



# *Preserving, Educating & Celebrating*

**2015 Annual Report**



**Wilton Historical Society**

## *From the President, Board of Trustees*



The fiscal year ending 9/30/2015 was a solid year of progress for our 325 members and the many friends of the Wilton Historical Society (WHS). Celebrating our 77<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we offered a wide variety of historically related activities to many families and individuals throughout Wilton and other Fairfield County communities.

In September we closed out this fiscal year with the final weeks of our spring through summer farmers' market, held each Wednesday at our Danbury Road complex in conjunction with the Wilton Chamber of Commerce. In late October we held our annual *Fall Antique Show* with over 80 dealers participating from throughout the northeast. This was followed by the *American Artisan* weekend show featuring nearly 30 outstanding craftsman displaying their wares again at the museum complex. Shortly after Thanksgiving we opened the Society's two-month *Great Trains Holiday Exhibit* attended by thousands of visitors throughout the holiday period. In late January through March we partnered with the Wilton Library to offer five lectures by noted historian educators focused on the Gilded Age in the United States. All programs were solidly booked. In the spring we again sponsored a successful Antiques Fair at the high school field house. We also entertained and hopefully educated many of Wilton's second and fourth grade classes with a field trip to the Society's historic complex. Our annual potluck dinner held in late June provided our many members, trustees and staff a chance to get together for good food and overall camaraderie.

None of this would be possible without the collective efforts of our wonderful Society staff, a dedicated board of trustees, and our many volunteers. Many thanks to all of you for your outstanding efforts.

I hope you are enjoying your membership in the Wilton Historical Society. We look forward to seeing you often. Please take advantage of this wonderful community asset.

Sincerely,

**E. Bulkeley Griswold**

*President, Board of Trustees*

## *From the Executive Director*



As an organization dedicated to historical preservation, we naturally focus on the past: the history of Connecticut, of our community, and of our collections. But we look to the future as well, as we work to expand our programming, improve the visitor's experience, and of course, preserve our heritage for generations to come.

We are proud to have presented two exhibitions by contemporary artists who reinterpret traditional art forms: *Denyse Schmidt: In the Making*, modern versions of classic quilt designs, and *One Loop at a Time*, June Myles's hooked art inspired by traditional art forms. Our Colonial herb garden was updated to make it historically accurate to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. And what would the holiday season be without the annual *Great Trains Holiday Exhibition*, which attracts visitors from near and far. The *American Artisan Show* and the *Fall and Spring Antiques Markets* were each successful, attracting visitors from throughout the Northeast. In all, our exhibitions, collections, and programs draw over 12,000 people to our campus.

I am also delighted to report that our museum complex buildings benefitted from long-overdue painting with a grant from the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation and the 1772 Foundation. Thanks to support from the Elizabeth Raymond Ambler Foundation, striking new signage is in place at all three campus locations. Generous donors provided our *Young Yankees* 4<sup>th</sup>-grade Colonial history program with support, aiding us in our vision to extend and enrich the content of this vital educational outreach effort.

We continue to build on our long tradition of collaborating with other area organizations. We are now in our eighth year of co-producing the *Wilton Library Lecture Series*. This year we presented five lectures, each of which drew 120 guests and a waiting list. The Letterboxing program returned this spring, co-sponsored by eight history organizations. We hosted the Wilton Garden Club's flower show, partnered with the Historical Christmas Barn to offer performances of *A Christmas Carol* at the Clune Center, and as always we worked with the Wilton Public Schools with our curriculum-based *Young Nutmeggers* and *Young Yankees* programs. For the first time this year, we teamed up with the Wilton YMCA on a vegetable dye textiles program for dozens of middle-school students. Our Historic Marker Program, chaired by Trustee Gini Benin, continues to promote the historical significance of Wilton's early structures.

None of this could happen without the dedication and support of our staff, volunteers, trustees, and members. All of you truly help us to achieve our mission and make history relevant and exciting. I look forward to deepening our connections in the years to come.

**Leslie Nolan**  
*Executive Director*

## 2014 American Artisan Show

The 29<sup>th</sup> Annual American Artisan Show was held on the Museum grounds the weekend of October 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> and was preceded by a festive preview party and silent auction. Our largest fundraiser netted the Society in excess of \$40,000 thanks to the efforts of a superb committee, many volunteers and a dedicated staff. With nearly 30 artisans showcasing traditional arts and fine crafts in unique gallery spaces within our historic buildings, the Society welcomed many new visitors throughout the weekend.

One of our artisans summed up the experience so well, "It's apparent that all of you care for the Historical Society because of your presence and helpfulness over the weekend. My wife and I have always enjoyed doing the Wilton show but even more so now that it's at the Museum. Thank you for your hospitality and we look forward to next year!"

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Co-Chairs: Gregg Chann, Janet Foster

Committees:

Artisan Relations: Lynda Campbell, Moira Craw,  
Elaine Richter, Catherine Romer

Preview Party: Janet Foster, Nancy Perez,  
Katy Williams

Publicity Coordination: Leslie Nolan,  
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Volunteer Coordinator: Joan Starr

Operations: Karl Dolnier, Peter Gaboriault

Treasurer: Dick Martin

Sponsorships: E. Bulkeley Griswold

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Gregg Chann

*President, Emeritus Trustees*

## Betts Store

The Betts Store is a beautiful one-room museum shop featuring American-made items. The store, which has tripled in revenue over the last three years, is poised to increase in sales yet again this year with more emphasis being placed on marketing via social media. We are hoping to *not* just be "Wilton's best kept secret" for one-of-a-kind gifts, and have broadened our efforts to reach surrounding towns. We are excited about showcasing new vendors and featuring an expanded book section. We always look forward to the holiday season, our busiest time of year, thanks in large part to the successful *Great Trains Holiday Exhibit*.

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Chair: Tara Day Roberts

Committee: Heather Bower, Lynda Campbell,  
Jess Christ, Leslie Nolan

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Tara Day Roberts

*Trustee*





## Buildings & Grounds

Our charter is to preserve, maintain, and lease-out the historically significant buildings owned by the Wilton Historical Society. The Buildings & Grounds Committee currently manages nineteen historic structures in Wilton, divided into three distinct campuses. A central museum complex at 224 Danbury Road contains our collection and “period display” rooms, education, and gallery spaces, as well as staff offices. Lambert Corner to the south, and the Cannondale campus to the north, are leased to as many as fifteen different commercial and residential tenants. The revenues generated thereby substantially support the ongoing preservation and educational efforts that are the core mission of the Society.

One of our highlight efforts this past year was the new street signage project. We completed the redesign, fabrication and installation of five new signs which will serve to reinforce the Society’s branding and unify the three campuses, while providing enhanced street recognition to our tenants. Additionally, we completed many maintenance projects including using a significant matching grant to paint the majority of the historic structures at the museum complex. The ownership of such buildings, put to adaptive reuse, is an ongoing and management-intensive challenge.

This fall we were pleased to welcome our new part-time property manager, Glen O’Brien.

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Chair: Christopher Lavin  
Committee: Greg Chann, Kevin Craw, Karl Dolnier, Bob Faesy, Peter Gaboriault, Dick Martin, Leslie Nolan, Glen O’Brien, Kevin Quinlan, Lee Wilson, Carl Yoder

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Christopher Lavin  
*Vice President, Buildings & Grounds*



## Collections

The Collections Management Committee (CMC) is responsible for the accessioning of donated Wilton objects and protecting, exhibiting and interpreting over 14,000 items in the permanent collection. We meet weekly to work on accessioning incoming donations, outgoing loans, conservation and research, and the current 10-year required inventory of all accessioned items. Additionally, the Committee oversees ten period rooms, the extensive Tool and Toy collections, and provides assistance with the preparation of exhibitions.

Highlights of 2014-2015 include: the restoration and conservation of an 1810 gold/black mirror, (1985 Betts Rockwell gift) underwritten by the Wilton Garden Club; loan of a Walter R.T. Smith Goose Wing Hewing Axe to the Connecticut Historical Society’s *Connecticut: 50 Objects/50 Stories* exhibit; the purchase of the 1739 Land Deed to the Lambert House located at Lambert Corner; and a very special gift - an antique train set from Kathy and Gary Leeds.

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Chair: Joan Starr  
Committee: Nancy Brautigam, Steve Desloges, Leslie Nolan, Catherine Romer, Carol Russell, Sue Sherwood, Helen Stauderman, Scotty Taylor

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Joan Starr  
*Vice-President, Programs & Education*



## Endowment

The Endowment Committee oversees both sustaining gifts to the Society's Endowment Fund, and sponsorship support for our three major fundraising events: the *Fall Antiques Market*, the *Great Trains Holiday Exhibit*, and the signature *American Artisan Show*. In order to have a simpler and more effective approach to potential sponsors for these key events, we developed "It Takes a Village" which is our business/corporate sponsorship program. It offers a tiered/bundled structure which makes it easy for a sponsor to support all three events. The program has streamlined and improved our efforts.

The Society's endowment, at \$1,031,000, is modest for an organization of our size and increasing it is a priority for both the Committee and Society. Beginning in 2015 we have focused more closely on planned giving, asking our friends and members to remember the Society in their estate planning. Inquiries are welcome, and we are prepared to assist friends in making the necessary arrangements.

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Chair: Hal Higby

Committee: E. Bulkeley Griswold, Randy Hatch, Leslie Nolan, Gregory Perry, Bob Russell, Roger Valkenburgh

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Hal Higby

*Vice-President, Development*

## Great Trains Holiday Exhibit

Substantial work went into creating two new permanent train installations in the Abbott Barn lower level. A re-built O-gauge layout complete with an airplane and landing strip is in place next to the fantastic Bob King historic Wilton layout. The three-gauge layout that was in the kid's section has been relocated to the area as well, and will become the third year-round display for the Abbott Barn. Now, these three train exhibits will be available to be run year long.

Thank you volunteers, one and all! Our volunteers, especially the chief trainmen, significantly enhanced and improved the exhibits. Their expertise, creativity, passion and "roll up your sleeves and dig-in" outlook help assure the future success of our train exhibitions.

On the collections front, the Society continues to be known as a destination where folks can donate childhood and family sets. We have received newer sets that can be actively integrated into our exhibit as rolling stock, and were recently presented with a 1920 Ives, and a 1930's Lionel Standard gauge set. We are in the process of inventorying the antique sets, and look forward to creating a permanent antique train display.

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Chief Trainmen: Bob Bucci, Richie Fuhrman, Paul Lourd

Trainmen: Don Drummond, John Frieders, Jeff Headden, John Hetherington, Jon Perelstein, Roger Smith, Bump Spangenberg, Bill Wzieman

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Steve Desloge

*Chair, Train Collection and Exhibits*

## Programs and Education

The Wilton Historical Society had a robust year of programs for visitors of all ages. A deliberate and expanded effort was made to continue offering long-standing annual programs as well as adding many new ones. *Young Nutmeggers* (Wilton's 2nd graders) had a hands-on Colonial experience and also visited Town Hall, while the *Young Yankees* 4th grade Colonial History program expanded this year beyond public school to include local independent schools and home-schooled children. Also new this year were historic craft offerings for youth in a variety of formats, knitting classes for children, letterboxing, and special holiday events. The Society partnered with the Wilton YMCA this summer to bring teen campers to the Society for a day of fiber crafts, including natural tie dying over an open fire. One of our most popular events was the two-month long *Great Trains Holiday Exhibit*, this year delighting over 5,000 visitors!

Highlights of this year's adult programming included: the annual collaboration with the Library on the scholarly five-lecture series *The Gilded Age: Culture and conflict at the end of the 19th century*; gallery talks by our exhibiting artists, Denyse Schmidt and June Myles; a new reading group, *Booked for Lunch*, focused on books with a historical bent; "A Journey..." Kimberly Wilson's one woman show; an evening of chocolate making; a genealogy program with Karen Sakowitz; and tours of the Colonial herb garden.

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Chair: Kim Mellin

Committee: Moira Craw, Rebecca Nanovic Lin,  
Leslie Nolan, Allison Reznik

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Kim Mellin

*Vice-President, Programs & Education*



## In Memorium

*Over the past two years,  
we have lost three treasured  
pillars of the Society:*

### **Peter K. Warren**

1920 – 2014

President, Board of Trustees  
(1987-1991, 1993-1997);  
Trustee Emeritus;  
Preservationist

### **Mary Lou Logan**

1925 – 2014

President, Board of Trustees  
(1968 -1970);  
Trustee Emeritus;  
Curator, Toy Collection;  
Visionary of Adaptive Reuse;  
Passionate Doll Collector

### **Walter R.T. Smith**

1922 – 2015

President, Board of Trustees  
(1984 - 1987);  
Trustee Emeritus;  
Master Builder;  
Quintessential Tool Collector



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 Mr. and Mrs. Fred Wernig  
 William & Karen Tell Foundation  
 Mr. Owen Williams  
 Mr. and Mrs. Robert Williams  
 Mr. David Willock  
 Mr. Leland Wilson  
 Wilson Properties, LLC  
 Mr. and Mrs. Mark Wiltamuth  
 Wilton Hardware, LLC  
 Wilton Kiwanis Club  
 Wilton Outdoor Sports Center  
 Wilton Wine Shoppe  
 Ms. Roxane Witke  
 Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Wolfe  
 Dr. and Mrs. Michael S. Wolfman  
 Mr. Albert G. Wood  
 Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Wulffleff  
 Youngs Nursery  
 Mr. Mario Zapata  
 Ms. Jenny Zeng  
 Ms. Judith B. Zucker



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John Ingersoll  
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Leland R. Wilson  
Ruth Wolfe  
Carl Yoder

WILTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

## Statement of Financial Position

September 30, 2015

### ASSETS

#### Current Assets

Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 124,195
Accounts Receivable	23,112
Merchandise inventory	21,814
Prepaid expenses	<u>8,594</u>
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>177,715</b>

#### Other Assets

Property and Equipment at cost (net of accumulated depreciation)	2,907,627
Investments at market value	1,057,115
Total Other Assets	<u>3,964,742</u>
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b><u>\$ 4,142,457</u></b>

### LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS

#### Current Liabilities

Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$ 5,733
Deferred revenue	<u>22,374</u>
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<b>28,107</b>

#### Other Liabilities

Mortgage payable	140,000
Tenant security deposits	<u>31,250</u>
<b>Total Other Liabilities</b>	<b><u>171,250</u></b>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>199,357</b>

#### Net Assets

Unrestricted	3,940,788
Temporarily restricted	<u>2,312</u>
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>3,943,100</b>

<b>Total Liabilities &amp; Net Assets</b>	<b><u>\$ 4,142,457</u></b>
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WILTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC

## Statement of Activities

For the Year Ended September 30, 2015

### REVENUES

Museum operations	
Contributions	\$ 43,045
Membership dues	25,251
Fundraisers	
Artisan Show (net of expenses)	40,221
Antique Shows (net of expenses)	23,137
Admissions	15,854
Program fees	15,288
Betts Shop sales	23,839
Other	3,812
Building properties rentals	376,603
Investment income (loss)	<u>(9,490)</u>
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>557,560</b>

### EXPENSES

Museum operations	
Payroll	\$ 187,560
Operating overhead	164,199
Office and administrative	58,949
Program costs	18,493
Betts Shop purchases	12,307
Building properties operations	<u>212,150</u>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>653,658</b>

<b>Change in net assets from operations</b>	<b>(96,098)</b>
<b>Net Assets released from restrictions</b>	<b><u>(19,538)</u></b>
<b>Total Net Assets changes</b>	<b>(115,636)</b>
<b>Net Assets, beginning of year</b>	<b><u>4,058,736</u></b>
<b>Net Assets, end of year</b>	<b><u>\$ 3,943,100</u></b>