
Stratford Historical Society >> UPDATE

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

Volume XV Issue 5

May 2011



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

NEXT GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Friday May 27, 2011 - 7:00pm

Christ Episcopal Church
2000 Main Street, Stratford

The Greatest Hits of the Civil War: America's First Professional Songwriters

Presented by *Rick Spencer*



This is a program of compositions by some of the nation's earliest popular songwriters. Songs by *Dan Emmett*, *Stephen Foster*, *George F. Root* and *Henry Clay Work* were known and loved by Americans on both sides of the War. These songs give remarkable insight into the character of the American people at the time of our country's greatest and most divisive conflict. This program includes a discussion of the phenomenon of the American minstrel show and its cultural impact, both positive and negative, on our culture.



Dan Emmett
1815-1904



Stephen Foster
1826-1864

Rick Spencer has 25 years of experience in historical presentation. He began as a musician and interpreter for Mystic Seaport, The Museum of America and the Sea. Rick is currently Executive Director of the *Dr. Ashbel Woodward* Museum in Franklin, CT. His concerts and lectures are well researched and highly entertaining. He accompanies his singing with guitar and banjo.



George F. Root
1820—1895



Henry Clay Work
1832-1884

The meeting is open to the Public
Refreshments will be served — Bring a Friend

Rudy Mastroianni, President

All's well that ends very well, or ... you've enjoyed the rest, now enjoy the best—the best of the 2010-2011 Society year – its 86th! This General Membership Meeting is a program featuring Richard Spencer who'll provide an entertaining evening of song and music popular in the Civil War period.

The Judson House and Museum tours, configured to supplement the Revolutionary War curriculum for Stratford's 5th grade students, kept our Docents busy with many classes throughout April and May. Teachers' evaluations show they've been very pleased with the relevance to the curriculum of the tour content. Equally important is the Docents' acknowledged happiness about taking part in the tours.

Museum Open House Memorial Day: The hours of 11a.m. to 1p.m. will give people an opportunity before attending the annual Ceremony on Academy Hill to view the displays of artifacts and history of the Revolutionary and Civil Wars. The parents of 5th graders may be especially interested in the Museum tours their children have experienced.

A hearty welcome and a rousing Colonial cheer of Huzzah!! to Molly Bailey Dillon who has become Associate Editor of the Newsletter. Having grown up between Philadelphia and Valley Forge Pennsylvania, she was thoroughly steeped in historical sites. Molly has enjoyed participating in the wonderful events and organizations in our town. She is currently pursuing a Masters degree in Library Science. Molly said she "is excited" and has already stepped up "to help the Society with the newsletter."

I look forward to being with you at the May 27th meeting!

Book of Remembrance

Donations have been made

In Memory of: David and Eleanor Guion

Given by:

Christopher and Robin Jean Mojcik

In Memory of: F. Edward Middleton

Given by: Katherine Beers

Docent News

The new class of Judson House Docents joined returning docents to receive 16 fifth grade classes from every elementary school in Stratford this spring. The students experienced a tour of Judson House and the Mitchell Museum with an emphasis the Revolutionary War era in Stratford. These visits are facilitated through curriculum developed with Perry House for the Stratford schools.

Docents work in pairs, each taking an opposing side representing either the Patriot or Loyalist faction in regard to issues like taxation, disease, raids, recruiting and supplies. Docents relate the stories of real people, "Stratford's Heroes" and their roles during the war - William Samuel Johnson, David Hawley, David Wooster, Jack Arabus, Jabez Tomlinson, Mary Edwards and Alice Benjamin.

The Docent Experience

Learning to be a docent gives you advantages-not only sharing everything we learned, but introducing others to what it was like living back when... I am having fun while teaching! - Lauren Pekar

Now a student knows that a tannery is not a salon for tanning but a place for making leather boots for the Patriots feet. - Joan Naples

My favorite thing concerning the Judson House Tours is when the light bulb goes on with the kids that people back then shared the same trials that we do in present times. We are truly all connected. - Gail Liscio

Special Presentation

Area 3 of the Handweavers Guild of Connecticut will officially present the SHS with woven samples from Silas Burton's draft book at a ceremony June 12, in the Catharine B. Mitchell Museum. The weavers chose Burton's drafts as their 2010-2011 friendship project. Meet the weavers and see their samples from 1-3pm. Free and open to the public with refreshments.

Summer History Camp

“Stepping back through time at the Judson House”

Hear ye! Hear ye! Time to sign up for History Camp to be held July 11 –15 from 9:00 - 12:30. Campers experience different aspects of 18th century life including candle dipping, churning butter, and weaving, with lots of fun mixed in. A walking tour of early Stratford will take place, and campers will hear town legends and stories.

To showcase all of their new knowledge, campers will give tours of the Captain David Judson House to friends and relatives, dressed in 18th century costumes! Openings are limited so if you know a child entering the 4th grade through high school who would enjoy experiencing hands-on history, call the Historical Society at 203-378-0630

Scholarship Awards

The Scholarship Committee has chosen outstanding seniors who reside in Stratford to be recipients of our \$2,000 scholarship award. They are Esther Jean-Marie and Megan Simon of Stratford High School and Caroline Proto and Kate Aspinwall of Bunnell.

All the recipients submitted a written essay, letters of recommendation and attained a minimum GPA. We congratulate them and wish them well. They will be attending colleges of their choice.

Their awards will be presented on Friday, May 27th at 7:00 P.M.

March Membership Meeting

The March membership meeting was an engaging presentation by Donna DuFresne on Prudence Crandall's influences and decision to admit young black women. She also took questions and led a discussion of the abolitionist movement in Connecticut.

Curator's Report - Carol Lovell

Since the 150th anniversary remembrances of the Civil War have begun, it is most exciting for the Society to have recently received a series of letters between Capt. Wilson French and his wife Martha Bouton that bring to life the situations at the home front as well as at the war front. Capt. French was with the 17th Regiment, Connecticut Volunteers, many of whose men were from the Stratford/Bridgeport area.

Martha's (Matt's) were written mainly from her rented apartment on Old Mill Hill in Bridgeport, now Boston Ave. Capt. French's correspondence was sporadic, depending on where he was stationed and what army activity took his time and attention.

Nearly four years of letters, written during and after the Civil War are included in the collection which was discovered, in the 1950s, in a brown paper shopping bag in the home of Elizabeth French Sammis, the first and long-time curator of the Stratford Historical Society. Her father was Capt. Wilson French who went to the war when she, "Lissie", was less than six months old.

Wilson French's military record:

Enlisted Aug. 1, 1862

Mustered in as 1st Lieut. Infantry Co. G, 17th Regiment, Ct. Vols.

Promoted May 8, 1863 to Captain

Wounded July 1, 1863 at Gettysburg, Pa

Taken prisoner, then exchanged and sent home for 3 month recovery

Captured Feb, 5, 1865 at Dunns Lake, Fla.

Taken to Andersonville Prison, Ga.

Paroled April 21, 1865

Discharged May 26, 1865

Called to Washington, DC to testify in the trial of Capt. Henry Wirz, who had been in charge of the Andersonville prison stockade.

Further mention of the contents of the Capt. French Civil War letters will appear in future newsletters.

Co. K, 8th Regiment, National Guard, was organized in 1863, during the Civil War.

This formation on Academy Hill in 1870 is part of a training exercise.



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Coming Events

May 30th - Free to the public: Museum open 11am -1pm

June 5th - Judson House: Open for the season

June 12 - Weaving Presentations 1-3 pm.

July 11 - 15th - Summer History Camp

Sept 30th - Membership Meeting

COMPUTER CORNER

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Stratford Historical Society Governing Board Meeting

June 27, 2011 1:00pm

Please call 203-378-0630 for information