



Built 1723

The Stratford Historical Society
Stratford, Connecticut



Built 1723

NEWSLETTER

July 1966

NEXT MEETING

Friday - July 22nd.

Boothe Memorial Park

6:30 P.M.

PICNIC BUFFET - Cold plate - Dessert - Beverage Rain or Shine
\$1.00 per person - including guests

Joe Melnick will conduct a guided tour of the Historical displays at the Park. There will be a short informal business meeting.

Please respond to the attendance questionnaire, for it greatly assists the Hospitality Committee in making plans for your enjoyment.

GIFTS TO ENDOWMENT FUND

Roy Sanborn, Treasurer has requested that friends of the late Judge John Smith, father of Mrs. Clark Lane, Jr. have contributed to the Societies endowment fund in remembrance of the beloved jurist who died in his ninety-ninth year.

PLANS FOR A NEW ROOF ON JUDSON HOUSE

The Executive Board at its last meeting decided to proceed with obtaining bids to replace with wooden shingles or with wooden "shakes" the roof on Judson House. While there have been no serious leaks to date it is not hard to see daylight through the roof while standing in the attic. The Board felt it a wise precautionary move to take corrective action before any damage might be done to the house or its priceless antiques. Not only will a new roof be put on but insulation will be installed in the roof at the time the repairs are made. Many items now in the attic will be stored temporarily in the Sarnmis House.

FLEA MARKET

The annual outdoor, money raising event of the year will be held at Bunnell High School Field, Saturday, August 13, 1966 - 10 A.M. to 6 P.M. The Societies wagon is a money maker - please fill it with items from attic to cellar. Items can be left in advance at Judson House (porch or museum) or call Mrs. Leo Miller, Jr. 378-1447.

The second most profitable attraction is the Baked goods table. Call Betty Winton and tell her what you expect to bring. We never have homebaked goods left over and we do charge a fair price for these items.

PHOTO CONTEST

Thirteen prizes will be awarded to entrants in the Society's Stratford 1966 Photo Contest. Entrys will be displayed and awards announced at the Flea Market. For further information call Miss Harriett Ryan, chairman 334-7287.

STRATFORD HERITAGE

Mute evidence of part of the varied diet of the Indians who lived in Stratford are sizable piles of clam and oyster shells deposited on hill tops in Oronoque.

The last timbers of the Shad House beside the little Niggarr brook that divides Oronoque and Putney reminds one of a day of clean river water, and spring shad runs.

Just this year the old Oak tree on Oronoque Lane died. . It is said an Oak grows for one third of its life and spends one third dying. The old Oak was over 23 feet in circumference was nurtured by a spring that furnished water to the Blakeman House (Leon Baker) on the eastside of Main Street. It must have been a sapling when George Washington was in Town. So there is every reason to believe he did not sleep under its spreading limbs.

THE FOG CLEARS - The fog horns are gone - Revealing letters in the sand:

5 May 1966

Honorable Abraham Ribicoff

Dear Senator Ribicoff:

This refers to your inquiry of 22 April concerning the request of the Stratford Historical Society for the old fog horns and brass lighthouse utensils from Stratford Lighthouse.

The brass utensils are presently being held at the newly acquired Coast Guard Base, Fort Jay, New York (Governor's Island) for placement in the Coast Guard museum. In the event that duplicate utensils become available consideration will be given to their donation to the Society.

Unfortunately, the two foghorns have both been destroyed and scrapped. In the normal course of events, items of historic value are excepted from scrapping. In the instant case their destruction was an inadvertence attributable to a misunderstanding between the cognizant staff component of the Commander, Third Coast Guard District, and the Coast Guard Group Commander at Eaton's Neck. We share the Stratford Historical Society's justifiable dismay at the loss of these memorabilia.

Sincerely yours,
P.E. Trimble
Rear Admiral, U.S. Coast Guard
Acting Commandant

July 12, 1966

Rear Admiral P.E. Trimble

Dear Rear Admiral Trimble:

Your response of May 5, 1966 to Senator Abraham Ribicoff concerning the Stratford Lighthouse fog horns and brass Lighthouse utensils was brought before the Executive Board of the Stratford Historical Society at its recent meeting. The Board was not only dismayed, as predicted in your letter, at the loss of these memorabilia; it was thoroughly annoyed, and directed me to write requesting your aid in at least partially righting a blunder.

The Board felt that you should know that a check was made of every metal scrap yard in this area. It found that the approximately 700 pounds of bronze in the horns "Given", (not sold), to some unknown person had not been turned in. We were informed that the horns, in accordance with routine decommissioning procedures, had been broken up by sledge hammer. Could it have been that, at a time when copper is at an all time high, someone, with authorization or otherwise, collected all the decommissioned fog horns up and down the coast?

If by chance the horns at Stratford Shoal Lighthouse (known locally as Middle-ground Light) have not been broken up -- or if there are others elsewhere of the type used at Stratford, our Society would like to obtain a pair.

The Board was not comforted by your explanation that:

"The brass utensils are presently being held at the newly acquired Coast Guard Base, Fort Jay, New York (Governor's Island) for placement in the Coast Guard museum. In the event that duplicate utensils become available consideration will be given to their donation to the Society."

We request return of the utensils to Stratford where they served for many years. We have a well established museum with a full time Curator. During the past year we have acquired property next to the museum to assure room for growth. People from all over the country, indeed the world, come to visit. Many are attending the American Shakespeare Festival Theatre but a few blocks away.

In the light of what has so far happened in regard to saving and properly displaying these memorabilia of the Stratford Lighthouse, it would seem appropriate for the Coast Guard to send back to Stratford at once the brass utensils for display at the Stratford Historical Society Museum, reserving the right to call back any utensil it might find, at such time as its museum is fully established, is "one of a kind".

The Birdgeport Post-Telegram carried on its first page the enclosed item on the Society's quest for the Lighthouse horns and the brass utensils. They picked this up from the Society's Newsletter, which not only goes to over 300 members, but to all Connecticut Historical Societies and to local publications. The destruction of the horns has not been made public.

It is hoped that immediate, forthright, favorable action will be taken on these specific requests to, in some measure, compensate for an unpardonable "inadvertence attributable to a misunderstanding between cognizant staff components."

Sincerely yours,
THE STRATFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Hildreth T. Winton, President

July 12, 1966

Honorable Abraham Ribicoff

Dear Senator Ribicoff:

The enclosed letter to Rear Admiral P. E. Trimble, Acting Commandant, U.S. Coast Guard, is being sent through your office in the hope that you will endorse the Stratford Historical Society's request that the brass utensils, used for many years at Stratford Lighthouse, be returned to Stratford for safekeeping and display at the Stratford Historical Society Museum.

You will note that we suggest that, if at such time as the Coast Guard Museum is fully established, it is found that any utensil in the "Stratford group" is "one-of-a-kind", it may be taken from Connecticut and displayed with customary recognition of source. At this time, we strongly feel that these items should all be returned to the State in which they served the seafaring men of yesteryear.

Your continued help will be appreciated.

THE STRATFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Hildreth T. Winton, President

OBSERVANT FUTURE HISTORIANS:

This last week two little boys - apparently twins were very busy reaching a decision as to what two of the eight varieties of cookies they should buy in a store in Oronoque when two Nuns entered at the far end of the sales room. In a shrill voice one boy shouted "Look there's Batman's Mother." Before the embarrassed mother could muzzle them both, the other protested, "No it can't be, there are two of them."

The Sisters seemed to enjoy this outburst of youthful spontaniety quite as much as the customers.

Remember, remember, try to remember the Picnic at Boothe Memorial Park, Friday, July 22nd at 6:30 and the Flea Market, Saturday, August 13th. Again this year, come, come, come to the Fair.

Hildreth T. Winton
President

It would not be in keeping with the property acquisition committee's policy to list the names of all donors to the property fund. It does seem, however, proper to give special thanks to Miss Adelaide M. DeGroot whose generous gift of \$5,000 gave the Society the encouragement it needed at the outset. Special thanks also go to Donald Sammis and his sister, Mrs. John Richardson, who in addition to cash gifts have, at substantial personal sacrifice, held the property off the market, paid the taxes, light, fuel and insurance bills for nearly two years so that the Society might find itself in a position to take title to the property.

Every contributor has received from Harold Lovell, chairman of the property acquisition committee, a personal note of thanks upon receipt of their gift or pledge.

My profound thanks go to all who participated.

It is hoped that now ownership is a reality. Those who have not contributed will want to join in the next step -- to reduce the mortgage. It would also be helpful to the Treasurer if those whose pledges are currently payable would send in their contributions.

In acquiring the Sammis Property it is recognized that added responsibilities have been assumed. This giant step has been taken with deliberation, with determination to live within our means and to secure a valuable asset that should prove to be both a challenge and an incentive to future growth of the Society.

Annual Flea Market

Saturday, August 14th from 10:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. the Society will hold its annual Flea Market at Bunnell High School - rain or shine. This is the one money raising event of the year -- a very important occasion, for in recent years profit from this project has exceeded total membership dues income. With ownership of the Sammis property our need for resources will be substantial.

Of more importance than the attractive money phase of the Flea Market is the fact that it is the type of society activity in which most members can participate. It may be baking three dozen brownies to sell at the food table, or gleaning from your cellar or attic a 'white elephant' for which someone visiting the Society Wagon may gladly pay good money for. If you know of someone who is moving they may have odds and ends that could be stored in the Sammis House until Flea Market time when they can be sold at the Society Wagon.

Care has been taken to hire specialists for the real onerous tasks at the Flea Market. Jobs for society members are broken down into one, two, or three hour stints -- ticket taking, food table, society wagon, etc. If you have not already volunteered to serve, please call Mabel Miller 378-1447 or Betty Winton 378-7335.