
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 21, 2014 - 7:00pm

Christ Episcopal Church
2000 Main Street, Stratford

Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

Presented by Emma Palzere-Rae

Harriet Beecher Stowe's anti-slavery novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, was published in 1852. The novel sold 300,000 copies within three months and was so widely read that when President Abraham Lincoln met Stowe in 1862, he reportedly said, "So this is the little lady who made this big war."

Stowe was born in 1811, the seventh child of the famous Congregationalist minister Lyman Beecher. She studied at private schools in Connecticut, then taught in Hartford from 1827 until her father moved to Cincinnati in 1832. She accompanied him and continued to teach while writing stories and essays. In 1836, she married Calvin Ellis Stowe, with whom she had seven children. She published her first book, *Mayflower*, in 1843.

While living in Cincinnati, Stowe encountered fugitive slaves and the Underground Railroad. Later, she wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in reaction to recently tightened fugitive slave laws. The book had a major influence on the way the American public viewed slavery. The book established Stowe's reputation as a woman of letters. She traveled to England in 1853, where she was welcomed as a literary hero. Along with Ralph Waldo Emerson, she became one of the original contributors to *The Atlantic*, which launched in November 1857. In 1863, when Lincoln announced the end of slavery, she danced in the streets. Stowe continued to write throughout her life and died in 1896.

Portraying Harriet Beecher Stowe, Ms. Palzere-Rae brings to life the background of this remarkable anti-slavery story. Ms. Palzere-Rae has over 20 years experience working in all areas of professional theater including performance, artistic administration, playwriting and producing. Her interest in historical characters caused her to serve as a docent and tour guide at both the Mark Twain and Harriet Beecher Stowe homesteads in Hartford.

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



A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT by Shirley K. McCormack

A special thank you goes out to Sandy Rukowski for the wonderful job she did in arranging The Early American Festival. It was a blazing success and everyone had wonderful comments about the re-enactors and all the other events that were offered to the public, especially the hatchet throwing. Sandy put in a lot of time and effort on this project and we are all proud of the job she did.

Another special thank you goes to Dolores Hoctor and all the docents for the successful school tours that were given in the Spring and the Fall. Dolores and Joe Dimenno did the scheduling and the docents made all the tours really very realistic for all the children. A lot of planning goes into this project and we all say "THANK YOU!"

Donations Reported by Curator



This tool chest was donated by Lori and Joe Laput. The wooden toolbox belonged to Baille Russell Nicol who brought the toolbox to the United States from Scotland. Born in Scotland June 21, 1880, he lived in Stratford and died in Springfield Mass. Oct. 19, 1951.



A large painting was donated by Mrs. Mary Ann Peter of Hillsborough, NC. The painting is believed to be of Mrs. Samuel William Johnson and her son, William Samuel Johnson. In research done by Lewis Knapp in 1999, the child is the great grandson of "our" William Samuel Johnson of Stratford.

- and, a donation from the Curtis/s Family Society of the ledger and accounts book of Matthew Curtis for the years 1819 - 1864.

Note - James Bond inherited a barrel of letters and documents of a Civil War ancestor and, with Bill & Glenna Jo Christen, has initiated a "Soldiers in The Barrel" research project. More on this when learned.

Lewis G. Knapp, Stratford's Town Historian

Past President of the Stratford Historical Society, Lewis Knapp, who passed away in May aged 91, was a man of many accomplishments and wide-ranging interests. He is remembered most vividly as the Town Historian and author of In Pursuit of Paradise: History of the Town of Stratford (1989) and Stratford and the Sea (2002). The Historical Society's archives were the source of much of the information he shared in these volumes. A few years ago, Dick Steele interviewed Lew with the intent of learning more about Knapp's background, his dedication to community service, and his particular interests as they all contributed motivation for writing these books. At the time, Lew was busy editing a Stratford postcard collection, since published as Postcard History Series, Stratford and sold for the Historical Society's benefit.

Lew was a native of Stratford. His ancestral roots in the state reach back into the 1600's with many connections to early Stratford townfolk. For years he lived on Shore Road in the vicinity of Bond's Dock on the edge of the Housatonic River, gateway for the town's settlers. Raised in a family involved in activities on the river and in the booming 20th Century industry of both Stratford and nearby Bridgeport, it was natural for Lew to have a vested interest in the well being of the town and to develop a deep knowledge of its history.

After graduation from Stratford High School in 1940, Lew took a temporary job at United Aircraft Corporation that turned into a 45 year career with their Sikorsky and Chance Vought subsidiaries. His tenure at Sikorsky was interrupted by two years of Army Air Corps service, during WW II. He retired in 1985 as Chief of New Product Engineering and holder of design patents for the S-61 Sea King, S-62 (H-52), and S-65 (H-53) helicopters. His mentor Igor Sikorsky was one of the few who called him Louie and escaped his ire.

Lew did not wait on retirement from Sikorsky to devote time to town programs. In the '70's, he served on the Greenway Steering Committee, and he was Conservation Commission Chairman providing leadership for the adoption of a town-wide plan in 1978. He also initiated dedication of several parks, including Paradise Green. He guided the Department of Environmental Protection in designating various tidal wetland areas and in the expansion of Roosevelt Park.

An avid boater since boyhood, Lew was a licensed captain to the 50 ton level USCG, a past Commodore of the Housatonic Boat Club and past Commander of the Housatonic Power Squadron. After retirement, he and his wife Vivienne enjoyed trips through the English Canals. He sailed on a sloop from Amsterdam down the Rhine, then later across the North Sea to England. Most memorably, he and Vivienne traveled on a German container ship around the world taking much the same route (and visiting many of the same ports) that early Stratford shipmasters took traveling to China via the Cape of Good Hope and across the Indian Ocean. This latter voyage related to the extensive research for his Stratford and the Sea book.

The Stratford Historical Society remains grateful for Lew's foresight in preserving civic memory. Lew Knapp developed and chaired the Historic District Commission, ultimately establishing the Academy Hill Historic District in 1988 and its subsequent expansion. Knapp had written that the Soldiers and Sailors' monument was dedicated Oct. 3, 1889, the year of the town's 250th anniversary.

Thus Lew Knapp's longtime interest in local history, commitment to conservation, as well as his personal interests and expertise provided the impetus for writing the two books as well as numerous articles on town history and environmental concerns published locally and cited internationally in the works of others. In Pursuit of Paradise... and Stratford and the Sea are available at the Judson House office.

In September Stratford celebrated the 375th anniversary of the founding of our town.

The society did their part by holding the Early American Festival. Many descendants of the first families came to pay tribute to their ancestors. They gathered around the flagpole to open the event. The Reverend Rawls, from the Congregational Church representing the first minister Reverend Adam Blakeman who led the first settlers here, gave opening remarks. The flag was raised by Dick Steele a descendant of the Curtis line and Daniel Diguino a descendant of William Judson.



**- and The Curtis/s Family Society visited us in October
during their 75th anniversary celebration.**



About Our School Tours

Third Graders Learn about Life in Town in the Past

School tours were in full swing at the Stratford Historical Society in October. Third graders came from all the Stratford Schools to learn about life in Colonial Stratford. Using all the beautiful artifacts that furnish the Judson House as a backdrop, they learned what life was like in the eighteenth century.

The things people used in their homes, how they provided themselves with heat, water and plumbing, food and clothing were all very different from the way we provide these things for ourselves today. A major emphasis of the tour is the lives of children and how much the family depended upon them to help with the constant work needed to keep a household functioning.

There were many opportunities for children to sample an earlier time such as creating pomanders, listening to the music of a historic piano forte, handling tools like bellows, brushes and whisks, wool cards and shuttles, and experimenting with various wood joints used in the construction of early houses put together without nails.

The second part of the tour took place in the Museum building. There the children learned about two of Stratford's noteworthy women, Goody Bassett and Gloriana Fulsom. In an amazing contrast, children learned about the tragic episode during which Goody Bassett was tried as a witch as opposed to the princess story of Gloriana Fulsom, the blacksmith's daughter, who married a Scotch baron and ended up living like royalty in a palace far across the sea.

The education of children was not neglected during the colonial period. Children found out how important it was to the early settlers to send their children to school to learn to read and write even if books and paper were scarce. One room school houses in town had many of the same rules as the schools of today, but punishment for disobeying was much different.

The children left with a better understanding of life during an earlier time in their town and an appreciation for an organization like the Stratford Historical Society that has been able to provide them with this experience.



OUR HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE

December 6, 2014 11:00-4:00

**at the Captain David Judson House
967 Academy Hill Road, Stratford, Ct.**

Presented by the Stratford Junior Historical Society

In Celebration of Stratford's 375th Anniversary

Admission: adults \$3 - seniors \$2 - children \$1 - under 5 free

Free admission for family if unwrapped child's toy is donated to be given to Sterling House.

The Captain David Judson House

Built circa 1750 by David Judson on the site of his grandfather's 1639 stone house. Christmas would not have been celebrated by our Town's early settlers; religious custom forbade it. Early accounts record December 25 as any other day. Christmas celebrations became popular in the Victorian era.

In this spirit we have decorated the house for the 2014 Christmas season. We have tried to remain true to our forefathers' resourcefulness, using spices, nuts, berries and greens to add a festive touch to our holiday tour.

As you tour our historical house look for displays that tell the origins of many holiday traditions.

For the children there is a special Holiday Scavenger Hunt. Find all of the items listed on the sheet in the house and receive a candy cane.

Please also visit our Catherine Bunnell Mitchell Museum and visit with Santa from 11:30-2:30.

Holiday music will be provided by The Hearthside Waits from 2:00-4:00.

Our Gift Shop is open and has many delightful holiday gift selections for adults and children.

For more information go to stratfordhistoricalsociety.org or call 203-378-0630

Our Colorful Autumn Surroundings



Flower Bed



Mums



Herb Garden

Photos courtesy of Mary Wickum who provided the Sister Cities photo in our September Newsletter

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Upcoming Events: Call for Information

Dec. 6 - Holiday Open House 11am - 4pm

Jan. 5 - Governing Board Meeting - 1pm

Jan. 30 - General Membership Meeting - 7pm

"Oh How We Laughed"

Humor in the 18th Century

By Fran Hendrickson

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

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