
Stratford Historical Society >> UPDATE

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

Volume XV Issue 5

May 2013



Capt. David Judson House c 1750

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

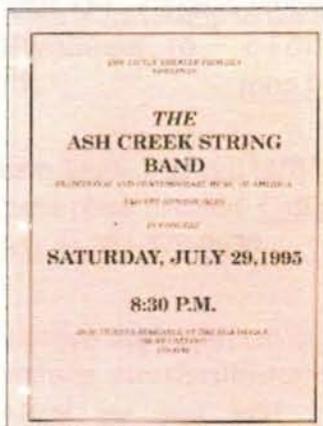
Friday, May 24, 2013 - 7:00pm

Christ Episcopal Church

2000 Main Street, Stratford

The Ash Creek String Band

Ash Creek String Band has been playing an eclectic blend of "old time" string band music since 1974; roots music before it was known as roots music. The trio continues bringing its special blend of tight harmonies and creative, tradition inspired arrangements featuring fiddle, 5 string banjo, guitar, mandolin, dulcimer and a host of other string and rhythm instruments to audiences throughout the northeast. Ash Creek delivers good music, good humor and good times.



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



Book of Remembrance

Donations have been made in
Memory of **T.R. Beardsley**

Given by:

Howard R. Beardsley

T. R. Beardsley, Jr.

Ruth E. Parker

Memory of **Jane Clausen**

Given by:

Doris Fariska

Kathie Lamir

Phil Santa Maria

Memory of **Elden Dustin**

Given by:

Joe Dimenna

Memory of **Elden & Rosamond Dustin**

Given by:

Michael & Susan Richardson Curry

Memory of **Dave Guion**

Given by:

Robin & Chris Mojcik

Scholarships

This year the Society is proud to present \$2,000 scholarships to three outstanding students from Stratford. The students had to submit a personal statement reflecting their interest in U. S. history, personal references and their current GPA.

The recipients are :

Brian Murray - Bunnell H. S.

Brendan Wardlow - Notre Dame H. S.

David Wiegand - Bunnell H. S.

The awards will be presented at our May 24th general meeting.

Ice Cream Social

The Stratford Historical Society is looking for vendors for our Ice Cream Social September 8, 2013, hours 12-4 on a Sunday with a rain date of September 15.

We would like some children friendly booths that offer a craft for children to make. We also are looking for booths that would be of interest to adults. Please submit a brief description of you craft.

Send to Stratford Historical Society, PO Box 382, Stratford Ct. 06615 or e-mail us at judsonhousestfd@aol.com

Spots are \$25

Preparing for Visiting School Groups

Aiding Dolores Hoctor with placing the house in order were docents Dimenno, Elias, Esposito, Firisin, Griswold, Guman, Kamenitsky, Kurmay, Minaudo, Mojcik, Rivera, Siksay, Sirois, Stockman and Stone.



Seen here are Marie Guman, Dolores Hoctor, Joe Dimenno, Elizabeth Rivera and Barbara Firisin.

(Stratford News

Thursday 18, 1987)

The Day They Moved The Railroad Station by *Lew Knapp*

If, on a summer morning in 1905, you stared down the track to the west, you would have seen coming toward you not the morning accommodation train, but the station itself. It was moving day on the New York New Haven & Hartford. Way back in 1848, the first tracks were laid, across a covered wooden railroad bridge, through the fields, past the tannery to Main Street, and on through West Stratford to Bridgeport. The wooden Gothic depot stood on the south side of the tracks west of King street, near witch's rock.

A painting by Edward Lamson Henry shows the busy scene when a train from New Haven arrives, in the 1860's. The baggage car has just been loaded with wooden tubs of oysters, Albert Laing's strawberries, and Meachen's wild ducks, for the New York market. Stockbroker John Benjamin is already seated in the parlor car, and his driver is busy trying to keep his rearing horses from backing the carriage into a carter's wagon. Behind the station, the up-country stage is already loaded and Frederick Beach's driver Bill Freeman is taking the empty phaeton home.

In 1872, the Consolidated Road, officially named the New York New Haven & Hartford, was formed, and consolidated it was. The main line was all double tracked by now, and all competition was stopped or bought up. The state legislature was in effect a tool of the railroad. Turnpikes were killed, steamship lines were bought or bankrupted, and even the trolley lines were all owned by the railroad. If you traveled or shipped, it was by the Monopoly.

The service was good, though. In 1889, the trains brought more than 10,000 people to Stratford's 250th anniversary celebrations. By 1891, the townsmen gathered along the track late each afternoon to watch as the crossing gates were lowered and the famous White Train dashed through. Its Pullman cars were painted white with trim of gold, and as it streaked through the evening moonlight of eastern Connecticut it was known as the Ghost Train. It was the first train to travel from New York to Boston in six hours.

By 1900, the railroad was being four tracked and elevated to eliminate grade crossings. The last section to be

completed was the Stratford - Bridgeport stretch. President Charles Mellen ordered that a new four track lift bridge be built across the river to replace the existing steel swing bridge. Today, that new bridge is a candidate for national landmark status.

To raise the track while trains kept running was an engineering challenge. Gravel was dug from pits and hills near the river, and hauled in little narrow gauge gravel cars to be dumped along the right of way. Often only one track remained in operation. As the fill appeared new tracks were built upon it and the grade level tracks torn out. The viaduct at the center was built in stages, of brownstone probably from quarries at Portland. Its first flood occurred before it was finished..

When the new grade was done, the job of moving the station to Main Street began. Men were giants in those days. First they jacked up the building onto cribbing several feet high. Then, shutting down rail traffic for several hours, they slid the station sideways onto two flatcars. All of this was done with grease, rollers, crowbars, horses and curses. Now a little yard engine was coupled onto the cars and the peculiar train backed slowly up the track followed by every man and boy in town. After crossing the new King Street viaduct and Main Street viaduct, the process was reversed until the depot stood on its present site, where once Judge Fairchild's house had been.

Across the four track right of way a new west-bound station was built. The inner tracks sped limited trains like Federal Express and Merchants Limited on their way and served the freights bound for Cedar Hill beyond New Haven. The outer tracks were used by local "varnish" of two or three coaches drawn by little chuffing 4-4-0's and local freights shunting cars for hours to spurs and sidings.

In 1913 Charles Mellen electrified the line and bankrupted the railroad.

And we've all forgotten the day they moved the station.

History Camp



History Camps

July 8-12, 2013 9:00-12:30

"Stepping back through time at the Judson House"

What was life like in Stratford during the 1700's?

The camp program portrays home life during colonial days. Butter making, candle dipping, weaving, school work with quill pens and Native American study are only a few of the topics and activities included in the program.

The campers will receive training to enable them to conduct tours of Judson House in colonial attire. Family members are invited to the Judson House on the last day of camp for the campers graduation when they become a member of the Junior Stratford Historical Society. A tour of the Judson House will be given by the new Junior Society with refreshments following.

FOR STUDENTS: Elementary (entering 4th-6th grade) Middle and High School

COST: History Camp Week \$125 per child and one adult membership to the Stratford Historical Society \$20 per family.

Space is limited, so call early to reserve a place in camp. **Call the Society at 203-378-0630**

Application can be printed from our website: **stratfordhistoricalso-ciety.org**

A SECOND AND NEW SUMMER CAMP:

July 22- 26, 2013 9:00-12:00.

'Exploring Historical Topics'

Each day a separate historical topic will be explored and discussed, with a related hands -on project. See our website: **stratfordhistoricalso-ciety.org** for application and contact information. The topics for the week will be:

1. Museums and how they are run. - Collections: where they come from and how they are maintained. After studying our porcelain collection each camper will make their own Canton plate, which will be glazed and fired.
2. Slavery - Slavery in the South and in the North, a Confederate re-enactor will tell his views on slavery. The Emancipation Proclamation and a discussion of our own views today.
The underground railroad, what it was, where it went and how.
3. Native Americans - We will study Native American displays and artifacts in the museum. We will learn how the Algonquin Indians lived and will touch on other Indian Nations. We will discuss the French and Indian war and King Philip's War.

For our hands-on project we will make dream catchers and sand paintings.

4. Paintings - What can we learn from studying paintings of people: Their station in life, what were their lives like, the period they lived, etc. For the hands on project we will create a self portrait of ourselves that tells something about who we are.
5. Walking Tour - We will go on a walking tour of our town to see historical sites and learn about famous people from the area.

“The 9:45 a.m. Accommodation Train at Stratford, Connecticut”



- painted by *Edward Lamson Henry* hangs in the Metropolitan Museum. A bit fanciful in background, it reflects the spirit of the time.

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On the Web: www.stratfordhistoricalsociety.org

Upcoming Events: Call for Information

June 24 - Governing Board Meeting: 1 PM

July 8-12 & 22-26 History Camps

Sept. 27 - Gen.. Membership Meeting: 7 PM

Civil War - Keith Miller