
Stratford Historical Society >> UPDATE

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

Volume XVIII Issue 1

September 2014



Capt. David Judson House c 1750

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Friday, September 26, 2014 - 7:00pm

Christ Episcopal Church

2000 Main Street, Stratford

“Rails to Back Trails”

Presented by Sue DelBianco



Sue DelBianco, a local historian and author, will talk about the history of the development of the train line through Trumbull and Newtown, its impact on commerce and transformation into a hiking/biking trail.

When Sue was a kid growing up in Trumbull, she tramped through the woods and camped out with friends inside Parlor Rock Park, once part of the vast holdings in the Pequonnock River Valley.

Parlor Rock Park was a destination for thousands of Bridgeporters in the late 19th century looking for escape on a hot summer day. It featured a carousel, dance hall, skating rink, swimming hole and a spot where visitors might rent rowboats for the day.

"The trail has always had a certain mysterious aura around it. It wasn't so much spooky as it had this cache of a hidden, unknown past that I've gotten more and more curious about as I've gotten older," DelBianco said. "I knew that there had been a swimming hole there as a kid. But the rest of its history -- that the railroad built Parlor Rock as one of the country's earliest amusement parks -- that I had no idea of. It was the railroad's way of driving commerce and giving people a reason to get on the train, get out of the city, go to what was then the country and spend money."

DelBianco is the author of "Rails to Trails - A Journey Back in Time."



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



Join Us for the Celebration on Sept. 20 & 21

The Stratford Historical Society will host an Early American Festival in celebration of the town's founding in 1639. **Our hours on September 20th will be from 11:30-5pm, and on the 21st from 9-4:00,**

The two-day event is **FREE TO THE PUBLIC**, and will start with a parade on Saturday that will begin at Paradise Green at 10:00 am and continue down Main Street to the War Memorials on Academy Hill. There speakers and other invited guests will say a few words.

Then, on the society's grounds, Revolutionary War, Civil War, native American and pirate reenactors will be encamped. They will be demonstrating on Academy Hill at scheduled times, and in their camps hold demonstrations of the skills needed by a moving army.

Period crafters will demonstrate various other crafts such as weaving and spinning. Many of the handmade crafts can be purchased.

The Captain David Judson House, circa 1723, will be open for tours given by docents in 18th century attire. The Catharine Bunnell Mitchell Museum on the Society's grounds will be open for tours.

Walking tours of the historic district will be given free during the day.

Christ Church will be giving tours of their burial ground on Academy hill.

Live music will be presented on the Society grounds by the State Troubadour Tom Callinan and the Hearthside Waits. They are sure to entertain with their colonial and patriotic songs. Food supplied by Vazzano's Four Seasons will be available. Their menu has a variety of items that will satisfy all age groups.

Admission is free, however we ask that a non perishable food item or a package of baby diapers be donated to help the Sterling House Food Bank.

Founding Family Descendants

Descendants of the first seventeen families will be meeting at about noon, following the parade, at the Stratford Historical Society's flagpole to kick off the two day celebration of the town's founding 375 years ago. Reverend Rawls of the Congregational Church will say a few words. In 1639 the Reverend Adam Blakeman brought the first seventeen families here to begin a new life in Stratford.

Daniel DiGiugno, a descendant of William Judson, and Dick Steele, a descendant of the Curtis family, will raise the flag together in honor of this special occasion.

Riverlights

The 7th Riverlights Housatonic Boat Parade is set for Saturday Night, September 20th at nightfall. As many as thirty boats, decorated in lights and airing music of various themes, will slowly parade down the river from the Route 1/I-95 bridge. The parade will continue to Knapp's Landing where the boats will turn around and head slowly back to their home ports.

All proceeds from entries and sponsor fees will be donated to St Vincent's SWIM Across the Sound.

"Lew" Knapp 1923-2014

Though physically in retirement for a number of years, the product of his labors in researching and recording town history have continued to be drawn upon. He joins in prominence past notables in the field, Samuel Orcutt and Wm. Howard Wilcoxson. More of the Lew Knapp story when we feature a 2007 interview with him in our November issue.



Sister Cities Visit August 10



History Day in Stratford was the Sunday subject for the Sister Cities visit. It began with an early morning walking tour of the historic area of town around Academy Hill led by Sandy Rutkowski, Assistant Curator of the Stratford Historical Society. The walk was followed by a stop for a continental breakfast at Sterling House. Following an ecumenical service at the Congregational Church and a luncheon at Christ Episcopal Church the guests and some host family members toured both Judson House and Perry House.

The large group of over a hundred people divided into two groups. Half went to Perry House and half to Judson House. A trolley provided transportation between the Houses and midway through the program, the groups switched.

Judson House guided tours were provided by docents Barbara Firisin, Joanne Gallagher, Peggy Haborak, Laureen Pekar, Carolyn Shannon and Nancy Sirois. The emphasis for the Historical Society tour was colonial life as manifested by the architecture and artifacts of the Judson House. Mary Evers and Joe Dimenno were available in the Museum to explain exhibits. Pam Hutchinson and her docents discussed the history of the Perry House. All docents enjoyed answering the many questions asked by the visitors from Stratfords of the World in England, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Our Education Committee

The Education Committee has been responsible for welcoming and arranging recent tours of the Judson House for a group of Chinese students, the visitors from our Sister Cities, and by a Church group. It will also be scheduling docents to staff the House on Saturday and Sunday during the Early American Festival, and for the Curtis Family Reunion visit in October.

Additionally, the training of new docents and scheduling of school tours continues.

Status of the Corsair Restoration



Curtis/s Family Society

The Society will be celebrating its 75th anniversary at the Trumbull Marriot Hotel over Columbus Day weekend, Oct. 10-12. Starting with a reception Friday evening at the Marriott, activities will continue in the Stratford area into Sunday and possibly Monday. While at the Judson House, the Curtis Family Society will present us with the Mathew Curtiss ledger of the accounts of Mathew Curtiss, a painter. His daughter who inherited the ledger wrote her family history therein.

Executive Curator & Director Carol Lovell

Assistant Curator & Director

Sandy Rutkowski

THE PROPOSED SLATE OF OFFICERS FOR 2014-2015

PRESIDENT	Shirley McCormack
VICE PRESIDENT	Todd Lovell
RECORDING SECRETARY	Carolyn Shannon
CORRESPONDING SECRETARY	-open-
TREASURER	Robert Hctor

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Molly Bailey Dillon 2012-2015

Joseph Dimenno 2012-2016

STANDING COMMITTEES (Chairperson - 1st Name Listed):

Buildings/Grounds	Todd Lovell, Joseph Bonitatebus
Education	Dolores Hctor
Finance	
Garden	Dolores Hctor
Hospitality	Pam Hutchinson
Hosts & Hostesses	Joseph Laput
Library	Gloria Duggan
Membership	Carol Bogacz
Newsletter	Dick Steele
Programs	Gail Liscio
Publicity	
Scholarships	Shirley McCormack

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

To cast your vote, please use the mail-in ballot printed and return it to the Office before October 16, 2014. If you wish to nominate a candidate or work on a committee, please come to the September 26, 2014 meeting.

STRATFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY **2014-2015 ELECTION BALLOT**

_____ FOR ALL CANDIDATES, OR

_____ FOR ALL CANDIDATES EXCEPT _____.

NOMINATIONS FOR:

POSITION _____	NAME _____	_____
POSITION _____	NAME _____	_____

MEMBER'S NAME _____

Humphreys House Visit

Nine docents from the Stratford Historical Society toured the Derby Historical Society's David Humphreys House on August 15 in exchange for a visit made by their docents to Stratford earlier in the season. Peggy Haborak, Dolores Hctor, Pam Hutchinson, John Kaminitsky, Gail Liscio, Laureen Pekar, Eileen Salamon, and Ray and Tina Vermette took a guided tour through this historic house to view its structure, observe its furnishings and learn about David Humphreys and the town's history. During school tours given to Derby fifth graders some rooms are used for hands-on spinning, weaving and food preparation. Two of the fireplaces can be used for open hearth cooking.

Unlike the Judson House, the Humphreys House was eventually divided into three apartments that remained until the Derby Historical Society acquired it in 1947 when it was restored to its original configuration. Like the Judson House, the furnishings are a collection of colonial artifacts. David Humphreys, for whom the house is named, joined the colonial army at the beginning of the Revolutionary War. During the course of the war he rose in the ranks to become aide de camp to General George Washington.

After the docents toured the house which is presently undergoing extensive exterior repairs, they took a guided tour along Elm Street to learn about other historic houses nearby and their colonial inhabitants. Derby was once a colonial seaport. Large sailing ships could navigate the Housatonic River inland to the point where the town is located.





In response to our query as to the location, when installed, of this recently acquired sign, Ernie Lagoja of New Haven advises us that it was fabricated by the Connecticut Department of Transportation March 22, 1962 and was placed along Route 8 Southbound at the north entrance from Shelton to Stratford.

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Upcoming Events: Call for Information

Oct. 27 - Governing Board Meeting: 1 PM

Nov. 21 - Gen. Membership Meeting: 7 PM

Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin

- Emma Palzere-Rae