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# Stratford Historical Society >> UPDATE

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

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Volume XI Issue 2

November 2005

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

## NEXT GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Friday December 2, 2005 - 7:30pm

Christ Episcopal Church  
2000 Main Street, Stratford

## BLOODY PATH TO THE SHENANDOAH

Fighting with the Union VI Corp in the  
American Civil War

Dr. Stewart Judson Petrie

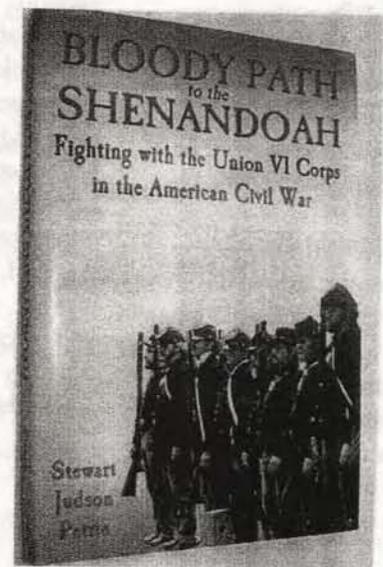
*Bloody Path to the Shenandoah*, the latest publication by author Dr. Stewart Judson Petrie, is based chiefly on the diaries made on a day-to-day basis by his great-great uncle George Judson. Dr. Petrie has incorporated other information concerning the Union VI Corps unending problems of long marches, heat exhaustion, poor food and illness during episodes of brutal warfare.

The Union VI Corp participated in such hard-fought battles as the Wilderness, North Anna River, the slaughter at Cold Harbor and most notably at Cedar Creek.

George Judson's diary describes the battle of Cedar Creek in great detail with movements and tactics of both armies. An apparent overwhelming victory by the forces of Jubal Early was later that day turned into a resounding victory by Union forces that included the VI Corp. The Union VI Corp would continue the struggle to their final destiny at Appomattox Court House.

Stewart Petrie graduated from the University of Connecticut before completing his medical degree from Temple University of Medicine. During World War II he served as a navigator-bombardier. He has been published numerous times. His contributions to Civil War literature also include *Letters and Journals of a Civil War Surgeon* and *Captive of Libby Prison*. A member of the Society of Civil War Surgeons, he has traveled and lectured using the extensive documents, surgical instruments, and memorabilia handed down from his family. Now retired from medical practice, he resides in Branford, Connecticut.

Dr. Petrie has collected personal memorabilia from both sides of his family including the surgical instruments of Dr. Myron Winslow Robinson his great-grandfather. He will display the historical instruments at the membership meeting. Also on display, and for sale, will be all three of Dr. Petrie's above mentioned books.



*As the hot afternoon sun set over the off-shore islands, on which so much blood had been spilled, I became sadly aware of the need for our troops to stand down. As the bard once said, "To lie awhile and bleed awhile, to rise and fight again."*

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

Bring a Friend

In case of inclement weather please call Station WICC at 5:00 pm

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## Ted Iott President

Who said that?  
Oh, what a tangled web  
do parents weave when  
they think that their  
children are naive.

Everything is funny as  
long as it is happening  
to somebody else.

Everyone is a prisoner  
of his own experiences.  
No one can eliminate  
prejudices - just recog-  
nize them.

Imagination is more im-  
portant than knowledge.

Cherish all your happy  
moments: they make a  
fine cushion for old age.

When you can do the  
common things of life in  
an uncommon way, you  
will command the atten-  
tion of the world.

Conscience is the inner  
voice that warns us  
somebody may be look-  
ing.

Be the change you wish  
to see in the world.

On October 24, the Stratford Historical Society Board of Directors approved a program for business sponsorship. The program will have two objectives. The first, to educate the business community about the Society and it's many functions, such as the David Judson house tours and summer camp for young people. Many in our town are unaware that the Judson House, built in 1750, and adjacent museum hold thousands of items related to Stratford history.

The second objective of the sponsorship program is to bring needed revenue to support the Society, it's programs, and preservation and acquisition of artifacts.

Looking to the future, I see some challenges. Diminishing membership needs to be addressed. Attendance in the summer of house tours needs to be improved. This is a wonderful way for visitors and family to be introduced to Judson House and the museum.

And, of course we recognize that our biggest asset is the core of magnificent volunteers who keep the Society up and running.

I wish you all a happy holiday season.

## Peet Family Genealogy

Mr. Terry Charles Peet has personally donated to the Society the volume *John Peet 1597-1684 of Stratford, Connecticut & his descendants*, with appendices. This information is available at the office library, placed with the Society's extensive family histories. Mr. Peet also donated his vast collection of notes used to assemble this 904 page record of the John Peet family.

Our reference librarian **Gloria Duggan** is in the office on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9am to 3pm to be of assistance to anyone seeking information concerning genealogy.

## James R. Miron Stratford's 1st Mayor

Two years ago, a referendum changed Stratford's Town Manager form of Government to a mayor/council system. On December 12, 2006, James R. Miron will become our first Mayor since Stratford was settled over 350 years ago. The Stratford Historical Society congratulates Mr. Miron as he begins his four year term.

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Appropriate to the moment are the words of Harold C. Lovell (1886-1969) who in 1940 wrote:

"Things to think about: that the quality, not quantity of its citizens makes a town; that town officials are not masters but servants of the people; that we have a historic beautiful town as our heritage and that our duty is to pass it on untarnished and improved in every way."

## Membership dues

2005 over your name on the address label indicates we have not received your dues payment for the year 2006.

With the increased cost of postage coming next year, the Board of Directors decided membership cards will only be sent upon request. Your cancelled check will be your receipt that dues have been paid.

If you have misplaced the return envelope included in the September Newsletter, please notify us immediately and we will promptly send another. Your continued support and interest in the Society is greatly appreciated.

Yes, Virginia, There is a Santa Claus.  
He exists as certainly as love and generosity  
and devotion exists.

Frances P. Church, *New York Sun*

## Growing Up in the Stephen Curtis House

From an account written by Claribel Spamer dated August 12, 1995

The house I live in as of this date I have lived in for seventy-eight years, my entire life except for the first few months of it. The house, known as the Stephen Curtis House, was built by my great-great-great-great grandfather and, with my ownership, is still in the family, I being a Curtis through my grandmother's line.

The house, when my parents moved in, was in the country. To the north were fields, lawn on the south, a neighbor's apple orchard to the west, and Huntington Road (a narrow dirt road which ended a couple of miles to the north) on the east, a brook rambled along the west side of the property, eventually crossing under Main Street near People's Bank. On the property was a building we called "the shop," built in 1832, for it had my father's workbench in one part of it. Another part was buggy, one would imagine. There was a chicken coop (no chickens in used for farming but rented by my Equipment Company for storing rock pile, an accumulation from woodpile of old boards and dead nights. Behind the shop was an



help from some boys) a tree house when I was 13, and under which was my bird cemetery, complete with wooden crosses. In the side yard was a yucca bush, on which we often pricked ourselves when jumping over it in our chasing games, but it bloomed profusely. An arbor supported grapevines and also swings, which my father made for us. Along the property by Park Street was an immense 70' long lilac hedge. Grapes also grew on the shop, and a trumpet vine grew up the side of the house to the chimney on the south side where a Dutch door was kept half open in the summers. The back porch was added by my parents for it was not there when I was a baby, but I do not know when it was built, probably in the early 20's. Near the barn was an old sleigh which had belonged to my great grandfather (brother of Calvin). To get to it, you had to brave the high grass in which yellow and black spiders spun their webs and garden snakes sometimes slithered by. Along the front of the house on the south was a picket fence with a gate. To the north was an old un-mortared stone wall. Also on the north, along a coal-ash-built driveway, were three small maple trees, planted by my father, one each for my two sisters and me. A pie-cherry tree grew in the field there. In front, by the mounting rock, was an enormous elm tree, lost in the 1938 hurricane.

In the house, the kitchen was the large back room, now the living-room. The fireplace was at first boarded, a coal range in front of it, the sink on the west early 1920's, removing the false ceiling old fireplace and Dutch oven. We had dump the ashes from the burned coal. car from sinking in mud in wet over the living-room to allow warm air through it, such as talking through it things through it. There was a tin bath-



when we were small, but I do not really recall much about it except the small tin tub. In the winter we had a fire in the fireplace, and cracked nuts on the hearth, and ate them and apples that we bought at the Long Hill Cider Mill in the fall. The rosewood sofa in the front south room was my refuge ("Don't cry on the sofa; you'll stain the velvet"), although the horsehair sometimes pricked. One could also hide behind it, as it was positioned across a corner.

the garage for the "flivver," formerly for a was an upper story loft for storage. Also, there my day), and an enormous hay barn, no longer grandmother, who owned it, to Deere Farm farm machinery. Near the chicken coop was a clearing the fields. Not far from there was a branches, used in our fireplace on winter enormous cherry tree, in which I built (with

grandmother, who owned it, to Deere Farm farm machinery. Near the chicken coop was a clearing the fields. Not far from there was a branches, used in our fireplace on winter enormous cherry tree, in which I built (with

wall. My parents renovated the house in the to expose the original beams, and exposing the a coal furnace which required that my father This he did on the "driveway" to prevent the weather. There was a register in the bathroom to rise to heat the bathroom. We played games from upstairs to downstairs, and dropping tub in which we were bathed in the kitchen

tub in which we were bathed in the kitchen when we were small, but I do not really recall much about it except the small tin tub. In the winter we had a fire in the fireplace, and cracked nuts on the hearth, and ate them and apples that we bought at the Long Hill Cider Mill in the fall. The rosewood sofa in the front south room was my refuge ("Don't cry on the sofa; you'll stain the velvet"), although the horsehair sometimes pricked. One could also hide behind it, as it was positioned across a corner.

My sisters and I had many "in the house" games. When we played with dollhouses, our "families" would take cruises in cardboard shoe boxes braving the stairs, which were huge waterfalls. Our paper doll families covered the entire living-room floor on rainy days. One year I published a newspaper once a week, and distributed it around the neighborhood. I laboriously printed neighborhood news, and drew pictures, and made up puzzles for the four-page 8x11 paper, carbon papered several times. I also gave shows in the shop of Mickey Mouse cartoon cards I made up and showed, card by card, on a mirrorscope, forerunner of a slide projector. As many as thirty kids would attend.

One of our outdoor games was "cops and robbers." The "jail" was the loft in the shop. When the door to the stairs was latched on the outside the "prisoners" could still escape down a hole which had held a stovepipe at one time. But you had to be small to make it through.

We made a tent out of old rugs once, and actually slept in it. Another project was a cave in the field. With my crew, we dug squares of sod, and then a shallow hole over which we laid boards and then the sod on top. Those who were not part of the crew never did detect it. To enter, you had to lift the sod and a board, squeeze inside, and replace board and sod -tricky. We got eight of us in at one time once, but it wasn't to be recommended.

My biggest project was a tree house built in the old cherry tree in back. We used old boards from the woodpile. A neighborhood boy and I worked for a couple of hours every day for weeks; two-by-fours nailed to the trunk enabled you to get enough feet off the ground to grab a branch at the height of the floor of the hut and swing up. At first it was just a platform. Then we built sides, somewhat crooked, and a roof. The doorway was just an open rectangle  
and we did make one tiny uncovered win-  
dow. I was just 13 then. I especially liked going out there by myself on rainy days.

We used to peek in Grandma's the seat of a tractor. The canvas from which I could not re- emerge. I believe I finally got out unaided



barn. Once we got inside, and I climbed onto seat had rotted out, and I slid into a position I remember thinking I might be there forever. somehow.

The brook was a favorite play place. My father named it Shady Rest. There was a big flat rock where we built various dams, sailed leaf-boats and swirled silvery leafs in the water. After visiting Watkins Glen in New York on a family vacation, I tried to re-create such a glen in the brook. The inspiration died quickly - Watkins Glen too big - brook too little. Black birch grew nearby, and we used to chew the bark. Dew's cornfield sloped down to the brook from the west, and in winter we slid down hill there sometimes, bumping over the stubs of the cut stalks, which protruded through the snow.

Evenings, when we were little, my sisters and I went to bed early in the summer while my mother and father worked in the yard and garden until dark. In one bedroom, we played games; we'd tell fanciful stories of little people playing on the bedspread, climbing down to the floor, climbing up the bureau leg. We'd listen for the quarter-hour ringing of the chime clock downstairs, and the every-fifteen-minute rumble of the trolleys, back and forth to their destination at the northwest corner of the Green, ending at one a.m. and beginning again at six a.m. When we had the measles, we had to stay in bed in a darkened room for three weeks. Admission of light was thought to cause permanent damage to one's eyes. When we were sick, my father made up stories and told them to us at night.

My mother used to take us to Lordship. We had to take the trolley to Bridgeport, and change to another which went over the meadows to where Marnick's is now. Later, she would take my father to work in Bridgeport so as to have the flivver to take us to Short Beach. The road from the main street was a one-way dirt road encompassed with overgrown vines, jungle-like, and trees bending to make it like a tunnel, almost. I learned to swim at Short Beach.

My great aunt lived in the house my great grandfather built on Paradise Place at the northwest corner of the Green. The house was where the parking lot now is, had a wrap-around porch covered with vines, and the side yard extended to the Adzima property, then a private home belonging to a Mr. Brewster. In that yard, under a pine tree, grew arbutus. She had many birds at her feeders - vireos, finches, chickadees, martins (there was a martin house), juncos, bluebirds, buntings, wrens, catbirds. I learned them all. There was a well behind the house from which we drew water and drank from a dipper. She dressed old-style even for then - long skirt, high shoes, lace neck collar - this in the twenties. She hated the stores at the Green - just a handful of mom and pop enterprises. She scolded me for using "gosh" or "gee," she said they were bad words. She made wonderful homemade bread and always gave us some.

My father eventually grew corn in the field north of us (where Baptist Church is). One year he grew gladioli there. Across the back yard he had rambler rose bushes with hundreds and hundreds of pink blossoms. At various times we kids had rock gardens and small attempts at vegetables. Mine were carrots and radishes. My father also grew asparagus.

The vehicles which passed down Huntington Road were few and far between. Our "vegetable man" had a horse and buggy, and he used to let us ride from our house to the corner, which, although only half a block, was a big deal. A farmer walking a cow scared my mother silly once, for I was coming across the Green and the cow began acting up and pulling on the rope, shouting to take my hat off, but I was just old enough to be controlled the cow, and they went on down the road. When my father bought his first car (I was seven), he bought it in Bridgeport and taught himself to drive it by driving it home. Because of coordinating the clutch with the gears, as you had to do in those days, by the time he made it he knew how to drive.



Main Street, north of the Green, was paved in 1924. I had a new tricycle at Christmas, and could ride it up the middle of Main Street after it was paved but before it was opened to traffic, which was only a day or two, I think. Sally and Emmy, my sisters, roller-skated, but I couldn't seem to learn how. I made rather poor attempts to ice skate at Brewster's Pond (Longbrook Park now), where one had to go through swampy marsh to approach the unwallled natural pond and find a stump on which to sit to put on one's skates. The boys built bonfires at which to keep warm. In those days, too, we could burn our leaves. We'd rake them into the street and light them with a match; such a procedure was not banned for many years. The smoke had to be a hazard to drivers going by, but traffic was so light and traffic speeds so slow that no accidents occurred as a result of smoke blindness. The woods beyond the pond contained such rare wild flowers as trillium and yellow violets, about which my mother taught me. The pond itself was a depository for dead cats, or so they claimed. I fell in once, on a 15°F day, and nearly froze getting home. Worse, I had on a new wool dress, very expensive and in the Depression when money was tight, and it shrank before I got home.

This was my childhood here, in the house still with the old handmade shingles, wooden pegs, paneled doors, hand wrought nails, wide floor boards, H hinges, fieldstone hearth, and bricks from Holland in the fireplace. It is a house with squeaks, bulges, warping, doors that open by themselves, and tilted floors (furniture has to be propped). But in 1995 it is still here, near the end of its 225 year-old life.



View of the Green across Huntington Road

**Note: Claribel May Northnagle Spamer (1916-1998)** was a teacher, an author and an active volunteer. A graduate of Middlebury College, with advanced degrees from Boston and Bridgeport Universities, she taught at all levels in the local school, and as an adult education creative writing instructor. Mother of four, her writings of childrens stories included a series for The Stratford News in 1957 entitled "*Young Folks Corner*" and, published at the time of our nation's Bicentennial in 1979, "*Stratford - From Indians to Independence.*" She was on the Boards of the Stratford Library, Shakespeare Theater Guild, American Field Sevice, Stratford Historical Society and Bridgeport Hospital Auxiliary.

The Spamer home was aquired by the neighboring Stratford Baptist Church in 2001. They have placed a plaque in the 'large back room' honoring Claribel Spamer for her contributions to the Stratford Community.

The pictures included herein were taken in October 2005.

## Our Personal Thanks To:

**Laurine Basso** for serving as our Chairman for Host and Hostesses, and to all the ladies and gentlemen who gave their time during the past season at Judson House. In the season of 2005-2006 **Dolores Hoctor** has accepted this task. We sincerely hope you will respond and accept her invitation to act as a hostess when she contacts you.

**Rebecca Arkenberg** for delivering two period dresses to be used as costumes. The dresses originally came from Joan Rowlett of Fairfield, and were washed, ironed and brought to Rebecca by Elizabeth Bassett of Trumbull.

**Millicent Zolan** for conducting a program of her extensive doll collection on October 29th at the Stratford Library sponsored by our Society. **Diane Matthews** who displayed and told the story of Glorianna Folsom Stirling's 1780 doll. Unfortunately, heavy rain made it impossible for many to attend the show.

**Sandy Rutkowski** for arranging the Summer Festival which was held along with the dedication of the World War II memorial on Academy Hill, and to all of the volunteers who helped make this a very big success. This time the rain came late in the afternoon and cooled a very hot day.

**Diane Matthews** and **Docents** who conducted the Summer History Camp in July for 21 young people. Diane will be offering sessions for training new docents in the Spring.

**Shirley Balascak, Shirley McCormack** and **Linda Woods** for providing refreshments at the Membership Meetings. Please volunteer to help at coming meetings in January, March, or May. This is not hard to do and both Shirley's will give all instructions and assistance. Tea, Coffee and cake or cookies is a nice way to end the meetings. This is a time to visit with friends, other members and find more about our **Speakers** and their subject.

## And Also To:

**Dorothy Bobko** for serving as Recording Secretary for the past year and to **Barbara Firisin** who has taken on the position. Barbara, joined **Diane Matthews, Dolores Hoctor** and **Ted Iott** as a new Docent at Judson House last Spring.

**Richard Steele** for organizing a display at Oronoque Village for Newcomers. He had a poster with pictures of Judson House and also handed out postcards.

**Eric Iott** for completing the exterior work on the Carriage House in time for the August Festival. Work on Interior walls, upper floor, ceiling and electrification will be done in the spring of 2006. The Carriage House to be officially known as "Beach Family Carriage House."

**Rudy Mastroianni** for being our all-around handy man and fixer-upper. Rudy previously worked with our late President Dave Guion, on a Print Shop display in the Museum, he will be completing it throughout the Winter.

**Dorothy Euerle** for arranging publicity with the Newspapers about our Speakers and the variety of programs offered at Membership Meetings.

**Marge Jacaruso** who comes from Crosby Commons in Shelton every Tuesday and brings us muffins. Marge is always willing to do any job necessary.

**Andy Nelson** who stops in to chat and bring us whatever news is current about the Town of Stratford.

To all of our **Members** who give of their time and support we want you to know that you are greatly appreciated.

NOTE: **Todd Lovell** had a knee replacement at Bridgeport Hospital one month ago and is recovering very well.

**Dolores Hoctor** has been in the hospital suffering from a severe case of Lyme Disease. She continues to monitor our membership list and will arrange for Judson House Hosts and Hostesses for the spring opening.

### WELCOME

The following two persons have joined the Society and become new Life Members in 2005

Johnathan Best  
Cheryl J. Moore  
Sandra McFarland  
Charlotte H. Blair

### BEQUEST

The Society received a Bequest in the amount of \$1,000. from the Estate of Josephine Noval Plavan who died on March 24, 2005

### GIFT

Mrs. Robert Franklin presented a gift from the Stratford High School Class of 1942 in the amount of \$500. Also, papers from the Estate of Stephen Onofrey, her Uncle, Class of 1926.

### Answers to Quotes:

1. Ogden Nash
2. Will Rogers
3. Edward R. Murrow
4. Albert Einstein
5. Booth Tarkington
6. George Washington Carver
7. Henry Louis Mencken
8. Gandhi



### Town Clerk of the Year

Stratford's Patricia Ulatowski was chosen as Connecticut's Town Clerk of the Year for 2005 by the Connecticut Town Clerks' Association. Her selection, announced in September, was based on her outstanding record for both community and Association participation and commitment.

Town Clerk since 1988, Mrs. Ulatowski's career with the Town has spanned 38 years. Locally, her committee memberships have included those for Charter Revision, Beautification, Extended Hours, and Gateway Signage. She has also been among the leaders in United Way campaigns, Support the Troops gatherings, and the annual 911 Memorial services.

At the State and area level, her accomplishments include her designation as a Master Municipal Clerk, and service as both Vice President and President of The New England Association of City and Town Clerks. Among her many assignments for the Connecticut Town Clerks' Association, she has been a member of their Education Committee and co-chaired their Conference Committee.



Patricia Ulatowski

## Stratford Historical Society

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967 Academy Hill  
P.O.Box 382  
Stratford, CT 06615-0382

**UNPAID DUES**  
If 2005 is above your name on the address label, your dues are not paid for the 2005-2006 year.

### COMPUTER CORNER

e-mail us at:  
Judsonhousestfd@aol.com  
Fax: 203-378-2562

**Stratford Historical Society Board of Directors Meeting**

**Monday, January 2, 2006**

**Catharine B. Mitchell Museum**

**All members of the Society are Welcome to Attend  
Please call 378-0630 for information**