

Elizabeth French Sammis

1861-1963

Born on Old Mill Hill in what was then West Stratford, and is now Bridgeport, on December 8, 1861, to Captain Wilson French and Martha Bouton French, Elizabeth was married June 11, 1885 in the Stratford Methodist church to Frank Russell Sammis. Mr. Sammis died in 1938 at the age of 80.

Mrs. Sammis was curator of the Stratford Historical Society 25 years, from its inception until her 93rd birthday, when she was named curator emeritus. She was an authority on antiques and an avid collector, and was one of the organizers. Of the historical Society.

Mrs. Sammis taught Sunday school in the Methodist church and later in the congregational church. She was the oldest member of the Congregational church and of the Silliman chapter, DAR. She was a past member of the Connecticut Chapter of the Daughters of Founders and Patriots of America..

During World War I, Mrs. Sammis volunteered more than 800 hours to Red cross work and in 1918 she went to Camp Lee, Va., to act as a nurse for her son who was in the base hospital and she remained there five months. Throughout her life she was active in charitable work in the area.

Active in Women's Suffrage society, she assisted in the drive for signatures on the petitions on behalf of women's suffrage which were presented to the then Governor of the state.

She was one of the organizers of the Hollister Heights Sunday school in the 1920's and taught there for many years

She was survived by a son, Donald Stuart Sammis, former town manager in Stratford; a daughter, Mrs. John Warren Richardson of Stratford; six grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Membership

Membership dues must be paid by the end of March. The membership sign up period has been extended. If you overlooked sending in your dues, please do so now before your membership and newsletters stop.

Judson House Repairs

During this past year there has been some water damage to the ceiling in the little bedroom off of the kitchen of the Captain David Judson House. The old ceiling had to be taken down which exposed the old lath work.



On top of the lath was found a tin box.



One of the still visible labels on the box read, in French, "d'amandes bise possede les qualites les plus et donne a la peau finesse et blancheur", interpreted as "possesses the qualities most and gives the skin a smoothness and whiteness". The tin box had nails in it when found. Possibly used when the ceiling was last repair



WAR of 1812 From Wilcoxon's History of Stratford Connecticut 1639-1939

The inhabitants living on the sea coast of Connecticut could see, from any high eminence, British War vessels constantly passing through the sound as New London was in a state of siege and Commodore Richard Hardy's ships were lying in wait for any vessels which might leave the Connecticut or Long Island shore.

Congress had declared war against Great Britain June 18, 1812. The Sound was quiet during the year 1813, but the next year more activity prevailed. Bridgeport was a borough then, but all the town meetings and voting's were held in Stratford. The people were in a state of fear and expectancy of the atrocities of 1779 being repeated here as had been the fate of Fairfield more than thirty years before. Military companies were enlisted ready for emergencies. There was The North Parade Ground for the drilling of the company under Captain Elijah Booth. The North Parade extended from the old North School house northward on the west side of the highway to Mrs. Mary Ann Booth's garden fence, where Stratford's Town Hall stands today.

Elijah Booth was captain of the uptown company and Joseph Stephen Porter was captain of the downtown company. Capt. Booth lived in the vicinity of the Parade ground and the company's rendezvous was nearby. Capt. Porter's home was at the water side and their parade ground was the same one used in earlier days on Academy Hill.

Their first call to assist Bridgeport Militia came on Friday, April 15, 1814. On that day at 5 o'clock in the afternoon, a British frigate and sloop of war had anchored off Bridgeport Harbor. Seen with a glass, the men-of-war were black with humanity in the rigging and on the decks. All the vessels in the harbor were hastily sent above the bridge. General Enoch Foote ordered an alarm to be sent to the surrounding towns for the militia to assemble and they responded promptly. The people were in a great state of fear and excitement. Their own military companies were stationed about the harbor to protect property and quiet the inhabitants. The night was very dark and rainy with a strong north wind blowing.

By Saturday morning more than four hundred militia from nearby towns had collected on the seashore west of Welles Tongue (now Seaside Park) to repulse the enemy. At about ten o'clock the British Vessels hoisted sail, crossed the Sound and sailed eastward.

It is commonly thought the Tories had a good night to ply their unlawful trade in furnishing the British ships with fresh provisions. After a few days the militia companies were dismissed and fear and excitement for the time subsided.

The Bridgeporters again and again petitioned the State for a company of troops and some cannons. A company of forty-five men drawn from the militia were allowed them. In the summer earthworks were built on Welles Tongue and named Fort Defence. The powder-house was built on Golden Hill, not far from State Street.

On Friday, September 28, the second scare occurred when towards evening, a British frigate and brig came to anchor a little to the westward of the harbor. Alarm guns were fired and soon some 300 militia were under arms. The Stratford Militia had enlarged their companies and marched again to the sea shore off Bridgeport. The next morning the two vessels got under way, sailed across the Sound and came to anchor on the Long Island Shore. The militia of Long Island were called out but the two vessels sailed in a short time to the eastward and the companies were dismissed. But the British came back at night and captured nine or ten vessels from Setauket Harbor and carried them away. After a few days the Stratford Militia were again dismissed and returned to their homes.

It was necessary to keep the militia companies ready for any emergency. The men were of all ages from 17 up to 50. It was an attractive site to watch them drill on the green then, as it is now. The fife and drum was an inspiring life in the quiet town..



The Stratford Star - Thursday, February 28, 2013

Flag flies above historic burial ground - by Greg Reilly, Editor

One of the charms of Stratford is its history, which dates back to its founding in 1639. Now a major piece of historical ground downtown is proudly adorned with a new flagpole and American flag.

The Congregational Burying Ground, established in 1672 and walled in behind Sterling House and the Stratford Library, had its first flagpole installed in January thanks to Stratford resident Todd Lovell and the Congregational Burying Ground Committee. The group funded the 34-foot pole and erected it on the property, which is owned by the First Congregational Church of Stratford on Main Street.

Lovell said it is fully appropriate for the nation's flag to be raised where veterans from many of America's wars were laid to rest.

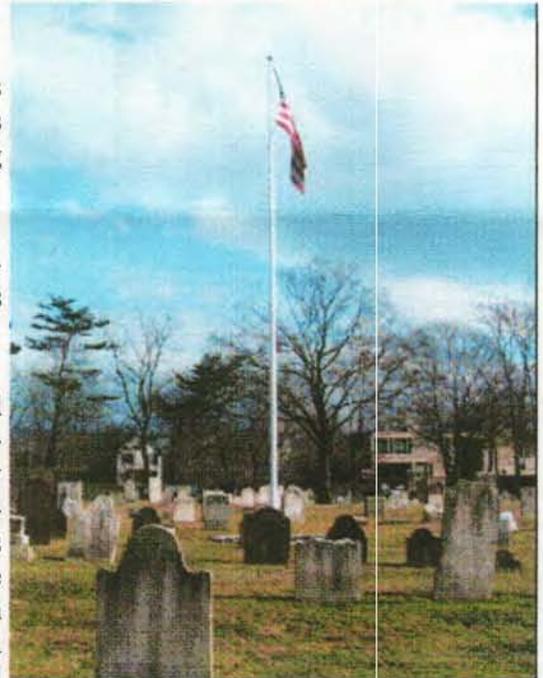
The cemetery, which the Stratford Historical Society says was referred to over the centuries as simply the burying ground, was the second burying ground established in Stratford, following the original on Elm Street at Mac's Harbor.

Records show 982 burials were listed as of 1906. The cemetery was closed to full interments in 1935, but a vault for urns containing cremated remains has niches available today.

Lovell's wife, Carol, is Director and Curator of the Stratford Historical Society. She said a walk through the cemetery, including reading the headstones, provides insight into the history of Stratford. Among those whose final resting place is the burying ground are Moses Wheeler, 1698, age 100, ferryman across the Housatonic River and namesake of the 1-95 bridge over the river; Capt. David Judson, 1761, age 61, militia; Capt. Gideon Tomlinson, 1766, age 35, fought at Ticonderoga; Lt. William Thompson, 1777, age 35, killed at the battle of Ridgefield; and Gideon Tomlinson, 1854, age 75, lawyer, member of Connecticut legislature, speaker of the House of Representatives, member of Congress, Governor of Connecticut, and U. S. Senator.

Carol Lovell said gravestones in memory of early sea captains and others who were lost at sea in Stratford's early days also are present. A full listing of burials and headstone inscriptions may be found at the Stratford Historical Society on Academy Hill.

Todd Lovell noted that the material used for gravestones continually changed over the centuries and that sandstone, slate, marble, and granite are all used in the burying ground.



Blizzard of 2013 vs. 1978 and 1888

By Greg Horan

So, we have had some amazing snowfall totals from the Blizzard of 2013 on Friday into Saturday. But just how does this compare to past notable blizzards? Many people consider the Blizzard of 1888, also known as the "Great White Hurricane," to be the standard for how all other storms were measured! It was considered the worst blizzard in the state. The next storm that was considered to be most remembered was the Blizzard of 1978! Below I will summarize the Blizzards and provide a comparison.

1888 Blizzard - (March)



Highest snowfall totals: 45" in New Haven and 50" Middletown.

Drifts: Reported up to 20 - 40 feet.

Temperatures: Dropped from the 40's to the single digits.

1978 Blizzard - (February)



Highest Snowfall Totals: 24" New Haven, 36" Eastern CT.

Drifts: Reported up to 18 feet.

Temperatures- Teens/20's.

2013 Blizzard - (February)



Higher Snowfall Totals: 34" New Haven, 36" Oxford, 38" Milford

Drifts: Reported 8+ feet.

Temperatures- Dropped from the 30's to teens.

Conclusion:

In looking at these three storms, it appears that the Blizzard of 2013 will fall into number 2 status. Average accumulations exceeded 2 feet and many approached 3 feet in central CT. The Blizzard of 1978 will come in as number 3 status with average accumulations just a few inches less. The Blizzard of 1888 will remain number 1 with the most snowfall accumulations.

If you look at just New Haven though, 2013 had 10" less than 1888, but 10" more than 1978! So overall this Blizzard of 2013 was quite impressive!

As far as impacts, both 1978 and 2013 were quite similar as far as many motorists being stranded on the road and in their houses for a few days. Of course in 1888, there were no cars, and people were out throughout the storm. Temperatures were colder and many more deaths resulted and drifts were much higher, due to very strong winds!

On Sunday April 28, 2013, 2:00 p.m. at
 Christ Episcopal Church Hall, 2000 Main Street Stratford,
 CT
 The Stratford Historical Society Presents:

One Family's Civil War

A program based on the Civil War Letters of Captain Wilson French, 17th
 Connecticut Volunteers and his beloved wife Martha Bouton French and their
 journey through the generations.

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Upcoming Events: Call for Information

April 29 - Governing Board Meeting: 1 PM

Gen.. Membership Meeting:s 7 PM

May 24 - Ash Creek Band

Sept 27 - Civil War - Keith Miller

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.

The best we can do about the past is to keep the memories alive!