
Stratford Historical Society >> UPDATE

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

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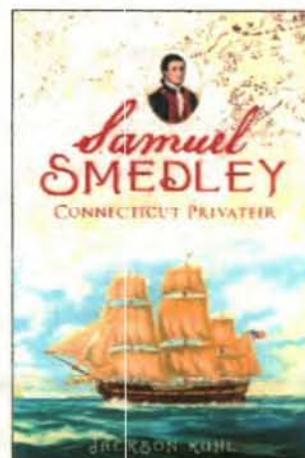
Capt. David Judson House c 1750

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Friday, November 18, 2011 - 7:00pm

Christ Episcopal Church
2000 Main Street, Stratford

Our speaker - **Jackson Kuhl:**
Biographer of this patriot and privateer of the
American Revolution.



Samuel Smedley, Connecticut Privateer

*“From the shores of Long Island Sound to the high seas of the West Indies, against British warships and with letters of marque, Samuel Smedley left a stream of smoke and blood as he took prisoners and prizes alike. At twenty-three years old, Smedley, a Fairfield, Connecticut native, enlisted as a Lieutenant of marines on the Connecticut ship **Defence** during the American Revolution. Less than a year later he was her captain, scouring the seas for British prey.”*

Mr. Kuhl, a freelance journalist, has a wealth of background in the fields of archaeology, history, and science. His Bachelor Degrees in philosophy and religion, and minors in anthropology and writing, from Ithaca College were followed by post-graduate work in archaeology. He then freelanced for several years editing and writing for Ernst & Young, Union Carbide Corporation, Jeffrey Norton Publishers, and others. He also worked as an assistant editor in the logic department of a puzzle-magazine press. Prior to becoming a freelance journalist, Mr. Kuhl was a senior television producer and co-produced a number of web packages.

He has also participated in several archaeological investigations, including cultural resource management projects and work at the Henry Whitfield Museum, and he is a member of The Association for the Study of Connecticut History and the Fairfield Museum and History Center.

The meeting is open to the Public
Refreshments will be served — Bring a Friend
Note starting time now 7:00pm

Rudy Mastroianni, President

As the Society embarks on its 87th year of existence, we express our thanks to every volunteer who has made possible, in any capacity, the success of our 86th year. For them - a rousing ... HUZDAH! HUZDAH! HUZDAH! - A fitting tribute to the Docents and Hostesses/Hosts who made possible the successes of tours for the public, and for the 3rd and 5th grade school children. In addition, maintenance of the herb and flower gardens and grounds, the Judson House and Museum are salient key tasks the volunteers performed.

I repeat: HUZDAH! HUZDAH! HUZDAH! to our Program Committee which will welcome our guest speaker Jackson Kuhl who will speak on Connecticut native Samuel Smedley, a privateer, as was Stratford native Samuel Nichols. Nichols' remains are buried in the Christ Episcopal Church Cemetery. The French term for privateer is Corsair which is the name given to the renowned aircraft of WW II. Coincidental or intentional?

In conjunction with the Nov. 11 Veteran's Day Ceremony on Academy Hill, we will open the Catharine Bunnell Mitchell Museum to the public immediately after the Ceremony, as we did on Memorial Day. Docents will be present to answer any questions on the historical background for the artifact exhibits of the Revolutionary War and Civil War periods, and to review the lists of Stratford residents who served in those Wars.

Thanks to the outgoing 2010-2011 Board members for their contributions of leadership and time. The nominees for the 2011-2012 Governing Board were elected without opposition. Thanks to the devoted Society members who returned their ballots with their membership renewals.

The first meeting of the incoming Board took place on Monday Oct. 24. The Board elected Alberta Vargas to fill the office of Membership Chair. Alberta replaces Deborah Mackbach, who reluctantly resigned, but intends to continue on as a Docent. The Board formed a new committee to review and revise the by-laws of the Historical Society. If you would like to participate, please contact the Society Office.

The Chairperson of the Scholarship Program reported that we received only one acknowledgement from the four 2011 \$2,000 Scholarship recipients. What do you, the members, think should be done with the program which was started in 2007. Continue or discontinue the program?

I am sincerely hopeful that we will have the opportunity to be together at the November 18 meeting, to answer any questions you may have, most importantly to wish you a Happy Thanksgiving.

September Membership Meeting

Society members and guests enjoyed a well-attended presentation by Robert Renkowsky. Mr. Renkowsky displayed 50 of his many thousand lanterns and lamps Many gathered around to examine the display. Mr. Renkowsky answered questions from many, including some fascinated young boys. As always, the coffee and desserts were appreciated.

The Capt. French Letters

In 2011, the Stratford Historical Society received transcribed copies of letters covering the four years of Capt. French's service during the Civil War. Letters to Capt French from his wife, and missives from Capt. French to his family were preserved. The letters were discovered by Capt. French's great-grandson John Sammis Richardson and transcribed with great care by Mrs. Elizabeth L. Richardson. Robert H. Sammis, another great Grandson, donated his copies to the Society.

Carolyn Ivanoff is analyzing the Capt. French letters for the development of a new project. She is excited to examine the letters because it is unusual to find such a complete collection of primary sources. Ms. Ivanoff produced an award winning presentation based on local historical documents, including the Blakeman Civil War letters, also held by the Stratford Historical Society. She hopes to discuss her work with the letters to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg in 2013.



Book of Remembrance

Donations have been made in
Memory of: Andy Nelson

Given by:

Todd and Carol Lovell

Gloria Duggan

New Acquisitions



The Historical Society recently acquired a wooden canteen, or "field keg" stamped with the name D. Wooster on the side. The letters LT or LF are also stamped on the end of the container. The canteen has iron bands and dense

wooden staves and is about the diameter of an old 45rpm record. An eighteenth century style container, this field keg held about a quart of water, rum, or switchel, what ever the beverage available.

This canteen's D. Wooster may have been Stratford's own General David Wooster. Born in the Oronoque section of Stratford in 1710 or 1711, 300 hundred years ago, David Wooster, with his family moved north to the Derby area at the age of ten or eleven. Our knowledge of his early years (and even the exact year of his birth) is limited due to the destruction of the family's papers when the British attacked New Haven in 1779. We do know that David Wooster graduated from Yale in 1738, was made a lieutenant 1739 and served guarding the coast of the Connecticut colony. In 1741 he was appointed lieutenant of the sloop *Defence*, possibly the same ship Samuel Smedley used while privateer-ing during Revolutionary times. Wooster served at sea through the 1740's, rising to the rank of Captain; and on land as a colonel during the French and Indian War, rising to the rank of General.

David Wooster served the Connecticut colony and the British Crown with distinction for over thirty years. Despite a comfortable pension and position as Customs Collector, Wooster fought for the independence of his native land. When the British landed in April 1777 to raid a Continental Army supply depot in Danbury, General Wooster organized the Connecticut militia to oppose the action. At the age of 66, General Wooster was shot through the back while rallying his troops during the battle.

Presentation at Oronoque Village

Zoli Toman prepared and presented a condensed program on the early history of Stratford to about 60 members of the Village's House & Garden Club at their September meeting. Arrangements were made through Betty Hugus for the Club.

Zoli, clad in a 1700's outfit of workman's shirt and breeches, appropriate as a docent for Judson House, highlighted the conditions under which the early settlers lived, the crops that they tended, and the importance of their church to them as individuals and to their community.

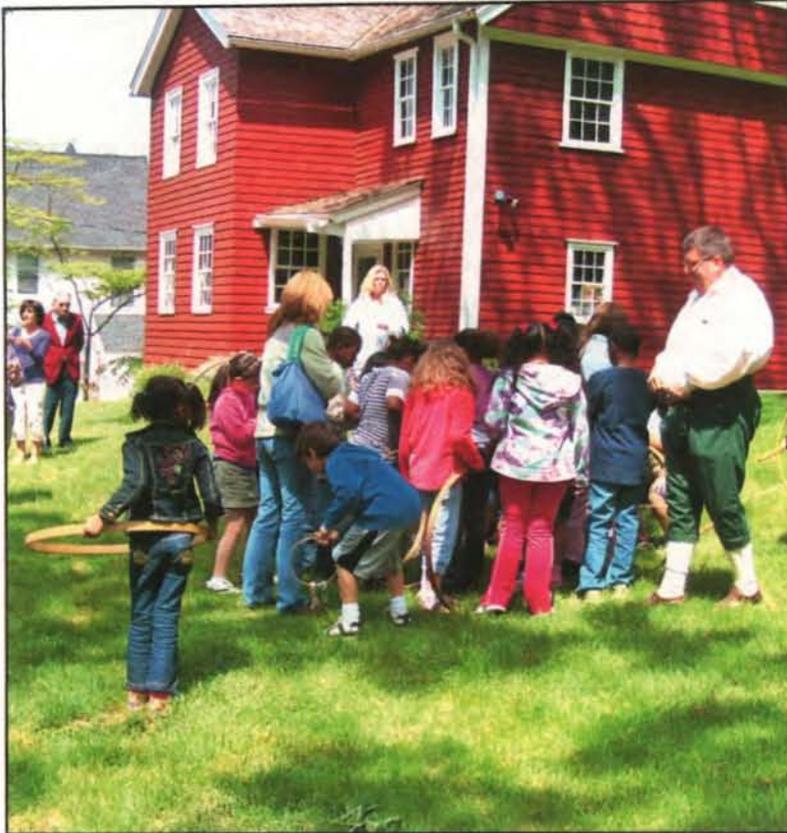
Illustrating the importance of the church in the community, a two-man, serious dialogue depicted an exchange between two early ministers, Rev. Chauncey and Rev. Walker, about the "Half-Way Covenant" which rent the original church into two churches, with some of the planters then moving away. On the lighter side, a skit was portrayed about a new minister being selected: Izrahiah Wetmore. It takes place in a fictitious Stratford parlor, with three ladies having tea. As the gossip goes, it seems Reverend Gold was dismissed because he, as a widower, marries a townswoman who is a member of the rival Anglican church. The Congregationalists were beside themselves according to the town histories and writings. Pressed into service for the dramatizations were Club members Betty Hugus and Camille Manzolli, and Historical Society volunteers, Dolores Hocter, Rudy Mastroianni and Dick Steele.

Zoli also discussed Stratford's industrial development during the program. He covered the early weaving of men such as Silas Burton, to the flight of Gustav Whitehead at the dawn of aviation, and the subsequent trials and successes of Igor Sikorsky, and the Corsair, built by Chance-Vought.



Pictured: Zoli Tomlin,

Camille Manzolli, Dolores Hocter and Betty Hugus



The Society has a special way for showing that it cares for the Town's youngsters. Here, third graders learn about the life of a child in colonial Stratford during the Revolutionary War.

The Stratford Historical Society with help from our dedicated volunteer docents welcomed approximately 650 Stratford third graders this fall.

We invite you to help us with this ongoing program. Docent training courses are held in late February and March.

Stratford Historical Society

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Upcoming Events: Call for Information

Nov. 11, 2011—Veteran's Day - Our Museum is OPEN!

Dec. 19, 2011—Governing Board Meeting: 1 PM

Jan. 27, 2012 — General Membership Meeting

History is Made Every Day--Don't Miss a Single One!!!

2012 SHS Membership renewals now due.

Please send your check and let us be a part of your future.