

Bridgeport Herald
December 9, 1917

STRATFORD BOYS AND GIRLS USEFUL CLUB TO GIVE TOWN CHRISTMAS TREE

EVERYONE JOINING IN

Stratford is all anticipation over its Christmas tree, the first of its kind ever raised in the town. For the past 250 years, there have been Christmas trees, big ones and little ones, but never before has there been one for ALL the children of Stratford, and all the grown-ups too for that matter. Consequently, when the word got around that the little members of the Boys and Girls' Useful club and the Billy Sunshine Useful juniors, were going to have a tree on Academy Hill for EVERYBODY Christmas Eve, Stratford Town sat up and began to take notice.

For a proper understanding of the full significance of the plan something must be known about the little Usefals whose organizations are referred to in the preceding paragraph. We'll call them "Usefals" for short because their really, truly names are pretty long, and after all the "useful" is the important part of the title.

The town was always chock-a-block full of Usefals in short pants and dresses, but nobody seemed to realize this to any great extent until Mrs. Richard Howell got busy and coordinated their usefulness. In other words she fathered a lot of little Usefals into two organizations where they would all work together toward a common useful purpose.

The older boys and girls were given the name of Boys and Girls' Useful club, and took two mottoes for their guidance for the girls, "Love, Friendship and Sympathy;" for the boys, "By Work and Honor." Miss

Dorothy Buck, twelve years old, a Freshman in the Stratford High School, is president.

The two other officers are: Vice-president, Herbert Buck; secretary, Adaline Hammond; treasurer, Walter Goddard; corresponding secretary, Ruth Baldwin.

And now come the juniors. To give the very young boys and girls the same opportunity for usefulness that the B. & G. Usefals had through their club, the Billy Sunshine Useful Juniors was gotten together. Evelyn Pratt, only eight years old, is president of this group. The vice-president is Elsie Buck; treasurer, Mable Higgins; secretary, Ruth Holcomb.

Instead of giving herself the rank of a full general, as Mrs. Howell might properly have done with such an army at her command, she took the modest commission of captain. She's captain of both groups.

The most important rule laid down for every member is that he or she must earn her own dues, which for the seniors are five cents a week, and for the juniors three cents. The means taken by these Usefals to earn the pennies are very interesting but the telling would take too long here.

Regular meetings are held at the homes of the members. Deportment is the chief study in the curriculum, and the subject is made to cover a wide area of good deeds. These good deeds are duly reported at meetings and "marks" are place to the credit of every Useful according as he does them. Prized go to the boy and girl who gets the

highest mark at the end of the year.

The Usefuls are encouraged to bring their worn-out, out-worn and cast-off clothes, toys, books, etc., to be given to others who need them.

The first big task undertaken by these Usefuls after their organization was the operation of war gardens in response to the call of President Wilson and others for everybody to "raise something to eat." Their gardens were very successful, and yielded quite a little money. They turned the joke on the Kaiser by using most of their cabbage crop for saurkraut [sic] which they sold at a good figure. Part of this money has been used to help win the war and the Kaiser will undoubtedly be very angry to know that he was beaten by his own favorite sauerkraut. But it will comfort him to remember that his predecessor, Napoleon Bonaparte, was killed by fried onions.

Now to get back to the Christmas tree. With Christmas coming on those Usefuls took a peep into their treasury to see how much money they had with which to make Christmas merry for a lot of other children. They found they had \$124. This was enough for a start. What would they do? It was the unanimous opinion that they ought to give the town a Christmas tree, and invite all the children of Stratford to partake in the festivities which went with the tree.

Everybody wanted to help when the idea became known. For once, there were more proffers of assistance than there was need for it. But the selectmen of the town and all the churches begged so hard they were permitted to do something. The selectmen are going to plant the tree on Academy Hill.

The churches are going to have a "Penny Sunday" one week from today when everybody in Stratford is going to give a penny or more to make the Christmas tree a big success.

The women of Stratford are going to make their fingers fly sewing the

cheese-cloth stockings - 2,000 of them - which will be filled with candy and distributed to all the children at the tree, who are twelve years of age or under. The cheese-cloth is already purchased and cut, so the women who want to help in the sewing have only to communicate with Captain Howell and be provided with the unsewed stockings.

The Usefuls have bought the electric lights and wires out of their own money and after the Christmas is through with them for the holidays, the light apparatus will be donated to the town for use at succeeding Christmases.

Every child under twelve who attends will be given candy, nuts and an orange.

The time of the affair will be Christmas Eve so that the children can all have a good time, go home and go to bed before Santa Claus arrives. Just when he will arrive nobody knows for sure, but it is known positively that he will not come until every Stratford boy and girl is fast asleep Christmas Eve. If necessary he will stay over in Bridgeport all night waiting for the sandman to close every little peeper in Stratford.

There is a big idea behind this Christmas tree, and the purpose is to give the Usefuls and all other children an impressive example of the Christ-giving spirit for which Christmas really stands, it will be a beautiful symbol of giving, not of getting. Perhaps this thought will be useful to some of the grown-ups, too, who may need it very much more than do the children.

The glorious tree will be a rebuke to selfishness, so long as it stands on Academy Hill. Whether at Christmas Eve or on the Fourth of July it will whisper to all who will listen:

GIVE, GIVE, GIVE.

Dorothy Buck, Stratford Avenue
Elsie Buck, Dorothy's sister
Herbert Buck (37), Dorothy's father
Mrs Billy (Richard) Howell - Congressional
worker, political town leader - 1585 Elm
St
Walter Goddard (43), 1433 Elm St
Adaline Hammond (14), Elm St
Ruth Baldwin (16), Main St
Evelyn Pratt, 1598 Main St
Mabel Higgins, ?
Ruth Holcomb (7), 1460 Elm St

Bridgeport Evening Farmer

VOL. 53—NO. 300

BRIDGEPORT, CONN., THURSDAY, DEC. 20, 1917

PRICE TWO CENTS

Bridgeport Evening Farmer
Saturday, December 20, 1917

STRATFORD

(Special to The Farmer)

Stratford, Dec. 20,—The women of Stratford started yesterday to fill stockings for the community Christmas tree, which was set up Monday on Academy Hill. The tree is 30 feet tall and is to have a gift on it for every Stratford child besides enough more for the soldiers, who number nearly 250. Every soldier of the town is to have a gift and if he is not there to answer to the roll call, the gift will be sent to him. So in order to have every Stratford soldier or sailor remembered, relatives are asked to send the name of any member of their family who have joined the colors. Names should be sent to Fred W. Townroe, chairman of the Citizens Committee.

The town hall of Stratford was a busy place Tuesday and Wednesday when the women began filling stockings with candy and nuts to go on the huge Christmas tree which is to be the gathering place for all Stratford on Christmas eve. The Boys' and Girls' Useful club of the town is the originator of this movement, and the whole town is backing the club. When the boys in olive drab come home on Christmas eve, they will be met at the station by a band, and every member of the club and probably half of the remainder of the population of Stratford. Arrangements are now being made by the citizens committee and the selectmen for a parade to traverse the principal thoroughfares of the town. The line of march will be announced in a few days. The children have been rehearsing many Christmas carols which will be sung at the tree. Miss Catharine Russell, a well known soprano vocalist, will also sing.

The churches of Stratford contributed liberally to Penny Sunday for the tree fund with the following result: Congregational

church, \$11; Methodist church, \$5; Episcopal church, \$9.80; Dt. James' R. C church \$7.42; Bethany Mission church, \$2.50 and Baptist Zion church, \$1.50.

Close to a \$100 has been collected by the children in a house to house canvas as well as in private subscriptions, making a grand total to date of over \$150. Pledges of various amounts made last week by citizens of the town are expected to be deposited within a few days.

Mrs. Richard Howell, who started the club on its useful career, wished to emphasize the fact that it does not matter if a soldier's name is handed in more than once so long as the Citizen's Committee gets every name.

Bridgeport Herald
December 23, 1917

STRATFORD PEOPLE WILL GATHER 'ROUND COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS TREE MONDAY

PRESENTS FOR CHILDREN AND SOLDIERS.

The old town of Stratford is ready to celebrate her first community Christmas tree. The big event in which everyone in Stratford, both young and old, is interested, will be held Christmas Eve, beginning 6:30 o'clock. The tree has been erected on Academy Hill and will be lighted by colored electric lights and all sorts of Christmas tinsel.

If ever that Biblical saying, "An a little child shall lead them," proved itself, it has in this case of the community Christmas tree. The Christmas tree is made possible by the Boys and Girls' Useful club of Stratford, club organized by Mrs. Richard Howell, the purpose of which is to use the energy of the little folks to some good purpose and get them interested in the real things in life which make them and other people happy.

The little folks suggested some months ago that they have a Christmas tree that the whole town could enjoy. Two of three times before efforts had been made to have a Christmas tree in Stratford, but for some reason the plan failed. This year, however, the club members suggested a community Christmas tree that will equal if not surpass anything of the sort in the state. The assistance of the churches and the Child's-Welfare club and other organizations was asked and all entered into the spirit of the affair with a vim. First Selectman Lalley [sic] was happy to know that Stratford was at last to have a real community Christmas tree and he has

worked like a beaver to make the event a big success. The Citizens committee, which has done so much good work in giving the town's soldiers a suitable send-off when they went to camp, have given their assistance also. This committee is composed of George Bateman, chairman; David L. Rhodes, Charles Abercrombie, Harold Lovell, F. W. Townroe, Olaf Unbehagen and Selectman Lalley.

The women's committee, composed of Mrs. Richard Howell, Mrs. Wade Cook, Mrs. Ogden S. Willey, Mrs. Walter Goddard and Mrs. Thomas Taylor have performed wonders in working out the many details to bring the affair to a successful termination.

It is some work to cut out and sew together 2,500 stockings and fill them with candy, nuts and oranges. But the women of Stratford who are interested in any worthy work for the good of the town did all of these things, meeting in the town hall and at their private homes both days and nights. And yesterday everything was in readiness for the greatest Christmas eve Stratford has ever known.

It is planned to give every child in Stratford, up to the age of twelve years, a Christmas stocking. Further than this, every soldier boy of Stratford, no matter where he is, will be sent one of those stockings from his home town Christmas tree. Maybe that won't make him feel that he is no forgotten by the folks back home!

The children are to meet at the town hall at 6:30 o'clock tomorrow night and, headed

by the Stratford Home Guards, they will march to the Community Christmas tree, and here the Home guard will give out the stockings to the children holding tickets which entitle them to a present. These tickets have been given out through the schools. The singing of the Christmas carols by the children will one of the interesting features. The children have been drilled by Musical Director Clark of the public schools.

Following is the programme:

Song - Come, All Ye Faithful.

Prayer - Rev. Henry P. Lyman-Wheaton.

Presentation - Miss Dorothy Buck.

Acceptance - Elliott F. Peck.

Song - Hark, the Angels Sing.

Address- Rev. R. C. U. Whitehead.

Presentation of gifts.

Benediction - Rev. Artye M. Baggett.

Herbert L. Bartram will play cornet for the singing.

The Boys' and Girls' Useful club is not a year old, but it is already one of the leading organizations in making over Stratford from an old fashioned town into a modern, wide-awake community.

Bridgeport Evening Farmer

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BRIDGEPORT, CONN., MONDAY, DECEMBER 24, 1917

PRICE TWO CENTS

Bridgeport Evening Farmer
Saturday, December 24, 1917

BRILLIANT SCENE THIS EVENING AT TOWN XMAS TREE

Presents From First Community Tree of Stratford Given Out Tonight.

EXPECT MORE THAN 2,000 WILL ENROLL

Stratford Red Cross Had Sent Out Great Amount of Clothing Goods.

(Special to the Farmer.)

Stratford, Dec 24—This evening at 7 o'clock exercises and the distribution of presents from Stratford's first community Christmas tree will take place at Academy Hill where the tree has been placed since last Thursday. Hundreds of electric lights of various colors will illuminate the tree. Twenty-seven hundred tickets have been given out to the school children by the committee of which Mrs. Richard Howell is chairlady. All have been requested to report at the town hall this evening at 6 o'clock. A parade headed by First Selectman James Lally and followed by the school children, will march down Main street to Academy Hill, where exercises and distribution of gifts will take place. Miss Catherine Russell, a well known soprano singer, will render a number of Christmas carols. Those who will assist Mrs. Howell are Mrs. Ogden S. Willey, Mrs. Thomas Taylor, Mrs. Wade Cook and Mrs. Walter Goddard.

Christmas Services.

On Christmas eve a Children's Christmas service and tree will be held in the Christ Episcopal church at 6:15 o'clock. Hymns will be sung by the children, and an address will be given. On Christmas day there will be a celebration of Holy Communion at 8 a. m. and a second celebration at 10 a. m. Rev. H. P. Lyman-Wheaton, D. D., new rector, will be the preacher at each of the foregoing services. A cordial invitation is extended to all to attend these services.

ST. JAMES, STRATFORD

Masses on Christ day will be at 6:30, 8:30 and 10:30 a. m. High mass will be celebrated at 6:30 and 10:30. Special music has been arranged as for Iowa:

Organ Prelude—Noel, Dudley Buck.

Kyrie—soprano and alto duet and chorus, Mattfeld.

Gloria—(from the 12th mass), Mozart.

Credo—solo and chorus, Mattfeld.

Offertory—Adeste Fideles, Novello.

Sanctus—tenor solo and chorus, Gounod.

Agnus Dei—chorus, Gounod.

Postlude—Hallelujah chorus. Handel.

Choir members:—Mrs. James McNamara, Miss Irene Malley, Mildred Sexton, Anna Ahearn, Bessie Bediger, Mabel McCarthy, Mildred Studley, Mr. Louis Serre, William Lynch, Paul Castelot.

Mrs. Charles Ogren, organist and director.

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BRIDGEPORT, CONN., THURSDAY, DEC. 27, 1917

PRICE TWO CENTS

Bridgeport Evening Farmer
Saturday, December 27, 1917

BIG ATTENDANCE AT STRATFORD'S CHRISTMAS PARTY

Four Generations Attend Sexton Christmas Celebration.

(Special to The Farmer)

Stratford, Dec. 27.—Fully 5,000 persons were present at the first community Christmas tree celebration held at Academy Hill, Monday evening. Of this number one-half were children who were made happy by being the recipients of gifts from the tree. It was the first real community Christmas tree ever held in Stratford and no doubt has left a lasting impression on the large multitude who witnessed the night's festivities. The children met at the town hall at 6:30 o'clock and headed the Stratford Home Guards, and First Selectman James Lally marched to the community Christmas tree where distribution of presents commenced.

Each child received a Christmas stocking filled with nuts, candy and oranges. The affair was in charge of Mrs. Richard Howell, president of the Boys' and Girls' Useful Club. She was assisted by Mrs. Wade Cook, Mrs. Ogden Wiley, Mrs. Walter Goddard and Mrs. Thomas Taylor. The Citizens committee which has done so much good in giving the town's soldiers a suitable send-off when they went to camp also gave valuable assistance. This committee was composed of First Selectman James Lally, Fred Townroe, David L. Rhoades, Charles Abercrombie, Olaf Unbehagen and George Bateman.

Much credit for the success of the vast undertaking should be given to the women of the town who worked to cut out and sew together 2,500 stockings and fill them with delicacies. The women met in the town hall and in private homes both days and nights and labored like beavers to make the affair a grand success. Everything was in readiness late Sunday afternoon.

The singing of Christmas carols under the direction of Prof. Clark, musical director of the public schools was one of the features. Following was the programme:

Song—Come All Ye Faithful.

Prayer—Rev. Henry P. Lyman-Wheaton.

Presentation—Miss Dorothy Peck.

Acceptance—Elliott W. Peck.

Song—Hark, The Herald Angels Sing.

Address—Rev. Robert C. Whitehead

Presentation of gifts.

Benediction—Rev. Artyre M. Baggett.

Herbert D. Bartram rendered several selections on the cornet which added much to the occasion.

The Boys' and Girls' Useful Club is not a year old, but it is already one of the leading organizations in making over Stratford from an old fashioned town into a modern wide awake community.

Four Generations at Dinner

At the Christmas dinner given at the home of Mr. and Mrs. James Sexton, Stratford avenue, Stratford there were four generations represented. Mrs. Jeremiah McAuliffe of New York city, aunt of Mrs. James Sexton, Mr. and Mrs. Michael Gill of Bridgeport, Vincent Gill also of Bridgeport, and Mr. and Mrs. James Sexton and family of Stratford were present and enjoyed a real old-fashioned turkey dinner. Mrs. Gill is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Sexton and Vincent Gill, grandchild. Mr. Sexton received a letter from his son First Lieutenant Vincent Sexton, who is stationed in California extending to them the happiest greetings of the Yuletide season also informing them that he was to leave for France in a few days. A dress suit case filled with many handsome and beautiful

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gifts also arrived and were distributed following the festivities. Lieutenant Sexton was formerly a newspaperman employed on the various repertorial [sic] staffs of the papers in Bridgeport.

Phillips-Bonesby

On Christmas morning at 10 o'clock Miss Gladys Bonesby, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Edward Bonesby of 3 Sachs street, Stratford, became the bride of James Phillips, Jr., son of Mr. and Mrs. James Phillips, sr., of Sachs street. Rev. Ernest C. Carpenter, pastor of the Stratford Methodist church performed the ceremony. The wedding was attended by the immediate relatives of both families. Both persons are widely known in town.