



Built 1723

STRATFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

JULY 1964



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Next meeting - our annual Lawn Party on the Judson House and Museum grounds, July 24 at 7:00 P.M. -- Members no charge. Bring a guest - one dollar covers refreshments and a tour of Judson House and our museum. (Remember last year, our delightful party with peaches and cream! Mm-mm!) This year you must all come. Mrs. Winton and her committee have planned a wonderful party. Picnic tables and chairs will be set up. You will meet all our new members, and we have so much to show you! As a member you should be acquainted with what goes on. Come, make an annual inspection with us. Pride yourself while guiding your guest around. Interest them in becoming a member with you--if not an active member, a contributing member.

First, Mrs. Lovell and her Acquisitions Committee members will be proud to show you all the new acquisitions for this year, especially the pendulum clock given to us by Mrs. Giles Whiting of Scarborough, New York. It is a grandfather type made by R. Whiting of Connecticut 1808-35. Then from Mr. Kenneth Judson of Long Island, a second collection of very interesting Judson family papers. Then, also, the sixteen articles of furniture left to the society by Miss Martha Curtis Miles of Milford, including an 18th century highboy valued at \$750.00, a desk valued at \$850.00 and a 1740 cherry secretary valued at \$750.00. Thirteen of these pieces trace back to the Stiles Judson family, direct descendants of William Judson. We are all grateful to Miss Miles for the generosity displayed in her bequest to us.

SAMMIS PROPERTY

Second, and very important to every member, we have an opportunity to acquire by purchase the Sammis property on the east side next to our Judson House. Many of us have felt for many years that we do need the property for expansion. As we continue to restore Judson House, we are going to need new living area for our Curator. We also need storage space and a workshop space. We could also use the first floor of the house for a display of our Victorian era pieces. We also need, or will need, the land area if we ever expect to expand the museum building or build additional separate buildings; and with that will come parking area problems. We cannot continue to accept additional acquisitions without planning for additional space to store and display them. Many of our things today are stored away in chests and cupboards because we cannot properly display them, especially our fabrics, clothing and hats, etc. With all these beautiful Judson family pieces coming home to Judson House, we cannot afford to pass them by. This will most likely be our last and only chance to acquire the property. If it is purchased by a private family, it could be years before it might become available again. If the church group interested gets it, it is gone from us forever.

Give the above your most serious thought and look the property over when you attend the meeting; talk it over with your fellow-members. Also consider it will cost money. Money we will have to raise to buy and do some repairs. We cannot put the Society in debt nor burden its future. Before we can acquire the property we must have 80% of the funds. We can raise some of it within our membership, but we are going to need outside help also. Let's not just read and forget--let's all be individual Ways and Means committees--let's have your opinions, ideas and help! We now have, in my opinion, a golden opportunity we should not let pass. The property will always increase in value, so our investment would be secure.

FLEA MARKET

Enclosed is our flier on our annual flea market, our biggest Ways and Means project of the year. From this come the much needed funds for operation, repairs and restoration of Judson House. Do all you can to publicize it--help us get a better crowd than last year. We have plenty of fliers to mail to your friends. We still are going to need lots of help, especially men to help park cars and pick up admissions, set up posters and directional markers and clean up after the show -- Ladies to help man the food booth and fill it with home-made goodies. We will, as usual, have our own space and wagon from which to sell articles. If you have something you can give us to sell at our wagon, bring it to the Lawn Party and we will take care of it from then on. Mrs. Miller and Mrs. Lovell are again co-chairmen and have a lot of planning, etc. underway, but on the day of the sale, let's all pitch in and help. Come and volunteer--don't wait until you are asked. Make it easier for everybody. It's lots of fun as well as work.

CURATOR

Mr. Booth continues to report an ever increasing number of visitors; 133 in May and over 350 in June! People are coming from far and wide. We are fast becoming a nationally known 'you must visit' place. Take time in your travels, especially around Connecticut, and visit other historic houses and museums. Then come home and see how much more we have to offer, how better informed our Curator and Hostesses are, and how much nicer is our display. You can be proud to be part of the most active Society in the state.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

At this meeting, the committee to nominate our slate of officers and committee heads for next year will be announced.

Between now and September is when you should give thought as to how you would like to work for the good of the Society. As we grow, and we are growing, we need more help on the committees and new committees formed. If you are a new member, we also need you. Give it serious thought and let us know the committee group you would like to work with.

CONNECTICUT LEAGUE

The next State League meeting is scheduled for Saturday, July 25th, as guests of the Hamden Historical Society, Mt. Carmel Congregational Church, 3284 Whitney Avenue, Hamden. Call Mrs. Larsen if you plan to go. Bring your own lunch --- coffee and dessert will be provided.

FINAL REMINDER -- (1) The Lawn Party, (2) The Sammis house, (3) The Flea Market and how you can help, (4) Next Year's committees.

Stanley E. Johnson  
President

The membership dues schedule is: Regular \$3.00, Contributing \$5.00, and Sustaining \$10.00. There will be an urgent need for more funds this year - Judson House needs a new roof and a new fence for the front lawn. The Sammis property will need some attention and we have a \$10,000 mortgage to maintain.

All those who feel they can pay on a schedule above the regular membership are urged to do so. They can be assured that their dues payments are carefully used to meet current needs.

By payment of \$100 or more in a year, one can become a permanent member, exempt from dues henceforth. We now have 21 permanent members. Their qualifying payments are invested and will benefit the society for generations to come.

Without further words on this sometimes unpopular subject, let me close with the plea of an old southern preacher, "Dig Down Brothers and Sisters".

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#### Stratford Heritage -

A unique part of Judson House is the basement slave quarters with its huge fireplace and its low, rough hewed beam ceiling. One can imagine a certain "togetherness" for a family of six to nine slaves, ages six months to sixty years, male and female. The male slaves worked side by side with their masters in fields in the north, while in the south they tilled cotton, largely on their own, in heat the white man could not endure. It is interesting to find that slaves were listed in the inventory of a will that is framed and displayed near the fireplace, at a value of 60 pounds or less each, a sizable amount of money in those days.

Under colonial law an indian who harbored a fugitive might be taken into slavery. There is, however, little evidence that the indian could, as a practical matter, be held in bondage. He, unlike the negro, could cope with the rigors of the New England winter, and he was resourceful.

Hanging near the fireplace is a pair of smoked glass spectacles that belonged to Esther, a slave owned by the then Stratford Post Master. The lens are not much larger than a quarter and are perfectly round. These spectacles may well have been the most prized possession of one whose life knew few material rewards.

Long before the Civil War, Stratford had an active Abolition of Slavery Association. While slavery never played a very important role in the early days of Stratford, it was, never-the-less a part of our past.

Hildreth T. Winton,  
President