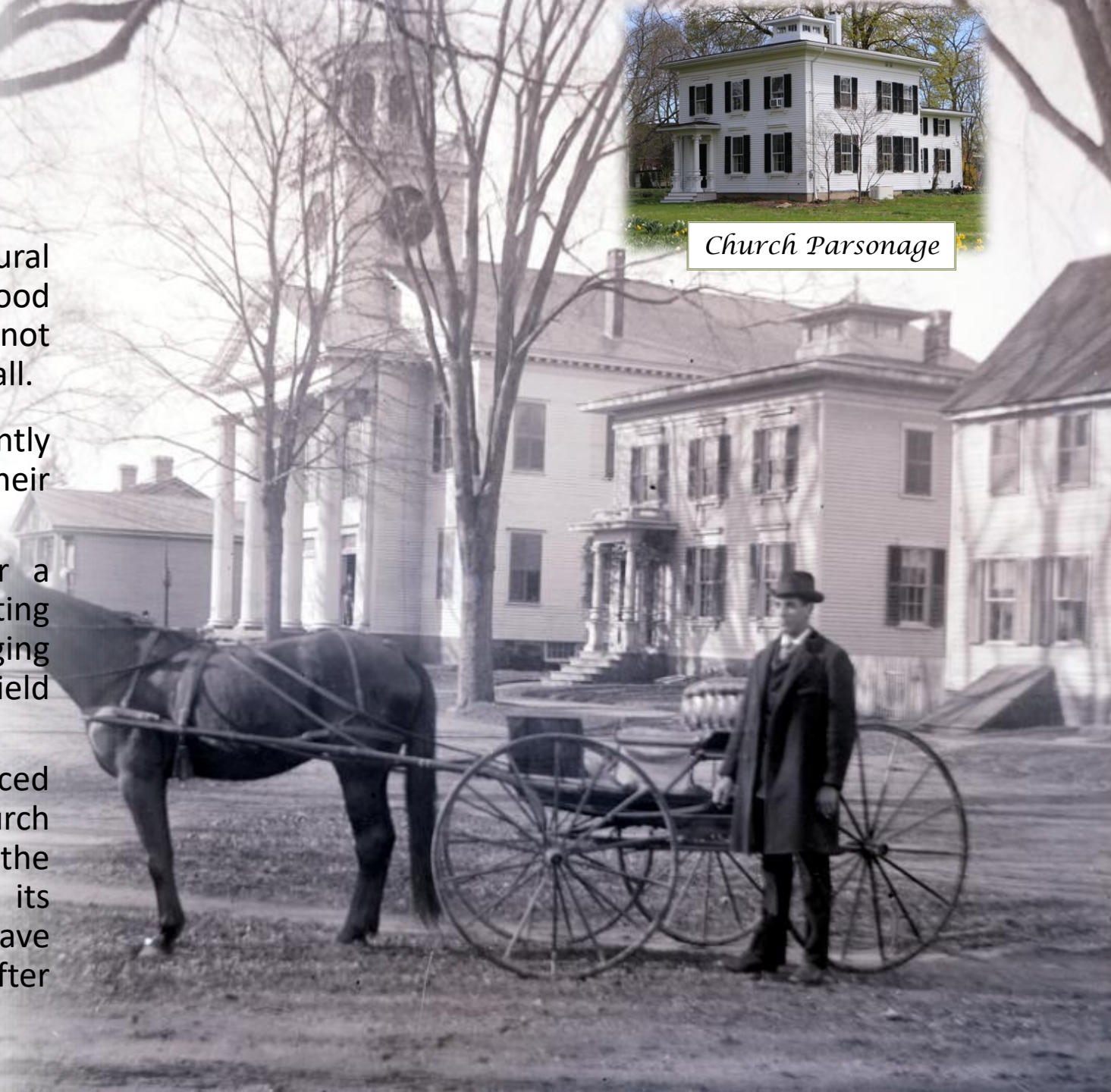
Business owners around the Green were gently persuaded to restore colonial appearances of their buildings (1951).

Long before Guilford enacted an ordinance for a local historic district, the Society hosted a meeting to discuss a proposed historic district (1960), staging a program with a representative of the Litchfield Historic District Commission.

When the First Congregational Church announced plans to demolish its parsonage next to the church (1963), the *GKS* promptly fired off a letter to both the church and *Shore Line Times* to encourage its preservation. This gentle intervention must have helped because the church parsonage was soon after moved to 28 Conway Drive.



*Church Parsonage*





## House Plaques (since 1957)

By 1957, the society re-activated the town's Tercentenary Committee project (1939) of marking antique dwellings with historic house plaques.

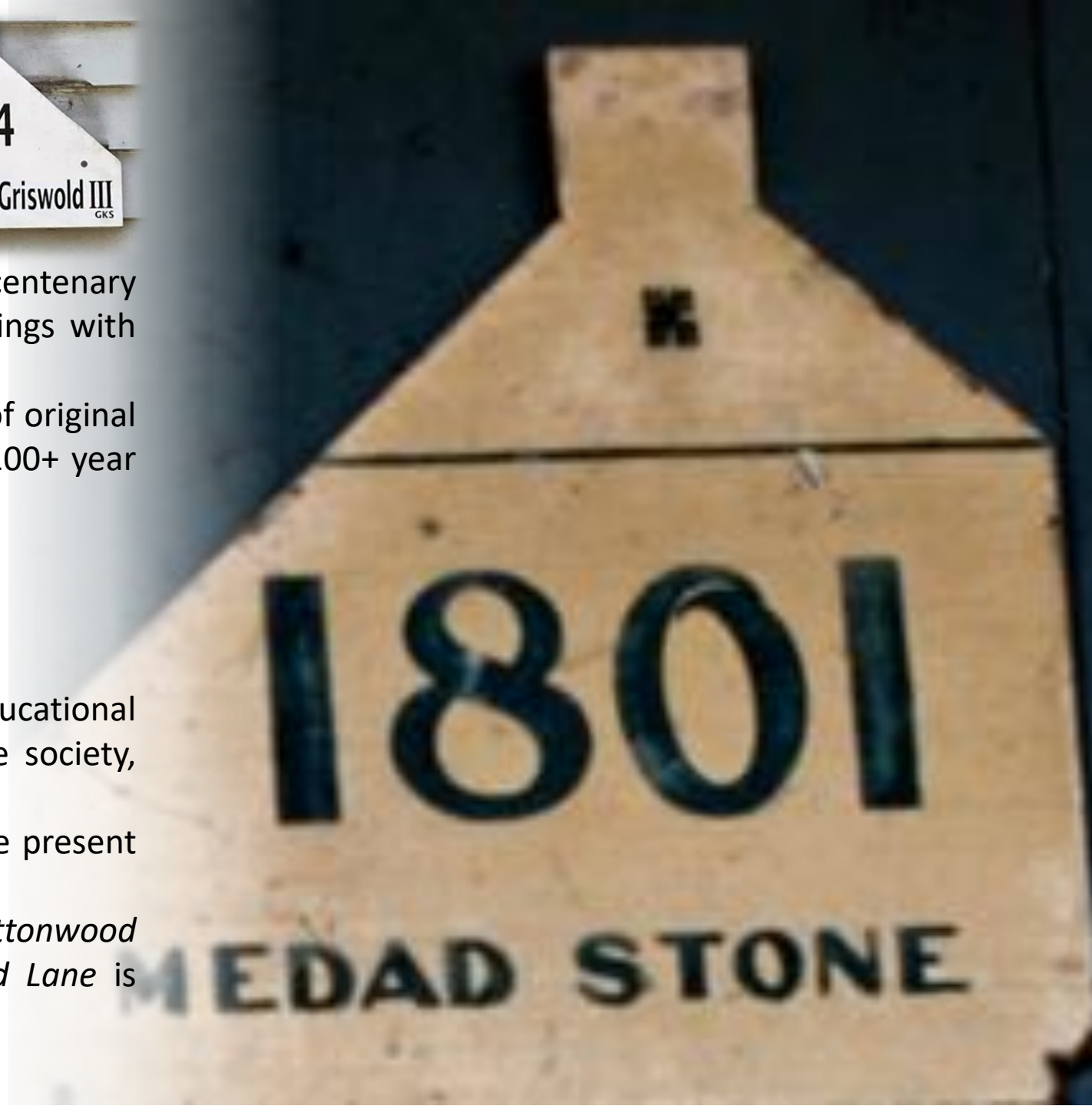
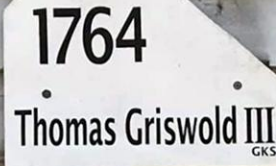
The well-known white saltbox silhouette with name of original owner and year of construction is still available for 100+ year old homes for a nominal fee.

## Street Signs (1950s)

Several of the *Guilford Keeping Society's* ongoing educational projects originated during the fledgling years of the society, beginning with street signs.

In the 1950s the GKS put up street signs showing the present and the old names.

For example, *Fair Street* was once *Petticoat Lane*. *Buttonwood Hill Road* became *Clapboard Hill Road* and *Crooked Lane* is today *North State Street*.









# Acquisition of Griswold House, 1958

The *Guilford Keeping Society* made its mark on the community without a coveted museum for ten years.

In September 1958, the *GKS* purchased the 18th century Robert DeForest House at the corner of Boston St. and Lover's Lane for \$28,000.

The new house museum fit the goals of *GKS* perfectly.

The classic colonial era structure came with a pageantry of colorful history. Moreover, it is close to the village center and offers unlimited opportunities for meetings and activities.

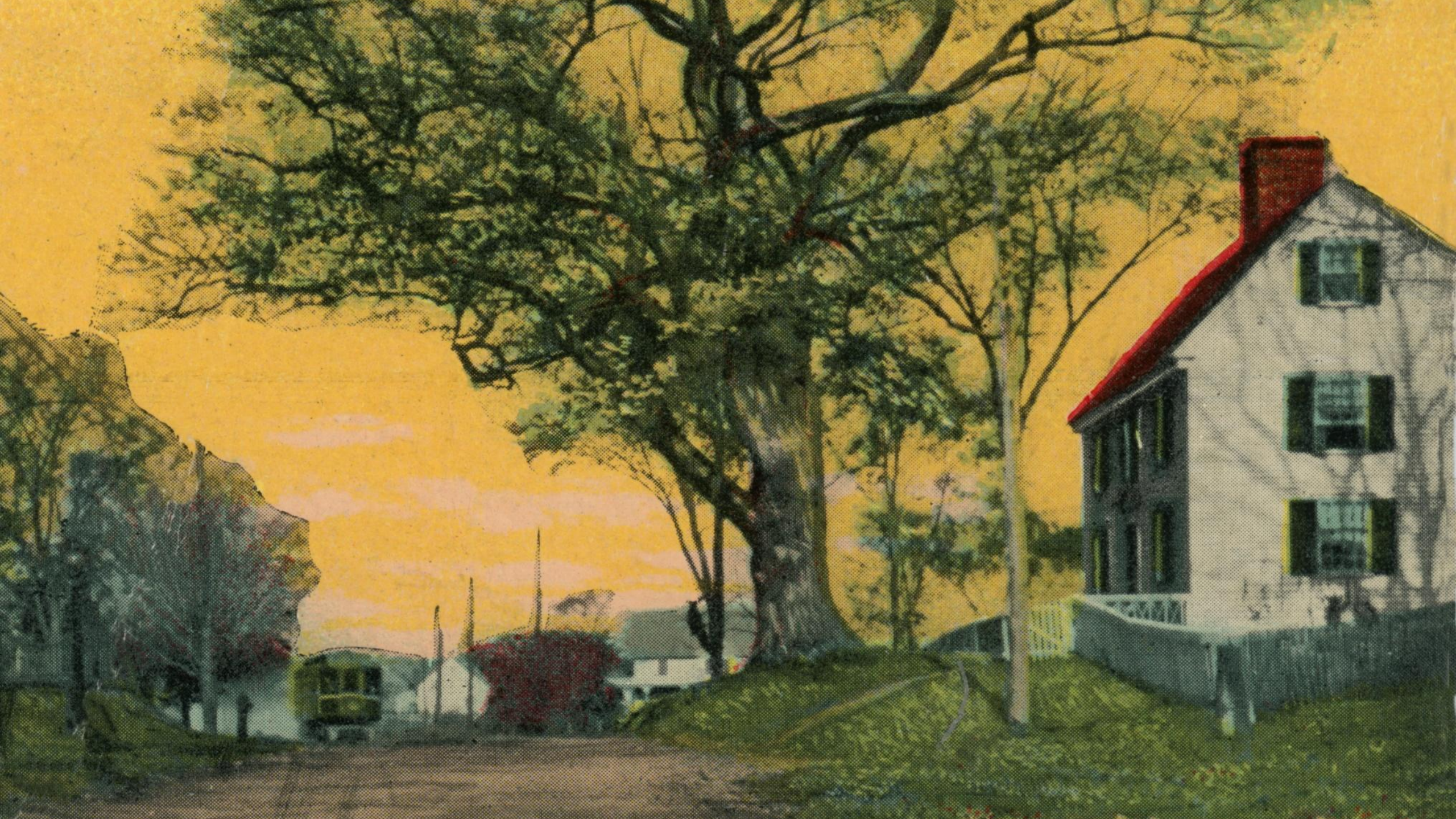


Photograph of the Keeping Room.

Previous page: photo by John Plant

Next page: "The Gateway to Guilford" c.1910 Postcard







# Inside the Griswold House

The venerable Griswold House is remarkable—not just for the continuity of its ownership in one family line, 1764–1958—but for its unspoiled condition.

Furnishings and décor of the Griswold House reflect the life-style of a late 18<sup>th</sup> to mid 19<sup>th</sup> century household.

Not only is the house a landmark on the National Register of Historic Places, but is described in J. Frederick Kelly's book, *Early Domestic Architecture of Connecticut*.

Its distinctive features include a rear double-sided batten door, round-back Guilford cupboards and Griswold heirlooms such as a Queen Anne cherry lowboy, gilt-framed mirror and table-bench.



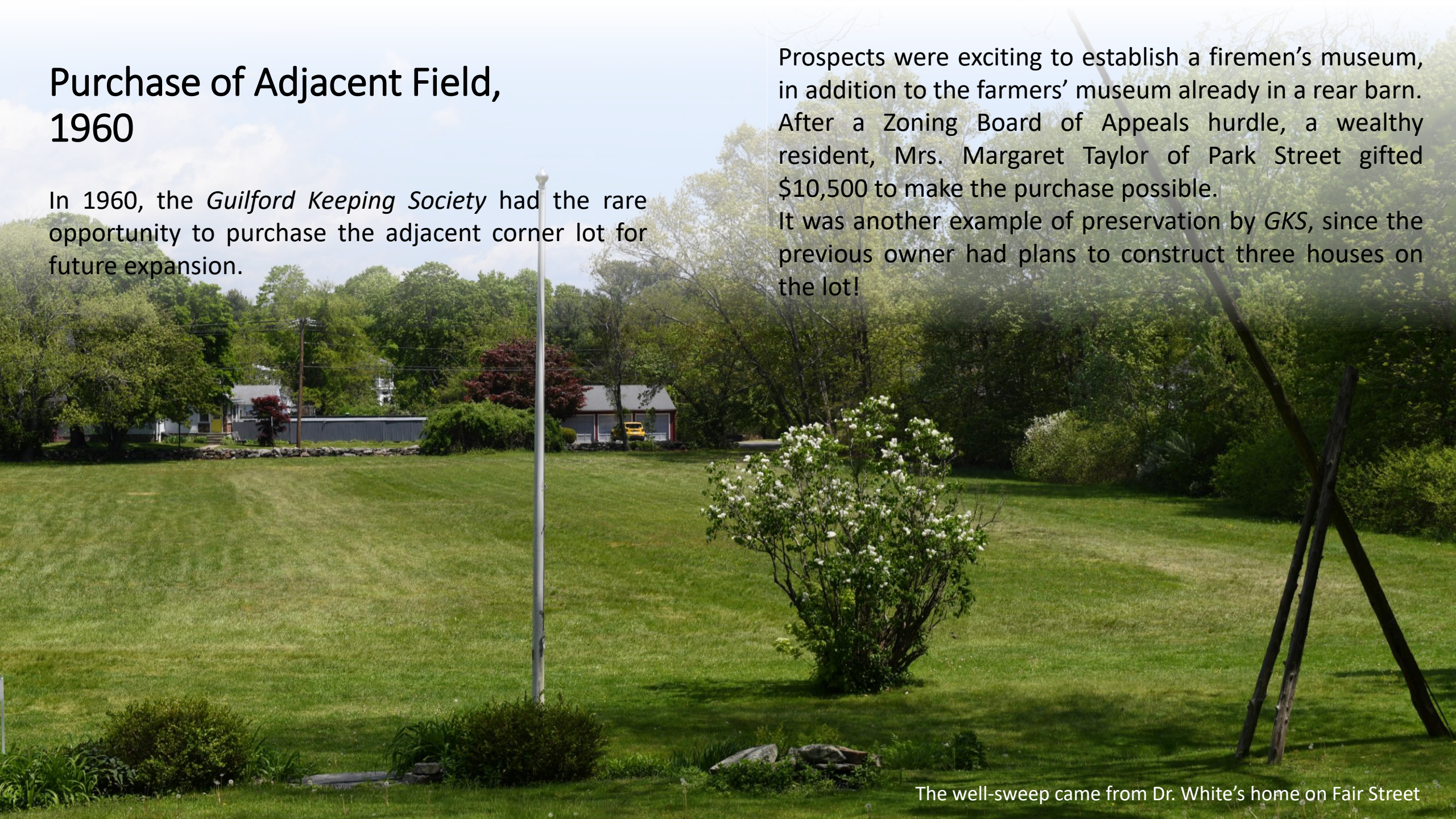
Sandra Rux cooking on the open hearth  
Parlor room (below)



## Purchase of Adjacent Field, 1960

In 1960, the *Guilford Keeping Society* had the rare opportunity to purchase the adjacent corner lot for future expansion.

Prospects were exciting to establish a firemen's museum, in addition to the farmers' museum already in a rear barn. After a Zoning Board of Appeals hurdle, a wealthy resident, Mrs. Margaret Taylor of Park Street gifted \$10,500 to make the purchase possible. It was another example of preservation by *GKS*, since the previous owner had plans to construct three houses on the lot!



The well-sweep came from Dr. White's home on Fair Street



## Restoration of Griswold House, 1974-1975

A major restoration was undertaken to return the exterior of the Griswold House to its original saltbox shape in the mid-1970s.

This entailed the removal of two dormers, a woodshed, and screened porch in the rear, as well as the rebuilding of the chimney-top.

When the brick kitchen fireplace was opened, the original ten-foot-wide fireplace with two beehive ovens and warming oven were uncovered.

Flooring was removed to expose original chestnut planks.



The Keeping Room during a later restoration (1995).



# Addition of Blacksmith Shop, 1981

Built in North Scituate, Rhode Island, c1825, it was moved to Guilford in 1960 and fully restored in 1981.

A rare feature of this working smith shop with chimney, anvil and bellows, is the *ox sling*.

Since oxen cannot stand on three legs while being shod, the design of the winch-driven sling allowed the animal to be raised off the ground.



Blacksmith Tony Kowalski





## Arrival of the Victorian Period Three-Seat Outhouse, 1997

Mark Dudley and his son Evan moved the privy with a team of oxen.







## Acquisition of the Medad Stone Tavern, 2001

Following the death of Leonard ("Len") Hubbard, a former Town Treasurer and lifelong Guilford resident, a new course of stewardship for the Guilford Keeping Society opened.

In his last will and testament, Len Hubbard bequeathed his landmark tavern home at 171 Three Mile Course to the *Society* to "be maintained in perpetuity as an historical museum".

Photo right: J.Plant; Watercolor next page: William Molno









# Medad Stone's Tavern

Len Hubbard's gift included 17 acres of surrounding land, various outbuildings, a generous endowment and all the tangible personal property in the house. Much of the vast array of furnishings, documents and artifacts belonging to four successive generations in the Davis/Hubbard family line have been documented. This has greatly aided curators in making a thorough interpretation of the house history.



The *Society* hosts a local equestrian, whose horses have been kept in the barn and have roamed the pastures since the days of Len Hubbard.

One pasture is leased to the Hubbard Community Garden.





# The Tavern That Never Was

Medad Stone (1754-1815) built the tavern in 1803. He was a notable character in early Guilford history. His first tavern was on the northwest corner of the Guilford Green. He was also the town's first postmaster, owner of a stage company which delivered U.S. mail, owner of a sawmill and iron works, and a Revolutionary War soldier. Medad's wayward tavern on the west side of the village became a folly since it never served as a tavern! He had speculated on a proposed alteration in the route of the Post Road that never materialized, leaving his second and newest tavern without guests.



Jim Powers and Steve Vandermaelen excavating the old outhouse, one of several archeological digs on GKS grounds. The Gentlemen's Parlor room (right photo). Oil painting next page: Charles Hubbard





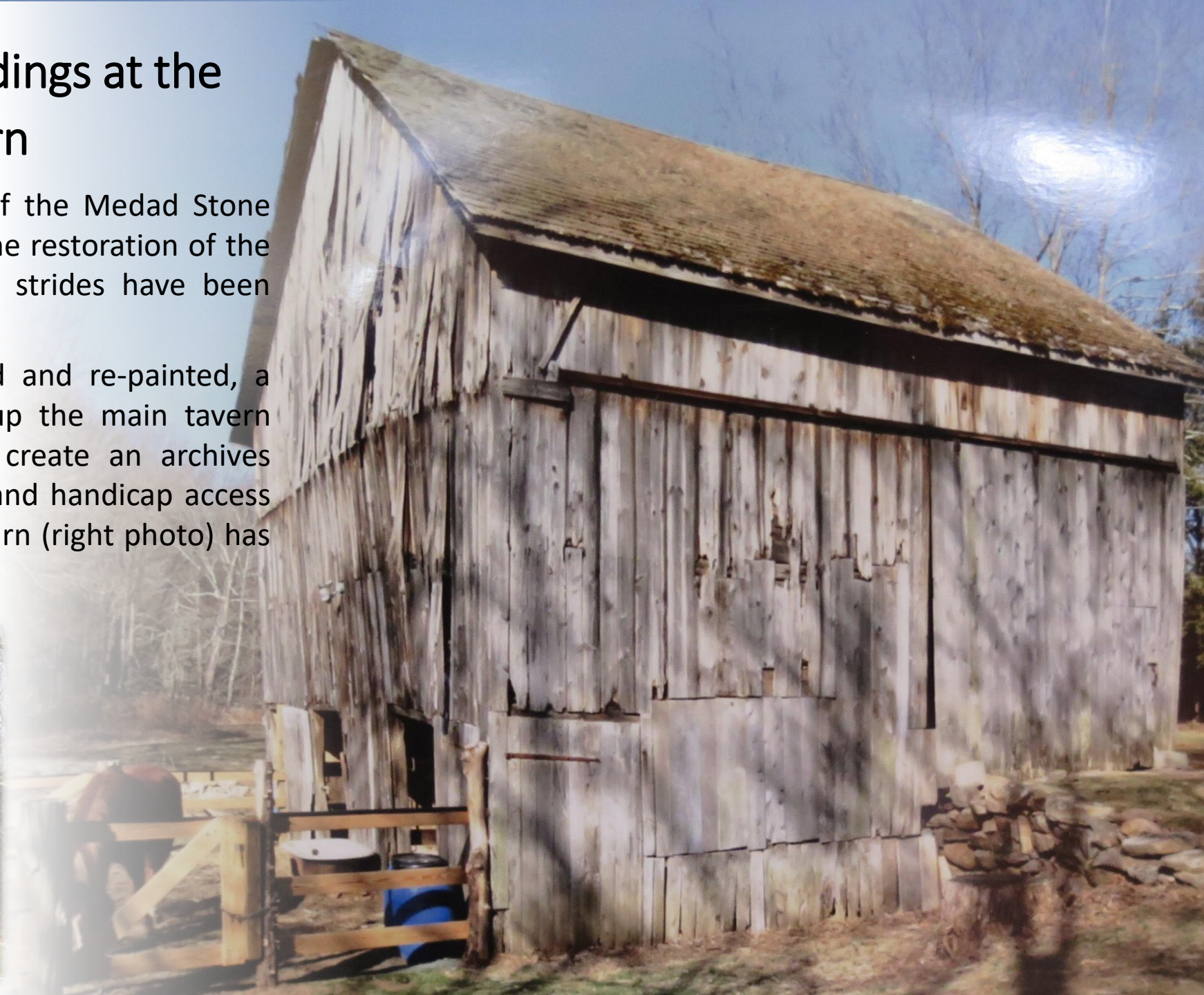


# Restoration of Buildings at the Medad Stone Tavern

The Society's ongoing restoration of the Medad Stone Tavern has been as challenging as the restoration of the Thomas Griswold House. Yet great strides have been made.

The old tavern has been re-roofed and re-painted, a 1950's kitchen removed to open up the main tavern room, a bathroom dismantled to create an archives room, two new bathrooms added, and handicap access ramps installed. The 120-year-old barn (right photo) has since been fully restored.

Corn Crib





# Education

## Early Guilford Days

The *Society* collaborates with the Guilford Public School System, Guilford Preservation Alliance, and Hyland House Museum to stage the annual “Early Guilford Days” for fourth graders.

This award-winning program consists of a series of workshops held during the day at the museums (one day for each of the four elementary schools).

A year-long experience with enrichment units prepares students for these workshops, when students, teachers, and volunteer parents alike dress in Colonial garb for fun-filled educational activities.

Treks to Old Sturbridge Village in Massachusetts are no longer necessary because historic Guilford becomes a living laboratory for children’s study of history.





# Education

## Colonial Camp

The *Keeping Society* operates two summer camps that allow its participants to better understand the lives of those who lived in earlier times.

The Colonial Camp at the Thomas Griswold House is similar to Early Guilford Day, both are hands-on activities in relation to colonial Guilford.

Activities throughout the week involve favorite pastimes of colonial children, as well as jobs and tasks that needed to be performed in the household. The camp also provides tasty baked treats from the colonial period as snacks.

It appeals to both boys and girls who want to learn about the town's past and have a good time.





# Education

## American Girl Doll Camp

The American Girl Doll Camp, held at the Medad Stone Tavern, uses the historic American Girl dolls as a means for the kids to learn about the past and the responsibilities of children.

The focus is not just on colonial times. Each doll showcases a different time period, thus providing opportunity to learn about different times and places.

The kids have fun with the American Dolls while at the same time learning with them.





# House Tours

Historic house tours started in the 1950s and nowadays have expanded to include historic outbuildings, such as barns and privies.

The 2018 “Mystery Buildings Tour” included the curious Cranbrook Tower, ornate Chittenden Bowling Alley, Stone Family Cider Mill and 18th century Regicide Cellar.

## MYSTERY BUILDINGS TOUR<sub>2</sub>

...a glimpse behind some doors that are rarely opened



# Memorial Day Picnics



Civil War encampment in the Griswold House field during the Memorial Day Picnic of 1992.

Under the patriarch maple trees, behind the Griswold House Museum, *Keeping Society* volunteers serve baked goods, ice cream, hotdogs and hamburgers.



# Antiques Festival

The *Keeping Society's* primary fundraiser (until 2015) was an annual antiques festival, which featured dealers from across New England.

The Guilford Keeping Society's  
**53rd Annual  
Antiques Show**

Held on the grounds of  
The Thomas Griswold House



The *Society* has hosted innumerable other events over the years, such as open-house tours, Stony Creek quarry tours, silent auctions, tag, plant & bake sales, special receptions and galas, New Year's Day reception, beer & wine tastings, lecture series, family festivals, soup & song evenings, tea luncheons, open-hearth cooking, Christmas caroling, etc.





## Costume & Textile Collection

The *Society* maintains a historic costume and textile collection.

Foremost are fashionable gowns, everyday-garments, wedding dresses, under-clothes, as well as beautiful quilts.

The collection generates thematically-driven exhibits that showcase items from the permanent collection.

← Reddick doll and details from a 3-piece satin wedding dress. The color is "burnt sienna", and the dress has a row of lovely buttons down the front.



# 100 Years of Wedding Gowns

1840s  1940s

Thomas Griswold House Museum



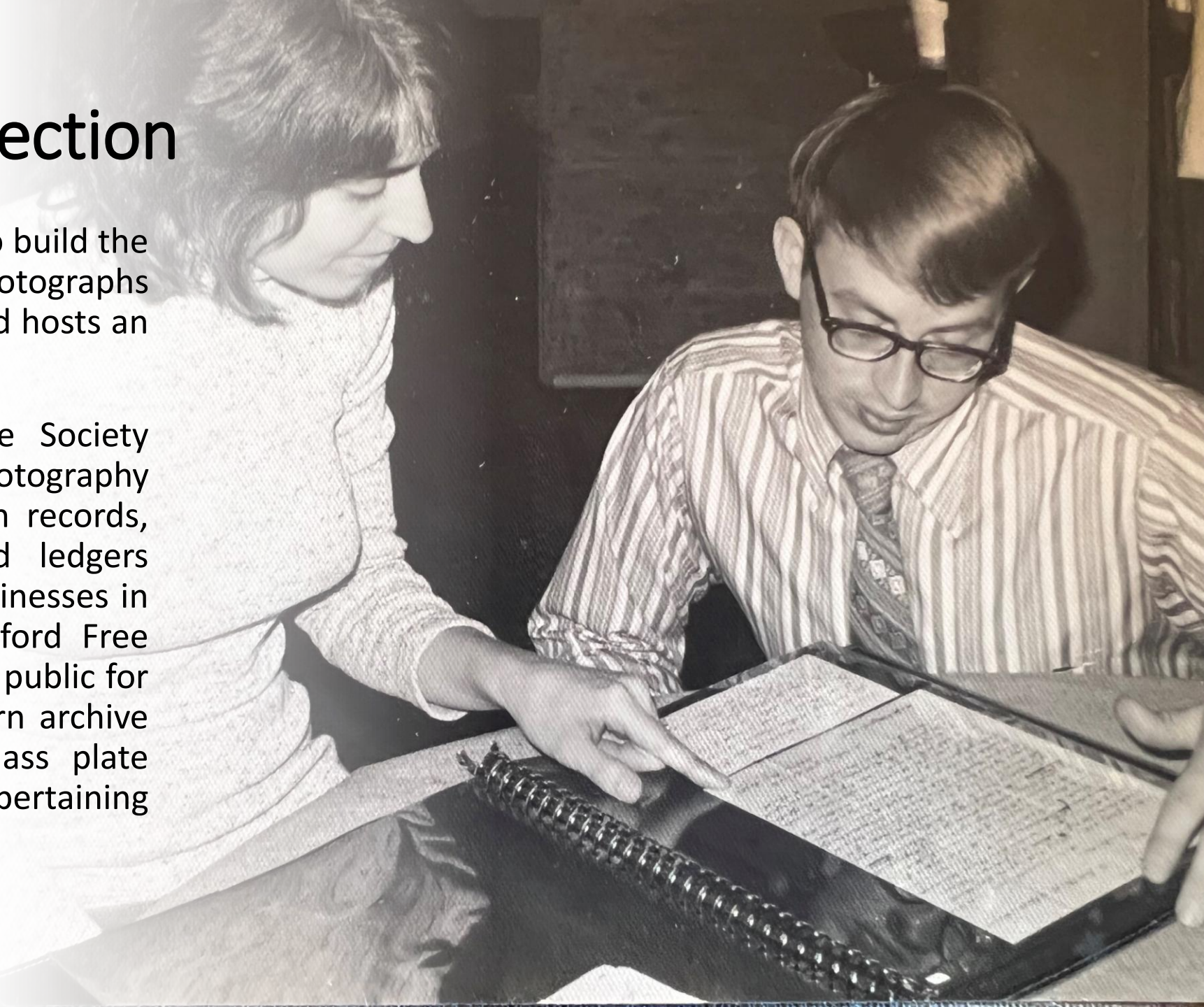
- 15 Wedding Dresses on Display •
- Many Worn by Guilford Brides •
- A Century of Fashion Trends •



# Photography Collection

The *Keeping Society* continues to build the largest extant collection of photographs pertaining to Guilford's history and hosts an online website of 11,000 photos.

The Library Committee of the Society maintains not only the photography collection but also Guilford Town records, family papers, manuscripts and ledgers from a variety of old Guilford businesses in the Historical Room of the Guilford Free Library. These are available to the public for research and browsing. The Tavern archive room houses a collection of glass plate negatives, as well as documents pertaining to the Stone and Davis families.





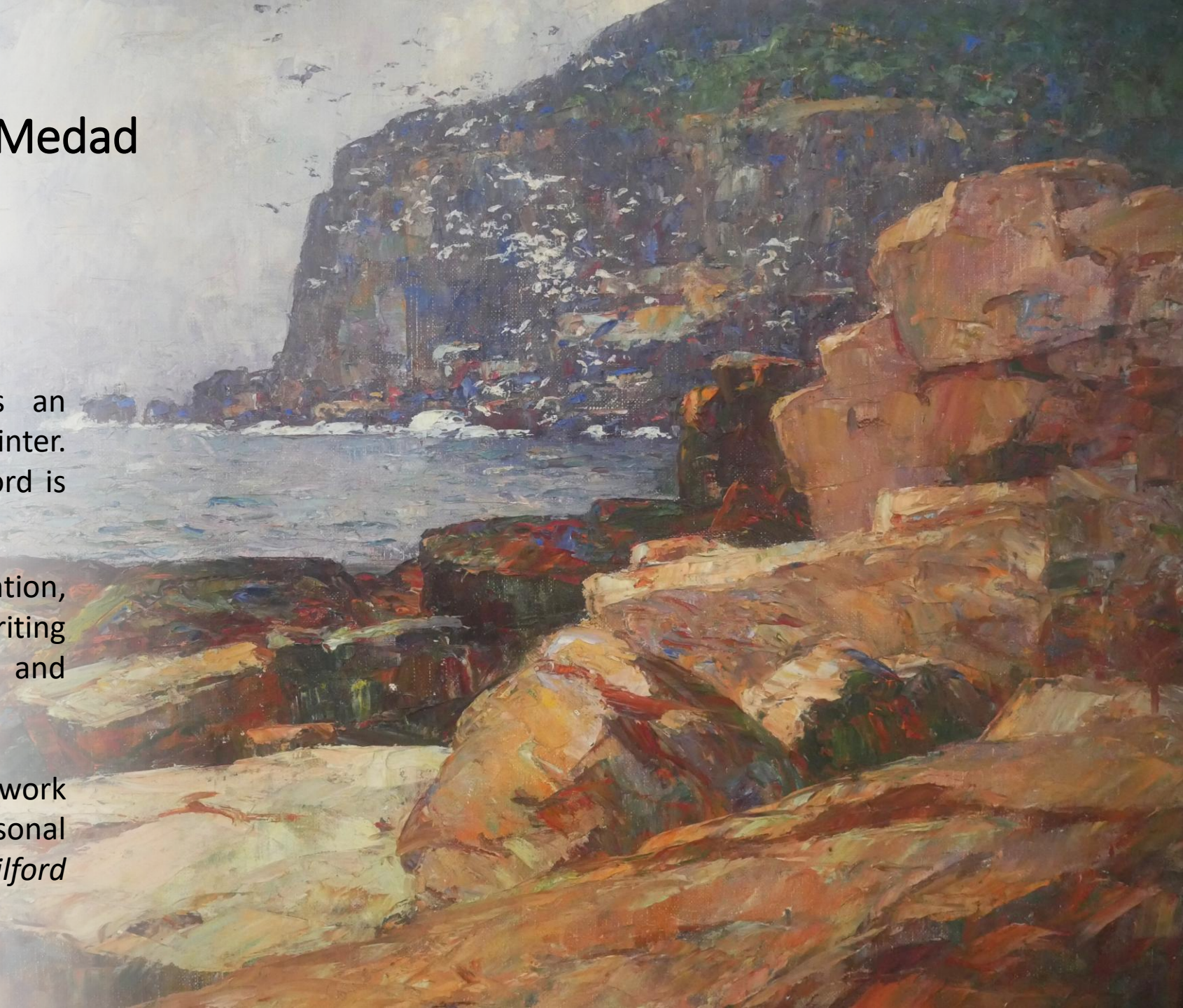
# Permanent Exhibit at the Medad Stone Tavern

## Charles D. Hubbard

Charles D. Hubbard (1876-1951) is an American impressionist landscape painter. He was born in New Jersey, but Guilford is the place where he left his legacy.

He toiled in many arts: painting, illustration, photography, calligraphy, creative writing and more. He was a Renaissance man and one of Guilford's most beloved citizens.

The exhibit is devoted to Hubbard's work and displays his artwork and personal possessions which he willed to the *Guilford Keeping Society*.





# Native American Artifact Collection at the Griswold House

Hundreds of pieces are on permanent display at the Thomas Griswold House Museum—and that's just the tip of the arrowhead.

This remarkable collection combines two major contributions: the Art Heidtman Collection and the Fred Davis Collection.

Charles Arthur "Art" Heidtman spent a lifetime collecting Native American arrowheads, stone tools, hand axes, knives, scrapers and other artifacts mostly from local sites in Guilford. The museum is thankful to Carl Balestracci, Jr. who recommended that Art entrust his collection to the *Keeping Society*.

Frederic G. Davis, along with George Woodbine of Guilford and Frederick Miler of Madison, recovered piece-by-piece dozens of artifacts when plowing fields on land today known as the "Sunrise" housing development. Mrs. Ruth Ann Davis gifted the collection to the *Keeping Society* in 2015.

The *Keeping Society* is thankful to Joya Helander and her father Forrest Helander for their expertise in identifying and documenting the artifacts. ➡





# Permanent Exhibit at the Medad Stone Tavern

## Model of an Early American Craft-Village

The “Armisteadville” is a miniature display in the form of a village featuring six trades important to early American towns — blacksmithing, carpentry, cooperage, weaving, basket-making and broom-making.

Donald A. Armistead built the crafts-village to scale and outfitted it with authentic working parts. He researched and modelled it over a 35-year period.

He donated the village to the *Keeping Society* in memory of his wife Dorothy Armistead, who was a Curator at the Henry Whitfield House for numerous years.





# Publications

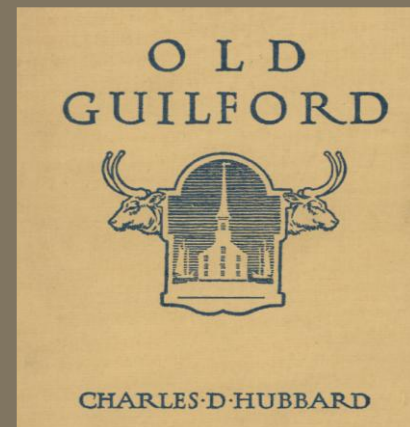
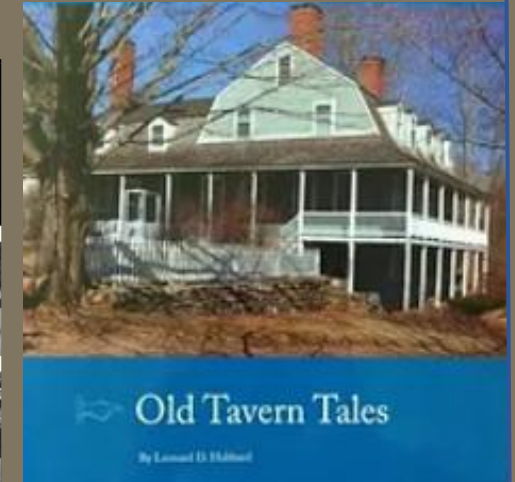
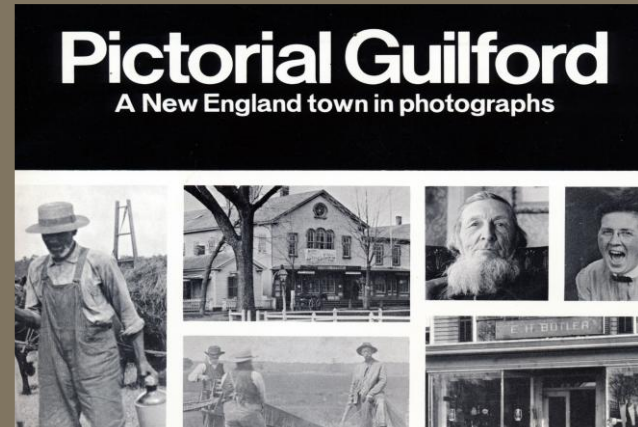
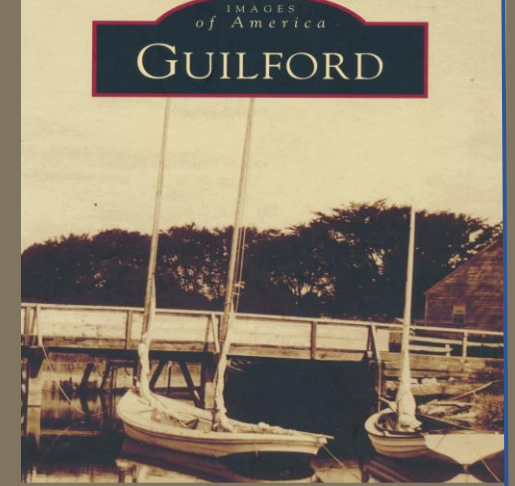
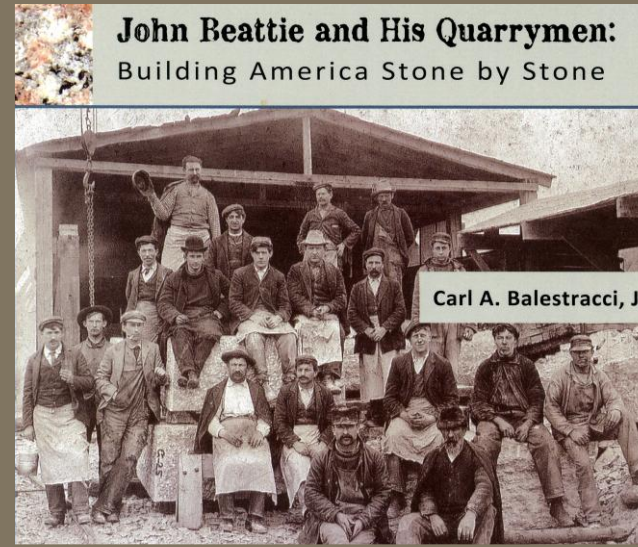
## Books, Pamphlets, Calendars

The Society's list of publications includes:

- ❖ *Milestones of Old Guilford* (1953)
- ❖ *Old Guilford* by Charles D. Hubbard (1961 reprint)
- ❖ *Pictorial Guilford* by James Lindsay (1976)
- ❖ *Images of America: Guilford* (2001)
- ❖ *Old Tavern Tales* by Leonard D. Hubbard (2012)
- ❖ *John Beattie and His Quarrymen: Building America Stone by Stone* by Carl A. Balestracci, Jr. (2016)

### *Pamphlets and Calendars*

- ❖ Annual Picture Calendars
- ❖ *Residents of the Medad Stone Tavern*  
by Jared Lynch & Dhruv Shrivastava (2020)





# We Thank You

## For 75 Years of Collaboration and Support

Guilford Public School System, Guilford Free Library, Henry Whitfield State Museum, Guilford Preservation Alliance, Guilford Garden Club, Hyland House Museum, Five Museums Group, Dudley Farm Museum, all members, interns and volunteers of the *Keeping Society*, and all contributors who have donated to our cause and to the collections.

*"Keepers of  
Our Past"*

*The 75<sup>th</sup>  
Anniversary of  
the GKS*

**Exhibit** John Plant; Pat Lovelace (Museum Director & Curator)

**Text** Based in large part on Joel Helander's *Guilford Keeping Society-  
The First 70 Years*, 2017; and other documents.

**Photos & Artwork** Guilford Keeping Society, GKS Library Collection,  
Pat Lovelace, Deborah Peluse, Joel Helander, John Plant

