
Stratford Historical Society >> UPDATE

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

Volume VI Issue 1

SEPT 2001



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

NEXT GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Friday Sept 28, 2001 - 7:30pm

Christ Episcopal Church
2000 Main Street, Stratford

Milan G. Bull

Remington Woods At The Crossroads

Most Connecticut residents have no idea that a 480-acre parcel of undeveloped land still exists in urban Bridgeport and Stratford. Surrounded by 6 inner-city schools, industry, brownfields, and neighborhoods, this unique oasis is home to raptors, neotropical migrants, Connecticut listed species, and many active and thriving wildlife communities, as well as a 22-acre lake and many emergent wetlands and vernal pools. Fenced, protected, and patrolled by Remington Arms and DuPont, the site has remained the best kept secret forest for almost 100 years. It has been used as an ammunition testing and storage site for nearly every major conflict since the Russian Revolution. DuPont is currently in the process of a major cleanup of the site, and the City of Bridgeport and Town of Stratford plan to develop it into yet another corporate/industrial park. Is this the best use of this land? A grassroots organization called Friends of Remington Woods is seeking to raise awareness and preserve the site as open space.

Milan Bull has a 30 year association with the Connecticut Audubon Society as a renowned Connecticut environmentalist with extensive experience in education and wildlife research. As director of Connecticut Audubon Coastal Center at Milford Point, he has been involved in many key environmental issues and programs that have been instrumental in creating better awareness and understanding of environmental conservation. Milan also leads Connecticut Audubon international field trips to locations such as Australia, Southeast Asia, East Africa and the Galapagos.

Mr. Bull has published numerous articles and speaks statewide on many important environmental topics particularly ornithology and the study of birds. Among his many interests is the ecological importance of Chimon Island located a short distance off the Norwalk shoreline. He has worked closely on the preservation project of this and other islands in Long Island Sound that became part of the Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge.

Milan Bull will be with us on September 28th to discuss:

**Bridgeport and Stratford Open Space
Versus Corporate and Industrial Development**

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

*In wildness is the
preservation of the
world.*

Henry David
Thoreau
"Walking"

Vice President Todd B. Lovell

Since the May Newsletter many good things have happened at your Society.

Painting of the interior and exterior of Judson House and the exterior of the Catharine B. Mitchell Museum have been completed. Both buildings sparkle! The flower gardens are in perfect condition due to the dedication of Dolores Hctor. Three bat houses have been located on the property. We hope to establish a colony of bats which will help combat the mosquitoes that are so abundant on the Society grounds.

The summer History Camp was an outstanding success with the best attendance ever! The children all agreed that they had a great time and some have already signed up for next year. A great Gift to your children or grandchildren would be to enroll them for History Camp 2002. Call Diane Matthews for more information.

In May, the Governing Board approved the purchase of a 10' x 20' colonial style shed to be used for storage and educational purposes. In mid-August the shed arrived and has been permanently located behind the Museum. Both sheds are painted red to match the Judson House and look great!

Raymond Cable, a long time Society member, passed away in February 1999. He bequeathed to the Society many of the books in his vast collection. For several weeks volunteers from your Society have been hauling books from Ray's house in Devon to Stratford and storing them in our new shed. To date we have moved 3 to 4 tons of books to be sorted and categorized. Most of these volumes are devoted to the subjects of history, architecture and furniture and will be great additions to our existing library.

Many thanks to the ten members who volunteered their time, energy and vehicles on four mornings during the hottest August in years.

Also in Ray's bequest are several thousand postcards of many different categories

which we are beginning to sort. That is a task which requires a great deal of time and dedication.

The Governing Board has voted to repair the dirt road leading to the rear of the Mitchell Museum. The recent heavy rains have eroded this track to the point where it is in serious condition. If it is not done before snowfall and freezing the cost could be double or triple by Spring.

Summer History Camp

Seventeen young people attended summer History Camp July 9th through July 13th on Judson House grounds. Graduates of the Camp will now, if they wish, become involved in the Historical Society's on-going programs and learn more about Judson House and the early settlers of our community.

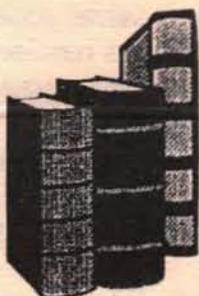
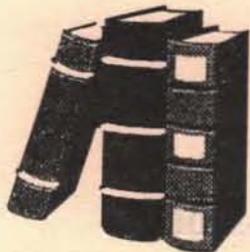
Congratulations to the following who received certificates into the Stratford Junior Historical Society: Nicole Ashe, Amanda Kate Bellitto, Kathryn Carroll, Allison Hulton, Elise Kapitancek, Emma Lazaroff, Jessica McCabe, Kim McCabe, Cassie Marro, Monica Mazzarella, Erynn Miller, Lexi Miller, Hannah Pancak, Caitlin Simon, Elizabeth Trojanowski, Mollie Westbrook, Theresa Wirtemberg.

The Camp which has become an annual activity open to young people in the community was organized and supervised by Diane Matthews, Sandy Rutkowski, Cindy Hulton, David Guion and Walter Matis.

A Reminder To Our Members!

September is the beginning of a new membership year: A membership envelope for the year 2002 is enclosed with this Newsletter for your convenience. Please note that the fee for dues is the same as last year. Additional donations are always gratefully accepted.

Your quick payment of dues will ensure that you receive your new membership card in the November newsletter saving the Society the expense of a separate mailing. Those who joined after June 1st have received their cards for the year 2002. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.



ELECTION OF OFFICERS

We are once again asking for a mail-in ballot for the annual election of officers. Enclosed is your stamped, postcard ballot. Please complete and return the ballot before October 15, 2001. If you wish to nominate a candidate or work on a committee, so indicate on the ballot.

The slate of officers for 2001-2002.

PRESIDENT	John Calhoun
FIRST VICE PRESIDENT	Todd Lovell
SECOND VICE PRESIDENT	Gary Jacopian
RECORDING SECRETARY	Diane Wright
CORRESPONDING SECRETARY	Marie Blake
TREASURER	Margaret Jacaruso
ASSISTANT TREASURER	Kay Moore
IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT	Louis J. Petriel, Jr.

DIRECTORS

1999-2002	Dean Paradise
2000-2003	Frances Sloane
2000-2003	David Guion
2001-2004	Sandy Rutkowski

STANDING COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

Accessions/Inventory	Carol Lovell
Building/Grounds	Vincent Hardy, Todd Lovell
Education	Diane Matthews, Cynthia Hulton
Exhibits	
Finance	John Calhoun
Hospitality	Mary Hardy
Hosts & Hostesses	Elizabeth Applegate
Library	Joyce Bradbury, Gloria Duggan
Membership	Dolores Hctor
Nominating	Louis J. Petriel, Jr.
Program	
Publicity	David Guion

Respectfully submitted by the Nominating Committee:

Louis J. Petriel, Jr., Chairman	Dolores Hctor
Marie Blake	Gary Jacopian
John Calhoun	Carol Lovell
Dorothy Euerle	Diane Matthews

Shirts For The Garibaldi Guard

Collectors of memorabilia often come across a wealth of unexpected information quite by accident. When Mr. Jayseth Guberman, Philatelist, spotted a stamped envelope (letter enclosed) at a Stamp Shop in Bridgeport, CT, he bought it because the cover was postmarked in the town of Stratford, CT, then his home. The letter inside intrigued Mr Guberman when he noticed a reference to "Garibaldi Shirts," written by Lizzie to her dear friend Maggie Bacon in Hartford and dated June 6, 1861. The entire letter reflects the everyday life and wonderful use of language in the correspondence of the period. Lizzie writes of disappointment at having to give up the pleasure of attending a grand wedding at 12:30 that morning at Christ Church because of the torrents of rain falling. The bride dressed in white satin with four bridesmaids to be united "for weal or woe" to a young Episcopal Clergyman. Lizzie's letter also infers that the women of Stratford were as involved in the early war effort as were their spouses, sons and brothers.

"Last week had you asked me what was the principal subject of my thoughts and the prevailing occupation of my hands; two words would have told the whole story Viz. Garibaldi Shirts!

You know that guard is composed mainly of foreigners, many entirely destitute of friends in this country. An American who is connected with them told a lady friend of his in Stratford that the regiment was very needy and would be glad to have us work for them. They sent up to us 500 yds of red flannel which had just been presented to them and we went to work most vigorously. This was Friday of the week before last; on Monday of this week 125 were sent down completed, and the next day the remaining thirty went. A very well-written, gratifying letter came in acknowledgment, from the adjutant since their receipt. I was thankful when the last went, for the responsibility and care of getting them all made and gathering them in was so great. Most of the ladies preferred making them at home to sewing in society. Our society now meets only once a week as formerly; they are making havelocks at present.

All my dress-making and other sewing has been laid aside for the military work, so I have my hands full."

The Garibaldi Guard, consisting of Italians who had fought with Garibaldi in Italy, along with other foreign guards constituted New York's 39th Regiment of Infantry. Commissioned officially by the U.S. Government on June 6, 1861 (coincidentally) for a three year stint retroactive to May 28, 1861 when the regiment was fully organized and equipped but not yet uniformed. It mustered seven hundred and fifty men, exclusive of field staff and regimental officers. Contributions called "subscriptions" were solicited in order to aid the regiment and supply the wants of the men. Large quantities of material for undershirts were purchased at wholesale and sewn up by ladies and church societies. The Guard's uniform consisted of a blue frock coat, blue pants trimmed with red cord, red undershirts and felt hats ornamented with feathers and green leaves.

Mr. Guberman states in his article in *The American Philatelist* "Until now, the contribution of the women of Stratford, Connecticut to the war effort in 1861 was unknown. The letter Lizzie penned on that rainy Thursday morning has come down to us as perhaps the only surviving evidence of their activities. Her letter reminds us of the importance of any written communication, regardless of how dreary, delightful, historic or commonplace the writer's life may seem to be. Lizzie's letter is proof of that, and its preservation has allowed us to reconstruct a missing piece of history which otherwise would be forgotten."



A young Italian Sentry wears a simple red Shirt, the uniform that gave Garibaldi's men their famous nickname. The "Red Shirts."

Marker Placed On Miss Fanny's Grave

At a celebration of her 97th Birthday Miss Fanny spoke: "Although I have no



immediate family, more than generous compensations have been given me by life. I sometimes feel that the persons whom I have helped find their way in life through the knowledge in bound volumes, are my children."

Miss Fanny Russell, Stratford's first librarian

and a member of an important Stratford family, died in 1959 at the age of 100. She was Town Librarian for 59 years retiring at the age of 90. She died with no close relatives and her resources had been depleted by a long final illness. No one realized that her grave was unmarked.

The Stratford Historical Society felt that a marker should be placed at her grave while there were still people who remembered her many years of service to the community and recently arranged for a marker to be laid.

Frances B. Russell, daughter of Judge of Probate Robert H. Russell, was born in the Russell homestead which stood on the site of the original library building on Main Street. Miss Russell was known to every resident of the town young and old alike as "Miss Fanny." She attended Mrs. Emily Nelson's private school in Bridgeport. She made the trip by freight train, then the only mechanical conveyance between the towns. Before beginning her long career with the library, Miss Fanny taught for several years in the Westport Girls' School. Her experiences as teacher was the nucleus for generations of friendships. She was a Charter member of the Stratford Library Association organized in 1885, eleven years before the library building was constructed.

Museum Display Cases

The Society recently acquired six standing glass exhibit cases. Artifacts from our vast collection have already been displayed. The lighted cases greatly enhance the surrounding walls in the new museum wing where pictures of old Stratford can be viewed. Visitors will be especially interested in the three by four foot picture of "The Andersonville Prison" at Camp Sumter, GA as it appeared on August 1, 1864 when it contained 35,000 prisoners of war.

In the new cases you will find medals and personal effects belonging to James H. Burns a prison survivor. A doll sent by Glorianna Folsom Stirling, daughter of a Stratford blacksmith, from her home in Scotland to her sister Anna Folsom in 1780. Native American bone tools, drills and chipping tools found in Stratford., and samplers made by young Stratford women in the early 1800's.

We hope the cost of the cases can be covered by members who would like to remember a friend or family member. Three of the cases bear plaques at this time: In Memory of Mr & Mrs Donald Fowler, given by Hiram & Connie Tindall; Mr & Mrs Harold Lovell, Sr, given by Todd & Carol Lovell; Mr Richard E. Blake, given by his family.

A \$300.00 donation will place a memorial plaque on a remaining case with the name of the person to be remembered and the name of the donor.

The six new cases will enable the Society to periodically show the many items donated since 1925 when the Society was founded.

Book of Remembrance

The following contributions have been made in memory of:

MRS. MARGARET ROSS

By: Janice and Jim Evans

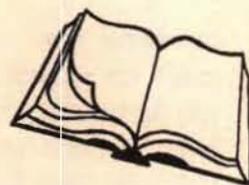
Richard and Joan Johnson

Joan and Marilyn Ross

Mr and Mrs Hiram Tindall

Shakespeare Guild, Inc.,

Mrs Nancy Finn, President



God Bless America!

*DAYS THAT WILL
LIVE IN INFAMY:*

DEC. 7, 1941

SEPT. 11, 2001

Stratford Historical Society

(203) 378-0630

967 Academy Hill

P.O.Box 382

Stratford, CT 06615-0382

COMPUTER CORNER

e-mail us at:

Judsonhousestfd@aol.com

visit our web site at:

www.ctnow.com/groups-stratfordhistoricalsociety

Fax: 378-2562

Stratford Historical Society Board of Directors Meeting

October 29th - 7:30 pm

Catharine B. Mitchell Museum

All members of the Society are Welcome to Attend

Please call 378-0630 for information