
Stratford Historical Society >> UPDATE

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

Volume III Issue 5

May 1999

NEXT GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Sunday, May 30, 1999 - 2pm to 5pm

Catharine B. Mitchell Museum

967 Academy Hill, Stratford

Red, White & Blue

**Opening of the Stratford Historical Society's
Exhibition of Flags, Banners and Posters**

RED, WHITE & BLUE will have its formal opening on Sunday, May 30th. The exhibition will be staged in the Dickgiesser/Viner Wing of the Catharine B. Mitchell Museum from 2:00 to 5:00pm.

The Regular Friday evening meeting will not be held, but members and their friends are invited to view the Society's exceptional collection of flags and patriotic items at this Sunday afternoon reception.

Beginning with our 17 star flag of 1812, arrangement will be chronological noting the additional star which marked the date when each state entered the Union .

In the center of the room, on a raised platform will be the 10 x16 foot Confederate flag captured by Stratford's Captain William Barrymore on the blockade runner "Julia" in Charleston harbor in 1862.

Above the flags will be a 20 foot ships pennant of 1862. Also on display will be posters, banners and badges dating from 1815.

The exhibition will be on display throughout the summer and early fall. We hope that Patriotic Societies, Boy and Girl Scouts and area Elementary and High School children will be attracted to this display over the coming months.

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

*Coming Event...
Early American
Festival...
September 25th
Jured Crafters
5th CT
Regiment*

The Society would like to extend **MANY, MANY THANKS** to all who worked and attended the recent Antique Show. The willing assistance of many contributed to a very successful show and a pleasant social occasion.

NOTE: The Society will no longer be accepting used books. We suggest donations be made to the Stratford Library Book Sale in the future

President's Message

The Antique Show is over. Due to renovations at the Baldwin Center it had to be held at the Christ Church Hall. It was wonderful to see the cooperation of so many of our members in this effort. The financial report has not been completed at this time.

The Judson House and the museum will open for the season on May 15th. There are changes. The kitchen area has been converted to a gift shop. Come and see for yourself the interesting items that have been obtained.

Signs will show visitors to the house which will now be through the museum. The Docents and Greeters will be inside the museum to welcome visitors. Having been displaced from the kitchen, the docents will enjoy the air conditioning they have been requesting for years.

Summer will bring Stratford Day June 5th, children's Summer Camp in July and the Early American Festival in September.

From the Files of:

The Stratford News - June 4, 1943

All roads led to Stratford as an estimated 50,000 persons from communities as far as Waterbury, came to see a parade conducted by Eugene Schaaf, grand marshal, which residents have called one of the most successful in history.

Major Luther C. Heidger has been listed by the War Department as believed to be a prisoner of war of the Japanese.

For the first time in history Stratford witnessed, on Sunday, a Memorial Day parade with no Grand Army veteran in the lines.

Stratford High School pupils, last week, raised a service flag in tribute to the 643 former students now with the armed forces.

Museum Wing Plaque

We are sure you will want to visit the Dickgiesser/Viner wing of the museum this season where the new flag exhibit RED, WHITE AND BLUE will be on display. Visiting friends and family will find this an interesting addition to their visit to Judson House.

At the time of your visit please take notice of the new bronze plaque that has been placed at the entrance. In 1993 the addition was constructed through the generosity of local schoolteacher Edna Viner and Mary and Robert Dickgiesser, along with funds from Society Members.

A reception was held in May, 1993 and visitors were invited to view exhibits of friendship quilts, early Stratford Postcards and Wedding clothes worn by Edmund Judson and Ida Atwood on their wedding day September 29, 1896. Members and friends attended.

We thank Mr. Alan Jennings, Superintendent of Union Cemetery Association, for his generous support and for arranging the casting of the plaque to acknowledge those who made it possible.

Stratford Day

Stratford Day 1999 will be held on June 5th, Saturday from 10am to 6pm.

Local organizations will feature crafts, food booths, antiques, games, information, children's shows and a classic auto show along traffic free Main Street

Stratford Day is a family street festival and town get together. All day entertainment and free admission for the entire family.

Rain date is Sunday, June 6th, from 12 noon to 6pm.

*Never ask of money
spent*

*Where the spender
thinks it went.*

*Nobody was ever
meant*

*To remember or
invent*

*What he did with
every cent.*

Robert Frost

Flagpole Erected in January 1986

A "rotted out" lamp post stood at the traffic circle in Stratford Center for many years until Hurricane Gloria brought it down in September of 1985. "For many years I wanted a flagpole in that location," said Todd B. Lovell who saw this as a chance to put up a patriotic monument the townspeople could be proud of. Todd, and then state Representative Vincent Chase, received permission from the Town and the whole project took about three months to complete.

In January of 1986, a new flagpole was erected in the traffic circle on Main Street in Stratford Center. It was donated by the Lovell family in memory of their father, Harold Charles Lovell, Sr. Mr. Lovell died in 1969 at the age of 83.

When warmer weather arrived a dedication ceremony was held and Rep. Chase donated a flag that flew over the Capitol building in Hartford. The flag flew over the 45-foot pole only one day before it was lowered to half-staff in tribute to the seven astronauts lost in the space shuttle Challenger.

The American flag and occasionally the flag of Connecticut fly on the pole.

Some years back when a request to fly other flags was denied criticism arose. Mr. Lovell replied, "the United States has one flag representing the Past, Present and Future...a flag bonding all of us together...a flag that gives us pride and represents all Americans. The STARS AND STRIPES."

The flagpole remained at the center location until recently when the traffic circle was removed in order to change the road pattern and install traffic lights. It now stands within a large grassed-in area in front of the former Chase Bank.

Early American Festival Featuring 5th Connecticut Regiment Re-enactors

The Early American Festival will be held on Saturday, September 25th at the Judson House grounds on Academy Hill, 10am to 5pm.

There will be Crafters demonstrating 18th Century crafts wearing clothing of the period. Free tours of Judson House will be held throughout the day and there will be plenty of refreshments available.

Formed on May 1, 1775, the 5th Connecticut Regiment, commanded by Colonel David Waterbury, was one of the original six regiments of Connecticut's Army. In June, 1775, the Congress of the United Colonies adopted this Army into the Continental Army. The Regiment then served at Fort Ticonderoga, participated in the successful siege of Fort Saint Johns, Canada, and helped capture Montreal. It was mustered out of service in 1775.

The second formation was organized in 1777 under Colonel Philip Burr Bradley and was part of America's first regulars. They saw action against the British at Ridgefield, CT. The unit served the next three years in the defense of the vital highlands near West Point, NY. In retaliation for British raids against CT's coastline the regiment contributed to the Continental Army's counterattack at Stony Point, NY.

In 1781, the new 5th regiment contributed to operations in the south, fought at Yorktown and participated in the last major infantry assault of the war-the famous capture of Redoubt 10. Sgt. William Brown was awarded the Badge of Merit, one of only three awarded during the Revolutionary War.

The unit was mustered out in 1782.

*Things to think about:
that the quality, not the
quantity of its citizens
make a town; that town
officials are not masters
but servants of the peo-
ple; that we have a his-
toric beautiful town as
our heritage and that our
duty is to pass it on untar-
nished and improved in
every way.*

*Harold C. Lovell, Sr.
1940*

Stratford Landmark H.C. Lovell Company

In 1783, the same year the treaty between the United States and Great Britain ending the Revolutionary War was signed, four years before the U.S. Constitution was adopted and six years before George Washington was made the first president, a store now known as the H.C. Lovell Company was founded.

The original site was the spot where Center School, now the Board of Education offices, was later built. Little is known of the first hundred years of the company until it became the L.H. Todd and Company in the late 1800's when it was moved to the location it now occupies in Stratford Center. Around the turn of the century, poor management brought the L.H. Todd and Company to the verge of bankruptcy.

In 1909, Mrs. Rosella Todd Lovell, who had a financial interest in the business, called her son, Harold C. Lovell, Sr. to run the store. Mr Lovell was working as a teller at the Bridgeport City Trust Company at the time. His first move was to introduce plumbing and heating into the ailing business and this turned out to be what turned things around. Business started coming from all over Fairfield county and Westchester county, N.Y. It was at this time the L.H. Todd and Company became the H.C. Lovell and Company.

Construction of the Lovell Building, a landmark in Stratford Center, began in 1919 and was completed in 1921. At the time, the three-story building was the largest in Stratford and it made Harold Lovell, Sr., the largest single taxpayer. The old L.H. Todd and Company building was moved to the rear and used for several years as a warehouse. It was torn down in 1948 to make room for a new warehouse at the rear of the building.

Business was good during the Roaring "20's" but plunged during the Great Depression as did every business in Stratford. "It was quite common to find sales for the day totally less than \$10." The store struggled until the start of World War II, when the factories began to hum and people went back to work. According to Harold C. (Bud) Lovell, Jr. "upon our entry into the war, the company, along with others, faced goods shortages, items that were made with metal suddenly became wood and even cardboard. Needless to say, they were not the best, but they sufficed." In 1909 the plumbing business saved

the company, a move to enter the industrial business now proved a step in the right direction.

The Company has not only contended with economic changes, there have also been natural disasters and catastrophes. In 1974 fire extensively damaged the upper portion of the warehouse, fortunately it was quickly extinguished and confined to the second floor. On January 21, 1979, flood water covered the basement and four feet of the main floor. Several thousand dollars' worth of stock had to be taken to the dump. It took three months to restore the store.

The Town changed after the war, the north end of town quickly built up and stores went up on the Paradise Green area. But, until then, the focal point of community life was the H.C. Lovell Hardware Store along with the meat markets and other small stores that was Stratford Center.

The business down through the years has been owned by such local historic names as: Robert H. Russell, Henry P. Stagg, Lewis H. Todd, Frederick P. Beardsley and continues under the fourth generation of the Lovell Family.

The Bridgeport Farmer

- May 14, 1912

Lewis H. Todd one of the oldest residents of the town died at his home on Judson Place last night. The deceased was born in Burlington, CT, in 1827. He came to Stratford in 1870 and inaugurated a grocery and hardware business in the store now occupied by H.C. Lovell & Co. In 1895 he retired from business having amassed a competency. During his long life he never failed to relieve suffering in any form which came to his notice and many people now living in the town will remember with gratitude his generosity. he was the father of six children all of whom survived him. His wife who was Sarah Fellows of Torrington, died years ago. The children are; Miss Alice Todd, Miss Winifred Todd, Mrs F.P. Beardsley, Mrs M.P. Fryer, Mrs. C.A. Lovell and Charles H. Todd. The deceased was an Episcopalian and an active member of Christ Church during his life here.

ASK YOUR WIFE

Sanitary
Durable
Cheap

If she would not like to bathe in a china dish, like her canary does.

Our Porcelain-lined tub is a china dish cased in iron.

If you have never tried it, you cannot imagine how delicious a bath can be made by using one of our bath tubs.

We finish them to suit your taste. This is a luxury you can afford.

The above advertisement appeared about the year 1875

Thoughts on Our Flag

President Taft's executive order was motivated by the fact that there were no less than 66 different flags being flown by the Federal Government at that time..

In the famous painting of Washington crossing the Delaware, He was carrying the wrong flag in it. The flag shown was not adopted until 1777 a full year after the crossing on Dec. 26, 1776!

Only three of the men who raised the flag at Iwo Jima in Rosenthal's photograph would leave the island alive.

When do you think the US flag became standardized? If you guessed during the Revolution, or the War of 1812 (when the "Star Spangled Banner" was written) - you're wrong! In 1818, Congress stipulated that there should be 13 red and white stripes with stars on a blue field. It did not specify size or stripe balance, nor types of stars or arrangement thereof. Standardization did not come about until 1912, when President Taft issued an executive order to do so.

For almost a century after 1776, all our flags were made overseas as no American company was set up to make bunting. It wasn't until 1866 a small company in Lowell MA, presented the Senate with its first flag - US made.

When George Washington reoccupied New York City, the procession halted at Chatham and Pearl Streets to await the triumphal raising of the American Flag over Fort George. The delay ended up being over an hour because the British had removed the halyard and cleats from the flagpole. When the sailors tried to climb the pole they found that the British had spread grease on it. Cleats were found and like a mountain climber they scaled the pole cleat by cleat to set the flag flying. Cannons boomed and the procession finally continued on their way down Broadway. To the waiting 800 troops standing proudly at attention for review.

One of the largest flags flown was 42 x 30 feet, had 15 stripes (each 2 feet wide). It's cost was \$405.90, and it required 400 yards of cloth. Major Armistead commander during the 1812 War said, he hoped the flag would be "so large that the British will have no difficulty in seeing it from a distance."

During the Revolutionary War there were so many flags displayed that even the good guys had trouble discerning the bad guys. Every colony had its own flag, and every regiment also showed its colors. So great was confusion of colors that the British once thought Washington was hoisting an offer of surrender when a new flag was suddenly raised. The Pine Tree appeared in both a blue and a red field. St. George's cross was another that appeared in more than one color. As tension mounted the rattlesnake "Don't Tread On Me," became increasingly common with a yellow field the most popular. As the French, among others, came with their national flags as well as regimental flags it only added to the battlefield confusion.

John Paul Jones claimed credit for being the first to hoist his flag above an armed vessel, the "Alfred." The British Union Jack and the "American" counterpart did look very much alike. While the British had a red field and the Colonists variable, the symbols on both sides were the same.

President Lincoln was standing in front of the White House reviewing his troops, when he sensed something was wrong. Turning around, he saw his youngest son Tad waving a Confederate flag behind him. Lincoln gathered the flag and the boy up in his arms and gave them both to an orderly to secure out of sight.

During World War II, the army classified thirty-three-year-old Joe Rosenthal as 4-F because he had one-twentieth normal vision. When the US invaded the island of Iwo Jima under heavy Japanese fire, Rosenthal was there. Wearing his thick glasses and carrying two spare pair, and a camera to follow the men up the hill and catch the raising of the flag over Iwo Jima. This photograph is probably the most famous of all taken of World War II.

In closing,

You cannot choose your battlefield,
The Gods do that for you,
But you can plant a standard
Where a standard never flew.

Historian: Sex before marriage common in 1700's

The nation's founding fathers sired more than their country, according to a historian who says sex was a mainstay of courtship in the Revolutionary War era and often resulted in premarital pregnancy.

Judging from birth and marriage records, Americans in the late 1700's "were more licentious than we imagine them to be," Jack Larkin writes in American Heritage magazine. He cites records of several dozen communities to prove that in the late 18th century, pregnancy was frequently a prelude to marriage. The proportion of women pregnant at their weddings had been rising since the late 1600's and peaked in the decades during and after the Revolution. In rural New England towns like Sturbridge, MA, nearly a third of brides already were with child.

People today tend to assume we've reached the ultimate level of moral looseness, and that you can look back through our history at a steadily rising level of immorality, building up to the present, "but in fact these things have gone in cycles."

Seventeenth-century New England was indeed a strict society, but sexual freedom began to increase as the region became more socially and economically diverse. And, as resistance to British rule spread through the colonies in the late 1700's, "all hell broke loose," Mr. Larkin states.

When early American communities did censure premarital pregnancy, it often was more a matter of economics than morals. Accordingly, if a woman were still unmarried when she gave birth, officials might interrogate her as to the father's identity, not as much to condemn him as to get him to support his child. Sexual morals began to change in the 1820's as the turbulent war years receded and society became more settled and strict.

Community records in 1840 show that the proportion of women who conceived a child before marriage steadily declined in New England from nearly one pregnant bride in three to one in six.

Some pray to marry
the man they love,
My prayer will
somewhat vary:
I humbly pray to
Heaven above
That I love the man
I marry.

Rose Pastor Stokes

Stratford Historical Society

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Membership Meeting
Sunday, May 30 th
2:00 to 5:00pm
RED, WHITE & BLUE