

## WELCOME TO RIDGEFIELD

The Fundamental Orders adopted by Connecticut in 1639 allowed would-be settlers, able to support a minister, to establish a settlement, build a Congregational Church and farm the land. This is exactly what was done here in 1708. The original 24 proprietors received 7 1/2-acre home lots drawn by lottery, with a 25th reserved for the minister. The lots were located north and south along a wide main street on one of the three ridges that would give Ridgefield its name. The close-knit community lived under the vigilant eye of the Rev. Thomas Hauley, who also served as schoolmaster and town clerk. Each family was an individual survival unit, dwelling in a small home, farming its outlying fields and husbanding a few farm animals on its home lot.

The 18th century was a busy time for the new community: homes and mills were built, schools and small businesses were established, and most importantly in 1775, after thrice declining to do so, the town fathers voted to oppose King George and the English government, and became part of the fight for liberty. In April 1777 a British raiding party, under the command of Gen. William Tryon, landed at Compo Beach in Westport with orders to march to Danbury where they sacked and burned the town, destroying the patriot supplies stored there. On their march back to the sea, they passed through Ridgefield where they were met by a hastily formed army led by Gen. David Wooster, Gen. Gold Selleck Silliman and Gen. Benedict Arnold (then still an American patriot).

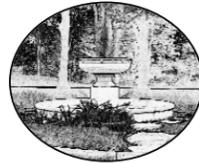
After the war the pace of commerce grew. By 1822 the town had weavers, hatters, tailors, cabinet makers, silversmiths and shoemakers. Immigrants arrived from Ireland and Germany. The 19th century also saw the birth of industry, including carriage manufacturing. By 1830 the Resseguie and Olmstead carriage "manufactory," later called the Big Shop, became one of the town's largest employers. During the Civil War the Connecticut 17th Regiment included young men from Ridgefield, who served in many battles, including Chancellorsville and Gettysburg.

A half dozen died on the battlefield or in Confederate prisons.

In the early 20th century the face of the town began to change: Italian immigrants arrived and built roads and the water system and worked on the great estates. Prominent artists, actors and writers also found homes here. By mid-century the biggest change came in the form of "commuters," who found a beautiful small town, affordable housing and a relatively easy commute by car or train to their offices in Stamford, Westchester and New York City. During the last half of the century, the population grew from 10,000 inhabitants to its present 24,000 plus.

On Ridgefield's 300th anniversary, September 30, 2008, we can only trust that the original 25 proprietors would be pleased at the transition our town has made from the small farming community they carved out of the wilderness into a caring town intent on remembering our past.

*Written by Kay Ables and Tom Belote*



**THE MUSEUM IN THE STREETS®** installation was created and organized by the Ridgefield 300th Anniversary Committee 2008.

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**THE MUSEUM IN THE STREETS®** is a heritage discovery trail for the community and its visitors. The walking and driving tour seeks to enhance the community's historical identity, educate, encourage preservation and promote the knowledge and respect of local traditions. Featuring permanent markers at 30 'stations of history,' Ridgefield's Museum in the Streets brings the past to life beyond the walls of traditional institutions.

**THE MUSEUM IN THE STREETS® project has been sponsored by:**

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*Our sincere thanks to the following individuals and organizations who have donated photographs from their collections to the Museum in the Streets installation, and to many notable Ridgefield citizens who have documented the history of Ridgefield throughout the years:*

Carol Ancona	Stephanie Pelletier	Barbara Serfilippi
Silvio Bedini	Ridgefield Highway Dept.	Gary Singer
Virginia Cohen	Ridgefield Historical Society	Mary Sullivan
Morton Dean	Ridgefield Parks & Rec. Dept.	Daniel W. Teller
Charles Fisher	Ridgefield Press	Richard & Marie Venus
Samuel Goodrich	George Rockwell, Jr.	Barbara Watson
David Hein	Kathryn Rosa	Glenna Welsh
Edward Karvosky	Jack Sanders	Josette Williams
Keeler Tavern Museum	Lucy Scala	
Korker Archives	David Scott, AIA	

# THE MUSEUM IN THE STREETS®



*A history walking tour of the Town of Ridgefield, Connecticut.*



**Welcome to RIDGEFIELD**



- 1** THE GREAT FIRE OF 1895

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- 2** BAILEY AVENUE: A SHORT-CUT TO THE TRAIN STATION

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- 3** THE SPOTTING TOWER AND RAILROAD WAREHOUSING

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- 4** THE RIDGEFIELD TRAIN STATION

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- 5** BOOTLEGGING AND THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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- 6** SMITH TAVERN—A COLONIAL MEETING PLACE

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- 7** THE ELMS INN AND THE STEBBINS HOMESTEAD

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- 8** THE BATTLE OF RIDGEFIELD, APRIL 27, 1777

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- 9** BALLARD PARK

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- 10** THE VILLAGE IN THE 1900S

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- 11** MAIN STREET IN THE LATE 1800S

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- 12** A MUCH-LOVED OLD CHURCH AND A WATERING TROUGH FOR HORSES

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- 13** OUT OF THE ASHES...

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- 14** THE LIVERY STABLE AND THE FIRST CATHOLIC CHURCH

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- 15** ST. MARY CHURCH AND RECTORY

- 16** THE VILLAGE CENTER IN THE EARLY 1900S

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- 17** MORE OF THE GREAT FIRE...

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- 18** BISSELL'S—DESTROYED BY TWO CONFLAGRATIONS

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- 19** GOVERNOR LOUNSBURY'S FIRST HOUSE AND THE BOYS CLUB

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- 20** STATE POLICE AND THE BENJAMIN FRANKLIN SCHOOL

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- 21** THE GOVERNOR'S ESTATE AND ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH

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- 22** BENEDICT ARNOLD'S BETRAYAL AND LIEUTENANT JOSHUA KING

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- 23** THE TOWN COMMON AND HAULEY HOUSE

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- 24** RIDGEFIELD'S COLONIAL PLANS

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- 25** KEELER TAVERN AND THE "BIG SHOP"

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- 26** SETTLER'S ROCK

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- 27** TITICUS: AN INDUSTRIAL CENTER

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- 28** RIDGEBURY—GEORGE WASHINGTON SLEPT HERE

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- 29** BRANCHVILLE—A CENTER OF ITALIAN-AMERICAN LIFE

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- 30** QUARRIES, ABRASIVES AND THE "FRESH AIR" KIDS



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