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# Stratford Historical Society >> UPDATE

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

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Volume XVII Issue 2

November 2012

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## NEXT GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Friday November 30, 2012 - 7:00pm

Christ Episcopal Church

2000 Main Street, Stratford



Capt. David Judson House c 1750

## A 19th Century Christmastide presented by Rick Spencer



Join us as we welcome back Rick Spencer rendering a selection of songs that were popular at the end of the 1800s, as he renders them on the guitar, banjo, mandolin, concertina or Appalachian dulcimer.



The songs were adapted from religious and secular traditions from England and Europe and are almost universally recognizable. Our romantic notions of the ideal Christmas are entwined with songs which were part of the holidays in Victorian England and America.

Rick will present a historic music program with commentary on the background and origins of the songs and the evolution of America's 19th Century Christmas traditions. Audience members are welcome to sing along.

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



## The Historical Society ONLINE

The Stratford Historical Society has a **new web-site!** Jim De Vivo has been working with Sandy Rutkowski to create a new site over the last two months. Our site is now tied into our face book page. This site will be updated with announcements on upcoming events keeping everyone informed of what, when and where. It has a whole new look and we hope everyone checks it out at: **[www.stratfordhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.stratfordhistoricalsociety.org)**

In case of bad weather and an event or meeting has to be canceled a new system has been put into effect to inform the public. You can go to [ctweather.com](http://ctweather.com), then under closings go to IAN, look down the list to see if The Stratford Historical Society is listed.

Announcements will also be announced on WICC.

**Stephen Raguskus** of Stratford won a one year membership in the Historical Society for being our 100th fan on FaceBook!

Join Stephen and all of us by sending your membership renewal in today!

### Book of Remembrance

Donations have been made in

Memory of Docent

**Lisa Wierzbicki**

Given by:

Mark Wierzbicki

&

The Stratford Historical Society Docents

&

Sikorsky Aircraft Corp.

## Holiday Open House

On Saturday and Sunday, December 8th and 9th, come and be warmed by the special sights and sounds of Christmases past at the Historic Judson House. The halls will be decked and house tours will be given by the Stratford Junior Historical Society all dressed in period clothing, and on Sunday we will have a re-enactor. Continuous house tours will be available to all guests from 11:00-3:00.

In the Catharine B. Mitchell Museum on Saturday the guests will be further entertained by the music of The Hearthside Waits. Cider and cookies will be available.

The Gift Shop will be opened for holiday shopping. The shop has many gift ideas for all ages.

Admission price is \$3.00 for adults and \$1.00 for children 12 and under. Children under 5 free.



Our junior docents make decorations for the Holiday Open House!

December 8th : The Hearthside Waits

Dec 9th: Historical Re-enactor

Please come visit!

## Hands On

Third grade school tours are in full swing. That's the tour where we teach the children about life in colonial times with special emphasis on the role of children. They learn what hard work it was for a family to survive without all the modern conveniences that we have today, and how necessary was the contribution children were expected to make.

At the request of many of the teachers we have added some interesting hands-on-activities. There is that fascinating block of tea in the West Room to be passed around (parlor); pomanders made by sticking cloves into oranges in the West Chamber (master bedroom), feeling flax and carding wool in the East Chamber (unfinished room), handling shuttles in the Small Bed Chamber, using bellows in the East Room (dining room), handling oven brush and whisks in the Kitchen, trying out boot jack and feeling stone eggs in the Slave Quarters (cellar) and ...

This year, thanks to Joe Dimenno, in the Tool Room we have added intriguing wood joints used in the building of colonial houses for the students to put together. We keep modifying our program to suit the needs of today's children and try to be responsive to the suggestions of teachers. All that makes us truly a **FRIEND OF EDUCATION!**

## September Membership Meeting

Peter McKnight, Chairman of the Friends of Remington Woods, described the present status and problems concerning the Lake Success property, and the concerns of their group that it be handled in the best interests of the residents of both Stratford and Bridgeport.

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## Connecticut Air & Space Museum on the Move

According to Andrew King, Executive Director of CASC, a lease has been signed with the City of Bridgeport for the Curtiss Hanger, behind the Windsock building at the airport, to be the new home for the Museum containing the Corsair among other historical artifacts. Work is starting this month to prepare for this move from Building 6 of the Army Engine Plant on Sniffens Lane.

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## Meet and Greet

The Governing Board welcomed our new Docents on Saturday October 6th in the Catharine B. Mitchell museum. There was lively conversation as everyone mingled and enjoyed punch and a variety of goodies. We appreciate the time the docents give in making our school tours a success.

### Election Day Cake By Stephen Schmidt

In Puritan New England, the traditional English "red letter days"—religious holidays such as Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost as well as seasonal holidays like May Day—were banished, the former considered "Romish," the latter pagan. In their place, the Puritans substituted a roster of purely secular holidays. In addition to Election Day, these included Commencement Day (originally associated with Harvard but later extended to Yale and other universities), Training Day (when colonial militias trained in public), and Thanksgiving Day, which was rooted in the English harvest festival. All of these holidays had spread beyond Puritan New England, to varying degrees, long before the Revolution, though they were celebrated on different days and in different ways in the various colonies. ... And in the evening, leading families in villages and towns, as well as the governor's household in Hartford, the colonial capital, staged Election Day "drinkings." These drinkings were public festivals of a sort, open to anyone who wanted to attend, and like the English festivals after which they were patterned, these drinkings featured a very large cake, or "great cake," which, in its great size, embodied the spirit of the occasion and, of course, provided servings for multitudes of revelers. The typical proportions for great cake outlined in seventeenth-century English cookbooks and cookery manuscripts are a peck of flour, then reckoned at 14 1/2 pounds, about 10 pounds of fruit (mostly raisins and currants), a pound or two of butter, a dozen or so eggs, a couple of quarts of milk, and liquid yeast, various spices, and a little sugar. These proportions produce a free-form or cast loaf. The cake was baked directly on the oven floor, not in a pan, and was about a yard in diameter and a foot high, certainly an impressive cake.



This photo is of the house that Kathryn Hepburn reportedly rented during her summers in Stratford while performing with the Shakespeare Theater. The house was severely damaged in the 1955 Hurricane. The Oyster houses behind it and Bond's Dock were damaged in this year's Super-storm.

**Stratford Historical Society**

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**Stratford Historical Society  
Governing Board Meeting  
January 7, 2013 1:00pm  
Please call for information**

**Contact US!**

**e-mail us at: [Judsonhousestfd@aol.com](mailto:Judsonhousestfd@aol.com)**

**Fax: 203-378-2562**

**On the Web: [www.stratfordhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.stratfordhistoricalsociety.org)**

**Membership Envelopes are included!**