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# Stratford Historical Society >> UPDATE

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

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Volume V Issue 4

March 2001

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Capt. David Judson House c 1750  
Catharine B. Mitchell Museum

## NEXT GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Friday March 23, 2001 - 7:30pm

Christ Episcopal Church  
2000 Main Street, Stratford

## Eleanor Roosevelt, An Intimate Portrait Page Hedden Wilson

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*"I have lost more  
than a beloved  
friend. I have lost an  
inspiration. She  
would rather light a  
candle than curse  
the darkness, and  
her glow has  
warmed the world."*

*Adlai E. Stevenson  
in Tribute to Mrs.  
Roosevelt at the  
United Nations.*

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Eleanor Roosevelt is one of the most respected women in history. During Franklin Roosevelt's presidency she changed the role of first lady from hostess to human rights activist. She fought for the rights of women and African-Americans, and against poverty and child labor.

After President Roosevelt died, she led the United Nations group working for human rights. She also helped start the Peace Corps.

The story of a life which she deprecatingly dismisses as "over" after the death of Franklin, is retold in Ms. Wilson's lively, humor-filled one woman play, "Eleanor Roosevelt, An Intimate Portrait."

In Sara Roosevelt's bedroom at Hyde Part in April of 1945, Eleanor, still numbed by the suddenness of her husband's death and deeply hurt by the discovery that Lucy Mercer shared his last moments sorts through the contents of boxes and barrels as she prepared to turn the "Big House" over to the government. As these reminders of a lifetime of devotion to the needs of family and country accumulated about her, she recovers a sense of her own worth and finds new direction for her future as a woman on her own.

Once again Page Hedden Wilson will bring one of her interesting historical personalities back to life portraying Eleanor Roosevelt in a one-woman performance. Ms. Wilson writes her own material after long hours of painstaking research, and with memorization and practice her fine work comes together to promise a memorable and enjoyable evening. You may recall on March 31, 2000, Ms. Wilson entertained the Society Membership and guests with her portrayal of "Wives of the White House" featuring Dolly Madison, Mary Lincoln and Edith Wilson.



Anna Eleanor Roosevelt  
1884-1962

**The meeting is open to the public and refreshments will be served  
Bring a Friend**

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## Vice President Todd Lovell

Big things are happening in Judson House. Paint! It has been almost thirty years since the interior was painted and it showed. When Judson House opens on June 2nd, it will sparkle with fresh paint in the first floor and several second floor rooms. The paint will match, almost identically, the colors formerly covering these walls. The scraping, caulking, moving furniture and matching paint colors is a slow and costly process... about \$8,000.

Any member wishing to help defray the cost of this long overdue endeavor will receive a certificate of donation for use in preparation of your income tax. All donations are tax deductible and should be mailed to the Society Att: Painting, P.O.Box 382, Stratford, CT 06615-0382.

When your Judson House opens in June on Stratford Day, come and see the "new and improved" house. Bring a friend for a tour and suggest they become a member. We need and welcome new members.

We are looking forward to a great season with many activities. Last season 150 visitors were guided through Judson House from 17 Connecticut towns and 19 states. The Gift Shop will be newly stocked with items of interest to all. Follow your Newsletters for coming events.

## Last Newsletter

We value all of our members, but if dues are in arrears we must discontinue sending the Newsletter after this issue. The cost of postage and printing makes it necessary for us to keep our membership list up to date for mailing. We have indicated with an "X" above your name on the address label if your dues are not paid.

Renewal envelopes are available at the office any Tuesday or Thursday from 9am to 2pm. We hope you will continue to support the Society and its activities.

## Upcoming Dates for the Stratford Junior Historical Society

### Saturday, May 19, 9:00-12:00

Herb garden clean up and mini review on "tour giving" and table top weaving review. If you can't attend this date you can still sign up for helping in the garden and at all events.

**\*\*After we have finished working we can have a colonial picnic together. Do a little research to find out what you can bring for your picnic. Remember, no plastic baggies or paper napkins!!!\*\***

### Saturday, June 2nd, Stratford Day

We will be using Junior Guides to help with the Judson house tours. There will be a mini review on "tour giving" prior to the event.

### Saturday, Sept. 8th (rain date 9th)

#### The Early American Festival

Plans for this event are under way and it appears that this year's festival will be bigger and better than last year's success.

### Junior Society Membership

Do you know a student who would like to become a Junior Historical Society Member? History Camp is slated for the week of July 9th through the 13th, 9:30-noon. Students entering fourth grade and older may attend a week of morning sessions. The program includes training for conducting Judson House tours and hands on activities in butter making, candle dipping, Native American study, Militia training and more. Upon completing the training students are invited to participate in the Early American Festival (Sept. 8th) and the Holiday Open House (early December).

Elementary, Middle School and High School students, male and female, are encouraged to join us!

Be sure your family membership dues have been paid. Call the Society office (378-0630) to receive more information or call Mrs. Matthews, 378-8341, to sign up for any of the above dates.

*The poorest man may  
in his cottage bid  
defiance to all the  
forces on the  
crown.....The rain  
may enter but the  
King of England  
cannot enter! - all  
his forces dares  
not cross the  
threshold.....*

*William Pitt,  
Earl of Chatham*



## A Terrible Tragedy In Stratford

Around 1879, there appeared in the Boston Herald an advertisement in "blocks of print topped by large headlines which could easily have been mistaken for a news item."

### A Fearful Tragedy

**A Clergyman of Stratford Connecticut Killed by His Wife  
Insanity-Brought On By 16 Years of Suffering With Female Complaints The Cause  
Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound  
The Sure Cure For These Complaints  
Would Have Prevented The Direful Deed.**

On the early morning of September 24, 1879, eleven year old Hattie M. Lounsbury awoke to the sound of a pistol shot. After dressing she started down the stairs where she was met by her Mother who said, "Oh, I have killed your Papa." The child ran to the bedroom where her Father was and shaking him got no word from him. He was dead. She then ran for the servant, Mary Cummings, who went for the Doctor. Dr. A.S.Allen made a thorough examination of the still warm body and determined that death had occurred.

Constable Porter, hearing of the affair, went immediately to the house arriving at half-past six. Mrs. Lounsbury still in her nightdress was in great agony. She sat wringing her hands in anguish and exclaiming, "Oh, I have killed by husband." Mr. Porter noting the words were all to true notified Justice E.D.Smith and a jury was impaneled for an Inquest. The Inquest was held at eight o'clock in the room where the deceased lay.

The servant, Mary Cummings, was the first witness to testify and stated that Mr. & Mrs. Lounsbury seemed to live very happy together. She noticed many times Mr. Lounsbury caressing his wife, but said Mrs. Lounsbury told her that on the night before her husband wanted her to see a doctor and have an operation performed that would help her if she would go, if not, he would make her do so. In her testimony, Hattie Lounsbury, their daughter, said when asked "Papa is sometimes kind to Momma and sometimes he is not."

Dr. Allen testified that the bullet fired entered the base of the skull and extended upward to the brain. Death must have occurred almost instantly. When asked was there anything in Mrs. Lounsbury's physical condition that rendered her liable to great nervous or mental excitement, he replied "A person with Mrs. Lounsbury's ailments was more likely to become deranged than one suffering from many other classes of disease."

Questions were then asked of Mrs. Lounsbury. She acknowledged shooting her husband and said she did it while he slept. The Jury then excused Mrs. Lounsbury because of her extreme nervous condition.

After deliberating about half-an-hour a verdict was returned that "Dexter L. Lounsbury came to death by a pistol shot from the hands of his wife, an act being committed during a condition of temporary derangement of mind, occasioned by disease."

The following day, Mrs. Lounsbury was served with a warrant of arrest for murder. When asked her plea, she replied, "Oh, I am guilty." She was 36 years of age, her husband 35 years at this time. There is no doubt that Mrs. Lounsbury was temporarily insane when she shot her husband, she had been more or less an invalid for 16 or 17 years with severe female complaints, had lived almost a recluse, seldom left the house or mixed socially with her husbands parishioners. Burglars had recently visited the house and Mrs. Lounsbury had spoke to her husband about getting a pistol but he had opposed the idea. She purchased one without his permission and kept it hidden in her bedroom.

Mary Ester Hart Lounsbury had a troubled existence, a bright and pretty little blonde she resided with her Grandmother in New Haven. About 1865, she took refuge at the State Hospital, "after being deceived by a rake" where Mr. Lounsbury, then a doctor, was House Physician. He became infatuated with Mary and was remonstrated for spending too much time with her. After Mary left the hospital he pursued her at length and they were married on October 22, 1866. Mary followed her husband's varying fortunes and was never unfaithful to him. She, however, repelled parishioners by her strange conduct and frequently refused to be seen.

Dexter L. Lounsbury was a native of Bethany, CT and received his education at Trinity College in Hartford, CT. He was called to Christ Church, Stratford about 1875 after having served at various parishes. Although not known as a brilliant preacher he seemed to have the affection and confidence of his parishioners. He was thought of as a man of intelligent gifts and thoroughly devoted to his calling, earnest and effective in his pastoral works as in the pulpit. Services were held at Christ Church, burial was in Wallingford with his 77 year old father present. The elderly man stated he firmly believed that Mrs. Lounsbury would not have committed this rash deed which turned her out of a pleasant home into a prison or hospital thereby giving up her only daughter, whom she fairly worshipped, without being insane. He believed her to be insane, at times, and cherished no feeling of vindictiveness and felt an insane asylum the best place for her.



## Lydia E. Pinkham's Wonder Drug

LYDIA E. PINKHAM'S  
VEGETABLE COMPOUND  
IS A POSITIVE CURE

*For all those painful Complaints and Weaknesses so common to our fair female population.*

It will cure entirely the most forms of Female Complaints, all Ovarian troubles, Inflammation, Ulceration, Falling and Displacements of the Womb; and the consequent Spinal Weakness, and is particularly adapted to the Change of Life.

It will dissolve and expel Tumors from the Uterus in an early stage of development. The tendency to cancerous humors there is checked very speedily by its use. It removes jaundice, flatulency, destroys all craving for stimulants, and relieves weakness of the stomach. It cures Bloating, Headaches, Nervous Prostration, General Debility, Sleeplessness, Depression and Indigestion.

That feeling of bearing down, causing pain, weight and back-ache, is always permanently cured by its use.

It will act all times and under all circumstances acting in harmony with the laws that govern the female system. For the cure of Kidney Complaints of either sex this Compound is unsurpassed.

Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound is prepared at Lynn, Mass. Price, \$1.00; six bottles for \$5.00. Sent by mail in the form of Pills, also in the form of Lozenges, on receipt of price, \$1.00 per box, for either. Send for pamphlet. All letters of inquiry promptly answered. Address as above.

No family should be without LYDIA E. PINKHAM'S LIVER PILLS. They cure Constipation, Bilioussness, and Torpidity of the Liver. 20 cents per box.

Lydia E. Pinkham's Blood Purifier.

This preparation will eradicate every residue of Humors from the Blood, and at the same time will give tone and strength to the system. It is far superior to any other known remedy for the cure of all diseases arising from impurities of the blood, such as Scrofula, Rheumatism, Cancerous Humors, Erysipelas, Gonor- rhea, Syphilis, and Skin Diseases.

Prepared by ALL DRUGGISTS

Marketed as "A medicine for a woman. Invented by a woman. Prepared by a woman. The greatest medical discovery since the dawn of history."

Was the secret of Lydia E. Pickham's Vegetable Compound the herbs or the preservative? In truth, 36-proof alcohol was one of the main ingredients That may explain the incredible sales during Prohibition.

A bottle sold for \$1, six bottles for \$5.

You can still buy Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound today. Don't expect miracles, but a couple of gulps might raise your spirits.



Lydia E. Pinkham 1819-1883

Lydia Pinkham was born on February 9, 1819, in Lynn, Massachusetts. She grew up in a Quaker family and attended Lynn Academy. For several years she taught school, and was an ardent member of many reform groups for abolition, Swedenborgianism, phrenology, temperance, women's rights, and other causes. In September 1843 she married a young widower, Isaac Pinkham, to whom, together with her children, she devoted herself for the next 10 years. The Panic of 1873 left the family in financial straits, and it was at the suggestion of one of her sons that she thought to exploit her reputation for an herbal medicine she had been concocting for years. Mainly an infusion of unicorn root and pleurisy root it was held by her and her neighbors to be a sovereign remedy for "women's weakness" and similar ills. Ordinarily the medicine was given to anyone who wanted it, but in the 1870's she decided to sell it.

Bottled with about 18 percent alcohol as a "solvent and preservative," Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound made its commercial appearance in Lynn in 1875. Her contribution to the astounding success of the preparation was twofold: for years she prepared the brew herself on her own kitchen stove; more important, she quickly realized the value of advertising. She wrote most of the early advertisements herself in a quaint, homely style drawn largely from that of the reform movements of her youth. She also personally answered letters from the thousands of women who, unable to bring themselves to consult male physicians, sought her advice on medical problems. She generally prescribed exercise, cleanliness, good diet, and her compound, in which she had complete confidence. Her advertised claims for it gradually grew bolder, and it was eventually recommended for men as well as women. By 1898, the compound was the most widely advertised product in the United States. Lydia Pinkham was the first female entrepreneur to use her own face to sell a product. Her picture was on trolley cars. It was on posters, it was on trade cards that you got from the druggist. The medicine's therapeutic value, if any, was never ascertained, and at one time it was attacked by the American Medical Association as a fraud, but it appears to have soothed the psyches, if not the bodies, of millions of purchasers for two generations. The business eventually became enormously profitable, but Pinkham lived to see only the promise of such results, for she died in Lynn on May 17, 1883.



## Women's History Month Three Women Who Went First

### First in Medicine

Elizabeth Blackwell was denied admission to 29 universities before she was accepted to Geneva College in New York. After she received her medical degree in 1849, the first woman to do so in the United States, no American hospital would hire her.

Blackwell worked in Europe for several years before returning to the States and setting up her own hospital, the New York Infirmary for Women and Children. She later moved back to England and became a professor at the London School of Medicine for Women.

### First in Publishing

Where would we be without a cookbook? In trouble - if it weren't for Fanny Farmer, the first chef to publish a cookbook.

When Farmer enrolled in a two-year course at the Boston Cooking School in 1887, she never expected to be head of the school seven years later. During this time, Fannie Farmer wrote the "Boston Cooking School Cook Book" and found a publisher for it in 1896. Because no one had ever written out ingredients, measurements and direction for many of the school's recipes before, the book became a huge success.

### First in Sports?

Annie Smith Peck, a college professor, reached new heights, literally, when she became the first mountain climber to reach the top of Mt. Huascarian in the Peruvian Andes. In 1888, she scaled Mt. Shasta (14,380 ft.) in California and in 1895 conquered the Matterhorn (14,703 ft.) in Switzerland. She was the third woman ever to do so. After her Mt. Huascarian (21,812 ft.) climb in 1908, Peck became the first person to reach the summit of Peru's Mt. Coropuna (21,696 ft.). She made her last climb, New Hampshire's Mt. Madison, at age 82.

To be the first at something, that's what these women faced. Each of them was the first of her gender to tackle some pretty major feats.

## Aunt Hagar's Story

The Autobiography of Aunt Hagar Meriman, published in 1861, is now available for sale.

Aunt Hagar, born a slave in 1805, was sold, at the age of nine months, to Mrs. Lovejoy of Stratford. Through her story we glimpse people, locations and activities of early nineteenth century Stratford.

This exceptional document starts: "My Grandparents were brought from Africa and sold as Slaves" and concludes "This ends the tale of the poor invalid, I have no more to say."

The narration has been copied by Assistant Curator Carol Lovell with spelling and punctuation exactly as read in the original document. Also included is an adaptation of an 1824 Stratford Map which has been highlighted to show pertinent locations mentioned in the story.

Copies are available at a cost of \$3.00. If you would like one or more mailed please add an additional \$1.00 for each book requested.

Other publications available from the Stratford Historical Society are listed in this newsletter, and can be purchased by calling the office.

## Book of Remembrance

The following contributions have been made in memory of:

### MRS. JEAN WILCOXSON

Stratford Police Department

Robert & Dolores Hctor

Candy & Bernie Kieck

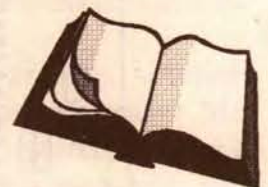
### CAPTAIN & MRS

ROBERT H. SHERMAN

Burton J. Calkins, Jr.

### BEARDSLEY FUND

Mrs. Ruth Beardsley has sent a gift in memory of her father and brother T.R. and H.R. Beardsley. Mrs. Beardsley also sent a donation in memory of her English cousin.





*Books are the quietest and most constant of friends; they are the most accessible and wisest of counselors, and the most patient of teachers.*

*Charles W. Elliot*

### Stratford Publications Available from the Stratford Historical Society

**The Autobiography of Aunt Hagar Merriman - The Memoir of a Young Slave**  
From the Original Copy - \$3.00

**"Stratford", Images of America Series - A Pictorial History, 1850-1970**  
Stratford Historical Society, 1999-\$16.99

**"In Pursuit of Paradise" - A History of Stratford**  
Lewis G. Knapp, 1989-\$30.00

**"Paradise Enow, Treasures from Yesterday's Kitchen" - Old Stratford recipes**  
Vivienne Knapp, 1989-\$4.00

**"History of Stratford, 1639-1939" - Wm. Howard Wilcoxson, 1939**  
(occasionally available-price on request)

**"Judson Papers" - Correspondence in the early 1800's between two Stratford-born grandsons of Capt. David Judson**  
Marguerite Judson, \$2.00

**"Lippincott Magazine, July 1879" - "Stratford on the Sound"**  
article, illustrated - \$2.00

**"Underground Railroad" - includes "our" Flora silhouette**  
National Park Service, \$5.00

**"Post Cards from Old Stratford, CT" - \$2.00**

**Maps of Old Stratford, 1824 & 1867 - \$2.00**

*(Above list of prices do not include postage)*

### Stratford Historical Society

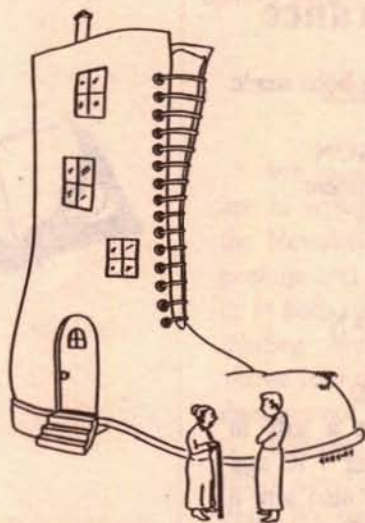
(203) 378-0630

967 Academy Hill

P.O.Box 382

Stratford, CT 06615-0382

Judsonhousestfd@aol.com



*"Once, I tried to change the laces, and the Landmarks Commission came down on me like a ton of bricks."*

**Stratford Historical Society Board of Directors Meeting**

**April 23rd, - 7:30 pm**

**Catharine B. Mitchell Museum**

**All members of the Society are Welcome to Attend**

**Please call 378-0630 for information**