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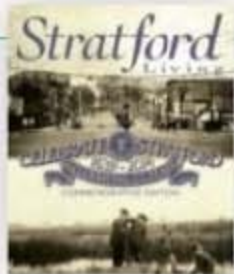
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About the cover: For the cover of our 375th Stratford Celebratory Guide we present two images which depict Stratford as it was so many years ago. Top: Stratford Town Center in 1914. At the start of the twentieth century, Stratford Center had twenty buildings. The Center was the place to shop, pay your taxes and for clubs to meet. Below: This image of men harvesting the waters of Stratford for crabs or oysters in 1894. Both photos were provided by the Stratford Historical Society, whose preservation of the Town's past is instrumental to the creation of this publication.

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*Happy 375th
Birthday
Town of Stratford!*

As Mayor of Stratford, I would like to thank our residents and welcome our visitors to town. This year, we recognize 375 years of Stratford, and I invite all to join me as we celebrate. In Stratford, and during this time especially, you will experience a town like no other. Unique for its age, having been settled in 1639, there are only a handful of towns in Connecticut that are older!

Whether you are a resident or a visitor who is planning to visit our historic town during our celebrations, there are many events taking place and many historic sites to see. We began our festivities with a kickoff event in early April at the historic Perry House – a house that has witnessed over three centuries of history. We also held our first Annual Restaurant Week, where we showed our appreciation to the community and to the small businesses that drive Stratford's local economy.

Whether spending a day at the beach or visiting historic Lordship, you will notice that we have added banners to the lamp posts on Main Street. These festive flags will provide a great backdrop during our town's annual events which have been added to the festivities, and include the fireworks (July 30–Aug 3), Blues on the Beach (July 26), Festival Stratford (July 30), the Pumpkin and Holiday Festivals, and many more. I encourage you to visit the Town's 375th anniversary website, www.stratford375.com for more information on the town and upcoming events.

I hope that you will join us in celebrating our history, as we recognize and thank residents of past and present for their irreplaceable contributions that have made Stratford a great place to work, live, and raise a family.

Best Regards,

Mayor John Harkins



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Our town lost a precious person in the tragedy of Sandy Hook. Teacher Vicki Soto died trying to protect her students and is a true hero. She is a posthumous recipient of the Presidential Citizens Medal.

Plans and petitions to honor her by name via scholarships, roads, and schools were announced in late 2012 and 2013. The Stratford Town Council unanimously approved a resolution to name a school after Soto, and the city of Bayamón, Puerto Rico, birthplace of Soto's father, is planning to name a public facility after her.

The second annual Vicki Soto 5k will take place November 1, 2014. Recently, the *The Sandy Ground: Where Angels Play* project constructed a playground at Longbrook Park in her honor. It is a lovely place for families and friends to gather and remember how precious life is.



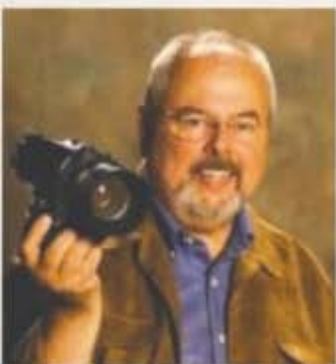
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1639-1699

In the Beginning

IN 1639, WHEN Reverend Adam

Blakeman and his parishioners arrived at Massachusetts Bay, much of the land was already taken. Blakeman and his people followed Thomas Hooker to Connecticut where, at Wethersfield, it was found that the best farmlands had been taken by the first arrivals. As soon as the weather allowed,

Blakeman's group moved southward toward the shoreline of Long Island Sound. The main group set out overland with cattle, sheep, and hogs while boats left Wethersfield laden with heavy household goods and stores, as well as the old and infirm. The group forded the Housatonic River near Oronoque, near where the Paugusset Indians had a fort. The depth at low tide was only a few feet, and the group came south along the river's edge until they found their vessels moored snugly in the little inlet later called Mac's Harbor (now at Elm St.). Here they erected a meeting-house and built English-style wigwams and temporary sod homes. Tradition says that on a spring day in 1639 Rev. Blakeman and his small group knelt to pray on the banks of a little cove near the mouth of the Housatonic River and agreed that this was the place they sought, the land they had traveled over five thousand miles to reach. The shores of this sheltered inlet, Cupheag, as the

Indians named it, would be their home.

This 1639 settlement was the beginning of the town now known as Stratford (first named in April 1643). According to ships' registers, these working peoples were masons, weavers, joiners, smiths, and husbandmen, or servants. They worked the land and harvested the



sea to make their plantation thrive. Temporary sod homes soon turned into wooden homes surrounded by fields, forest, and pastures. A 10-foot palisade erected around the village protected them from Indians and wolves.

By 1699, the fifth town founded in Connecticut Colony was flourishing with an estimated population of 572.

—*Stratford Historical Society with excerpts from The Pursuit of Paradise*

THE FIRST FAMILIES OF STRATFORD

THESE ARE THE traditional seventeen families believed to have settled the town. Later research suggests there may have been others, numbering upward into the thirties. A complete list does not truly exist.

BEARDSLEY, William and Mary;

children: Mary, John, and Joseph

BLAKEMAN (BLACKMAN), Adam and

Jane; children: John, Samuel, probably

James and Mary. Deliverance and

Benjamin were not yet born.

BOSTWICK, (BOSTICK) Arthur;

son: John

CROOKER, William

CURTIS (CURTISS), Elizabeth; children:

John, William, and Thomas

FAIRCHILD, Thomas; married a Seabrook.

Son Samuel was the first recorded birth in

Stratford: August 31, 1640

GROVES, Philip; married a daughter of

Rev. Henry Smith of Wethersfield.

HARVEY, Richard and Ann

HURD, John and younger brother Adam

JUDSON, William and Grace; children:

Joseph, Jeremiah, and Joshua

MILLS, Richard and Francis; children:

a daughter and a son, Samuel

NICHOLS, Francis; children: Isaac,

Caleb, John, and two daughters

PEET (PEAT, PEAKE), John and Marie;

children: John and Benjamin born after

arrival

QUENBY (QUINBY), William

SEABROOK, Robert; believed to have

sailed with his daughter, who was

married to Thomas Fairchild

SHERWOOD, Thomas and Sarah (Robert

Seabrook's other daughter)

WILCOXSON, William and Margaret;

one child

The First Inhabitants

THERE WERE SEVERAL

settlements of native Indians when the English first came to Stratford. They were part of the Paugussett federation of tribes, who in turn were part of the Algonquin and shared similar languages. The Cupheags was a small clan led by Okenuck, who was aged nineteen in 1639. He was the son of Ansantawae of Wepawaug, now part of downtown Milford.

After Stratford village was settled, Okenuck and his clan moved to Pootatuck, now Shelton. They would return in the spring to fish and clam the shores, while they hunted for food in their inland home during the cooler months. In 1664, by a town vote, wigwams, or some of them, were relocated to the southwest part of the Stratford village. It was called Wigwam Meadow. There was also a Wigwam Hill about three miles north. The people of Stratford village were never harmed by the Indians. There was fear (given the history of more aggressive tribes and the



recent bloodshed during the Pequot War of 1637), but the Indians, who more

than likely outnumbered the English five to one, primarily watched the

early Stratford settlers from the edge of the trees.

The "Pequannocks" lived to the west of Stratford village, currently Bridgeport. Pequannock means "cleared field". This clan cultivated about 100 acres at the north end cove of Black Rock Harbor. The encampments of Pequannock wigwams resided on both sides of the Uncoway River, now known as Pequannock River. The tribe lived here for many generations, and the planting ground was owned by them until 1681, when it was sold to Fairfield.

LEGENDS OF TOWN: TUNNELS

THERE ARE STORIES of a network of underground tunnels leading from the basements of early homes to the safety of Watch House Hill (now Academy Hill). Some say the tunnels were created to help villagers escape from unfriendly Indians. Could they have been used for smuggling? Perhaps that is why homes had sub-basements, particularly in seamen's houses. Some speak of a connection with the Underground Railroad. Of course "the Railroad" was not a named tunnel, but the name given to a

system used to aid fugitive slaves to escape their masters.

We may never know the true how or why of these tunnels, secret rooms, hidden spaces, and sub-basements. None exist today to investigate, perhaps closed off for safety reasons, or crumbled over time. All that remain are the tales of one of the intriguing mysteries of Stratford's early days.

—Compiled from "A Walk Through Time, Walking Tours of Stratford Connecticut,"
Stratford Historical Society

Blessed Be the Tie That Binds

THE SEVENTEEN

FAMILIES under the leadership of Rev. Adam Blakeman who settled Stratford in the spring of 1639, were "people of law, order, and thrift and believed that as believers in Christ and in their Covenant with God that they could build a community based upon faith. They believed that the church had a right to legislate for itself as conscience dictated, free from coercion by anyone."

Those values would later be reflected in the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut that governed Stratford, Connecticut, and would find their way into the U.S. Constitution.

Built that very first year, their meeting house was the place where all affairs of the town were conducted. It also served as the First Congregational Church, and for many years the history of the church was also the history of the town. In 1680 a second building was

erected on Watch House Hill—now Academy Hill. That building was replaced by a third in 1743. The fourth was erected on Elm Street in 1786 near the Old Burying Ground. In 1859, that church was replaced by the current lovely Gothic-style church on the corner of Main and Church Streets that still features the lovely, stained glass "Rose Window".

Throughout its 375 year history, the church has been at the forefront in dealing with the issues of the day: the cause of freedom during the American Revolution; the issue

of slavery of the mid-19th century; the suffrage of women in the early 20th century; the support of its members serving their country during two World Wars; and the continuing issues of peace and justice of the last decades.

The First Congressional Church is "Mother Church" to more than 22 churches in this region, from Putney Chapel to Trumbull, from



Left: The drawing of a church in the earliest of days. Above: The First Congregational Church today.

Bethany to Newtown, and from Washington to Woodbury.

Starting from its beginnings in 1639, the First Congregational Church has been at the very center of the Stratford community, joining

with other religious groups to respond to the needs and issues of Stratford's people. Strong indeed are the ties that bind the First Congregational Church and the Stratford community.

—Richard Elias



SEALED WITH A KISS

LEGEND HAS IT that John Birdseye of Milford was caught kissing his wife one Sunday in 1649. Public kissing was forbidden and on Monday Birdseye was sentenced to be lashed. Before he was about to receive this sentence, he broke away and swam to freedom over the river onto the more lenient Stratford side. At night he returned by boat, fetched his family, and rowed back to Stratford where subsequent generations remained. One of them went on to invent the modern frozen foods concept and, locally, a Birdseye Street still exists by the river, just south of the Shakespeare Theatre.



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Colonial Craftsmen



AS WERE MOST towns in the early days of colonization, Stratford was agricultural. As the village population and shipboard trade grew however, the colonists expanded the making of goods and cottage industries grew up. Skilled artisans built small shops, usually in their side yards, and crafted goods for use and trade with other colonies and the West Indies. They enlisted assistants, apprentices, and indentured servants.

Hemp and flax were grown and sheep were raised for wool to be used by weavers to create cloth. Cotton brought back from the Caribbean islands was also used for cloth creation.

By 1660, the first tannery in town was operating, located east of the current railroad station. Durable leather was used in the making of

coats and pants, and leather crafters also honed their skills on saddles, harnesses, and shoes...although cobblers were not thought of as very skilled craftsmen in the early days.

Woodworkers fulfilled the need for building materials. Joiners, architects, and cabinetmakers, shipwrights, wheelwrights, and coopers all used wood to create their products. Colonial homes used wood both inside and out, with interior paneling considered a craftsman's pride.

Smiths used copper, iron, and silver to create functional items for use and trade (the decorative items came later). In the earliest days, iron was imported from England until colonists in nearby towns like New Haven and Kent learned how to successfully refine bog ore.

Mills & Millers

THE FIRST MILLER of Stratford was believed to be Thomas Uffoot (Uffoord) who owned the land on Little Neck (Mac's Harbor) before 1650. Not only did the variety of mills supply the town with its various needs (grain, paper, wood, cider), they were known to be a place to exchange all kinds of news and gossip.

In 1676, James Blakeman built a sawmill on Farmill River. It became the eleventh mill among the river banks, joining a gristmill, papermill, sawmill, cidermill, sorghum mill, and a stump-joint factory. The last mill at the dam site was Robert's Paper Mill, which burned down in 1907. Today, the mills no longer exist.



Half-ton granite stones like this and others on display at Boothe Memorial Park, were removed so furrows could be deepened and sharpened with a hammer and chisel.

Early Ports

IN 1648, MOSES Wheeler was granted permission to operate a ferry that would carry both people and horses across "Great River" between Stratford and Milford.

The wharf at what is currently Bond's Dock was the first in town. Built in 1686, it was known as Town Dock and Lower Dock. There local schooners and sloops would be loaded with cornmeal, pickled beef, pork, leather goods—even horses—to go to the West Indies for trade. The ships would return with cargoes of salt, sugar, rum, gun powder, fruits, and spices. Exports of lumber and timber were banned in 1690, as the nearby forest became depleted, but they kept shipping corn and grain, onions, apples, oysters, shad, and bolts of cloth. Imports would also arrive from Europe and included



The wharf now known as Bond's Dock was the first in town.

wine, nails, iron, glass, and fabrics. Another wharf was located near Mac's Harbor, where, until the Civil War, the water was deep enough to receive shipping vessels whose bowsprit extended out over Elm Street. Sea trade was a major part of life in Stratford and other coastal towns of Connecticut. In the same genre, shipbuilding, one of Stratford's earliest businesses, significantly improved the town's way of life.

THE TOWN CRIER

THERE WERE NO newspapers in the early days. News was spread verbally by a Town Crier who travelled the streets using his loud voice to speak the news.

According to town records, "January 3, 1661, John Beach

was chosen Crier for ye town and to be allowed four pence for everything he cries and every tyme he cries; that is to say for all sorts of cattle, and all other things of smaller value, two pence."



THE GREAT WOLF HUNT

IN THE EARLY days of Stratford colony, wolves were very much feared. The livestock of the colonists often at risk and attacked. Even men were not safe. Joseph Curtiss told of being attacked as he was riding home from Newtown. In order to avoid injury, he and his companions had to relinquish their sacks of grain to the hungry pack of wolves.

Although the number of wolves was lessened by bounties—32 shillings then reduced to 12—they still successfully bred farther away from civilization. Wolves were trapped in wolf pits: holes that were dug deep, and outfitted with spears at the bottom, and disguised with branches on top.

Despite these efforts, the wolf problem continued. At a town meeting held April 17, 1693, the freemen agreed the situation was dire. Sheepmaster John Beach stood up and confirmed that foaling ewes and newborn lambs were being lost to wolf attacks. All agreed to mount a campaign to get rid of the beasts once and for all.

The following Thursday, fourteen groups of men and boys, 8-10 per group along with a leader, enforced "the great wolf hunt." They chased down adult wolves and disposed of the cubs in their dens. It is not certain how many wolves were killed, but judging by the bounties paid, the number was estimated as high as 599 for the year.

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Witchcraft

THE GENERAL COURT passed a law in 1642 which read: [sic]"Yf any man or wman be a witch (that is) hath or consultheth with a familiar spirit, they shall be put to death." Witchcraft in the colonies (as the town of Salem would prove some forty years later)

was serious business. Also Young of Windsor was hanged in 1647 and Mary Johnson of Wethersfield died in 1648 for "familiarity with the Deuill."

It was a rash of hard weather, sickness, hallucinations, and deaths that led the women of Stratford to lay blame at the feet of Goody Bassett; they coincided with her recent arrival from the New Haven Colory. Goody Bassett was believed to be a witch; and for this she should be put to death.

There is no record of the full name of Goody Bassett, (Goody being a then common derivative of "Goodwife"). The *Colonial Times* of May 15, 1651 states, [sic]"The Gouvernor,

Mr. Cullick and Mr. Clarke are desired to goe downe to Stratford to keepe Courtse vppon the tryall of Goody Bassett for her life, and Gouvernor cannot goe, then Mr. Wells is to goe in his roome." There is also 1651 record

of a trial in New Haven Colony for witchcraft that mentions a Goodwife Bassett condemned at Stratford, and another that mentions a confession.

It is believed that Goody Bassett was hung at the base of Clapboard Hill by the Gallows Brook Stream after being



This drawing by Eric Wehder, Jr. depicts what may have been the hanging of Goody Bassett.

found guilty in a trial. The brook and the Gallows Bridge that crossed remained until 1848 when the railroad came to town. Some of the ledge was visible until 1958, when it was demolished to make way for I-95.

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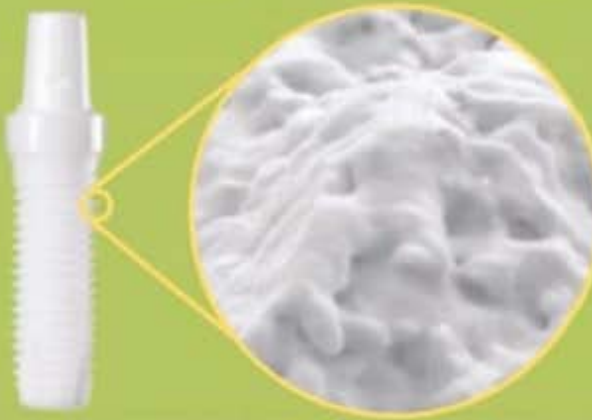
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Lordship History

The first inhabitants of Lordship were the Paugussetts who had encampments at Stratford Point and Indian Well. When the English arrived in 1639, they found an area that had been used to plant corn, so there was little clearing necessary. Originally called Great Neck, the area was a common field worked and owned by settlers who then returned home to the safety of the palisade fort at night.

Richard Mills was the first to build a farmhouse in Great Neck in the western end near present day Second Avenue. It is in connection with his name that the term Lordship is first found, as applied to a meadow on what became known as the Lordship farm.

In colonial days, there were a few farms and very little trees on the windswept landscape. Due to its isolation, stories of pirates, buried treasure, and smuggling abound. In 1815, Captain Samuel Nichols built the oldest house in Lordship on Fourth Avenue with his privateering profits from the War of 1812. The house would become known as the Lordship Manor. In 1822 the first lighthouse was built and the area became known as Stratford Point.

William Hopson would acquire the Manor house and begin the transformation of Lordship into what it is today. He built the road to Bridgeport in the late 1880s and formed the Lordship Park Association (LPA) in 1896, which remained the



largest developer in Lordship until dissolving in 1981. Beginning in 1911 with the sale of 500 acres to the Wilkenda Corporation, the LPA set out to establish Lordship as a resort area, building the Lordship Casino, Lordship Pavilion, dance hall, bathing facilities, a tent camp at Lordship Beach, and a trolley line in 1915 to connect Lordship with Bridgeport. Gradually lots were sold and houses built after World War I. The LPA reacquired the property of the Wilkenda Company in 1922. The Lordship Improvement Association (LIA) was formed in 1924 and worked with the LPA to design the tree lined medians and donate park land to Stratford. The LPA would donate Russian Beach and Bluffs to the LIA

Lordship Manor Beach in 1915.

in 1938. The LPA retained possession of the land east of Spruce Street until after World War II when they started developing towards the lighthouse.

Today Lordship remains the recreational hub of Stratford with beaches, golf course, and Little League complex at Short Beach. Lordship School, built in 1938 on land donated by the residents, remains a source of pride for the community. Always known for its volunteerism, the Lordship Fathers Club has served the area since 1947, and Stratford Volunteer Fire Company #3 dates back over 100 years.

—Tom Halverson
Lordship Historian

1700-1799



The Birdseye home, built in 1714, was located on upper Main Street.

BY 1700, THE town of Stratford was growing. Colonial Stratford was mainly agricultural, but there were craftspeople as well as professionals. The northern part of town, called Oronoque, grew and prospered. The mills were up and running making life more efficient, and as people began to



Quilting was a way for female neighbors to socialize while they worked.

settle farther out, new village centers and farms such as High Land were created (now Huntington Center).

The size of houses increased as well. Some included lean-to additions, followed by the construction of many saltbox houses. Full two-story homes with center chimneys were built by the affluent to house their families.

It was a time of extra taxes, a smallpox outbreak, fighting in conflicts, soldiers from other countries invading, and the need for supplies from the town. The big news of the century was the fight for independence from England. Not everyone was for this revolution.

But in the end when the war was over, the land was free and a new nation was born. In 1784, Connecticut

native Levi Pease started a stageline with Bennett's Tavern as a stop. Signer of the Constitution, Stratford native, William Samuel Johnson was elected to Congress in 1785.

The west was expanding and commerce was thriving. In 1789, Huntington separated from the town, as did Trumbull in 1797.

FIVE VILLAGES

AS A TOWN in the Connecticut colony of the King until 1789, Stratford township retained 112 square miles of territory, its local government run by five villages, parishes, or ecclesiastical societies.



- Old Society (Stratford)
Square Miles: 19.3 Date Settled: 1639
- Stratfield (Bridgeport)
Square Miles: 12.6 Date Settled: 1694
- Ripton (Shelton)
Square Miles: 30.2 Date Settled: 1717
- North Stratford (Trumbull)
Square Miles: 23.4 Date Settled: 1744
- New Stratford (Monroe)
Square Miles: 6.5 Date Settled: 1762

Christ Church: Mirror to a Nation

IN THE FACE

of a puritan theocracy. Anglicans elected a vestry in Stratford in 1707, making Christ Church the first Anglican Church in the Connecticut colony. The first church was built in 1724 and the golden rooster weather vane that rises 125 feet on the present steeple dates from that time. Dr. Samuel Johnson, a Yale graduate and former Congregational minister, led the first church, and under his leadership, a second church was built in 1743-44. His gift of a bell continues to call worshippers today. (Dr. Johnson's son, William Samuel Johnson, brought fame to Stratford as one of the framers and signers of the Constitution. Both father and son are interred in the Christ Church burial ground.)

As our new nation sought to form a cohesive whole, the issue of slavery defied compromise. Though abolition was unpopular in Stratford, Rev. George Shepherd served as the first president of the Stratford Anti-Slavery Society, with church organist Asa



Curtis as its secretary. After the southern states seceded, Christ Church hosted popular rallies on its front lawn in support of the Union cause.

Over the ensuing decades, technology brought benefits, although World War I saw it put to deadly uses. Rev. Clark Kennedy was gassed on the western front where he served as chaplain.

Though he survived, he never fully recovered. Perhaps motivated by his suffering, Mrs. Kennedy organized and became the first president of the Stratford Visiting Nurse Association. Twenty years later, Rev. Loyall Graham, a marine veteran of World War I, served as an army chaplain during WWII. Of the 167 Christ Church members that served, four perished in the conflict.

The decades that followed witnessed a religious revival, civil and women's rights movements. The face of the church changed; women at Christ Church now serve in both lay and spiritual leadership positions.

Times change, and the citizens of the Christ Church congregation, town, state, and nation continue to struggle with issues that have colored our collective history for centuries. While the tone of our debate can be shrill, the discussion is a testimony to the power of faith and democracy.

—Judith Kurnmay



MILE MARKERS

IN 1753, IN an effort to improve the fledgling postal system, postmaster of the northern colonies Benjamin Franklin spent ten weeks in New England measuring distances on the Post Roads. Riding in

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| a carriage with a homemade odometer (cyclometer), he was followed by a wagon of assistants with stone markers. They would place the stones specifically at sites Franklin staked, measuring the miles to major cities. | Stratford has two stones that remain: (pictured)14 | miles to NH (New Haven) located where Ferry Boulevard meets East Broadway, and 15 MILE TO NH on the West Broad Street hill. Since postage rates were determined by mileage, this was a more accurate way to measure the distance of letters sent. |
|--|--|---|

Judson House

CURRENTLY THE HOME of the Stratford Historical Society, the Judson House was built circa 1732 by Captain David Judson on the site of his great-grandfather's 1639 stone house. It is a fine example of Georgian architecture with its impressive broken scroll pediment entry. It is furnished with period pieces of Stratford origin. The beautiful paneled "west room" contains an early piano which belonged to William Samuel Johnson, a Stratford resident, framer of the U.S. Constitution, and



Present day exterior of Capt. David Judson House.

DID YOU KNOW

Prayer Spring in Oronoque got its name because, legend has it, during the 1762 drought, Rev. Nathan Birdseye prayed for a spring and got it.

the second president of Columbia University.

An outstanding collection of Chinese porcelain is displayed in the dining room, as well as a circa 1750 Crown Great Chair (Heart and Crown), a form unique to this area. A huge fireplace, complete with period accessories, dominates the kitchen. A rare eighteenth century clothes press original to the house is located in the west chamber, along with a canopy bed and

a candlewick bedspread dated "1808 MB." The fireplace wall of this room exhibits its original paneling. Slave quarters and displays of fishing, oystering, and farming tools are located in the basement.

Adjacent to the Judson House is the modern Catharine Bunnell Mitchell Museum with permanent exhibits of Stratford history and changing gallery exhibits which feature items from the

collections of the Stratford Historical Society.

The property also includes the Beach family carriage house, built approximately 1880-1885. The carriage and horse were housed on the ground floor, while the upper floor was used for hay and grain storage.

Listed on the National Register of Historical Places, the House and museum are open from June-October, Wednesday-Sunday, from 12:00-4:00pm.

POST OFFICE

THE FIRST STRATFORD Post Office was established on February 16, 1790. Prior to that time, the postal services were run through general stores in the village. The Post Office ran independently until 1913 when it joined the Bridgeport Post Office. Delivery by carriers began April 13, 1913. In 1938, airmail begins to be dispatched from Stratford's airport.



The David Brook's Post Office 1803-1857 from a painting by Edward Lampson Henry. David Brooks was Postmaster of Stratford for more than 52 years.

CELEBRATE STRATFORD
1639 - 2014
CELEBRATING 375 YEARS

Stratford Masonry



ON APRIL 22, 1766, nearly fifty years before the establishment of the Freemasonry in America, the St. John's Lodge No. 8 of Stratford was granted their original charter. Meeting in homes at first, this well attended group built a temple that was sold to the town in 1887. Prior to the moving into their new Masonic Temple in April 1928, they

The current Masonic Temple of Stratford.

leased space in Town Hall.

The Lodge continues today under the merged name of America-St. John's Lodge #8, A.F. & A.M, and is composed of three merged Lodges: St. John's #8, America #132, and Temple #127.

Independence Day

Word of the thirteen colonies claiming independence from Great Britain reached Stratford and the Christ Church bell rang loud and proud announcing American independence. This bell, cast in Fairfield in 1762, has been rung every July 4th since.



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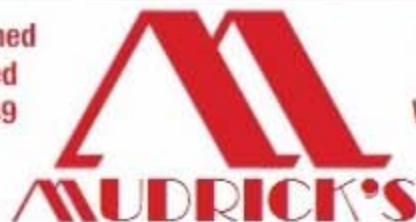
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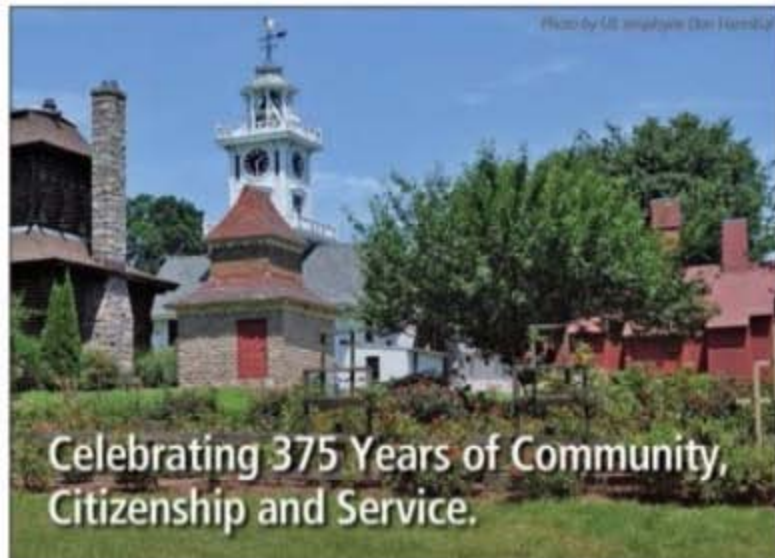
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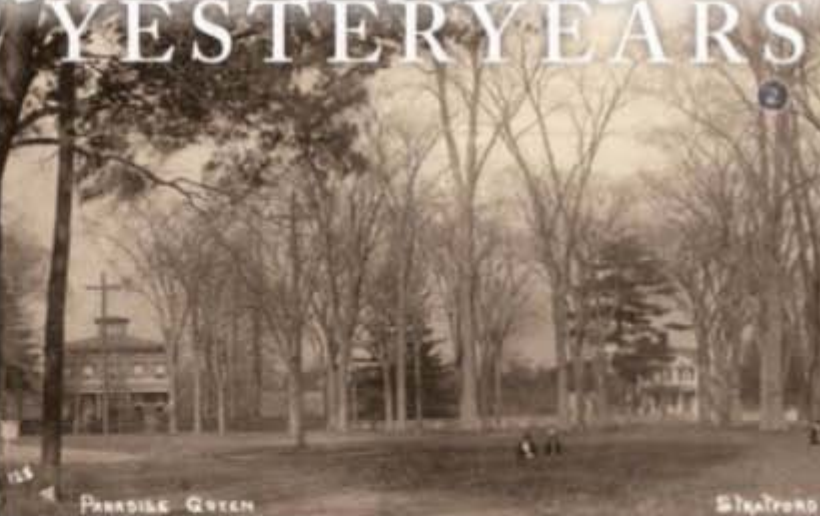


UIL congratulates the town of Stratford on its 375th Anniversary. We are pleased to join in Stratford's anniversary celebration and support the town's commitment to its residents.



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- 2 Paradise Green
- 3 Housatonic River
- 4 Paper Mills at Far Mill River
- 5 North End
- 6 Vintage Main Street
- 7 Selby's Pond
- 8 Waterfalls

Photos courtesy of the Stratford Historical Society.

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Lew Knapp grew up during the Great Depression in a Stratford of farms and open fields. In 1940 he took a temporary job at United Aircraft Corporation and stayed for 45 years. As the town exploded in unrestricted change, he became dedicated to rescuing the good parts of our past. We thank our former town historian for preserving our past for future generations. Lew penned several books on Stratford, most notably, *In Pursuit of Paradise*, *History of the Town of Stratford*.

Let us remember Lew for all the good things he did for our community.



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1800-1899

AT ITS START, the century held heartbreak for some citizens of Stratford. The War of 1812 was pivotal to the destruction of commerce on the seas, destroying the livelihoods of many Stratford sailing men. The volcanic eruption of Indonesia's Mount Tambora in 1815, with its vast volcanic dust clouds, lowered temperatures for the following two years. Corn crops were a disaster and Stratford farmers faced financial ruin. Many left their farms when the Land Act of 1820 offered fertile federal land in the West for \$100 per eighty acres.

Many citizens persevered and made life better by using their natural resources and talents. Better roads and improved water transit brought changes to town. Bridges were built; railways and trolleys came to be; and inventions improved the way of life for citizens. Schools were expanded, and in 1887, the first high school class of the eight-room Stratford Graded School, celebrated graduation.

Opinions on slavery were diverse,



The Nicholas Knell homestead faces south toward Sandy Hollow (now known as Mac's Creek).

yet Stratford strongly agreed the Union must be preserved. Although the Civil War was not fought in our state, the participation of Stratford citizens was strong.

The U.S. population grew by more than 145 percent from 1860 to 1900, from 31 million to 76 million. Stratford also saw growth, with population numbers climbing from 2,294 to 3,657.

THE COVERED BRIDGE

IN THE SUMMER of 1846, townspeople saw the first of Alexander Twinings' surveyors looking for a route for a railway to pass through Stratford. By 1848, the railroad was constructed, and it included a 1,293 foot covered bridge over the Housatonic River to Milford. It was the longest covered bridge ever built in the state of Connecticut. It was replaced by iron in 1884.



The covered railroad bridge that once spanned the Housatonic River between Stratford and Milford.

THE FIRST LIGHTHOUSE

THE FIRST STRATFORD lighthouse began lighting the way in 1821 when the United States government purchased four acres of land on Stratford Point from Betsy Walker. It was only the third lighthouse constructed on Long Island Sound at the time. The 28-foot wooden, octagonal lighthouse was built by Judson Curtis and consisted of

withstood the storm! The fog bell tower added in 1864 featured a bell that worked on a clock mechanism, it required almost continuous winding (it took 20 minutes) and ran for half-an-hour. It was replaced in 1911 with a modern siren foghorn.

In 1881, the dwelling and tower were replaced with a 35-



Stratford Point Lighthouse in 1894.

the light tower and the dwelling house.

The "September Gale" of 1822, the worst southeast gale ever known to pass over Stratford, blew over houses and uprooted hundreds of trees. Blown salt spray was found on windows and leaves as far away as Nichols. At the time, only the frame of the tower existed, yet it

foot cast iron tower and two-story house.

The Fresnel lens put in place in 1906 to replace older lenses remained in operation for many years. Finally, in 1969, the light was automated.

One can only imagine the hard work generations of light keepers endured to secure safety for the seafarers.



Who's Knocking?



ON A SUNDAY morning in March 1850, upon returning to his large home after church services, Rev. Eliakim Phelps and his family found his front door hung with mourning crepe and inside the house, a figure laid out in a shroud for the grave.

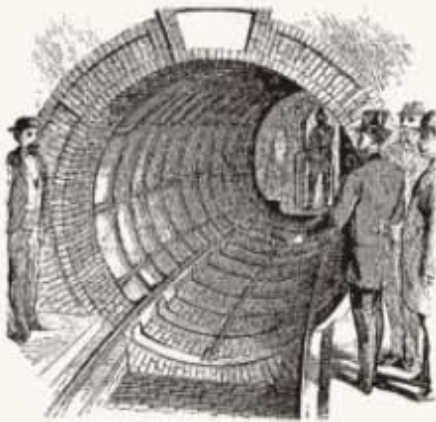
In the months that followed, strange noises, apparitions, knockings, odd figures, moving furniture, and flying bricks were reported. Word spread quickly and newspapers reported tales of the "Stratford Haunting." One newspaper wrote of a scissors grinder stopped in front of the house, who, in view of several people, "began to ascend in the air, turning his wheels and being lost into view to come down to Waterbury the next day." Another newspaper termed this account a "falsehood" stating that "no such thing happened."

No explanation for the happenings could ever be found within the home, which was originally built in 1826 by General Matthias Nicoll for his daughter Elizah and her husband, Captain George R. Dowdall. The home featured a 70-foot entry hall which mirrored the normal length of a ship's deck during that time, so that Elizah's seagoing husband could pace the deck and not feel far from sea.

Reports of "knocking" and other oddities ended when the Phelps family moved out. However, during the time that the home served as the Stratford Convalescent Hospital, there were stories of buzzers going off by themselves. Was it real, or did imaginations run wild with tales of the haunting? Torn down in the 1970s, the tale of the "Stratford Knockings" lives on as town legend only.

STRATFORD'S SUBWAY INVENTOR

IN 1855, ALFRED Ely Beach, Thomas Edison's patent attorney and a successful publisher, writer, and inventor, bought his first property in Stratford. A man of many talents, Beach conceived the idea for an underground system to alleviate the traffic woes of New York City. He created a prototype for "his people-carrying cyclinder" and demonstrated it at the 1867 American Institute Fair.



Alfred Ely Beach's "early" subway.

Beach secretly built a one block-long pneumatic subway under the streets of New York, only publicly announcing it upon completion in 1870. It included a single car holding 22 passengers and one station located in the basement of Devlin's clothing store. Beach operated this 300-foot demonstration railway for several years, but the concept failed to pass legislation. It lay forgotten until 1921, by which time contributions to electricity from Edison and others made the subway a reality.

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Oldest African American Church

THE YEAR WAS 1877, just a short fourteen years after the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. Slavery was still very fresh on the minds of the Negro population when a small group of black settlers formed a Sunday school class where they could worship and learn and study the word of God. Aided by a Mrs. Sarah Talbot and Mrs. Judson, the group held the classes in Mrs. Talbot's home. It was inevitable the Sunday school class would grow larger and with further assistance, larger quarters were secured at the Old Academy School which stood on Academy Hill.

The dawning of a new century saw a mass migration of Negroes from the south looking to prosper from industrial growth in the north. The church (then known as the Pilgrim Baptist Society) continued to grow, and eventually a member of the original Sunday school class, Mr. Matthew Johnson, gave part of his land to the group. Located on Main Highway, now known as Stratford Avenue, Johnson and three others pooled their limited financial resources and built what is today The First Baptist Church of Stratford, located at the corner of Stratford Avenue and Johnson Court.



The First Stratford Baptist Church held early meetings in the Old Academy School on Academy Hill before eventually moving to its present home on Stratford Avenue.

RING, RING

IN 1882, THE first utility arrived in Stratford: the telephone came to town. The directory had three listings: undertakers Bishop & Cullinan; Franklin S. Sammis; and H.P. Stagg's Hardware.

By 1909, a telephone was installed in Town Hall, and ten years later there were more than 700 telephones in town. These all ran with switchboard connections ("Operator, connect me with...") until 1940, when "modern" dial service technology arrived.

Wonder what our ancestors would think about our cellular phones of today?

The Washington Bridge



Housatonic Boat Club

THE HOUSATONIC BOAT Club is the oldest active yacht club in the State.

The club began in 1887 when a group of seven of the town's affluent gentlemen organized the club. The two story clubhouse was built on Alfred Ely Beach's land at the cost of \$1,204. The site was chosen for its commanding view

and it's easy reach up or down the river.

The club's facilities were deliberately kept spartan. Until

1933, oil lamps provided light. Running water came in 1946, when pipes were laid across the fields to Elm Street every spring, and taken up each fall.

From the start, HBC policy was to maintain a congenial and homogeneous membership of families with common interests in sailing and social pastimes at moderate cost. The Club was a place

for sailboat racing, swimming, fishing, autumn duck hunting, covered dish suppers, teas, and dances.

Storms, ice, hurricanes, and tides have always been a threat to HBC. The club was hit hard over the years with several disastrous hurricanes, although

the worst property damage resulted from the surprise hurricane of 1950. Fortunately the clubhouse had been moved onto new pilings in 1948, and

the main deck was loaded with twenty tons of mushrooms being winter-stored: it was the only structure to survive.

Today, members continue to sail, race, and enjoy the sea. The little white building has survived for 127 years and remains a Stratford icon on the Housatonic River.

—Debbie Mackay



1803

The Washington Bridge Company built the first bridge.



1806

A spring ice jam swept it out to sea.



1807

A second bridge is constructed strong and solid by David Lacy.



July 15, 1868

The open draw collapsed on the steamer Monitor as it passed through and has to be rebuilt.



1870

The Washington Bridge Company signs over its shares to Stratford, Milford and Bridgeport. The Washington Bridge Commission is formed to oversee construction.

1873-1874

The third bridge is made of wooden truss construction and is ready for use.



Farms and Fishing

THE 1890 STATE REGISTER reads: "Stratford: Principle industries, agriculture and fisheries."

Lordship and Oronoque were mainly farmlands with livestock of cows, some poultry, and sheep. Vegetables and fruits were harvested, eggs gathered, butter made. Surplus was traded for goods. Cash crops included strawberries, peaches, and melons; pumpkins in the fall. In the winter, firewood and lumber were collected.

Shad was fished in the river, rich and plentiful in numbers until the path of the spawning fish was cut off by the 1890 dam built across the river in Derby. By the end of the century, the damming and pollution from raw sewage and chemicals

destroyed the Stratford shad industry.

Oystering however, was going strong. Oysters were harvested by sloops from the naturally abundant beds and brought back to the oyster shacks at Bond's Dock where they were cleaned and packed for shipment, or shucked and the meat shipped in wooden kegs packed on ice. Sloops were present up until the mid-1950s.

Top: Most farmers used teams of oxen for heavy work until newer breeds of horses arrived from Europe. Middle: The rocky hills of Oronoque were pastures and fields surrounded by stone walls built by farmers years ago. Bottom: The oyster buildings at the upper wharf at Bond's Dock.



1889

New Haven and Fairfield Counties take over the bridges across the Housatonic River



1894

A fourth bridge is opened, made of iron and trusswork.



1917

The governor approves a bill for a new modern bridge, but WWI interrupts the plans.



1919

Work begins on the fifth bridge, made of reinforced concrete. It's double-leaf steel bascule lift crosses the 125-foot channel and five fixed arched spans. Its width is 43-feet. It cost is \$1.5 million.

Nov. 11, 1921

Dedicated on Armistice Day, a parade of citizens, bands, and floats march from each side and meet in the middle before continuing onto Milford for ceremonies and a picnic.

1989

The bridge is reconstructed at a cost of \$12.3 million.



Library Opens

ON JANUARY 16, 1896, with appropriate ceremonies, the beautiful marble building known as the Stratford Library was dedicated. Its classic architecture and endowment for books, the gift of Mr. Birdseye Blakeman of New York, far exceeded the fondest hopes and dreams of Stratford citizens, who had eagerly looked forward to the time when the town would possess a library worthy of the community. The joy of the occasion was marred only by the absence of Blakeman, a Stratford native, whose generosity had made the dedication possible.

Erected at a cost of about \$30,000, the building was designed by architect W.H. White in a Romanesque style, using gray St. Lawrence marble and stone with a red clay mission roof. A 1982 contemporary linkage greatly expanded the library by joining



(Above): The Stratford Library is located at 2203 Main Street. (Below): The Stratford Library after expansion.



the original building to the nearby American Legion building, a tan stone structure with a slate roof. The result is a 33,000 square-foot, three-level library completely accessible to the handicapped which maintains the historical integrity of the two original buildings while providing a contemporary structure that houses the functions of the latest in library services.

Under current director Barbara Blossveren, the Stratford Library has become a user-friendly, all-service center with an accomplished, professional staff and the latest in technology advances for its many patrons. The mission of the Stratford Library is to empower its citizens and enrich the community by expanding access to innovation, information, ideas, and inspiration.

—Tom Holehan

TROLLEY TRAGEDY

THE EXCITEMENT OF the new trolley line opening between Stratford and Shelton on August 6, 1899 was marred by a horrific accident that occurred when the first passenger car to take the journey jumped the line while crossing the bridge at Peck's Mill Pond. Twenty-eight people were killed. Four additional victims died a few weeks later, bringing the death toll to thirty-two. In addition, a dozen more passengers were seriously injured, some with lengthy recoveries.



A tragic trolley accident in 1899 occurred on the maiden voyage over the bridge at Peck's Mill Pond, resulting in 32 deaths and a dozen injuries.

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Stratford's Bravest



The Stratford Fire Department celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2009. In the early days it operated on a volunteer basis, until early firefighters began receiving pay in 1909. The original department was organized in 1875 under the leadership of Robert L. Clarkson as the Mutual Hook & Ladder Co. It began as a hand drawn hose reel, later replaced by horse drawn apparatus. (The company actually never owned its own horse.)

In the early days of Stratford, fire was a major threat to homes and businesses. The lack of true fire prevention and primitive communication systems led to very serious situations when a fire occurred. As years went by



Top Left: 2014. Above: 1897. Bottom Left: 1911

| Year | Fire Stations | Equipment | Personnel |
|------|--|--|--|
| 1897 | Mutual Hook & Ladder Company moves out of the Old Town House into its new building next to Town Hall. | A hand drawn ladder truck and hand operated pump wagon were the company's first apparatus. | All volunteer |
| 2014 | Four companies: Company 1: Recently built new headquarters on Main Street Company 2: Huntington Road Station Company 3: Lordship Station Company 4: Cronoque Station Additionally, a fire boat in the water year round responds to emergencies on 17 miles of coastline. | Company 1: Four engines including a ladder truck Companies 2 and 3 have two engines and Company 4 has a single engine. All engines are equipped with GPS-type computers that assist with information on the way to calls, such as location, hazardous conditions, and hydrant locations. | Fire Chief Robert McGrath and personnel of 99 (including administrative staff) serve the town 24/7/365. They not only act as first responders and fight fires, they provide numerous public education programs geared primarily to the young and elderly. |



and communications advanced, a switchboard system was implemented, followed by today's enhanced 911 system. In 2014, we find there are three dispatchers working around the clock to respond to 911 calls; Stratford's firefighters and EMTs currently respond to approximately 6,000 calls a year.

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1900-1999

THE CENTURY BROUGHT many changes to both the nation and to the town. By 1900, Stratford's population was up to 3,657 and would grow steadily over the decades, tripling to 12,347 by 1920.

Life itself seemed to be ramping up to a faster pace. Transportation evolved. Trolleys led more people into town in the early part of the century to enjoy beaches, boating, baseball games, and outdoor events held by clubs and churches. Trolleys, trains, and automobiles all advanced, making the need for better rail systems and roads necessary, and paving the way (so to speak) for the creation of highways. During the early days of aviation, the sky literally was the limit, and by 1929 Sikorsky had made a home in Stratford. Come 1950, Stratford's population was up to 33,428 and expanded to 49,389 by 1990.

Stratfordites joined alongside fellow Americans to answer the call of duty throughout the century. Many townspeople worked at manufacturing plants creating machinery used on battlefields across the globe, including the Chance-Vought Corsair fighter



plane and helicopters from Sikorsky and Avco-Lycoming.

Inventions were plentiful, leading to significant changes in households (think of all the 20th century appliances) and industries, increasing efficiencies, and offering greater opportunities. By the end of the

Barnum and Main Street as it was in November 1945. Town Hall is peeking out behind the restaurant.

century the desktop computer had become standard in business and most households...and had ushered in a technological revolution.

Running Water & Gas Modernized

In 1905, pipes were extended to Stratford from the Bridgeport Hydraulic Company and the Citizens Gas Company of Bridgeport, bringing water and gas directly into homes.

Let There Be Light

Electricity for household lighting was first introduced in Stratford in 1908, followed by its use in street lighting in 1910.

COUNCIL GOVERNMENT

From 1639 until 1921, Stratford followed the old New England town meeting form of government. It ran under the direction of the Board of Selectmen elected annually on the first Monday of October. The town literally grew out of these meetings, with a surge in population growth between 1910-1921.

In 1921, a change to Council-Manager form of government was approved. The town was divided into nine districts (a tenth was added in 1931). The councilmen would be elected biannually, with the council then selecting the Town Manager.

In 2005, the Council-Manager form of government gave way to a Mayor-Council. A mayor serves a four-year term and the town council (composed of ten members) is elected by district to serve a two-year term. Those ten council persons select one of its members to serve as chairman.

In November 2005, James Miron was elected as Stratford's first mayor. The second, and current mayor, is John Harkins.



Stratford School of Decoy Carving

ALBERT LAING WAS

a decoy carver who learned his trade in Rahway, New Jersey. Laing founded what became known as the "Stratford School" of decoy carvers in the 1860s when he moved to Stratford. As carved by Laing and those who learned from him, a Stratford School decoy was distinguished by its unusual breast shape which allowed the decoy to stay upright in the heavy currents and ice of the Housatonic River.

Generations of Stratford men practiced the art of decoy carving, each copying the skills of others



and perfecting their own specific styles. Roswell Bliss was the only Stratford carver who actually made a profession out of carving; most created their decoys for their own use in hunting at the mouth of the Housatonic and along the shoreline.

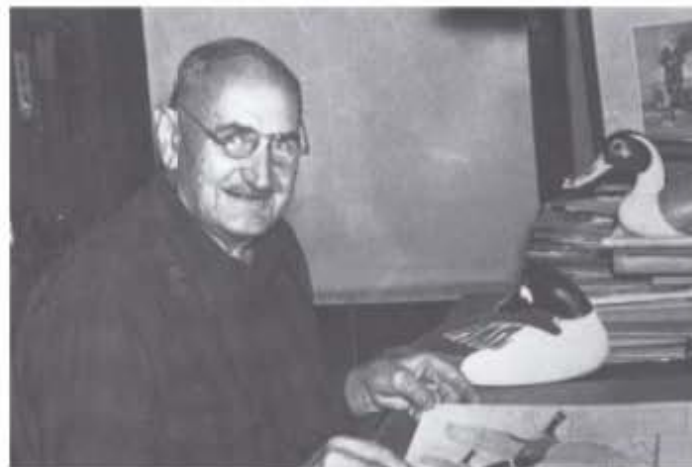
Charles "Shang" Wheeler is widely

considered one of the finest, if not the finest, decoy carvers of all time. Wheeler moved to Stratford as a teen in the early 1900s and was known as a local roustabout and prizefighter at the camp at Bond's Dock.

Eventually becoming an oysterman and later, a respected Connecticut State Senator, artist, and political cartoonist, Wheeler never sold his carvings. Those that sell today for tens of thousands of dollars were given away to family and friends.

Wheeler passed away in 1949, but his legacy lives on in other Stratford artisan carvers including Hank Sprouse, Peter Bowe, and Don Schuler.

—David Wright



Charles "Shang" Wheeler c. 1934

Sikorsky

IN 1923, RUSSIAN engineer Igor Sikorsky restarted his aviation career in the new world; the company was then called Sikorsky Aero Engineering Corporation with primitive facilities on Long Island.

In 1928, with the success of the S-38 Twin Engine Amphibian, the company had sufficient capital to construct a more modern facility. Since the company president and most of the larger shareholders were from New England, they insisted on one requirement: "Find a place in New England preferably in Connecticut, Massachusetts, or Rhode Island."

Sikorsky needed deep water and a place for land-based flying. He found the ideal site in Stratford. "A stretch of flat farmland at the mouth of the Housatonic River on Long Island Sound lay immediately adjacent to deep water for seaplane operation. And just across the road—Stratford's South Main Street—the city of Bridgeport was building an airport," he reported. The site was approved and purchased in 1928.

The following spring, construction began on a modern aircraft plant appearing and completed in mid-1930. Full production of the S-38 began.

At the same time, Sikorsky and his family moved to a rented bungalow on Pauline Street in Lordship. Approximately 100 of Sikorsky's Russian refugee associates made the move with the company, and many settled in Lordship in a section still

referred to today as "Russian Beach."

The following years saw the production of several different model amphibians and flying boats, with the S-42 Flying Boat, then far ahead of its time, still recognized as the aircraft that pioneered air routes across the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

In the build up to WWII, flying boat production declined and Sikorsky's production was in jeopardy. Igor made a plea for helicopter development, in part stating, "If Sikorsky does not

Growth brought about change and the need for more space. Sikorsky looked to the north end of Main Street to an area formerly known as the Barrett property. Ground breaking took place in 1954 and the dedication of the new facility in late 1955.

Today this facility, expanded over the years to more than two million square feet, is the company headquarters and the research and development, engineering, and manufacturing centers of excellence



The first flight of the VS-300 on September 14, 1939 lasted approximately 10 seconds and reached an altitude of eight inches.

create this craft of the future, another will." As is well known today, Sikorsky made the first lift-off of a practical helicopter, the VS-300, on September 14, 1939. Two years of development saw the final configuration, the combination of one main rotor and one anti-torque tail rotor, still today the configuration of choice by manufacturers around the world.

and the home of the "Hawk" family of helicopters.

Sikorsky is a worldwide company with over 15,000 employees but Stratford is home.

The Igor I. Sikorsky Historical Archives, Inc. and Sikorsky Aircraft Corporation are pleased to share this momentous anniversary with the Town of Stratford.

VFW POST 9460

VFW POST 9460 of Stratford was started by a small group of veterans in their early 20s and 30s after the end of WWII. First meetings were held in Redman's Hall behind the First Congregational Church. By May 28, 1947, charter membership had grown to more than 240 veterans. In need of a place of their own, a great plan was born.

A well-known pair of Stratford builders, McNeil and Blamey, said they would build a house in Paradise Green to raffle off for the VFW as a fundraiser at a cost of approximately \$13,000. Raffle tickets were sold for \$1.00 a piece for a chance to own the home! The raffle

was a huge success, giving VFW Post 9460 a profit

of over \$35,000. At the same time, an old factory building on Barnum Avenue Cutoff was for sale.

With the help of lawyers and realtor members, a deal was negotiated for the building. It

still operates today as the

Raymond T. Goldbach VFW Post 9460, in honor of the first Stratford resident to sacrifice his life in WWII. Goldbach, 22, was killed in the battle of the Philippines seven weeks after the war began.

It took the hard work of the many members who had become carpenters, plumbers, electricians, masons, painters, and tapers to transform the factory building into the VFW Post. Over the years, additions and changes have been made to reflect the new times and new members added, including veterans from Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, and other conflicts.

Today's members are proud of what VFW Post 9460 has become.



Sterling House

STERLING HOUSE

COMMUNITY Center resides in a Romanesque Victorian mansion on Main Street. It was once the home of the Sterling family, one of Stratford's oldest and wealthiest families. The stately homestead was designed by architect Bruce Price of New York, who also designed Osborne Hall and Welch Hall at Yale University. The estate's lawns and gardens were originally planned by Frederick Law Olmsted, the renowned landscape architect of New York's Central Park.

John William Sterling, a graduate (and later major benefactor) of Yale University, co-founded a successful law firm that represented the likes of Jay Gould, Henry Ford, the Rockefeller family, and Standard Oil. In 1886, he built the house for his mother and sisters on land originally purchased by his father, Captain John Sterling.

John's sister, Cordelia Sterling, later donated the home her brother built to the people of Stratford and neighboring areas, in memory of their father. She died in 1931, and according to her wishes, Sterling House became a community center, nurturing the body, mind, and spirit of area residents of all ages since 1932.



Today, Sterling House Community Center is a non-profit organization offering positive development, assistance, and prevention programs for children, teenagers, and adults, programs. It meets the social, intellectual, physical, emotional and artistic needs of individuals who reside in Stratford, Bridgeport, Fairfield, and New Haven.

The center's homelike appearance makes people feel welcome and therefore willing to seek assistance with many different challenges, from needing food or a place to live, to help with a financial problem, or participating in enrichment classes. It serves as a home away from home, and the centers 375 volunteers take pride in their work, the building, and its historical uniqueness.

—Lou Perno

From Buttons to Paint

IT ALL BEGAN in 1933 in a small space in Valencourt's Dry Goods when Ben and Ethel Clough opened what would become Clough's Hardware (Valencourts was owned by Ben's eldest sister). After a few years, Ben and Ethel were able to build the store that has been operating for 81 years by the Clough family.

In the early days the store sold everything from buttons and thread to paint. During WWII it had a large toy department. If Ben knew a local father was overseas fighting, he would leave toys on the porch of their home on Christmas Eve. Many residents who did not have money to pay for toys

took advantage of the generosity of Clough's "take it now for your children and pay when you can" policy.

The store experienced big changes in the 1950s, adding a lamp department and fine giftware, and by 1970 a Dept. 56 line of collectibles. This led the way for the special window displays created at Christmas time. In the 1980s Benjamin Paints were added.

The old wooden floors that still welcome shoppers were crafted by during the Depression by Ben, a man with masterful carpentry skills who loved helping people and the community. After his death in 1976, Ben's son Ron and daughter-in-law

Evelyn took over and have run Clough's with the help of sons Tim, and current manager, Ron.

—Evelyn Clough



Ben Clough and son Ron pose before breaking ground on the hardware store's new home in 1933.

BRACKETTES SOFTBALL

Originally known as the Raybestos Girls All-Stars, the team was formed in the summer of 1947, and it's doubtful that William S. Simpson, the general manager who organized the company-sponsored team, could have imagined how monumental that decision would be. That first team compiled a 16-4 record and lost the state tournament quarterfinals; they didn't do much to warrant headlines.

Since that time, however,

with 4,045 games played, 3,662 victories, three World Championships, 32 National Championships, including



28 A.S.A. titles, 22 National Hall of Fame members, and 12 Olympians, the Brakettes are the number one name in

women's fastpitch softball.

In 2013, the Brakettes celebrated a perfect 68-0 record, their second unbeaten campaign in three years, and the third in team history. It also capped a four-year stretch

where the team went 256-4.

Whether the team was called by Raybestos Brakettes, the Hi-Ho

Brakettes, or Stratford Brakettes, the 335 players who have proudly worn the red, white, and blue uniforms that have dazzled hundreds of thousands of fans with their flare for the dramatic, their workmanlike character and professionalism, and their total commitment to continuing the world's greatest softball tradition.

The 2014 season runs until August 10 at Frank DeLuca Hall of Fame Field (on South Main Street). For additional information on the Brakettes go to www.brakettes.com.

—Rob Baird

Stratford Inherits a Treasure



Left: Boothe Memorial

Park and Museum has 20 buildings and countless treasure to explore. Below: From one of Stratford's original settlers, David Boothe loved sharing and expressing his patriotism.

were great collectors of Stratford history, with many items pertaining to daily life throughout the decades housed within the various museums on the park property.

In 1985, the Boothe estate was placed on the National Register of Historic Places, and is a wonderful pastoral sanctuary with ten of the twenty buildings open for tours in warmer weather.

Buildings include the Boothe Homestead museum, where David and



Stephen were born (built on the foundation of the 1663 house), an adjoining ice house, and an outhouse. A carriage barn is connected to the Americana Museum which highlights many items that relate to the textile and farming industries of the past.

The clock tower perhaps the best know building on the property, was extended by Stephen and David themselves in 1913, with a tall tower added on top of the old hay barn to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the family's presence in North Stratford. Five massive bells were engraved with the Boothe and Nichols genealogy and sit on the top of the Anniversary Tower, still ringing every quarter hour throughout the day.

Because of the whimsical nature of the buildings at Boothe Park and Museum, and since the collection is so eclectic, it serves the town and its many visitors from around the world with an interesting glimpse of our past with a look toward the future.

BOOTHE MEMORIAL

PARK and Museum is located in the north end of town alongside the Housatonic River on the east and the old Pagaussett Indian Trail on the west (today known as Main Street Putney). The 32-acre property was bequeathed to the town in 1949 with the joint wills of the last two Boothe descendants, David Beach Boothe and Stephen Nichols Boothe. The brothers wished that the public might enjoy their estate and their collection of buildings, as much as they had during their lifetime: the park opened to the public in 1955.

One of the original settlers of Stratford in 1639,

Richard Boothe (originally of Cheshire, England) and his grandson Zechariah sought more favorable land and traveled up the Housatonic River to settle in the Putney section of Stratford. (Put-Nee is a Native American word meaning high hill.) The land on which the estate now exists was bought from Jonathan Stiles in 1725 for 1,000 pounds.

The brothers' mother, Betsy Amelia Nichols Boothe, was a descendant of first settler Sergeant Francis Nichols. Betsy loved history. Along with her two sons, she formed and incorporated an antiquarian society dedicated to preserving their past. They

Shakespeare Comes to Stratford



COMPLETED IN 1955, the American Shakespeare Festival Theatre was the brainchild of Lawrence Langer and was supported by Lincoln Kirstein and philanthropist Joseph Verner Reed. Housed in a 1,534 seat venue that showcased a vibrant history of classical plays, the stage has seen countless theatrical debuts of notable actors, and has served as a canvas for esteemed artists including Christopher Plummer, Katharine Hepburn, Lillian Gish, James Earl Jones, and Christopher Walken to name a few. The magnificent structure, with its teak skin, vast support areas, and perfect situation within Stratford's historic district along the banks of the Housatonic, contributed to its national recognition.

In 1983, the theatre was

The Shakespeare Theatre under construction in 1954.

purchased by the State of Connecticut and became part of the state park system. In 2005, the State transferred the theatre's deed to the Town of Stratford. The theatre is the main component of a complex that also includes the historic Nicoll-Benjamin House (c. 1840), and 14.4 acres of grounds. The theatre and Nicoll-Benjamin House have achieved recognition on the National Register of Historic Places.

Today, the theatre complex and grounds serve as home to several town festivals and events, most notably, *Festival! Stratford*, which takes place at the end of July. The annual festival is organized and run entirely by local volunteers.

THE STRATFORD ROTARY IS FORMED

THE STRATFORD ROTARY Club came into being on May 17, 1958 at a gala event that had the distinction of being Rotary's first international Charter Night. More than 700 Rotarians, about 70 from other countries, were in attendance at the Shakespeare Theatre for the chartering ceremonies. Since then, hundreds of business owners, corporate leaders, professionals, educators, public servants, civic leaders, clergy, and persons from a variety of other disciplines in the working community have come together as members of the club to contribute their time and talents for the betterment of humankind and, in the process, have been enriched by the experience.

Over the years the Stratford Rotary Club has acquired a rich history and a proud legacy of service. "As our efforts to help others continue, we seek to honor the efforts of all Stratford Rotarians who preceded us by enlarging upon the rich legacy we inherited."

The Club has undertaken many service projects that have benefited the Stratford community (read their accomplishments on their website at www.stratfordctrotary.org.) As is the case with all Rotary Clubs, membership is comprised of men and woman who have been successful in their chosen fields, who have subscribed to honorable and ethical standards in their personal and vocational conduct, and who have a desire to do good things for other people. They meet weekly on Tuesdays at Oronoque Country Club.



YMCA: SERVING STRATFORD FOR 50 YEARS

ON MAY 8, 1859 a small group of businessmen held their first meeting to discuss organizing a YMCA in New Haven. Within a year, the YMCA started their work with outreach programs, and with no building of their own. Now, 150 years later, the New Haven YMCA has become the Central Connecticut Coast YMCA and has grown to twelve branches serving 75,000 people annually in a 25 town area.

The Stratford Y opened in 1964, at 3045 Main Street, and has helped thousands of children and adults take charge of their health, spend quality time together as a family, develop relationships with neighbors, learn new skills, improve their grades, and enjoy a laugh with staff and other members.

The people of Stratford have turned to the Y in times of need, to feel supported, to improve their well being, and to create meaningful experiences in their lives.

At the Y, the community is strengthened through youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. As Y members, Stratford residents have become a part of a cause that has given them the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive, while also making their society healthier and happier.



Mudre's Hilltop Market

IN 1931, JOHN and Helen Mudre purchased Lots 62 and 63 in the area of Stratford known as Paradise Green Heights, currently 1081 Huntington Road. They opened a small market within a store/house structure known as Mudre's Store and sold groceries. As people entered the store, a bell on the front door would ring, alerting John or Helen (whose home was on the other side through a connecting door from their kitchen) to service their customers. They would tally orders, using pencil and paper, and the total was written on the brown paper bag used to carry away goods. For many years the children would deliver the customers orders to their homes.

John and Helen's children Mary (Semanchik), Edward, John, and Eleanor (Demchak) all worked there at one time or another, as well as the next generation, the grandchildren. In the early 1950s, Edward and John Mudre assumed ownership and the store was renamed Mudre's Hilltop Food Market. The house was remodeled into a second floor apartment in 1962, where John and Helen lived out their retirement years while spending many hours helping out in the store.

Today, Mudre's Hilltop is the oldest Mom and Pop grocery store in Stratford and is still owned by the original family. Customers travel from miles around to

purchase sought-after specialty Slovak/Czech ethnic baking items, holiday foods, and fresh cuts of meat. John and Marie's sons Bill, Jack, and Ron currently own and operate the store with the same pride and integrity as previous generations. "Auntie Eleanor" Demchak still works the cash register as she has since she was a young girl, and the new



Bill, Ron, Eleanor & Jack

generation, the great-grand children, put in hours as well.

An avid supporter of many community sports teams and events, the Hilltop's loyal patrons still enjoy the friendly personal service that often keeps them there for a social chat. Generations of children can remember free slices of cheese from the deli counter or buying candy and foot-long freeze pops. At the end of any school day you still see a barrage of hungry students buying snacks and sandwiches before going onto their sporting events.

—The Mudre Family

Square One Theatre Company

NOW IN ITS 25th season, Square One Theatre Company, was founded in 1990 by Barbara Cairney and Tom Holehan. Employed by the Stratford Library, Holehan had begun a theatre program of staged readings there in 1985. With Cairney, they recognized an opportunity to create a new professional theatre in Stratford center when the town's former movie house was bought and renovated as a legitimate theatre by the Scottish Rite Building Corporation.

Square One's first production, *A Walk In The Woods*, was praised and supported by the original Broadway producer, Lucille Lortel.

Since then, each season has seen critical and financial success.

For more than eleven seasons, the theatre presented special morning



Janet Rathert and David Victor in the Square One Theatre Company's 2014 production, "Time Stands Still".

performances to Stratford and Bunnell High School students, offering teacher study guides and post-performance discussions with the students. In the 2004-2005 season, Square One began performing plays in the libraries of each school, enriching each school's curriculum. The eventual result was Square One Teen Theatre, a summer

company of area teenagers who produce, direct, and perform their own productions.

As a result of these programs, artistic director Tom Holehan was the recipient of the very first *Outstanding Artist Award in 2006* from then Mayor James R. Miron. The Stratford Community Fund also presented its Lighthouse Award to the Square One Theatre Company in 2010.

Although the actors and artistic staff at Square One Theatre receive a nominal stipend for their work, the theatre is conservatively managed and relies on contributions. The Square One Theatre Company takes pride in keeping ticket prices affordable offering live theatre intellectually stimulating as well as entertaining.

—Tom Holehan

RECYCLING IN STRATFORD

IN 1987, STRATFORD Townspeople Oppose Plant (STOP) was formed in response to a proposed burn plant at the town's transfer station, just a short distance from an existing plant in Bridgeport. Many who formed the group spoke about recycling as an alternative to more garbage and a means to save tax dollars.

STOP was replaced

by START (Stratford Townspeople Agree to Recycle Trash), but an August, 1988 editorial in the former *Stratford News* asked "Do the people of Stratford care deeply about recycling? Do they care enough...to participate in a voluntary program? We don't think so."

It's been 26 years now, and the News editor was

proved wrong. Volunteers recruited organizations, schools, church groups, and non-profits to take on the job of recycling and earn money for their groups. The Town Council created a Recycling Committee and town-wide curbside recycling was born. Under Recycling Coordinator Maureen Berg, Stratford became a leader in the recycling movement, receiving calls from around the country and Canada

asking for guidance.

As they did in 1988, the citizens of Stratford continue to care about the environment and to recycle. The 25th anniversary of the recycling movement, and the 375th birthday of Stratford, reminds us that we live in a great town with many caring, concerned, and active citizens who are proud of their hometown and care about the future.

—Bill O'Brien

Roadways & Air Travel EVOLVE



1. I-95 started Circa 1955. **2.** Moses Wheeler Bridge 2014. **3.** I-95 tolls. **4.** I-95 and the Merritt Parkway tolls, no longer used. The Parkway's toll booths are at the Boothe Memorial Park and Museum to view. **5.** Legendary Igor Sikorsky. **6.** Aerial of I-95 being built Circa 1955. **7.** The airport circa 1950. **8.** Gustave Whitehead **9.** Bridgeport Municipal Airport circa 1950. **10.** Mr. Beach replaced wheels with blades to travel over roads when snow was packed down, not paved. 1800. **11.** Flight to New Haven, 18 miles in 15 minutes. **12.** The infamous Corsair, at recent 2010 airshow held in Stratford. **13.** Avon Park and Paradise Green Trolley, early 1900s. Photo 2 courtesy Shoreline Aerial Photography. Photo 12 courtesy Roger Salls. All other photos courtesy Stratford Historical Society.

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12



Army Maneuvers

In August 1912, the United States Army and National Guard came to the area to practice defending "New York" (Stratford, Monroe, and Huntington were the stand-in) from foreign aggressors. The "Red Army" (the

invaders) set up camp in Milford, and "attacked" from New Haven to Danbury while the "Blue Army" placed their headquarters in town at Wilcoxson's Dairy Farm. Paradise Green. Maneuvers also included the use of planes. This was

the first occasion the Army had ever used an airplane in military training exercises. Twenty thousand men were involved, 5,000 in Stratford, observed by the US Commanding General Leonard Wood and several European officers.



The Army arrives at Stratford railroad station. Supplies and equipment stowed in covered wagons were unloaded from flat cars to travel in a mule train through town to Paradise Green for camp set-up. Outdoor kitchens were set up and included an iron cookstove, water buckets, cauldron to cook, wash tubs, and washboards; food provided included beans for the men and oats for the mules.



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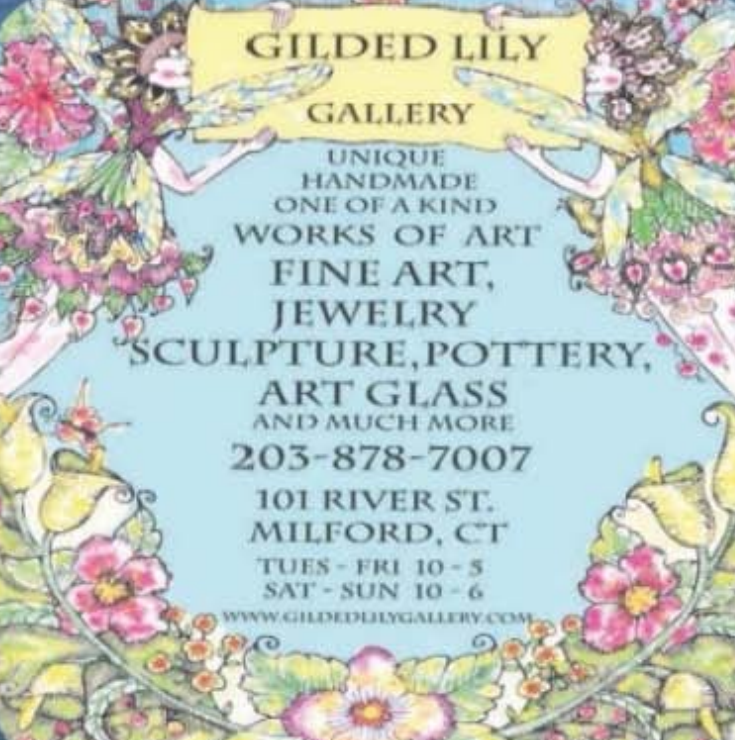
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2000-2014

INFORMATION

TECHNOLOGY PEOPLE

Worldwide breathed a somewhat sigh of relief that the efforts and monies spent to check, fix, and upgrade their computer systems resulted in a fairly successful transition into the Y2K.

Improvements were made to the beaches, municipal departments: a new firehouse, a new home for the EMS, a brand new animal control shelter, high school sports fields, a community farm, Sikorsky Bridge and Greenway walkways and skate parks—all to be used by over forty nine thousand Stratford citizens and visitors alike.

Manufacturing

Operations continued to thrive in Stratford, with iconic names such as Sikorsky Aircraft supplying military and commercial helicopters; Ensar manufacturing pump atomizers; Aptar creating cosmetic containers; Ashcroft manufacturing pressure and temperature gauges; the Norwalk Company; manufacturing



compressors; and Bridgeport Fittings, a major supplier of electrical fittings, all calling Stratford home.

September 11, 2001

Saddened our hearts and the nation. Devastating weather became a common occurrence: Hurricane Irene caused local devastation including the need for a new roof on the Paradise Green Gazebo, one of many repairs needed around town. Superstorm Sandy packed a punch to the

tri-state area. Although we experienced damage and

outages, it was kinder than neighboring Rockaway and the Jersey shore areas

received. A tornado passed

through our town and took down many trees, and

writers dealt out record-breaking snowdays to our schools. But as always,

Stratford used its resources, talents, and generosity to bring the town back to full productivity.

Happy 375th

Anniversary. Stratford!

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Stratford

Stratfords of the World

IN 1985, STRATFORD, Connecticut and Stratford, Ontario in Canada officially became "Sister Cities." Since then, Stratford-upon-Avon in the UK, Stratford of Prince Edward Island, Canada, Stratford, New Zealand, and Stratford, Australia have all joined the association.

Every two years a reunion is held for all of the Sister Cities with each Stratford taking its turn as host. In 2014, our Stratford will proudly host the "Stratfords of the World Reunion" for six days, from Thursday, July 31 through Tuesday, August 5.

The reunion will encompass a wide array of events celebrating our New England heritage, while sharing good times with people from other cultures. Some of the activities planned include tours



Stratfords of the World Reunion 2014 Stratford, Connecticut U.S.A.

of the town from "forest to shore," the Helicopter Museum, the newly established Two Roads Brewery, time to explore Stratford's beautiful river and coastline, and a clambake at the Housatonic Boat Club. Visitors will also be able to see some other parts of Connecticut, including the Pequot Museum and a shopping day at Olde Mistick Village. Guests will also enjoy professional Shakespearean performance on the lawn of the Shakespeare Theatre during "Festival! Stratford."

The combined talent of all the Sister Cities will come together in harmony when the Sister City choruses join together to present the Catalano Concert, dedicated to the memory of Sister Cities' founder, Hugh Catalano. The chorus meets weekly on Monday nights at Stratford High School under the direction of Jeffrey Leinen. The group is open to all men and women in the community from high school through retirement age.

—Rosemary Martin Hayduk

SAFE AND SOUND

POLICE DEPARTMENT

SINCE IT BEGAN in 1917 with a single patrol vehicle and ten officers, the Stratford Police Department has grown to a force of 112 sworn officers and many specialized units.

Police headquarters was originally located in a building in Stratford Center. In 1959, the total force of 63 Officers finally got their own building, which was located next to Fire Headquarters. The building was sufficient for the needs

of the department until 1970, when the department moved to its current location due to the increase staffing and lack of space. Always an innovator, the Department was the first in Connecticut to utilize station wagon-style patrol vehicles for emergency medical transport. In 1987 it became the first police department in the State to install mobile data terminals in patrol vehicles.

EMS

THE STRATFORD EMERGENCY Medical Service (SEMS) was established in December 1977 to provide high

quality emergency medical services 24/7/365 within the 20 square miles that makeup the Town of Stratford and surrounding areas.

Quality patient care and safe emergency transport are the guiding principles for an organization that has long been an innovator in the field of emergency medical services.

Stratford EMS was one of the first in the nation to adopt and use the life saving semi-automatic external defibrillator, serving as the pilot site for Connecticut in 1986. The following year SEMS established a

Of Beer and Blatchley

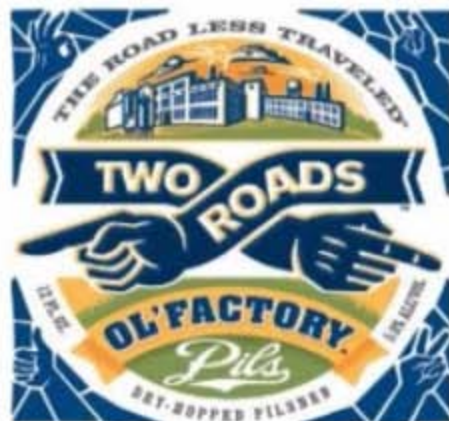


A WONDERFUL THING happened inside the 100-year old U.S. Baird building at 1700 Stratford Avenue last summer. One day, 105-year old Lionel Blatchley walked into the building (now home to the vibrant and growing Two Roads Brewing Company) and asked if he could enjoy a Two Roads craft beer in his old office. Wish granted! As co-owner Brad Hittle describes the event (and

the picture above tells the story.) "It was a wonderful moment for everyone and perfectly captured the enduring history of our great building."

Lionel Blatchley was one of four brothers who worked for the U.S. Baird Corporation, according to his niece Nancy Peruzzi. Nancy's father Wilmot, her Uncle Edson, and Uncle Clayton all worked alongside her grandfather Allison. Nancy herself worked for U.S. Baird part time.

After U.S. Baird closed its doors in Stratford in 2007, the building was purchased by Two Roads Brewing Company who saw an opportunity to revitalize a great piece of history. Once a bustling manufacturing facility filled with high production machinery, Two Roads Brewing Company transformed



the vacant building and filled it with fermentation tanks, high-speed bottling, canning and kegging equipment, and a large tasting room.

Two Roads Brewing Company honors the history of manufacturing and U.S. Baird through the production and names of its craft beers including Ol' Factory Pils and Workers Comp.

—Amy Knorr

"Special Operations Division" (SOD) to provide services during mass casualty incidences. In 1996, SEMS became the first volunteer paramedic service in New England and continues to provide volunteer paramedic-level, advanced life support care today. In 1997, SEMS established one of the nation's first medical bike units, and in 2005 SEMS was named the EMS Service of the Year by the National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians.

As an "enterprise fund" department, Stratford EMS operates entirely from



Stratford EMS headquarters on Main Street

monies generated from billing insurance companies. This means that all of

the services that SEMS provides are essentially at no cost to the taxpayer.

The Perry House Foundation

WHEN BENJAMIN

BEACH drew lot 7 in the first expansion of Stratford in 1680, he couldn't have imagined that the thatch-roofed home he would build would stand witness to more than 300 years of change.

At first the changes would come slowly. As the home of a shipbuilder, the house reflected a community focused on the shipping and fishing that would long be central to Stratford's prosperity. In 1740, Isaiah Brown remodeled the house into a saltbox by adding a kitchen along the back. It was this house George Washington



passed by on Kings Highway no less than seven times. In 1853, William Perry purchased the home for his wife and five children; five more would be born in the homestead. A well-known and respected politician, probate judge,

and merchant who provided shoes to the Union Army during the Civil War, his name continues to be associated with the house.

The pace of change surrounding the house accelerated. The west parlor served as a school from 1889-98, and through the 20th century the house saw a succession of owners. As I-95 was being constructed in the mid-1950s, Jessie Murphy altered the house to accommodate three rental apartments. She willed the house to the town in 1981.

By 1997 Perry House needed much renovation but there was pressure to raze it to provide parking. Recognizing the potential of the historic property

The Perry House as it proudly celebrated Stratford's 275 anniversary in 1914.

sitting at the "Doorway to Stratford," concerned citizens saved the house, and in 2004 the Perry House Foundation was established.

Today, the renovated home to Stratford's Visitors' Center and Chamber of Commerce brings the town's rich history into the 21st century with innovative education programs for children, families, and adults. Perry House exemplifies Stratford's heritage and demonstrates the town's ability to adapt to modern challenges and opportunities.

—Carole Adzima



The Perry House was the site for the Stratford's 375 Anniversary Celebration Kick-off, April 2014. Mayor Harkins joins Carol Lovell in the ribbon cutting.



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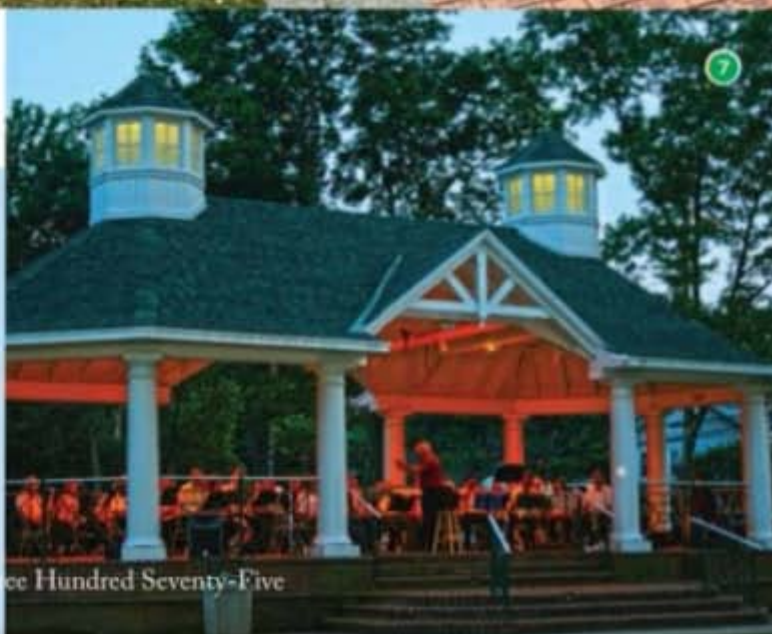
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Explore Stratford History

Genealogy

Stratford Historical Society

An extensive genealogy library is located in the office area of the Catherine Bunnell Mitchell Museum and is available to the public on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. year round. Genealogical requests may be made by telephone, e-mail, U.S. mail, and in person.

967 Academy Hill, PO Box 382, Stratford CT, 06615
www.stratfordhistoricalsociety.org
Email: judsonhousestfd@aol.com

Stratford Library

http://www.stratford.lib.ct.us/vital_records.html

Town of Stratford Websites

A wealth of information for citizens and visitors can be found on the town website, including all departments, emergency preparedness, links to many of the current attractions and community clubs.

www.townofstratford.com
www.stratford375.com

Connecticut State Library

The major genealogy resource for the state includes the Barbour Collection of Vital Records, Hale Collections of Cemetery Inscriptions and Marriage & Death Notices, church records, family bibles, land records, genealogies, court records, etc. CSL offers a limited genealogical index search for a fee.

History and Genealogy Unit 231

Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106
Phone: 860.566.3692
www.cslib.org/handg.htm

Books

History of Stratford Connecticut 1639-1939

By Wm. Howard Wilcoxson, Past Town Historian*

In Pursuit of Paradise, A History of Stratford

1989, By Lewis G. Knapp, former Town Historian*

Stratford, Images of America Series, A Pictorial History, 1850-1970

By Stratford Historical Society, 1999*

Paradise Now, Treasures from Yesterday's Kitchen, Old Stratford Recipes Modified to Modern Taste

Vivienne Knapp, 1989*

Stratford by the Sea

2002 By Lewis G. Knapp & Stratford Historical Society*

The Autobiography of Aunt Hagar Merriman, Slave Girl Memories of Growing Up in Stratford

By Hagar Merriman*

Stratford (Images of America: Connecticut)

By Stratford Historical Society*

American Shakespeare Theatre: Stratford 1955-1985

By Roberta K. Cooper

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SPECIAL EVENTS

Sunday, April 6
Stratford 375 Kickoff
Perry House

April 6 - April 12
Restaurant Week

Sunday, April 13
**Oratorio for
Stratford's 375th**

Saturday, April 26
Project Greensweep

Monday, May 26
Memorial Day Parade

Thursday, May 29
Victorian Tea
Baldwin Center

Saturday, June 7
**Stratford Main Street
Festival**

Tuesdays,
June 10 - August 26
**Summer Sunset
Concert Series**

Saturday, June 21
First Responder Luncheon
First Congregational Church

Thursday, July 3
Stratford Fireworks

Saturday, July 12
**Colonial Crafts
and Games ***
Stratford Library Lovell Room

Monday, July 14
Bluefish vs. the Brakettes
Harboryard
Special ticket prices available

Saturday, July 26
Blues on the Beach

July 30th - August 3
Festival! Stratford

August 3
Sister Cities Visitation
First Congregational Church

July 31st - August 5
**Stratfords of the World
Reunion**

August 5
**Brakettes Celebrate
the Town's 375**
Home Game - Brakettes vs.
St. Louis Saints

August 25
**Sunday morning 375th
Landing Service**
First Congregational Church,
at Mac's Harbor

Saturday, September 6
Clam Bake
Volo Hanger at Sikorsky
Airport (21+ only, by advance
ticket) **

Sunday, September 14
Latin Music Festival

Saturday, September 20
**Early American Festival
and Parade
Main Street**

Sunday, September 21
Early American Festival

TBA (September/October)
Boat Parade
Housatonic River

Sunday, September 23
**Stratford Library's Lit Crawl
for the 375th!**
Various Stratford Center
Restaurants

Sunday, October 12
**Connecticut: Songs, Stories
& Tunes from Connecticut's
Past & Present***
Stratford Library Lovell Room

Saturday, October 18
Pumpkin Festival

TBA (November)
Hockey Game
Bridgeport Sound Tigers
Hockey Game
Stratford Fire Department vs.
Fairfield Fire Department

November 15
Anniversary Service
First Congregational Church

Tuesday, December 2
Holiday Festival

Monday - Sunday
December 15 - 21
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RESTAURANT
WEEK

IN CELEBRATION OF Stratford's 375 anniversary, the town's many eateries were proud to participate in Stratford's first annual Restaurant Week! The weeklong feast, April 6-12, kicked off a bevy of fabulous events for all ages throughout 2014.

Stratford Restaurant Week was co-sponsored by the Stratford Chamber of Commerce and the Stratford Economic Development Department.

Participating restaurants for 2014 Stratford Restaurant Week were:

- ACAPULCOS
- BELLA NAPOLI PIZZA
- BLUE GOOSE RESTAURANT *
- BLUE SKY DINER
- DAO FUSION CUISINE & LOUNGE
- FROG POND
- GINO'S PIZZERIA *
- JULIANO'S PIZZA RESTAURANT
- KNAPP'S LANDING RESTAURANT
- KRISSYS KORNER *
- MARE BELLO
- MARNICK'S RESTAURANT *
- MCCOY'S PUB
- METRO DINER
- OUTRIGGER'S RESTAURANT
- PANDA HOUSE RESTAURANT
- RIVER'S EDGE CAFE & BAKERY
- RIVERVIEW BISTRO *
- SIENA ITALIAN TRATTORIA
- STANZIALE'S RESTAURANT *
- STATIONHOUSE WINE BAR & GRILL *
- STELLA'S RISTORANTE *
- SWEET MUSTARD SANDWICH SHOP
- THE SITTING DUCK
- THE WINDMILL TAVERN *
- VAZZY'S OF STRATFORD *
- VILLA PIZZA ITALIAN RESTAURANT

* DENOTES STRATFORD CHAMBER OF COMMERCE MEMBER BUSINESS

The Pet Hospital of Stratford also held a special discount for pet food purchased during the week.



Early American Festival



ON SEPTEMBER 20 and 21, the Stratford Historical Society will host an Early American Festival to honor the founding of Stratford and the brave men and women who ventured into the wilderness to build a better life for their families. In addition, the festival will pay honor to the generations of men and women who fought to maintain American freedom.

The two-day event, free and open to the public, will kick-off with a parade ending at the War Memorials on Academy Hill. Mayor John Harkins, Rev. Edward Rawls, senior Pastor of the Congregational Church, and other invited guests will honor veterans. A gun salute in honor of all attending veterans will signal the start of the festival.

Revolutionary War and Civil War re-enactors encamped on the Society's grounds and will recreate battles fought from both wars on Academy Hill at scheduled times. Demonstrations of skills

displayed by a moving army will be ongoing, such as cooking over a campfire, tinsmithing, blacksmithing, and various other jobs. There will also be demonstrations of weaving, spinning, and other period crafts. Handmade items will be available for purchase.

Tours of the Captain David Judson House, circa 1723, will be given by docents in 18th century attire. The Catherine Bunnell Mitchell Museum will also be open for tours.

Walking tours of the Stratford Historic District will feature locations where the first settlers landed and made their homes. Tours will include tales of local history, including the famous haunting of the Phelps Mansion and the legend of town "witch" Goody Bassett.

Hearthside Waits will entertain with live colonial and patriotic songs. In addition, Tom Callinan, designated Connecticut's First Official State Troubadour, will perform two shows on Saturday September 20: "Young America," songs from the Colonial period and Revolutionary War at 1:30pm and "Brother Against Brother," songs of the Civil War at 2:30 pm.

PARADE GRAND MARSHALL

THE PARADE CELEBRATING 375 years of history of the town of Stratford will take place Saturday, September 20, 2014, beginning at 10:00 am at Paradise Green and travel down Main Street to the Academy Hill area.

Parade Grand Marshall Todd Lovell has deep roots in his hometown and is thrilled to be part of this year's celebration. "It is a high honor to both me and my family. I was here for the 300th and never though I would make it to the 375th."

The Lovell family has been part of Stratford for more than 250 years. In 1783, distant



relatives formed the Lovell Hardware business in the center of town, which operated for more than 200 years! Todd Lovell began working side-by-side with his father, brothers, and sisters at an early age. "I am proud of my parents, what they did for me, and what they did for the town," he says. An Army veteran, Lovell admits he always enjoyed working, saying, "Life has been a ball!" He met and married his wife Carol fifty-one years ago, has a son and daughter, and five grandchildren. Although retired, Todd Lovell's dedication to Stratford continues through many civic associations. He has been instrumental in having flagpoles erected and American flags flown throughout the town, including at area cemeteries to honor those early settlers who are buried there.

Party Like It's 1639!



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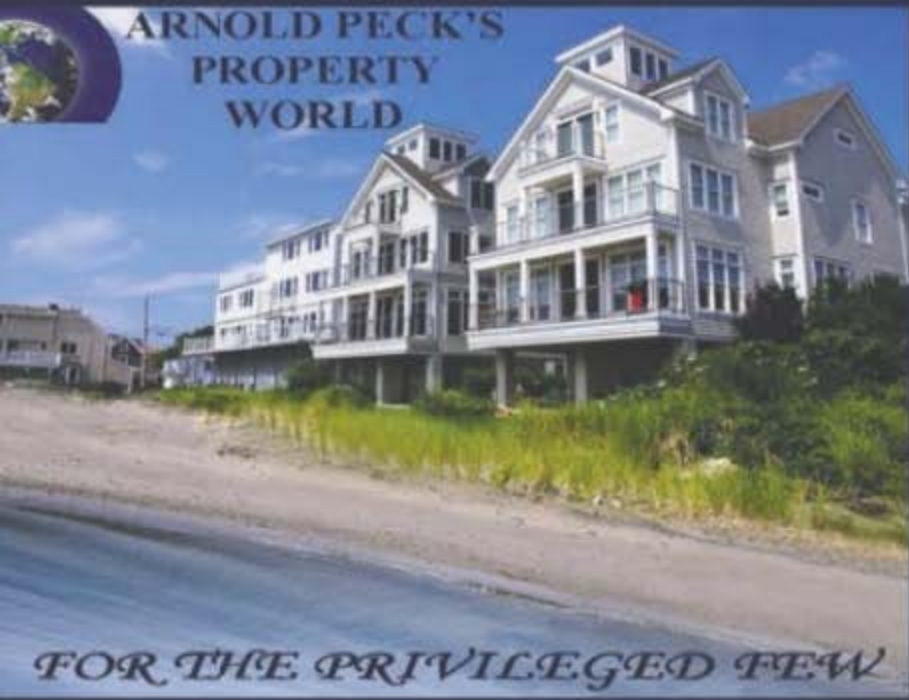
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