
Stratford Historical Society >> UPDATE

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

Volume IX Issue 4

March 2005



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

NEXT GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Friday March 18, 2005 - 7:30pm

Christ Episcopal Church
2000 Main Street, Stratford

Deborah Guzzi

Medieval Re-Creationist and Bard

Good friend, for
Jesus sake forbear
to dig the dust
enclosed here.
Blest be the man
who spares these
stones.
And curst be he who
moves these bones.

*Shakespeare's Tomb
Stratford-upon-Avon*

Life in a castle was no fairy tale and many castle inhabitants didn't live happily ever after.

As a member of the Society for Creative Anachronism - an international group of medieval re-creationists; Guzzi, who has a primary interest in the Renaissance, is a Bard. She memorizes stories, poems and songs to perform. She also practices fencing and archery.

Born in Maine, Debbie has lived in Massachusetts, New York, Maryland and Connecticut. She currently lives and owns her own business, Empathic Touch, in Monroe, CT. She is a graduate of the University of Connecticut School of Fine Arts with a Major in Printmaking and a double minor, one in Art History focusing in architecture, and one in English with an emphasis on Shakespeare. Being an avid reader, she studied the history of the United Kingdom, Ireland and Eastern Europe in particular with an eye to the medieval period. Debbie has traveled widely and visited castles in England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, France, Germany, Denmark and Italy.

In her earlier years she worked in recreation therapy with children and seniors. This gave her first forays into public speaking. In the past five years she has performed original work in poetry and song in small local clubs and has been published in a number of issues of *The Helix*, a University of Central Connecticut Magazine of the Arts. As an active member of the local branch of the Society of Creative Anachronism, she continues her study of history. She speaks to many small groups on topics such as art, history, meditation, self-care and healing.

Debbie and her partner will appear in medieval costume.



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

**Early
American
Festival
Aug 14th
A Time Line
In History**



Happy St. Patrick's Day



Happy Easter

Carol Lovell Curator

Storytelling was the theme of a recent unit for the seventh grade students at Flood Middle School, presented in conjunction with the "Teaching History as a Dynamic Discipline" program. Diane Matthews, Education Chair of the Stratford Historical Society, was the presenter on February 17th. She appeared in colonial costume and regaled the students with the story of Gloriana Folsom, daughter of the blacksmith, who married (in Stratford) a Scottish lord and moved to Scotland where she had thirteen children, and never again saw her birthplace.

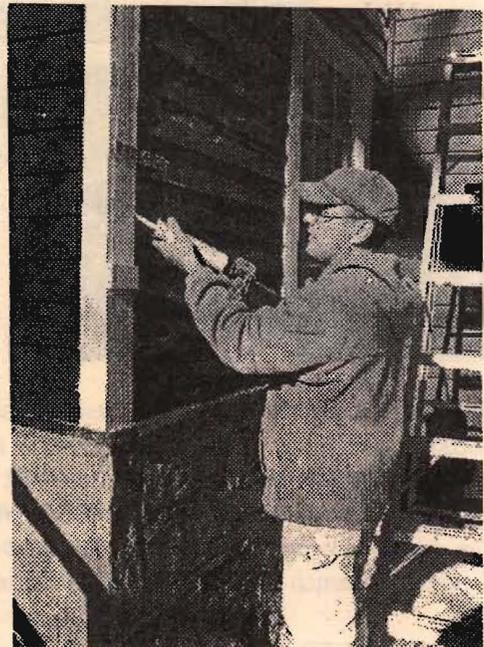
She told the children about Jack Arabus whose father fought in the Revolution and was denied his promised freedom by his owner, Capt. Ivers of Stratford. He won his case in a court of law; the first black person to have a successful "day in court."

Bringing historical incidents into the 21st century, Diane mentioned the recent release of 880 slaves in northern Sudan and told the students that slavery is happening today; that it is not only in the long ago past. One of her final messages was: "You young people have ahead of you the task of continuing the removal of slavery from the world." We will never know the impact of her words.

Good job, Diane!

The Stratford Historical Society
presents
**The 11th Annual Early American
Festival**
Sun. August 14, 2005 9:00 to 5:00pm
Capt. David Judson House
Academy Hill, Stratford, CT
Crafters demonstrating 18th century crafts
re-enactors of the Revolutionary War
French and Indian War, Civil War
mountain men fur trappers
children's games, gift shop, music,
refreshments and the recently
restored 1895 Carriage House.

Eric Iott Historic Home Restorer



Eric Iott is pictured above at work on the David Humphreys House Exterior Restoration Project in Derby, CT.

A lifelong painter and contractor Mr. Iott has been working with his father Theodore Iott for 12 years. About four years ago the Stratford Historical Society contracted with the Iott's to paint Judson House and they have been very involved with projects on and around the premises ever since.

When the Society decided to take on the challenge of restoring the 1895 Carriage House the Iott's were called. The removal and transfer of the House was done with precision during the Spring and the rebuilding continued through the summer. By Fall, the outside was complete and closed in for Winter. A job thoroughly and meticulously accomplished.

The Iott's will be ready when warmer weather comes to resume work on the finishing of the Carriage House.

Both gentlemen are active members of the Society, Ted is 2nd Vice-President and Eric is on the Committee for Building and Grounds Maintenance.

“ May the spirit of Skipper’s live on forever”

By F. Paul Kurmay

January 29 was a very sad day in the history of Stratford. It was the day the old Skipper’s Restaurant burned down to the ground. My father, wife and children went down to the site and just stared at the smoldering remains in disbelief as distant memories flooded our consciousness.

I grew up in that restaurant. I helped my dad since I was tall enough to reach the counter. We became part of each other. My dad taught me from the bottom up, from dishwashing to cleaning to food preparation and, finally, to the art of becoming a chef. This was a family restaurant, and the Father’s Club, the Lordship Volunteer Firemen and everyone else in Lordship called it home. It was the place to being your family, to enjoy a nice meal with waitresses who were a combination of friend, family and jokester.

I worked with my best friend in the whole world, my mom’s father, whom I called Poppy but others called Charlie. He was the bartender and was a cross between Winston Churchill (whom he resembled physically, including the ever present cigar) and Archie Bunker (whom he resembled personally).

Skipper’s survived every hurricane to hit the area and sometimes had a ton of sand in the bar room. It always had a cat, many were born there, sometimes in empty beer boxes. We took one home and he became my companion for life; his name was Budweiser, of course, My parents took another home and they named her Michelob. Many of the neighborhood kids took kittens home too. We never lost a single one, so the local Cat Project really began a long time ago with Skipper’s Home for Homeless Cats. One was called Stripes. He would sit with the fishermen on the sea wall across from the restaurant and wait for them to catch something juicy. Then, before they realized it, he would have the fish in his mouth, bounding off down the sidewalk with his afternoon snack. Once he caught an eel, right in the middle.

We loved our neighbors and they too were family: Pop’s to the east, owned by the Tristine family. Marty Tristine was the heart and soul of the Lordship Father’s Club and was one of the perennial stars at the Vaudeville Show at Our Lady of Peace Hall. His son, Buss, and I have been close friends since kindergarten in Lordship School. He now lives with his own family on the water. On the west side was Marnick’s (used to be Panda’s), owned and operated by Marge and Nick Quattone. It was fitting that my dad and I sat in Marnick’s the other day with Nick, Sr. as we mused over the distant past. We were never competitors; we just worked together, helped each other and enjoyed our friendship.

In the heyday of the Stratford Shakespeare Festival Theatre a lot of the actors would come in for something to eat or just to stare out at beautiful Long Island Sound. One frequent visitor was Jack Palance. My dad used to love to listen to him talk to his fellow entertainers. He said it was like spoken music.

I think my dad hired just about every kid in Lordship at one point or another; teaching them all that it meant to work hard with a lot of pride and self-discipline. Some of those kids are now professionals still living in Stratford and I know the lessons my dad taught them as kids have helped them to become better parents themselves.

My dad owned and operated Skipper’s for 34 years, in the beginning with his father, Paul, my other grandfather, Charlie, and later with his partner, Ladi Macuch. Those who passed through its doors were real characters, as colorful as any who could be found in a good novel. Phil the Bartender used to stutter and only had a grammar school education, but he had the heart of a giant. He would bring the neighborhood kids huge boxes of candy and gum and hand them out like Santa Claus. Jimmy Romano, a partner in Anne’s Newfield Bakers, would bring down long boxes of pastries for everyone to devour. They never lasted the day. “Uncle Henry,” as I called him, was an old-timer who remembered when Long Island Sound froze over so solidly that people could walk out on the ice for miles! He used to take me fishing in a small boat and I felt like I was with the Old Man and the Sea!

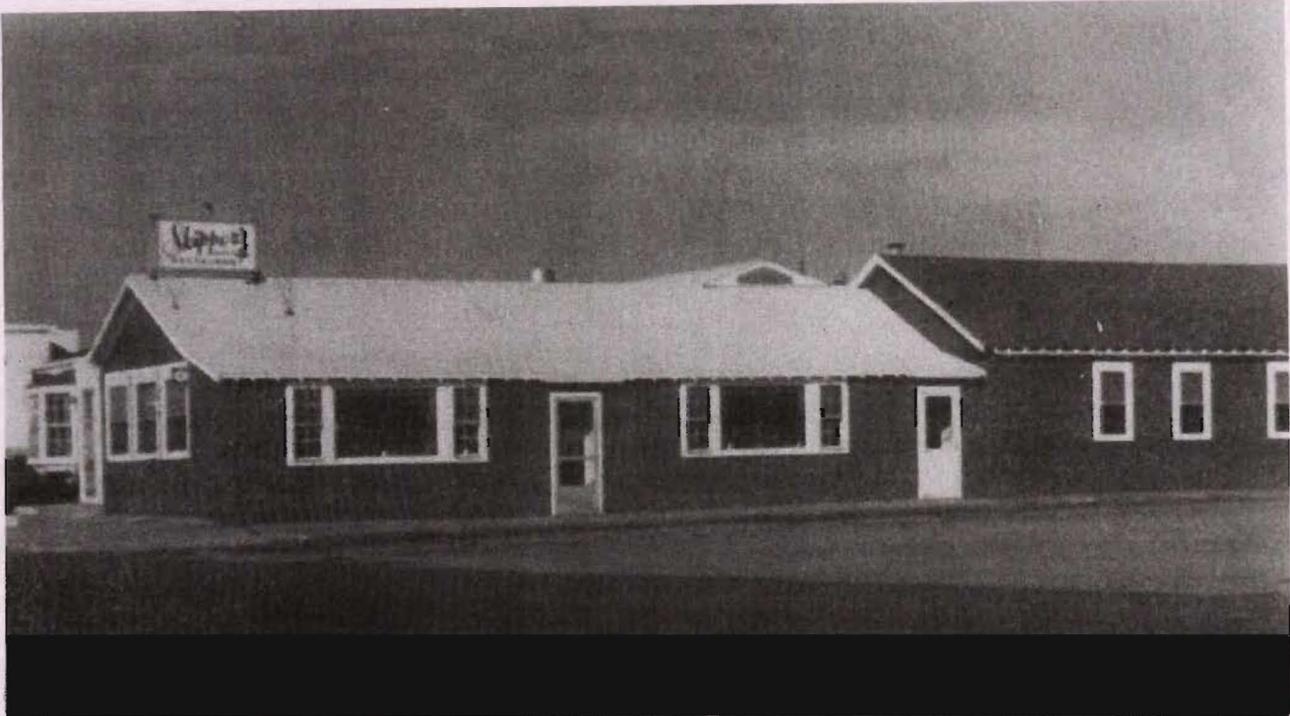
My dad had his share of battles, trying to keep his restaurant free from human vermin. Sometimes local motorcycle gangs would try to bust in and he would throw them out single-handedly (he was a Marine and never forgot it!). As he got older, he told me that he just couldn’t do that any more, so he finally retired in 1976 (a 34-year stint - not bad).

Billy Hansen, another Lordship boy, took over and kept the name until he sold it, after which the Skipper sign was lovingly retired to the family garage. We still have it and it will always be a part of our family’s history.

God only knows what will happen to this historic site now. Whatever its fate, it will never be the same, ever. Those days are now as invisible as the gentle breezes off the Sound. So it’s time to say good-bye to this dear friend of Lordship and the whole area. You’ve been a good friend, a great teacher and a lasting memory. Farewell and may the spirit of Skipper’s live on forever.

Skipper's
RESTAURANT

1943 - 1985



After January 28th, 2005



**March
Women's History**

Emily Dickinson
1830-1886

Emily Dickinson became a legend in her own lifetime, but not for her poetry. To the villagers of Amherst, she was an eccentric recluse, who in her later years always wore white and never went out of her father's house. It was not until after her death that her family discovered that she had written over seventeen hundred poems.

If I can stop one heart from breaking,
I shall not live in vain;
If I can ease one life the aching,
Or cool one pain,
Or help one fainting robin
Unto his nest again,
I shall not live in vain.

Favorite poems of Emily Dickinson

Rita Dove
1952 -

Rita Dove served as Poet Laureate for the United States from 1993 to 1995. In 2004 she was named Poet Laureate of the Commonwealth of Virginia and is Commonwealth Laureate Professor of English at the University of Virginia.

Rita Dove's books of poetry are many, including: *On the Bus with Rosa Parks* (1999) was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award, *Thomas and Beulah* (1986) which won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry, *Fifth Sunday* (1985) a book of short stories, *Through the Ivory Gate* (1992) a novel, and *The Darker Face of the Earth* (1994), a verse drama.

Her many honors include the Academy of American Poets Award, a Mellon Foundation grant, an NAACP Great American Artist award, Fulbright and Guggenheim Foundation Fellowships, and grants and fellowships from the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities.

She resides in Charlottesville, VA.

**From
The Past**

The Stratford Times-Dec. 30, 1937
One-Fifth of Stratford Streets
Incorrectly Numbered

Nearly one-fifth of the 397 Stratford streets listed in the city directory are incorrectly numbered, a recent check of the directory revealed, indicating that the community stands in great need of control over house-numbering such as that provided in the ordinance recently passed at first reading by the Town Council.

In addition to the 81 streets which the directory publishes have designated as improperly numbered, there are many which have numbers starting at a high figure without apparent reason. Academy Hill street, for instance is one block long and there are but four houses, but the numbers run from 915 to 967. Stratford and South avenues and Broad street start at the Housatonic River with initial numbers at 500. Elm street numbers begin at 1010.

Town authorities were quick to correct the impression that the ordinance will involve a compulsory renumbering of most of the town's residences. The essential purpose, they said, is to provide the town with control over the numbering of houses erected in new building developments. The law would only affect present dwellings in a few remote instances where the present number system is extremely irregular. Similar ordinances are on the statute books of practically every other community, so that some form of control can be administered when necessary. In Stratford the Town Manager will be authorized to order buildings numbered in regular series on all public thoroughfares in the town and he may, at his discretion, insist upon the renumbering of any street. The new ordinance will go before the ordinance committee for a public hearing in January.

NOTE: The ordinance was adopted in 1938 to control and determine the placing of house numbers, and a thorough study made to correct existing numbers.

The pedigree of
honey
Does not concern the
bee,
A clover, any time to
him
is aristocracy.
Emily Dickinson

Rosa Parks

How she sat there,
the time right inside a
place so wrong it was
ready.

That trim name with
its dream of a bench
to rest on. Her sensible
coat.

Doing nothing was
the doing:
the clean flame of
her gaze carved by a
camera flame.

How she stood up when
they bent down to
retrieve her purse
That courtesy.

On The Road
With Rosa Parks
Rita Dove

15 minutes burns
150 calories



Short Beach Sea Wall - 1935

Town Report 1949 - Removal of 12 summer cottages at Short Beach has added more than 1000 ft. to the bathing area. It is anticipated that when Housatonic River pumping operations are completed this beach will be widened thus giving Stratford one of the finest beaches in the area.

Town Report 1951 - The severe storm of Nov. 25, 1950 caused extensive damage to Lordship and Short Beach. Half the sea wall was destroyed and much of the beach washed away at Lordship, additional jetties are being planned to build up the sand area. All damage to Short Beach has been repaired.

Stratford Historical Society

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COMPUTER CORNER

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Stratford Historical Society Board of Directors Meeting

April 25, 20045

Catharine B. Mitchell Museum

All members of the Society are Welcome to Attend

Please call 378-0630 for information