



Judson House, 967 Academy Hill, Built C1750  
and Catharine B. Mitchell Museum, 1958

Town Settled 1639

Society Organized 1925

## The Stratford Historical Society

Box 382, Stratford, Connecticut 06497  
Telephone 378-0630

September 1995

**NEXT GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING:** Friday, Sept. 29, 1995--8:00pm  
Christ Episcopal Church Hall  
2000 Main St., Stratford

The 70th Annual Meeting of the Stratford Historical Society, including Election of Officers for the 1995-1996 year will be held on Friday, September 29, 1995. Following a brief business meeting, the program will feature...

### **THE COMEDY AND TRAGEDY OF THE SHAKESPEARE THEATRE**

The 1995 Annual Meeting of the Stratford Historical Society marks both the fortieth anniversary of the completion of the Shakespeare Theatre and a new beginning, as that day new proposals will be submitted to the state.

Town Historian Lewis Knapp has documented the history of the theater, from the day in 1954 when twelve Housatonic Boat Club members sold the land along the river to the theater group, to the present day when we hope to see the revival of great classic theater in Stratford. With slides of historic events at the theater and colorful broadsides of productions, Lew will tell the story.

How did the theater start in Stratford? Was it really good? Who were the people involved and what were they like? Why did it collapse and can it be revived? There is a story to be told, of Lawrence Langner and his dream, of the glittering stars who came--Massey, McDowell, Hepburn, Drake, Tandy, Ritchard, Havoc, Gish, Redgrave and others; of unknowns who became great--Plummer, Weaver, and most of all, Carnovski; of how it came so close to success under John Houseman's direction; of its time as a rich man's toy; and of the throes of its final collapse.

Come hear the story of the theater, and decide for yourself why it failed, and how it can succeed. This is more than a story, though. All of us are involved, and all will be affected by the future success or failure of the theater in our town.

*To find out where we're going, we must know where we've been.*

Refreshments will be served following the program. The Public is invited.

**Early American Festival** activities will take place on Academy Hill as well as on the Judson House property on Sunday, Oct. 1, 1995, rain or shine! Please see the enclosed yellow flyer for the details. It has been several years since the Society's last Festival. This year's event will be different in several ways, most noticeably in the presence of two units of Cavalry (with horses) and the fact that all of the participants will be attired in authentic colonial attire. This should be a wonderful family event! Refreshments will be available for purchase. Parking will be available on Main St. as well as in the Christ Church parking lot on the west side of Main St. (The road between Judson House and Academy Hill will be closed for this event.)

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**Committee to Recognize Historical Sensitivity:** At a recent meeting of the Governing Board it was voted unanimously to form a committee to recognize historical sensitivity with respect to the maintenance of historic properties and buildings within the Town of Stratford. You may have noted already some of the very exciting efforts in this direction. The Society wishes to recognize persons responsible for this contribution to the community as well as to raise awareness concerning this challenge.

Are you interested in being a member of this committee? If you are, please contact the Society at 378-0630 and leave your name and phone number or send a note to the Society at PO Box 382.

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**Wilcoxson's 'History of Stratford':** We have available two copies of this volume, published in 1939. They are priced at \$90 and \$100 respectively, depending upon condition. If you are interested, please call the Society at 378-0630 and leave your name and phone number.

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**Carol Brancato**, who was for many years our Education Chair, retired in June. She was in charge of Docent Training, as well as opening and closing Judson House each season. We thank her for her devotion to the Society. Sandy Rutkowski and Cindy Kleynowski will be filling this position for this year..as well as coordinating the Early American Festival mentioned earlier.

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**Flora**, our well-loved 18th century silhouette of a Stratford slave, has developed a world-wide fame. She has been featured in four books, in a film for Carter Grove in Virginia and has been displayed in Washington D.C. at the Corcoran Gallery and at the Brooklyn Museum. There is currently a request for her to go on a two year tour which we will refuse as we do not want to be separated from her for that long. Recently there was a request for her to be used in a film on Thomas Jefferson by Ken Burns for Public Television. As far as we know, Flora is the earliest known likeness of a slave, dated 1796. We also have her bill of sale.

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**Sister Cities:** Early in August the Society entertained about ninety visitors (hosts & guests) from England under the auspices of the Sister Cities program. They toured Judson House and the Museum and had lunch here.

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**Gift of photographs:** Recently Mrs. Marcus (Gil) Andrews now of East Orleans, Mass. but formerly of Stratford donated her husband's collection of pictures covering at least fifty years of Stratford history. They will be a wonderful addition to our extensive collection of Stratford pictures. We are always grateful for any pictures of Stratford scenes, buildings or groups.

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**Genealogical Research:** People from far and wide use our archives. George Kennen, Ambassador to Russia during the Roosevelt administration, now with the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton was here this spring. In one day we had researchers from Utah, New York City, and Newtown, CT.

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**Curtis Quilt:** The Curtis Quilt has just been returned from a special exhibit at the Museum of American Quilters in Paducah, Kentucky where it commanded special attention. In 1900 it won a national contest for descendants of soldiers in the American Revolution. The editor of the 'Quilters Journal' is writing an article featuring it as, until this time, it was thought that the first national quilting contest was held in 1932. We have letters and newspaper clippings documenting the quilt's winning \$100 in 1900.

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**Hamilton's Pharmacy,** for so many years a fixture in Paradise Green, has closed its doors. Our thanks go to Alexander and Burr Hamilton for the many items from the pharmacy which enhance our holdings in pharmaceutical items dating back to the mid-19th century.

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**Book of Remembrance Contributions:**

Given By:

In Memory Of:

Alice Longstreth  
M/M Peter Dahl  
M/M Henry Hillson  
M/M Richard Ross  
Dorothy H. Gamble  
M/M M. Balaschak  
Ann C. Livingston  
Catherine T. Moore  
M/M Todd B. Lovell  
M/M Hiram Tindall

Alma Fowler  
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Elizabeth Hanusovsky  
Ida Allen Cable

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**Membership Renewal letters are printed on the reverse of this page and Membership envelopes have been enclosed in this letter in order to save on postage. Please read the letter and return your dues payment as soon as possible.**

Judith Kurmay,  
President

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Dear Stratford Historical Society Member:

It's that time again when membership Renewals are due. The one envelope is to be used when husband and wife are, or will become, members--\$20.00; Individuals--\$10.00; Seniors--\$7.00.

You will note that there are other Dues Categories printed on the envelope. These give an opportunity for more substantial support. Members are urged to consider 'Life Membership'. If you are now a Life Member, please consider giving the Dues envelope to someone who might be interested in becoming a member.

We welcome additional gifts not related to dues to help accomplish special projects. A separate check is very helpful in this case.

Your membership in and support of the Stratford Historical Society are reasons for the continuing success of your organization in its work to keep alive the noble history of the Town of Stratford.

Please help the Society by sending your Membership Dues as soon as possible. This will save the cost of postage involved in follow-up letters.

Many thanks.

Sincerely,

Dolores and Robert Hctor  
Membership