



STRATFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

May 1, 1973



OUR NEXT MEETING, and last meeting of the 1972-73 Historical Society year, will be combined with the May meeting of the Connecticut League of Historical Societies on Saturday, May 19, when our Society plays host to the State Association. This event will begin at the Stratford High School auditorium and cafeteria and will end at our Judson House and Catharine B. Mitchell Museum in mid-afternoon.

THE PROGRAM: 10:00 - Coffee and Registration; 10:30 Welcome by Mrs. Janet Jainschigg, President of the League, and brief greetings and introduction to "The 250th Anniversary of Judson House" by your president; 10:50 "Museum Planning: Exhibit Techniques", a talk by the featured speaker, George Bowditch, with a slide presentation showing the 1958 to present evolution of our Museum and House by Donald Fowler; 11:50 League Awards; 12:05 Luncheon (everyone to bring his own box lunch with dessert and tea or coffee to be served by our Society); 12:55 Annual Business Meeting; 1:15 "Museum Organization: Storage, Record Keeping, Cataloging" by Mr. Bowditch; 2:15 Visit to Judson House and Museum. (Parking available in the Christ Episcopal Church parking lot).

Mr. Bowditch, now curator of exhibits at the Margaret Strong Museum in Rochester, N.Y., continues a distinguished career which has included positions as curator at the Idaho State Museum and the New Bedford Whaling Museum, and the directorship of New York State's Adirondack Museum. He is a very personable, interesting and effective speaker.

PLEASE DO plan to attend all or part of this meeting to enjoy, to profit from the comments of an expert in the museum field, to help celebrate our 250th Judson House anniversary, to visit our newly decorated House and Museum with reorganization nearing completion, and to help play hosts and hostesses to our out-of-town guests. You will be glad you did!

On the 19th, the museum emphasis will be on the theme of work-in-progress with illustrations in writing and example of the do's and don'ts of restoration and preservation techniques for leather, clothing, documents, prints, etc. The storage areas as set up will speak for themselves in illustrating recommended practices. Many of our lovely pieces of furniture, china, glassware, guns, swords, bicycles, sleds, library, etc. will be in view, but the emphasis will not be on exhibits and displays primarily. We are fortunate to have Mrs. Chapman in charge of the Museum work. She has unusual ability to organize and classify, and a keenly professional museum philosophy. Her work, and that of Mrs. Fowler, her co-chairman, is outstanding.

In visiting Miss Celia's Room, the parlor chamber, your attention will be drawn to the new curtains and bed hangings made from fabric with a silk screen 18th century design. This project represents a great deal of work and skill on the part of Mrs. Manning Harvey, who did all of the cutting and made the valance, and Mrs. Sellick, Mrs. Boyhen, and Mrs. Bunnell, who spent many hours in the sewing of the materials. Miss Cornelia's Room has been turned into a quite well set up sewing room, at least temporarily.

OTHER PROJECTS, COMPLETED, IN PROGRESS, OR TO BEGIN SOON: (1) Filling and grading of the Sannis House site property, with raking and seeding to be done "any day now". (The recommendation of Mr. Favretti, the University of Connecticut landscape architect, was followed in leaving all trees and keeping the natural land contours. Mr. Favretti has sent us a sketch which suggests additional beds, shrubbery, and a walk in the general area - this a long-term project.) (2) Repair and repointing of Judson House foundation. (3) Installation of gutters and downspouts where needed on the House and Museum. (4) Spring clean-up of grounds. (Mr. Joseph DiMenno and Scouts from Stony Brook and Eli Whitney schools helped. We are grateful.) (5) Removal of wire fence at the west of our property. This will be replaced with a board fence in the style of the one now in front of the House and will follow our line as surveyed by the Town last year. Howard Smith will be in charge of this work. (This generous and skilled volunteer worker has also recently scraped, treated

for rot resistance, and painted the wide step at the back door of the House, after repairing the step foundation. We thank him for all of his hard work.)

We thank Mr. and Mrs. Alvin Burt very much for the gift of an Indian stone which was on their South Main Street property. This has been set up in the row of similar stones along the new stone steps leading to the Museum.

Mrs. Virginia Mussler, Chairman of Hostesses, head guide, and coordinator of the visitation program, presents her April report of visitors and sales (cards, pencils, place mats, quill pens, House pictures for framing); 210 adults, 174 children with a financial return of \$338.20. It was an unusually busy and successful month in this area of our work. Much of the enthusiastic interest in our visitation program is a result of the work of our Education Chairman, Donald Fowler, who has presented a lecture and slide show to many community organizations and provided educational materials concerning our Society to the news media.

Mrs. Mussler has regular assistance, one co-guide each day, from Mrs. Stephen Lawrence, Mrs. Harold Bailey, Mrs. Louise Blauvelt, and Mrs. Fred Wilcoxson. Much additional assistance is needed, especially with school groups. To date the volunteer guide corps has included Mrs. Bunnell, Mrs. Sellick, Mrs. Carson, Mrs. Walker, Mrs. Madelyn Judson, Mr. and Mrs. Dustin, Mrs. Bassett, Mr. and Mrs. Fowler, Miss Viner, Mrs. Martin, Mrs. Casey, Mrs. Elliott, Mr. Cable, Mrs. Perkins, Mrs. Colborne, and Mrs. Weaver.

Other March and April volunteer workers not previously mentioned are Mrs. Barrows, Mrs. Switzgable, Mr. and Mrs. Larson, Mr. Nye, Mrs. Brandt, Mrs. Oakman, Mr. Chapman, Mrs. Hubbell, Mrs. Mulford, Mr. Melcher. Mrs. Minatti, Mrs. David, Mr. Wardman, Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Johnson, and Miss Roberto, this last named a senior at Albertus Magnus College who will earn academic credit as a research worker in our Museum this summer. Special mention should be made of Joseph Allen, who has helped with our clock repair problem. It is noteworthy that our 43 volunteers (and we have probably omitted someone, and we apologize) represent approximately 12% of our membership. One out of eight as active workers is a high proportion for any organization, we believe.

We are sorry that Mrs. Howard Smith had a health problem which prevents her from continuing as chairman of the refreshment committee for the League meeting on May 19, but are happy to report that she is now much better. We are very grateful indeed to Mrs. Richard Slater who will assume this duty. Mrs. Roger Cole, over-all chairman of hospitality, reports that Mrs. Slater will be assisted by Mrs. Robert Scott, Mrs. Allan Rice, Miss Elizabeth Hamilton, Miss Susan Abercrombie, Mrs. Robert Brown, Mrs. Edward Carten, Mrs. David Ferency, Miss Laurie Jenney, Mrs. Ronald Rader, Mrs. Andrew Patrick, and Miss Susan Roberto. Mrs. Robert Abercrombie and Mrs. Layard Savacool will arrange flower decorations.

At the last Executive Board meeting on April 2 it was voted: to have the Judson House foundation repaired and repointed at a cost not to exceed \$150; to authorize the repair of the DeGroot (Alexander Hamilton) bookcase and a DeGroot armchair, the expense to be paid from the DeGroot account; to award a contract for gutters and downspouts @\$164.44, the payment to come from the capital account; to pay for the painting of the front of the House from the capital account; to authorize a committee composed of Mr. Wardman, Mr. Dolyak, and Mr. Dahl to take full responsibility for awarding the contracts to landscape and seed the Sammis property site; to authorize Stanley Johnson to secure a new furnace for the Museum if needed (it has now been determined that the heat exchanger in the present furnace does have a crack); to authorize removal of the wire fence and the building of a board fence along the west boundary if lumber is donated.

We have now received 450 copies of "The Judson Papers" written by Mrs. Marguerite M. Judson. This attractive little book, in paperback now that the original edition is sold out, is a delightful interweaving of the letters which passed between David and Eli Judson in the early 1800's, David in Fairfield, Conn. (He was postmaster there and an important citizen) and Eli in Lansingburgh, N.Y., a tavern keeper in the steamboat days) with narrative which reflects simply and accurately that era and gives background for the letters. Eli and David were grandsons of Captain David Judson, the builder of our House, in which they were