

RIDGEFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY - YEAR-END REVIEW 2023-2024

(Ending October 2024)

Mission:

The Ridgefield Historical Society's purpose is to preserve, interpret and foster public knowledge of Ridgefield's historical, cultural, and architectural heritage.

The purpose of the annual meeting each year is to welcome our membership and to report on the progress of all strategic and tactical achievements from the past year, Oct 2023 to October 2024.

This past year has been another productive one for the Historical Society as we continued to develop our team of staff and volunteers and through our planning to better support our mission to serve as a vital organization in the community. This team building strategy has allowed us to continue to pursue new initiatives and expand the organizations visibility.

The Historical Society completed its first full year with Stephen Bartkus in the role of Executive Director. With the security of this role in place, we have been able to establish clear lines between operational responsibilities and high-level board oversight as well as continued to establish clear goals and objectives for the future. These goals include continuing to build a strong and effective Board of Directors as well as matching our staff to the growing needs of the organization:

In addition to the staff in place comprised of Executive Director, Stephen Bartkus,, Collections Manager, Betsy Reid and Book keeper, Cathy Malloy, we have added 2 new key members to the team.

Executive Assistant, Janet Graves

Development Consultant, Peter Authier

In addition to these new team members we have tremendous support through consultants, Phil Yarnall – Graphic Designer and Mike Carusi, Webmaster.

Financial and Committee Reviews:

2023/2024 Report

Finance Chair and Treasurer, Steven March oversaw overall fiscal responsibilities which included: budgeting and financial planning, reporting, and monitoring, internal controls and accountability, transparency, and risk management and monitoring other risk management areas.

Implemented this year:

The Investment Committee met several times this year and finalized the Long and Short-term investment strategy. Based on this board-approved strategy, the Investment Committee then created a proposed investment portfolio at Vanguard which was also

subsequently board-approved. The existing funds at UBS and Infinix were transferred to the newly opened Vanguard investment account and the investment portfolio was executive.

The Financial Sustainability report was written for RHS, which will be used to guide the organization in its financial decisions and used with potential donors to explain our operational funds.

Roles and Responsibilities: The day-to-day financial operational tasks of RHS were migrated from the Board Treasurer to the Executive Director. This includes the payment of all incoming invoices and deposits, as well as monitoring the current operating cash position of RHS. The Executive director works with his executive assistant and the bookkeeper to complete these daily tasks.

RHS Grants Received October 18, 2023 to October 15, 2024

Wadsworth Lewis (February 2024): \$1,500

For general operational support.

Ridgefield Rotary (March 2024): \$2,500

To support the oral history project.

Ridgefield Thrift Shop (April 2024): \$10,000

To purchase collections supplies.

Goldstone Internship Grant (May 2024): \$5,000

To hire three summer interns.

Ongoing work from existing grants:

CT Humanities Grant:

LGBTQIA+ Oral History Project

This program is on track with 21 of 25 interviews completed. The remaining interviews have been scheduled and should be completed in November.

National Park Service American Battlefield Protection Program Grant

Phase II:

BOR Archaeology Project

The State Historic Preservation Office circulated the Historical Society's RFP to all cultural resource management companies who work in CT. The application period ends on Oct. 31.

New Board member James Segalstein will work with Stephen Bartkus on the next phase of the NPS Grant project.

Membership

Under the guidance of Membership Chair, Tatjana Witzmann, Executive Director Stephen Bartkus, Marketing team, Nancy Rowe, Sally Sanders, and Graphic Designer, Phil Yarnall, a new campaign was redesigned to include new membership levels and benefits. The annual membership drive was moved to the spring to coincide with the start of the fiscal year. Rack cards were designed for this campaign. The Catoonah Circle, a sustaining membership tier (\$1,000+) was created, and we currently have 22 members (\$22,000). Membership 2022-23: 224 households. Membership 2024-2025 to date (3 months into the membership year) : 150 households.

We have created a new Board role to focus on organizing events throughout the year to focus on this new level. Our first event will be the “Opening of the Vault” party on Thursday, October 17, 2024, as a special recognition for members of the Catoonah Circle. The evening will showcase Ridgefield treasures from our collection housed in the climate-controlled vault beneath our historic 1714 Scott House. The evening will include guided tours of the vault, access to seldom seen Ridgefield artifacts from past centuries, and a chance to meet the Board of Directors, Executive Director, Staff as well as fellow history enthusiasts and supporters.

This year’s mailing was followed by a press release, a series of eblasts, and personal email reminders were sent to promote the new Membership Drive. Membership continues to grow each year due to an increase in yearly membership campaigns with targeted follow-up.

In addition to the newly formed Catoonah Circle, member benefits include priority registration and early access to ticket sales, an invitation to exclusive members-only events, discounts on paid program and our gift shop.

Marketing

The marketing team, Nancy Rowe and Sally Sanders, continued to promote Ridgefield Historical Society events and programs through press releases and social media in an increasingly fragmented media environment.

Working with Stephen Bartkus and Janet Graves, the marketing Committee writes/edits the monthly eBlast newsletter and Sally Sanders prepares a twice-yearly Scott House Journal, focusing on an aspect of history that’s relevant to current historical society or town events. Most recently, the Branchville Schoolhouse history was featured, using archived materials from our collection including an oral history done with a former Branchville student.

The Marketing team promoted the second year of the Witness Stones Project installation at Scott House last November and continues to promote the popular monthly Ridgefield History Club.

The big project of 2023-2024 was the Ridgefield Holiday Historic House Tour, a fundraiser in cooperation with Tiger Hollow, which sold out its 700+ tour tickets as well as its gala preview. The event was our first true fundraiser, led by co-chairs Steve March, Stacey Schibli, and Jill Rae. We look forward to working with Tiger Hollow again in 2025 to plan another successful collaboration. In the spring, the committee promoted Dr. Darla Shaw's Fabulous Women of Ridgefield bus tour; this fall, among numerous other events, the team is working on a Great Estates bus tour with Jack Sanders. The marketing for the next big event, a June 2025 garden tour, in collaboration with the Ridgefield Garden Club, is now underway.

The marketing team works closely with special projects director [Laurie McGavin Bachmann](#) to plan and promote special events throughout the year.

Special Projects

Goals: The Special Projects team was established in November 2023 to create regular mission-driven programs and events that preserve, interpret, and foster public knowledge of Ridgefield's historical, cultural, and architectural heritage and fulfill the RHS strategic plan to engage the greater Ridgefield community. Many of these programs and events were new, SOLD-OUT, and income-producing.

Team: Led by Laurie McGavin Bachmann (former RHS Recording Secretary) with Nancy Rowe (Marketing and former RHS Executive Director) as an assistant, the Special Projects committee also includes Stephen Bartkus, (Current RHS Executive Director), and Sally Sanders, (Marketing + Peter Parley Schoolhouse). This team meets on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month. The aim of the committee is to create a robust offering of programs and events that bring the face of the Ridgefield Historical Society to the Ridgefield community and beyond.

Other Participants: Representatives from the Membership Committee are needed to participate, as well as volunteers from Collections and other Committees. Increased awareness of the Ridgefield Historical Society will bolster Membership, Fundraising, Volunteerism, Finance, and all other committees and projects of the Ridgefield Historical Society.

Partners: Over the past fiscal year, the Special Projects Committee has partnered with: Amazing Tales from Off and On Connecticut's Beaten Path, Cooper-Hewitt Museum in NYC, Downtown Ridgefield, Lounsbury House, Peter Parley Schoolhouse, Ridgefield Garden Club, Pride in the Park, Ridgefield Chamber of Commerce, Ridgefield Graveyard Committee, Ridgefield Library, Ridgefield Public Schools, Ridgefield Theater Barn, Town of Ridgefield, Town Hall Exhibits, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, The Benjamin Restaurant, Tiger Hollow and Wilton Grange.

Sponsorship Model - The *Fascinating Women of Ridgefield* program held on March 23, 2023, co-hosted with Dr. Darla Shaw, was identified as a 'pilot' program for partnership/sponsorship. Karla Murtaugh/Compass was offered a sponsorship at a modest rate, and the team explored options and costs for sponsorship benefits

including: logo development and placement; event program sponsorship; goody bag sponsorship and recognition across multiple channels. Sponsorship is repeatable for the future events with advance planning; staff/volunteer resources; and the correct sponsorship funding level to cover costs and contribute to Historical Society income.

Program/Event Types: Many diverse programs and events were offered: author talks; bus tours; a commemorative Town ceremony for Covid victims; craft program (signature silhouette workshop in Dec); community outreach tables; exhibits; lectures; a new monthly history club (now mtg on 3rd Tuesdays); Peter Parley Schoolhouse programs/school tours (open Sunday 1-4 from May-Oct); membership events; theatrical production; (Eccentric Women of Ridgefield) scavenger hunt; (Townwide Where's Waldo for children/families) as well as walking tours.

Audiences Served: Many different audiences were served: children, families, school groups, young people, adults, seniors, Ridgefield Public School-students, teachers & administrators, Town of Ridgefield representatives, members of the LGBTQ and Tiger Hollow communities.

All Programs/Events Count and Attendees FY 2023-2024

Please see attached "Special Projects Summary FY 2023-2024" which lists all programs/events from July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024. Program type and estimated attendance numbers are included. Summary: *There was a total of 37 Special Projects Programs offered in FY 23-24 with an estimated 1,010 attendees*, (not including special events and fundraising events).

SOLD-OUT Programs during FY 2023-24/Gross Income = \$10,819.75

Sept 9 – SOLD-OUT, Bennetts Farm Walking Tour, 20 x \$15 = \$300

Dec 6 – SOLD-OUT, Author talk/reception about Benedict Arnold with author Jack Kelley, 70 x \$20 = \$1,400

Dec 10 – Signature Silhouette Workshop, \$3,095, RHS got 25%, \$773.75

Mar 23 – SOLD-OUT. Fascinating Women of Ridgefield Bus Tour, \$785 net ticket sales + \$200 sponsorship from Karla Murtaugh = \$1,034

Apr 24 – SOLD-OUT, Lecture/reception Mike Allen talk about the Battle of Ridgefield, 77 x \$20 = \$1,540

Apr 27 – SOLD-OUT, Walking Tour-Battle of Ridgefield, 80 x \$20 = \$1,600

June 27 – SOLD-OUT, Exclusive Bus trip to Cooper Hewitt/Hudson Yards with internationally known tapestry artist, Helena Hernmarck, 28 x \$149 = \$4,172 (**offered to high level members/membership first**)

SOLD-OUT - Fundraising events during FY 2023-24/Gross Income = \$47,093

Nov 8 - The Benjamin - Guest Bartender, Author Rich Cohen. Stacey Schibli coordinated – made **\$1,093**

Dec 1 – Historic Holiday House Tour Preview Night - SOLD-OUT – (90 preview tickets @ \$250)

Dec 2 –Historic Holiday House Tour – SOLD-OUT – (750 house tour tickets sold @ \$75)

Stacey Schibli was Co-Coordinator of this fundraising event. ***Over 92K was raised and half of the proceeds after expenses went to the Historical Society = \$46,000***

Fundraising Committee Chair and Members Needed: Now that the Special Projects Committee has been formed and is executing a rhythm of mission-driven programs and events that populate the fall/winter/spring calendar year (with summer as a time for planning), *a separate fundraising lead/committee is needed to create special fundraising events, ideally twice a year.* Note: Fundraising is a very different kind of activity from programming.

Fundraising for fiscal year 2023-24 - there will be the Ridgefield Garden Tour, including a Garden Party Preview event in a private home (Friday evening, June 6, 2024) and tours of 7 Ridgefield Gardens (Sunday, June 8, 2024). Stacey Schibli is coordinating this Fundraising Event with support from Marketing and other RHS committees.

Fundraising for fiscal year 2024-25 - another Historic Holiday House Tour to be offered jointly with Tiger Hollow is being planned for the first weekend of December 2024.

Summary

This has been a very busy year for the Special Projects Committee with many new, annual and ongoing programs and events taking place. By meeting twice a month, this committee has been able to increase the amount and breadth of the Ridgefield Historical Society's program and event offerings - which has led to increased attendance and in many cases to sold-out programs and income. Instead of going from program to program, the Special Projects Committee can now plan a season at-a-glance (i.e. Fall/Winter, Winter/Spring and Summer. I am very grateful to my colleagues on this committee, Stephen Bartkus, Nancy Rowe and Sally Sanders whose creativity, vision and hard work have made these positive steps possible.

Technology

Since the last annual meeting, the Technology team has been building upon the investments and great work that had been done previously which has resulted in:

- Upgraded PCs / laptops and fast, reliable and stable WIFI networking and access to the Internet supporting improved operational productivity of the Society's staff and volunteers. For example, multiple people are now able to use the PastPerfect cataloging system at the same time, participate in web meetings, print and scan documents, etc..
- Digitization and organized online sharing of materials relating to the Society's collections / archives and ongoing projects. For example, oral history recordings of Ridgefield veterans of World War II have been digitized and transcribed and the recordings and the related transcripts are now available for the general public to listen to / read via the [Society's public website](#). There are now ongoing projects to record, and publish online (initially via the Society's public website and later to the Connecticut Digital Archive), video recordings of LGBTQ+ oral histories of Ridgefield residents as well as the scanning of hundreds of photo negatives that were donated by the former Korker Photographic studio in Ridgefield. These photo negatives, which capture images that were taken from

the very early 1950's thru to the 1980's, will also be made available for people to view via the Society's public website.

Ongoing support for the various projects and activities of the Society. One such example would be the introduction and use of mobile apps and credit card readers that allow Society memberships and products to be purchased while at external events such as SummerFest, etc.. Other examples would be support for the Society's Historic activities related to Collections / Archives, Historic Preservation, Finance, Marketing, Membership, Programming, etc.

Ridgefield Historical Society Scholarship

The 2024 Ridgefield Historical Society Scholarship was awarded to graduating senior, Marko Katra at the Ridgefield High School Award Ceremony in June. The scholarship — founded in 2022 — encourages students to share their individual perspectives on our Town's history.

Internships

Thanks to the continued support of the Goldstone Family Foundation and the Kasuli Family, Ridgefield Historical Society offers two paid internships.

The Kasuli Internship honors the memory of the late Georgianne Kasuli, a longtime member of the Board of the Ridgefield Historical Society. The *Goldstone Family Internship* is part of a program which supports the hiring of interns across several Ridgefield non-profit organizations. Both internships provide growth and learning opportunities for the intern, and much appreciated assistance and fresh perspective for the organization.

2024 Interns:

Libby Maxwell, 2024 Goldstone Family Intern

Libby graduated Hobart and William Smith Colleges where she majored in Architecture with a minor in Art History. She is now studying for her masters in Edinburgh, Scotland for a Master's in Conservation Architecture.

Lexie Hirai, 2024 Goldstone Family Intern

Lexie is a Sophomore University of Denver majoring in History

Tyler Ingram, 2024 Georgianne Kasuli Intern

Tyler is currently a junior at George Washington University in Washington, DC. majoring in Biological Anthropology with minors in Archaeology and Human Anatomy.

Volunteers

Thanks to outreach and programming efforts in community the Historical Society's volunteer base continues to grow as we attract new volunteers including the increase of support through our High School students, College students and recent grads, as well

as continue to work with the Boys and Girls club, the National Charity League. Volunteers are the key to our success.

Peter Parley Schoolhouse

Jack and Sally Sanders continue to volunteer at the Peter Parley/West Lane District Schoolhouse for the Last Sundays at the Schoolhouse and keep watch on the building during the off-season.

In March, Dr. Darla Shaw, with Dennis Waymire and Christine Johnsmeyer, presented schoolhouse sessions for third grade classes from the Branchville Elementary School. Dr. Shaw also presented a program for a group of homeschooled girls in May and in June, Jack and Sally Sanders hosted a group of pre-schoolers from the Creative Children's Korner. Although Dr. Shaw is not able to lead classes this fall, Mr. Waymire and Ms. Johnsmeyer have stepped in to lead a session for the homeschoolers in November.

The Gateway Project, a public-private partnership that aims to enhance three triangles along Route 35 from the New York border to Main Street, will bring new landscaping and upgrades to the Peter Parley Schoolhouse property. Discussion of details is ongoing but the project is expected to include a more defined parking area and the installation of a period outhouse (with chemical toilet) to replace the current porta-potty. Repairs to the building are also planned.

This project will also involve the Mitchell watering trough at the Olmstead Lane triangle and the Cass Gilbert Fountain. The Ridgefield Historical Society has been involved in the planning for the Schoolhouse offering perspectives on how the building and surrounding land were used, since the first school was established there in the mid-18th Century.

Collections

This year, Collections added 90 new accessions to our archive, ranging from the Roger Bullard architectural papers and drawings and to a collection of Native American artifacts from Richardson Park. All have been added to our collections database, Past Perfect, and uploaded to our online archive on our website, where they may be viewed by the public.

Our volunteer number now stands at 16. Together they contribute a total of 40 hours per week cataloging, organizing, scanning and transcribing - including work on the LGBTQIA+ oral history project and the Korker Photography Collection.

The \$10,000 grant that we received from the Thrift Shop in April 2024 has been a huge benefit enabling us to carefully preserve these new accessions and will continue helping with more that are to come.

In Collections we work with both the Architectural Archive Committee and the Historic Preservation Committee doing preservation work and research.

We are continuing to collaborate with the Ridgefield Public Schools.

The historical society's recently acquired collection of Native American artifacts from Richardson Park were exhibited at Ridgefield High School in September. We plan on continuing to exhibit the collection in the schools in the future.

In addition, we are working with both middle schools and the Witness Stones Project to research and remember the enslaved persons who lived in the David Scott House. This November will be our third installation ceremony involving students and faculty.

Exhibits at town hall are ongoing and are changed every few months. We created exhibits with two non-profits in town celebrating their 50th Anniversary - Meals on Wheels and the Ridgefield Recycling Center. Other exhibits included the Branchville Schoolhouse, the Battle of Ridgefield and 9/11.

Buildings and Grounds

The Society maintains Four historic buildings and properties. These buildings include the **David Scott House**, which serves as our Headquarters and houses our state of art vault. **The Peter Parley Schoolhouse**, a Bauhaus inspired post World War II property, recently given to the Society to be maintained by the Historical Society and serve as a place for future educational programs, specifically related to Post WWII architecture, history, and design. There is a small cottage on the property where we can collect income from a tenant.

As of Oct 15th, The Historical Society is officially the Steward of the **Branchville Schoolhouse**. A Public Hearing was held for the lease on Wed. Sept. 25 at 7:30pm and the Special Town Meeting on Wed. Oct. 9 at 7:30pm at Scotts Ridge Middle School where over 300 residents unanimously voted to approve the lease. The Society subsequently signed a multi-year lease with the Town of Ridgefield with the intent to restore the dilapidated building. A capital campaign is planned to kick off later this year. Both schoolhouses were listed on the State Register of Historic Places in June 2024. The Historic Preservation Committee together with the Executive Director will oversee this project, by forming a committee and pursuing fundraising through grants and private donations.

Architectural Archives Committee

The Architectural Archives Committee was created in 2019 and seeks to collect architectural material for the Warren Arthur Architectural Archives at the RHS. Mai Arthur contributed funding for the creation of this new archive, named in honor of her husband.

A fortunate outcome of the shortcomings of the grant-funded Historic Resources Inventory historic context was the beginnings of a building photo-inventory by street number and address. This will become part of the electronic database created by and managed by both the Historic Preservation and Architectural Archives Committees. In 2024, Kevin Julier (Technology) joined with Betsy Reid and her interns to create the Grand List Project, a Google-based platform that holds individual folders by street

number and address. Al Garzi, town assessor provided the Society the current property database which includes both taxable and tax-exempt properties.

We are fortunate that one of our new volunteers, Sarah Kaplan has graciously engaged in the Roger H. Bullard collection and is reviewing and updating the collection inventory. This may serve as an opportunity for another volunteer, to assist the Committee in getting some public awareness and the basis for a presentation in 2026.

Outreach was undertaken in 2021 to seek materials from local architects but has yet not produced any substantive interest.

(September) and a new volunteer, Christina Marchessault, has taken it on. Melanie Marks graciously volunteered to keep the records of the Demo Delay requests on behalf of the Committee.

Historic Preservation Committee

The Historic Preservation Committee is expanding its volunteer base as our work continues to grow.

Historic Resources Inventory

Continued management of the town-wide Historic Resources Inventory (HRI) on behalf of the Ridgefield Historical Society and the Town of Ridgefield Historic District Commission. Commonwealth Heritage, now Chronicle Heritage, produced a historic context draft in August 2023 which was very problematic and took considerable effort by the Committee to address the substantive issues. A "FINAL," dated August 15, 2024 was submitted by Chronicle, and while issues were substantively addressed, fine-tuning remains to be completed. Random sampling of numerous Historic Resources Inventory (HRI) forms found them to be questionable regarding *accuracy*. In agreement with First Selectman, for numerous errors, formatting issues, delays in producing revisions and issues with HRI form accuracies, a decision was made in September 2024 to terminate the contract, whose deliverables deadlines had long expired.

A new volunteer, April Pereyra, is going to be working with Melanie Marks to review and make corrections to the HRI forms.

A second, \$30, 000.00 Survey and Planning Grant with matching amount for HDC for a total of \$60,000.00 will be sought from the State of Connecticut for the contractors to create 500 more HRI forms. An HRI presentation is planned for March, 2025.

A new volunteer position has been created to provide updates for our website and social media to begin publicizing the activities around Historic Preservation.

Demolition Delay Ordinance

The revised Demolition Delay Ordinance has been in place for about a year and in this fiscal year we received six demolition notices, none of which were objected to after research and understanding of the need/want. One demolition that got by the Building Department was the eighteenth-century farmhouse at 42 Whipstick Road. Used ZBA to justify a “remodel” and a building permit was issued. A new project to monitor town commission agendas is underway (September) and a new volunteer, Christina Marchessault, has taken it on. Melanie Marks graciously volunteered to keep the records of the Demo Delay requests on behalf of the Committee.

Gateway Project

In late February 2024, the Ridgefield Historical Society was asked to join a meeting with First Selectman, Rudy Marconi, and longtime Ridgefield benefactor and project proponent in discussing plans for three separate site improvements dubbed *The Gateway Project*. All town-owned sites, they include the Cass Gilbert Fountain, the so-called watering trough, and the Peter Parley Schoolhouse.

The intent of the project which, was intended to improve the sites that are at key entry points to the town center. Plans prepared by Landscape Architect, Jane Didona included site redevelopment plans.

Numerous meetings, including on-site have been undertaken since to fine-tune the proposals.

The Nominating Committee

The aim of the Nominating Committee is to sustain the RHS board by identifying new board directors and assist in filling current board resource needs. Our focus is to develop classes of future board members to take on seats as individual terms expire every 2 years.

It was a busy year for the nominating committee, with a large number of directors’ terms coming up for reelection and with new term limits coming into effect several seats being vacated.

On the executive committee, Tracy Seem, President is relinquishing her role after two consecutive terms and is on the slate to be reelected to as a director. Tracy led the board during some of the most significant changes in the Society’s history. She initiated and oversaw our strategic plan and actively recruited new board members to help drive our mission forward. Among her many accomplishments evident throughout this report, she led the upgrading of our financial organization, acquiring new assets and projects such as the Mai Arthur property and the Branchville School House, as well as an extremely successful Battle of Ridgefield celebration for the town. Steve March, Treasurer is stepping down from the board after a successful term. He was instrumental in improving our financial operations, controls and systems, including bookkeeping. Steve led the effort to form the new investment committee and consolidating our investment accounts. Both Tracy and Steve will be joining our Advisory Committee and continue to help attract opportunities for development and projects. Sara Champion, having served in the

legal and compliance capacity and been a long-standing member of the board, is leaving her position. She plans to continue volunteering her time in genealogy. Nancy Rowe, who has served as executive director in the past, and most recently, in marketing and public relations will be leaving her board post. She too expects to continue to volunteer her time on projects for the society.

We are most grateful for all their tremendous efforts and extraordinary contribution to the Society.

The nominating committee started the year, focusing on individual board role requirements and current director's future expectations. As the year progressed the focus turned to recruiting candidates for the board to fill new and vacating positions. With both the president and treasurer seats openings, significant effort was dedicated to their replacement. We searched both internally and externally for candidates and are pleased to nominate two new board members on the slate for president and treasurer. Additionally, we are nominating four new board members on the slate to take on various roles.

The committee is continuing to develop new candidates for the board. Combined with the new term limits adopted, our goal is to develop classes of directors that join the board and form the basis of future executive committee members.

With Appreciation

The Ridgefield Historical Society is a relatively young organization and unique in that we have been fortunate enough to have had many of the volunteers who helped form our organization 20+ years ago, serve on our board for all these years. As we look to the next 20+ years, we welcome the new members that have joined us. And to those leaving this year, want to thank you with the deepest gratitude for all your selfless work and commitment to the Society and hope you will continue to be part of the RHS family.

A very special thanks to:

Steven March – Treasurer

Nancy Rowe – Marketing

Sara Champion Compliance

Tatijana Witzmann -Membership

Ridgefield Historical Society Special Projects Summary - Programs/Events FY July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024 with program type and estimated attendance

July 01, 2023

Where's Waldo?

It's July in Ridgefield CT and that means one very important thing — it's time to find Waldo!

Family program/25 est.

July 04, 2023

Let Freedom Ring 2023

This Independence Day, the Ridgefield Historical Society will again be celebrating Let Freedom Ring. All are welcome to join us or partake independently with a bell of your very own.

Community program/20 est.

July 18, 2023

Ridgefield History Club

Join the July Ridgefield History Club where we will reminisce and share recollections of favorite Ridgefield stores and businesses — past and present.

RFHC 1/15 est.

July 29, 2023

Ridgefield Summerfest

Meet the Ridgefield Historical Society outside Town Hall at Ridgefield's annual Summerfest.

Community Outreach Table - 1

July 30, 2023

Peter Parley Schoolhouse Open House

West Lane at South Salem Rd

It's July and Ridgefield Schools are not in session, but the Peter Parley Schoolhouse is open and welcoming students of all ages. No homework. No pressure. Just a wafting breeze and a glimpse into Ridgefield past.

PPSH 1/10 est.

August 15, 2023

Ridgefield History Club

In August at the Ridgefield Historical Society, we're thinking about school days. Going to School in Ridgefield will be the topic for this gathering of the Ridgefield History Club.

RFHC 2/15 est.

August 27, 2023

Ridgefield Historical Society to Honor Legacy at the 2023 Cannon Grange Agricultural Fair

25 Cannon Road, Wilton, Connecticut 06897. The Ridgefield Historical Society will be an exhibitor at the 91st Cannon Grange Agricultural Fair at 25 Cannon Road in Wilton.

Community Outreach Table - 2

August 27, 2023

Peter Parley Schoolhouse Open House

West Lane at South Salem Rd

This month marks the 240th anniversary of Peter Parley's birth. Visit the Schoolhouse for a glimpse into his life and times, and a 2:00pm performance, by his sister Abigail

Goodrich, as portrayed by Dr. Darla Shaw.
PPSH 2/10 est.

August 30, 2023

Ballard Park Gardens Then and Now Lecture

Terry McManus, President of the Ridgefield Garden Club, archivist and historian, gives a talk on the history and current care of Ballard Park and its gardens.
Lecture 1/65

August 31, 2023

Walking Tour of Ballard Park Gardens

Come and experience the beautiful and varied gardens and greenhouse in Ballard Park which are maintained by the Ridgefield Garden Club and the Caudatowa Garden Club.
Walking Tour 1/15

September 05, 2023

"The Jeffersonians" by Kevin Gutzman

Discover the Virginia Dynasty, who served as president from 1801 to 1825, and set the guideposts for later American liberals to follow. At the Ridgefield Library.
Author Talk 1/40 est.

September 09, 2023

Explore History on a Walking Tour of Bennett's Pond State Park

Bennett's Pond State Park, 572 Bennett's Farm Road

Discover the interesting history and stories of the people who once inhabited the Bennett's Pond area.
Walking Tour 2/20 est.

September 09, 2023

Eccentric Women of Ridgefield

Ridgefield Theater Barn, 37 Halpin Road

These monologues, adapted for the stage from the storytelling of Dr. Darla Shaw, celebrate four eccentric women of Ridgefield.
Play/160 est.

September 19, 2023

Ridgefield History Club - Farming in Ridgefield

It's harvest season and we invite you to join us as we unearth the fascinating history of farming in our picturesque town.
RFHC-3/15 est.

September 23, 2023

Reception for the New Executive Director of Ridgefield Historical Society

Celebrate the Ridgefield Historical Society's new chapter!

Special Event/25 est.

September 24, 2023

Peter Parley Schoolhouse will open Sept. 24

West Lane at South Salem Rd

Join us in saluting another distinguished West Lane Schoolhouse alumnus, Cyrus Northrop, whose birthday is Sept. 30.

PPSH-3/10 est.

October 07, 2023

Revolutionary Ridgefield Bus Tour

Enjoy an afternoon on a bus tour exploring colonial Ridgefield. Learn about the architecture, people, and stories connected to these historic places.

Bus Tour – 1/25 est.

October 17, 2023

Ridgefield History Club - Silvio Bedini's Ridgefield

Silvio Bedini's Ridgefield will be the topic for this month's history club!

RFHC-5/15 est.

October 29, 2023

Peter Parley Schoolhouse

Special Spooky Schoolhouse Sunday

West Lane at South Salem Rd

To close the season we'll be sharing schoolhouse tricks and treats from the past!

PPSH-4/10 est.

November 08, 2023

Rich Cohen, Guest Bartender @ The Benjamin

The Benjamin, 20 West Lane

Ridgefield, CT

Join us for this special event to benefit the Ridgefield Historical Society!

Fundraiser/75 est.

November 15, 2023

Live-stream of the 2nd Annual Witness Stones Installation Ceremony

Remembering the enslaved in Ridgefield, a Witness Stones installation ceremony honoring Dinah and Peter.

Not a public program/Ridgefield Public Schools, 8th graders

November 15, 2023

Intemperate Habits: LGBTQ History from a Connecticut Perspective
Ridgefield Library

Discover LGBTQ history including the experiences of Connecticut residents!

Lecture 2/55 est.

November 18, 2023 at the Scott House

Tellabration: Your Part in Historical Ridgefield

Everyone has a story to tell and we'll celebrate some Ridgefield tales during Tellabration!

Storytelling/15 est.

November 21, 2023 at the Scott House, third Tuesdays at 10am

History Club: Photographing Ridgefield with Clarence Korker

Join us as we look at the evolution of Ridgefield through the photography of Clarence Korker.

RFHC-5/15 est.

December – first weekend – Historic Holiday House Tour with Partner Tiger Hollow -

December 01, 2023

First Weekend in December 2024

Preview night-Fri. Dec 1

Fundraiser/90

House Tour-Sat. Dec 2

Fundraiser/750

December 06, 2023

God Save Benedict Arnold - Talk, Book Signing and Reception with Jack

Kelly Jack Kelly, an award-winning author and historian, will give a talk about his new book featuring Benedict Arnold!

Author talk 2/70 est.

December 10, 2023 at the Scott House

Silhouettes by Deborah O'Connor

Calling all children, families, and yes even pets! Silhouettes, a beloved tradition at the Historical Society, returns for the holiday season.

Workshop/25 est.

December 19, 2023 at the Scott House (third Tuesday at 10-11 am)

Ridgefield History Club - Christmas Memories in Ridgefield

Share in the warmth of Christmas memories from Ridgefield's past!

RFHC – 6/15 est.

January 18, 2024

Wine, Cheese & Chamber Chat with Ridgefield Historical Society (networking)

[Lounsbury House](#), 316 Main Street

Join us for an evening filled with Ridgefield history, hosted by the Ridgefield Chamber of Commerce, at the historic Lounsbury House!

Special Networking Event/65 est.

February 01, 2024

[50 Years of Recycling in Ridgefield, Then and Now](#)

[Ridgefield Town Hall](#), 400 Main St

Ridgefield is celebrating a golden environmental anniversary this year and a new exhibit highlights the decades-long effort to promote recycling. On display from February to

May

Exhibit

February 20, 2024

[Ridgefield History Club: Ridgefield Place Name Stories](#)

What's in a name? Have you ever thought about why your street is named the way it is?

RFHC – 7/15 est.

March 19, 2024 - [Ridgefield History Club: Celebrating Ridgefield Women, Then and Now](#)

In celebration of Women's History Month, come share personal remembrances of Ridgefield women, who have influenced your life and the community.

RFHC 8/15 est.

March 23, 2024

[Fascinating Women of Ridgefield Bus Tour-SOLD OUT](#)

Sit back, relax, and enjoy the stories as Dr. Darla Shaw hosts a history tour featuring 50+ fabulous women from Ridgefield's past.

Bus Tour 2/24 est.

April 16, 2024

[Ridgefield History Club: Ridgefield Restaurants, Past and Present –](#)

Come share your memories of your favorite places to eat out in Ridgefield, whether it was a venue for a special occasion or the familiar spot "where everybody knows your name".

RFHC-9/15 est.

April 18, 2024

[Remembering Ridgefield's Covid Victims: A Memorial Ceremony at Scott House](#)

Join us at Ridgefield's Covid Memorial Tree as we remember those lost during the pandemic.

Special Event/20 est.

April 24, 2024

[How the Battle of Ridgefield Impacted the Revolutionary War](#)

[St. Stephen's Episcopal Church](#), 353 Main St

The Ridgefield Historical Society presents featured speaker Mike Allen, creator of the Amazing Tales From Off and On Connecticut's Beaten Path podcast.

Lecture-3/77 est.

April 27, 2024

Battle of Ridgefield Walking Tours -

Join our "living history" event where Revolutionary War characters are brought to life by actors in period costumes.

Walking Tour 3/80

May 04, 2024

Downtown Ridgefield's Spring Stroll

Come see how we are preserving Ridgefield's history, past, present and future!

Community Outreach Table 3

May 04, 2024

Cemetery Tour: "1918-19, Not The Best of Times!"

The Town of Ridgefield Graveyard Restoration Committee is highlighting some of the graves of Ridgefielders who are believed to have died in the great Spanish flu epidemic of 1918-19.

Graveyard Committee Collaboration/negligible

May 21, 2024

Ridgefield History Club: Remembering Our Veterans

It's nearly Memorial Day, a time when we honor those who lost their lives while serving their country over the centuries.

RFHC-10/15 est.

May 26, 2024

Peter Parley Schoolhouse/West Lane District School Season Opening -

West Lane at South Salem Rd – last Sundays May – Oct, 1 – 4 pm

The Peter Parley Schoolhouse opens for the season on Sun. May 26

PPSH-5/10 est.

May 27, 2024

Memorial Day Parade

See you on Main Street. Look for us in the parade as we remember our fallen Ridgefielders on Memorial Day. New float created, parade cancelled due to rain prediction. Do next year!

June 01, 2024

Pride in the Park

[Ballard Park Ridgefield CT](#), 485 Main St

We are preserving LGBTQIA+ history, learn more at Pride in the Park.

Community Outreach Table 4

June 18, 2024

Ridgefield History Club: Lost Ridgefield

Bring your personal recollections of buildings, neighborhoods, businesses and organizations that are no longer a part of our town.

RFHC-10/15 est.

June 27, 2024

Exclusive Bus Trip Featuring Works by Helena Hernmarck

Helena Hernmarck, celebrated for her monumental tapestries designed for architectural settings, takes center stage as the tour showcases her masterpieces.

Bus Tour-3, 24 est.

June 30, 2024

School's out: Last Sunday at Schoolhouse is June 30

West Lane and South Salem Rd,

The Peter Parley/West Lane District Schoolhouse will be open to visitors for Last Sunday at the Schoolhouse, caretakers Jack and Sally Sanders will be on hand to answer questions!

PPSH 6/10 est.