
Stratford Historical Society >> UPDATE

A Hand on the PAST >> An Eye to the FUTURE

Volume III Issue 2

November 1998

NEXT GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Friday, November 13, 1998-8:00 p.m.

Christ Episcopal Church
2000 Main Street Stratford



CAPTAIN DAVID JUDSON HOUSE

THE COLORED LADIES WOMEN OF COLOR CREATING A LIVING HISTORY OF THE 18TH AND 19TH CENTURY

“The Colored Ladies” character portrayals celebrate women of the past whose diverse lives span two centuries. In dramatic vignettes “TLC” reveal the accomplishments, struggles and contributions of these women to American History. Each woman’s life is depicted against the events and issues of her day, contrasting her domestic and public spheres.

Some of the women portrayed achieved a place in history. Others are less familiar to present day audiences, but their lives also deserve recognition. Harriet Tubman on the underground railroad, Tituba of Old Salem Town, Susie King Taylor’s Civil War experiences, Allean Crockett a runaway slave, Molly a free black, meet family members of a colored soldier or hear the words of an abolitionist missionary against the wrongs of slavery. These are characters developed or works-in-progress for storytelling either as a workshop or single event. The characters from the 18th and the 19th Centuries, are developed as a part of Living History, therefore all inference and information must be accurate.

Two Storytellers will present characters at the Membership meeting on November 13th, Priscilla Dianne Varona and Pam Goncalves. Priscilla Varona is an African American woman, dancer, teacher and writer who lives in Cambridge, MA. Experience, GOD’s grace and the need to teach the love of learning have wrought a Storyteller. “As a teacher I’ve always used storytelling to give life and experience to a lesson. More importantly, storytelling is used to demonstrate and encourage students to think about relativity and truth.” Storytelling can be entertaining while enlightening.

“TLC” take their performance to educational institutions, museums, public libraries, and historical societies. The program is in co-operation with American History classes at Stratford and Bunnell High Schools.

DON’T MISS THIS MEETING-share a day with GINGI a cigar smoking, fast talking, worldly woman who runs a gaming house.

*There are no
strangers in this
room, only friends
who have not yet
met..*

*Sign in an Irish
Tavern.*

*Coming Event...
Keep Dec 13th
open for Judson
House Early
American
Christmas.
See page 3 for
more details.*

The meeting is open to the public and refreshments will be served.

Message from the Vice President

Our busy summer season is over. We congratulate those whose work and dedication made it so successful. The History Camp and Early American Festival under Sandy Rutkowski's leadership involved many new young people and their parents in the Society's activities. During the Festival almost 400 visitors toured the Judson House, most for the first time. Juniors wore colonial outfits. Many purchased with funds from our pipeline grant.

We were able to show off two gardens this year. Dolores and Bob Hoctor grew the best flower ever, and the Juniors, under Diane Matthews' guidance, grew a colonial herb garden to demonstrate the many historic uses of herbs.

Our docents guided 50% more visitors through Judson House in addition to the Festival attendees. This summer the interiors of Judson House and nine other Fairfield County historic homes were featured in "Antiques and The Arts Weekly."

Family research continues to grow. Joyce Bradbury and Gloria Duggan have helped researchers who travelled from as far away as Louisiana, Texas, and Arizona.

Selection of pictures for our "Images of America" book project is well underway. Old glass plate negatives which have been stored away unseen for decades are being reviewed. Prints of many are being made for the book and for our file.

John Calhoun
Vice President

Early American Festival

The fourth annual Early American Festival was held on Saturday, September 26th. The weather was bright and sunny for the several hundred people who roamed the grounds, toured Judson House and watched craftsmen and society members dressed in period costume demonstrate crafts of the 18th Century.

Medicine Wheel Dancers of Fairfield County performed and built a summer wigwam from hemlock branches, a blacksmith hammered red-hot metal into tools the colonists would have used. Tinsmith Douglas Schlicher of Woodbury made Christmas ornaments, Stratford potter Jim Birks and his daughter Lily, age 8, displayed clay pots and pipes of the period, spinners spun wool, angora and flax into yarn used to knit sweaters, vests, shawls and hats while Judy Saylor of Fog Hill Farm in Oxford showed her handmade oatmeal, lanolin and scented soaps. Angler Rudy Cassetti of Shelton displayed hand-tied flies and handmade wooden fishing poles, Peter Blekos of Willimantic made a footstool with a pedal-powered bowstring lathe and Frank Disbrow allowed visitors to try writing with black walnut ink and quills made from wild turkey and Canada goose feathers.

Members of the Junior Docent Society, which numbers about 60, churned butter, demonstrated games of the era and showed off the two sample herb gardens they grew this year.

Stratford's *New England Attic Treasures* was present to appraise family heirlooms brought by visitors.

A wonderful occasion for the entire family.

*An idealist
believes the short
run doesn't count.*

*The cynic
believes the long
run doesn't matter.*

*A realist
believes that what
is done or left
undone in the short
run
determines the long
run.*

Sydney J. Harris

LILLIE DEVEREUX BLAKE

Fiction Writer, Journalist, Essayist, Lecturer and Activist

Elizabeth Johnson Devereux was born August 12, 1833 in Raleigh, North Carolina, she was the daughter of George Pollock and Sarah Elizabeth (Johnson) Devereux. Her grandfather was Judge Samuel Johnson, a prominent citizen of the County and State. He was a proprietor of the Stratford Academy. Her great grandfather was The Honorable William Samuel Johnson, lawyer, member of the Continental Congress from Connecticut, 1787, and a signer of the Constitution. He was the first president of Columbia College which succeeded King's College, New York. Elizabeth's great great Grandfather was Rev. Dr. Samuel Johnson, first rector of the first parish of the Church of England in Stratford, Conn., 1723. He was the first president of King's College, New York, 1753, which later became Columbia University. He returned to Stratford to again take up the rectorship of Christ Church in 1763.

Elizabeth's father died when she was about four years old and her mother came back to Connecticut to be with her family. She attended school until she was 15 and then was privately tutored in the Yale undergraduate curriculum. The attractive out-going girl enjoyed New Haven's social life until her first marriage to Frank Umstead, a lawyer. They moved briefly to St. Louis and then to New York City. It was here she began her first novel using parts of Stratford as background. Her husband killed himself with a pistol shot to the head leaving his wife to support two small children. She wrote for magazine and newspapers and later became active in The National Women's Suffrage Association led by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Some of her novels reflect her feelings about the way women were treated and their inability to vote.

Her second marriage was to Grinfill Blake, a New York business man. She continued to support herself because her husband was not well. By the 1870's Lillie had found her voice as a lecturer for the suffrage movement. She organized legislative action which proved instrumental in modifying many laws that discriminated against women. She also initiated actions which led to the founding of Barnard College of Columbia University, formed as an annex to Columbia, where women were admitted to the Columbia Collegiate course for Women, 1883.

Her mother, Sarah, built a cottage sometime after 1855 on a portion of the old homestead property of the Johnson's across from the Episcopal Church. The house standing under two fine Elm trees, naturally was called "Elm Cottage." Lillie spent time there until it was sold to Mary and William Strong in 1862. The house today belongs to Christ Church and contains the Golden Rooster, a consignment shop. Mother and daughter then went to Wallinford, and sometime later Lillie went back to New York, Lillie Devereux Blake died in a nursing home in New Jersey in 1913.

Host/hostesses

My sincere thanks to the members of the Society who served as Hosts and Hostesses during our 1998 season at Judson House. A total of 218 hours was given by the volunteers and their contribution to a successful season is greatly appreciated. In a few months, I will be calling for your help for the 1999 season when Judson House reopens in May.

Betty Applegate

Walking Tour

Sunday, October 25th, Sandy Rutkowsky, Co-Chairman of Education, conducted a group of between 40 and 50 Boy Scouts, and some parents, from Troop #172 on a walking tour of the Historic District. The boys ages 5 through 12 years old were especially fascinated by the tale of Goody Bassett while in the Congregational Burying Ground. A black cat suddenly appeared on the wall to add to the occasion. Sandy was very impressed with the knowledge and questions asked by the young people.

Thank You

Recently, Mrs. Clinton J. Baxter and her daughter-in-law from Utah toured the Captain David Judson House and Museum. Vincent Hardy, Life Member of the Society, acted as guide as it was not a regular visiting day. Vince and Mary Hardy received a card from Mrs. Baxter thanking them for their hospitality and sharing their knowledge of the historical facilities. Mrs. Baxter also acknowledged a kindness she received from Stratford Attorney Barry Knott.

Early American Christmas

On Sunday, December 13th, from noon to 4pm, the first floor of Judson House will be trimmed with holiday decorations of early American.

Visitors can mingle with Docents, Junior Historical Society Members and Re-enactors who will be portraying seasonal activities.

We are arranging for craft people to entertain. Free cider will be available and there will be a bake sale.

Admission is \$2.00 and children under 6 will be admitted free.

Did You Know?

SILHOUETTE -Etienne de Silhouette, from whose name the term is derived, was a tightfisted French finance minister of the mid-18th century who made paper cutout portraits as a hobby. Paper silhouettes were popular during the late 18th and 19th centuries, before the development of the daguerreotype and other forms of photography, as inexpensive substitutes for painted miniatures. Among the foremost makers of silhouettes was English artist John Miers.

Gravesites

Reminder: The Society has ten gravesites at Mountain Grove Cemetery available for sale. They will be sold at one half of the price charged if bought from the Cemetery.

If you are interested in purchasing one of these sites, please call the Society's office at (203) 378-0630.



THE STRATFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Report of the Nominating Committee, 1998-1999

PRESIDENT	Louis J. Petriel, Jr.
FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT	John Calhoun
SECOND VICE-PRESIDENT	Todd Lovell
RECORDING SECRETARY	Diane Matthews
CORRESPONDING SECRETARY	Marie Blake
TREASURER	Margaret Jacaruso
ASSISTANT TREASURER	Catherine Moore
IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT	Judith Kurmay

DIRECTORS

3 years	Gary Jacopian
2 years	Gloria Duggan
2 years	Dorothy Euerle
1 year	Lewis G. Knapp

STANDING COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

Accessions/Inventory	Carol Lovell
Buildings/Grounds	Vincent Hardy, Robert Hctor
Education	Sandra Rutkowski, Cynthia Kleynowski, Diane Matthews
Exhibits	Hiram Tindall
Finance	John Calhoun
History	Catherine Lawrence
Hospitality	Mary Hardy
Host/Hostess	Elizabeth Applegate
League Delegate	Raymond Cable
Library	Joyce Bradbury
Membership	Dolores Hctor
Nominating	Lewis G. Knapp
Program	Bette Johnson
Publicity	Elaine Gavoli
Ways & Means	Sandra Rutkowski, Diane Matthews

Respectfully submitted by the Nominating Committee:

Hiram Tindall, Chair	Louis J. Petriel, Jr. (ex. officio)
Elizabeth Applegate	Dolores Hctor
John Calhoun	Lewis G. Knapp
Vincent Hardy	Carol Lovell

Connecticut Game Club—Historical Reenactments

The Connecticut Game Club is a family oriented club that plays mostly historical battle reenactments in miniature, also board games with an historical objective.

Events are hosted by Game Masters, most of whom are also the game authors who designed the games and rules. A *Fool in No-Man's Land*-Allies and Germans clash when an American staff officer is shot down over no man's land carrying the entire plans for Operation Cobra. *Hitler's Last Gamble*-the second in a series of microarmor WWII engagements from the Bulge, December 1944. Follow Napoleon's retreat from Moscow with *Campaigns of Napoleon*.

The club which has been in existence for 20 years is looking to expand its membership and newcomers and the curious are always welcome.

Meetings are held the second Saturday of each month at the Stratford Ramada Inn, Lordship Blvd., Stratford CT with games being played from 10am to 12 midnight. For more information call or write Charles Richardson III, 3 Coachlight Sq., Bridgeport, CT 06606 - (203)373-9007.

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!!

Stratford Historical Society

(203) 378-0630

967 Academy Hill

P.O.Box 382

Stratford, CT 06615-0382

Bulk Rate

U.S. Postage

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City, ST

Permit No. XXXX

*Heap high the board
with plenteous cheer, and
gather to the feast.*

*And toast the sturdy
Pilgrim band whose
courage never ceased.*

Alice W. Brotherton
