



STRATFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY
SEPTEMBER 1965

Next Meeting

Friday, September 25, 1965

Christ Church 8:00 P.M.

Program - "Photographs of Old Stratford"

Mr. Donald Fowler and Mr. Leo Miller have made, and will present, an interesting collection of slides of Stratford as it used to be. Included are early school classes and many pictures that will remind you of "the good old days".

This meeting will also be the annual meeting of the society. Mr. Stanley Johnson, chairman of the nominating committee, will present a slate of officers and committee chairmen for your consideration.

Bring a friend with you. Possibly you can identify some of the pictures that are not fully catalogued. It should be as much fun as the "Show and Tell" program.

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Flea Market -

Mabel Miller reports that in spite of the intense heat and fewer wagons than last year, the net profit from the outdoor sale was \$1344.00. This was most gratifying. All those who participated should feel their efforts were well spent.

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Sammis Property -

Counsel has been retained to handle the societies purchase of the Sammis property. Those who have pledges unpaid are urged to send in their checks to the Treasurer, Mr. Roy Sanbourn, 66 Academy Hill Terrace, Stratford.

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State Meeting -

The Connecticut League of Historical Societies fall meeting will be held Saturday, September 25th at Simsbury Historical Society, Eno Memorial Hall in Simsbury. These enjoyable and worthwhile meetings are open to all our members. Bring your box lunch - coffee and dessert will be furnished by the host society. Subjects on the program, that starts at 10:00 A.M., are "Your Society and its Accessions" and "On Preservation of Furniture".

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Annual Dues -

The Society has an enviable record of paid up dues accounts. There are at least two reasons for this; sincere interest in the society, and approval of its work, and a dues schedule that is reasonable.

The bylaws were amended last year with a view to raising more money to meet society needs and, at the same time, not to make membership a prohibitive luxury for those living on a limited budget.

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