
Stratford Historical Society >> UPDATE

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

Volume VIII Issue 2

November 2003



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

NEXT GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Friday November 21, 2003 - 7:30pm

Christ Episcopal Church
2000 Main Street, Stratford

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Frederick Fenn

Author of

“Journey to Common Ground”

Frederick Fenn holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Behavioral Sciences from Lyndon State College, and taught special Education in public schools for twenty-three years. He holds a Connecticut certification in social studies/history.

After leaving public school, Fenn began a second career in writing. He is currently writing a Vermont Trilogy. He published the first novel in the trilogy, **Journey to Common Ground**, in 2002. He is presently working on the second novel, **Jericho**. In addition to writing historical fiction novels, Fenn writes for the Barkhamsted Historical Society quarterly newsletter. Fred and Ann Fenn live in New Hartford CT.

Fenn takes us on a journey with Joshua and Sarah Brown who, in 1770 and just married, travel from the Connecticut colony to the New Hampshire Grants, later known as Vermont.

Their journey takes them through Deerfield, Massachusetts and further on to a small township north of Windsor, Vermont called Hertford (present-day Hartland). On the way north, their lives take an unusual turn, they come upon a runaway slave. Do they ask him to join them? Or is this too big a risk?

Fenn's tale is a historically simple, wholesome account of two journeys—one slave, one free.

Copies of **Journey to Common Ground** will be available for sale at the membership meeting and Mr. Fenn will be happy to personally sign the book after his presentation.

Journey to Common Ground

BY FREDERICK FENN

PLEASE NOTE

The meeting is open to the public and refreshments will be served. Meeting starts promptly at 7:30. Bring a friend.

Lewis Knapp will be available at the November 21st meeting to sign copies of his book **Stratford And The Sea**. Now is the time to get your copies for holiday giving.

President Dave Guion

Once again our Early American Festival was a great success. Attendance was about the same as last year, and we had a few more re-enactors than in the past. Everyone seemed to have a good time learning more about Stratford and colonial times.

New this year was a rather large contingent of civil war enactors. They made quite an impression and we hope to have them back again next year.

Many do not realize how much work goes into making the Festival a success. Chairman, Sandy Rutkowski, spends hours in preparation. She is fortunate to have help from other volunteers, docents and graduates of summer camp. I would dearly love to name all of the many who participated but I am afraid I might miss someone. We appreciate the assistance of all who helped.

Curator Carol W. Lovell

Mrs. Edward Richardson (Margaret Clinton) recently made a much-appreciated donation of two mid-nineteenth Century thirteen star flags which had been in her Curtis/Clinton family for several generations. Both Margaret and her sister, Catherine Clinton Lawrence, recall the flags being draped across the front of the homestead on Elm Street for special occasions.

The flags have been determined to date from 1815 to 1860, which places them before the Civil War. We can imagine that the flags were displayed on the house at the dedication of the Soldiers' and Sailors Monument (now called the Civil War Monument) on Academy Hill in 1889 during the 250th anniversary on the settling of stratford in 1639.

Included in this donation is an early quilt with handspun, hand-woven backing and some purchased fabric with hand-woven fabric in the top design; also two framed old maps of Stratford and many old land deeds.

We thank both of these ladies for their continued interest in the Stratford Historical Society.

In Memorium

Some people, very special people, can never be replaced. They will always be remembered for the things they accomplished through the years.

Constance Boynton died on May 8, 2003 at the age of 92.

Joyce Bradbury died on May 5, 2003 at the age of 84.

Book of Remembrance

Contributions have been received
in Memory of

JOYCE BRADBURY

Given By

Marie Blake, Gloria Duggan
Margaret Jacaruso, Catherine Moore
Todd & Carol Lovell
John & Beverly Tabak
Hiram & Connie Tindall

CONSTANCE BOYNTON

Given By

Marie Blake, Gloria Duggan
Margaret Jacaruso, Catherine Moore
John & Laurie Goodsell
Todd & Carol Lovell
The Shakespeare Guild
Hiram & Connie Tindall

HAROLD C. LOVELL, JR.

Given By

Mrs. William Woolfolk

Transition

Since 1978, Mrs. Betty Applegate has, as Chairman of Hosts & Hostesses, always arranged to have a member of the Society on hand to greet visitors on Wednesdays, Saturdays & Sundays at Judson House. Her many years of service are greatly appreciated by the Society's members.

We are pleased that Mrs. Laurene Basso has agreed to be Chairman of Hosts and Hostesses for the coming year when Judson House opens for the season in May 2004.



The following article recalls when Stratford was a quiet town of several thousand residents, but just like today there were topics of interest such as politics and business along with some gossip and the weather. The pros and cons of many subjects were discussed around the warmth of a pot-belly stove.

THE STOVE CLUB

Bridgeport Times-Star — January 3, 1935

100 years ago the Stove Club was organized in Stratford although some say it was never organized but just happened. In 1835 Stratford was a little hamlet connected to Bridgeport by a wooden bridge. A dirt road wound through the Center where stood the old market building, formerly the Universalist Church and later Jewell's store which for 43 years was to be the brewing pot of local politics.

Older men in Stratford can tell you that not only politics was discussed. It was the open forum where women, crops, and cost of tobacco, and education were fit subjects for debate. About six o'clock in the evening the stragglers would drift in, take a chair in the back room and start talking.

It all started when a group of young men decided they needed a place where they could let off steam. There were about 40 leather-covered chairs available and every one was filled by 6:30 or so. Sometimes a particular debate would become so heated that members took a few hours off to sleep, returning in the morning, ordinary business neglected, to settle the issue.

Three or four days sometimes passed before the Stove Pipers were talked out. Then a wide-awake young fellow, Lovell, came along about 1878 and opened up a hardware store. Gradually the Stove Club got into the habit of dropping in there instead of Jewell's store. Names still famed in town once were on the roster, Clarkson, Stiles, Judson, Curtis, Rhodes, Smith, Tuttle, Wells, Sammis, Judd, Peck, Beardsley, Stagg and many others grew up in the back room. Anybody who amounted to anything at all was a regular attendant.

Then, one day, Stratford was startled by a strange rumor. The Stove Club was to be without a home, gossips said the Lovell store was to be closed promptly at 6 every evening. On January 7, 1910 the Stratford correspondent for the BRIDGEPORT EVENING FARMER wrote: The old and famous Stove Club is likely to be demolished" the dreadful notice was posted on one of the front doors this morning but, it remained only a few hours. To attract the attention of the passers-by. Shortly before noon it was torn down. This unexpected development put new courage in the hearts of the stoveites," and it may be their indignation flamed forth so violently that Mr. Lovell was afraid the petrol he keeps for passing autos might take fire.

The stoveites continued to assemble for some time longer but the old zest had gone from the argument, personalities that had made the circle sparkle with wit and well-formed opinions drifted away. It ended as it had begun without any formal decree.

Through the years Stratford has progressed to a municipality of 50,000 residents. Gone are the woods, farmlands, dirt roads and drainage ditches replaced by modest homes, schools and shopping areas; but, politics, taxes, sports and world events are still the topics of conversation in local spots around Stratford Center and other parts of our town.



Stratford Center looking north' c. 1880. Note railroad tracks still on ground level. Todd's Hardware Store (later Lovell's), old Town Hall, and the Newton Reed Store are on the left. The large building served as Town Hall from 1875-1936. Jewell's Meat Market was on the right at 2430 Main Street.

 Being Nimble and Being Quick, They Pass into Arithmetic

June 13, 1934



Graduation Exercises at the Helen King Reynolds school on East Broadway in Stratford.

The young people are: First Row-Dolores Hennessey, Charles Edgerton, Adrian Maher, Jean Hubbard, Carl Back, Carol Sorenson, Todd Lovell, Jack Maslen, Philip Darling, Edward Burns. Second Row-Frederick Downey, Danny Weaver, Richard Kaesar, Joan Hennessey, Joan McGill, Virginia Savacool, Carol Daisenberger, Joan Crossley. Third Row-Nancy Jepson, Betty Mattison, Marilyn Griffen, Marilyn Ibbs, Fred Anderson, Roger McNeil, Robert Sampson, David Quinlan, Robert Nicholas, Thomas Martin, Mansell Riker.

The Helen King Reynolds School was established in 1931 and still enjoys the distinction of being an educational center, with high social and academic standards. Careful individual study and attention are given to the needs of every child.

The School first opened on Main Street (exact location unknown) before moving to 868 East Broadway. At one time there was a Lower School - Nursery, Kindergarten, Junior Primary and an Upper School - Grades I through V. In recent years the school changed and became, as it is now, a pre-school facility.



Judson House Welcomed Many This Season

As the season comes to a close for the Judson House this year we would like to reflect on the many visitors that have graced its doorway. The range of age and variety in home addresses of our guests continues to keep our house guides as interested as our visitors. One of our youngest visitors this year arrived in a stroller with several elementary age cousins, mother and aunt. As the tour began and introductions were made the guide found that the infant was a descendant to the Judsons. Thinking that the young child would soon be sleeping during the tour we were all amused how the drowsy child would perk up as family stories and items were discussed.

Another visit this summer included a young teen and his mother from Florida. They were visiting the mother's home town of Stratford and fortunately included the Judson house in their itinerary. In the museum the story of Jack Arabus was being told and the young man excitedly explained that he had read the book *Jump Ship to Freedom* in the car on their trip. After visiting several major book stores and being disappointed in not finding the next books in the series, we were happy to provide the desired books for him in our gift shop.

Our President, Dave Guion, was fortunate this season to conduct a tour for several Judson descendants. Dave always enjoys these visits and has been quoted as saying, "I've never yet met a Judson who was not one of the nicest people you would ever want to meet." The Judson family was well represented this year when members of the 12th generation of William Judson paid a visit from Ontario, Canada.

William and Grace Judson and their three sons came from Yorkshire, England in 1634 and settled in Concord. They came through Hartford to Stratford in 1639 along with the original 17 settler/farmers led by the Reverend Adam Blakeman

Judson House Visitors

Attendance records show that close to 650 visitors toured Judson House during June through October. They came on Stratford Day, the Fall Festival, Summer Camp, PEI Sister Cities Tour as well as the following towns and states.

Visitors from Connecticut

Stratford-47	Shelton-4
Milford-5	Orange-2
Westport-3	Wallingford-1
Manchester-2	Fairfield-3
Meridan-2	Bridgeport-15
Easton-2	Madison-1
Wilton-3	Monroe-1
Trumbull-2	Old Saybrook-1
Portland-2	Watertown-1
West Haven-3	Oxford-2
Southbury-1	Seymour-1

Visitors from the United States and Canada

Florida-10	New York-3
Minnesota-2	Maryland-4
Massachusetts-10	Texas-1
Vermont-3	Pennsylvania-4
New Jersey-1	Maine-1
Hawaii-1	Georgia-1
Illinois-1	Arizona-1
New Hampshire-4	Prince Edward I.-40
California-4	Ontario, Canada-2

It was a pleasure for our guides to welcome visitors from so many Connecticut towns and States as far away as Hawaii, the 35 young people who came from the Little Red School House in Stratford and the 40 voices of the Sister City Chorus from Prince Edward Island.

Please remember, although the Judson House is closed for the season, the Society remains open all year. We hope you will join us for the Membership meetings held every other month featuring guest speakers and light refreshments. Bring your friends and introduce them to our Society and the rich history of our town.

The Tightwad

We once knew a man who was too stingy to take the newspaper in his home town and always went over to borrow his neighbor's.

One evening he sent his son to borrow the paper and while the son was on the way he ran into a large stand of bees and in a few minutes his face looked like a summer squash.

Hearing the agonized cries of the son, the father ran to his assistance and in doing so, ran into a barbed wire fence cutting a handful of flesh from his anatomy and ruining a \$4 pair of trousers.

The old cow took advantage of the hole in the fence, got into the cornfield and killed herself eating green corn. Hearing the racket, the stingy man's wife ran out of the house, upsetting a four-gallon churn full of cream into a basket of kittens, drowning the whole flock. She slipped on the cream and fell downstairs, breaking her leg and a \$19 set of false teeth. The baby, left alone, crawled through the spilled cream into the parlor and ruined a \$40 carpet. During the excitement the daughter eloped with the hired man, taking the family savings bank with them. The moral is that every man should be a subscriber to his home newspaper.

Source Unknown



SPRING TAG SALE

Last year the Historical Society Tag Sale was a huge success thanks to the overwhelming response from our members and friends. This year we are again asking that you respond as generously as before with items suitable for sale.

Space is available for storing, so we will be accepting items immediately. Please bring your donations on Tuesdays or Thursdays from 9 am to 2 pm. If you have items you would like picked up, please call the office (378-0630) at any time and leave a message.

JUDSON HOUSE ROOF FUND

We are very pleased to report that the Society has received some recent contributions to replace the aging roof on Judson House. Bids were submitted to three Organizations who are capable of doing the work and the response has been encouraging. Remember all tax deductible contributions, of any amount, will be greatly appreciated.

MUSEUM DISPLAY CASES

The Society is pleased that Mr. George C. Lay has arranged for a plaque to be placed on the next to last lighted display case in the Museum. The dedication will read:

**"PRESENTED BY GEORGE COWLES LAY
IN MEMORY OF JEAN CLARKE LAY."**

Stratford Historical Society

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COMPUTER CORNER

e-mail us at:

Judsonhousestfd@aol.com

Fax: 378-2562

Stratford Historical Society Board of Directors Meeting

December 4, 2003 - 7:00 pm

January 8, 2004 - 7:00 pm

Catharine B. Mitchell Museum

All members of the Society are Welcome to Attend

Please call 378-0630 for information