

Stratford Historical Society

Update



Capt. David Judson House c 1750
Catharine B. Mitchell Museum

VOLUME XX, ISSUE 2

NOVEMBER 2015

MARK THE DATES:

- Historical Society Governing Board Meeting Monday, January 11, 2016 at 1:00pm
- January's General Membership Meeting: January 29th, 2016
- Society offices will be closed November 25th-27th and December 23rd—January 3rd. The offices will reopen on January 4th.

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November's General Membership Meeting

Humor in the 18th Century

Presented by Fran Hendrickson

"Oh, How We Laughed!"

Friday, November 20 - 7:00pm

Christ Episcopal Church
2000 Main Street, Stratford

Whether in shared events or by social comment, witty wonders abound in Colonial America.

Enjoy a tongue-in-cheek peek into 18th century life and humorous events. "Nothing has changed - only the names to protect the guilty!"

Growing up in Lincoln, Massachusetts, Fran was surrounded with the history of the Revolutionary War period. Lincoln is between the famous towns of Lexington and Concord, and was the site of Paul Revere's capture as he rode from Bos-

ton to alert sleeping residents of the British invasion.



Fran Hendrickson

Fran studied piano from the ages of 4 - 15 years old. It was painful to play in front of others

so Fran was a living room musician. Many years later she brought her brother's accordion home and began to teach herself to play. Not long after that, she answered a poster from a dance leader looking for musicians. The poster was placed in the grocery store by Chip Hendrickson! She always told him, "See, it pays to advertise!"

Chip sent her to learn to play for dancing with Marshall Barron of English Country Dancing fame and later introduced Fran to Will and Kate Tressler of The Jackson Pike Skiffers band. Fran was accepted into their group and continued to play with them for the next 17 years.

The meeting is open to the Public. Refreshments will be served — Bring a Friend!

President's Message

I want to take this opportunity to thank all our members for helping to make this a very successful year for the Stratford Historical Society. We have all worked very hard to help preserve the history of our town. We have quite a few things planned to make next year

an even better year and with all your help, I am sure we will be successful.

From our Jr. Docents all the way up to our Governing Board, we all need to work together to be a bigger and better Society.

I want to wish you all a very Happy Thanksgiving and a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Shirley McCormack

Tremendous Classroom Needs



Nichols School 1915



Garden School 1915

One hundred years ago, school building was THE major priority of the town. School rooms could not be built quickly enough to meet the needs of Stratford's rapidly expanding school age population. Between 1914 and 1915 Stratford's school age population grew nearly 12% to 2,364 students. The year before the growth rate was nearly as dramatic.

Naturally, that student population boom put great pressure on the existing school buildings

and required Stratford to build many more schools. The idea was to place schools where the school age children lived.

An additional school building was considered by the Town Council for Garden Street in March 1914. As 1914 progressed, the Council realized that one additional school would be insufficient to meet the classroom demands. A second school was authorized for Nichols Avenue by late

summer in 1914.

Construction began on both schools in November of 1914. Neither school was completed before the school year began in 1915, but both opened by November.

At the same time, a large addition was authorized for Franklin School (opened in 1910) which was completed in time for the start of the 1915 school year. Sedgewick School had just been completed in 1904 and Eli Whitney School was built in 1913.

1915 Prices & Dollar Value

\$100 dollars in 1915 would buy what \$2,325 buys today. Average salary in 1915 was \$687 annually.

- Pork chops cost \$0.125 per pound in 1915. Pork chops' average cost is \$3.99 per pound today.
- Bacon cost \$0.40 per pound in 1915. Bacon's average cost is \$5.59 per pound today.
- Peanut butter cost \$0.125 per pound in 1915. Peanut butter's average cost is \$2.91 per pound today.
- Eggs cost \$0.27 per dozen in 1915. Eggs' average cost is \$2.11 per dozen today.
- Potatoes cost \$0.01 per pound in 1915. Postatoes' average cost is \$0.67 per pound today.
- Rice cost \$0.042 per pound in 1915. Rice's average cost is \$0.69 per pound today.
- Price of a new car in 1915 was \$2,005. Average new car price today is \$31,252.
- Mens' shoes cost \$3-\$5 in 1915. Mens' shoes average cost today is \$70-\$116.

September's Membership Meeting

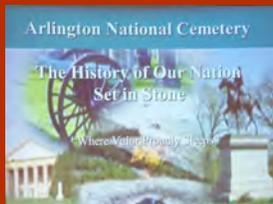
Carolyn Ivanoff led us on a visual tour of the founding and evolution of Arlington National Cemetery. Carolyn's presentation took us from cemetery's inception as the former home of General Robert E. Lee through today's use of the cemetery as a special reminder of how our society has

changed and adapted to racism, war and terrorism.

Carolyn's video presentation may be viewed in its entirety at arlingtonstratfordhistoricalsociety.info.

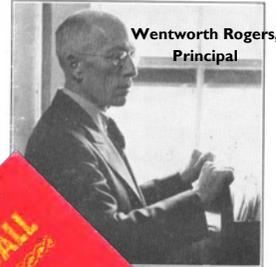
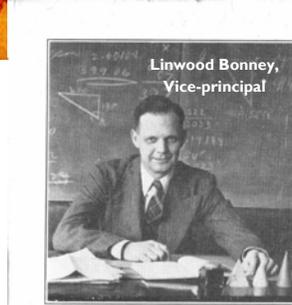
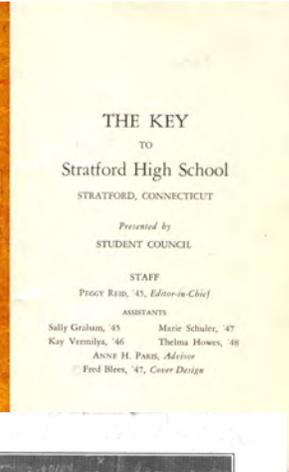
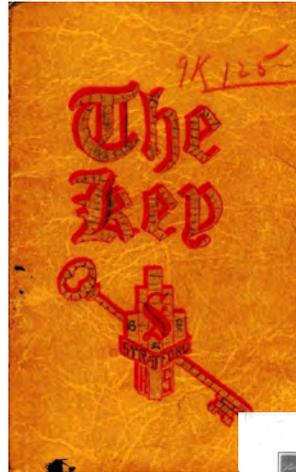
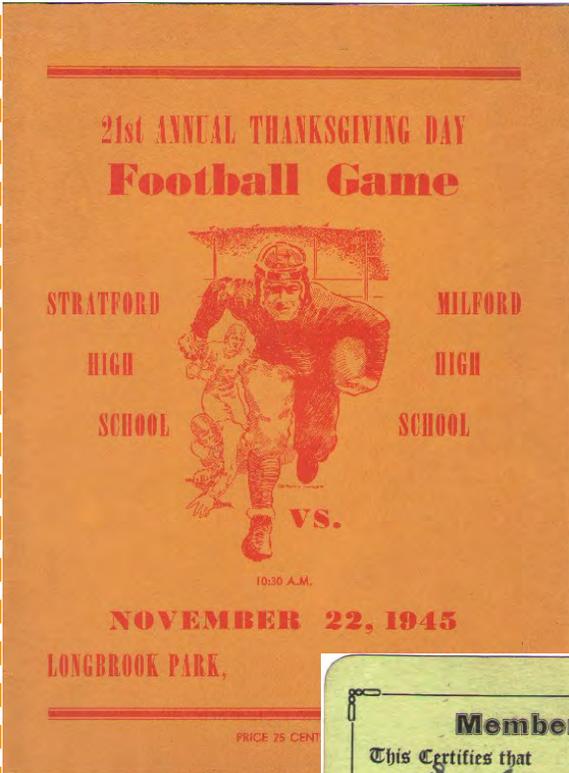


General Montgomery Meigs designer of Arlington Cemetery and the U.S. Capitol building



Carolyn Ivanoff presented "Arlington National Cemetery: The History of Our Nation Set in Stone"

Back-to-School Time



As we move forward through one more school year, we thought you might enjoy this retrospective look back at Stratford High memorabilia from a few decades ago.



Living History



Ginny Reinhard, Jean Spangenberg, and Carol Lovell



Dolores Hocter and Ginny Reinhard



Piano by Astor & Co. of London at Judson House, Stratford, CT. Photo by Jim Steinhart, Copyright 2014 all rights reserved (Ref

On Friday, August 28 the docents of the Stratford Historical Society gathered in the Museum for a Pot Luck Lunch and program. After a lunch of salads, baked beans, Swedish meat balls, rolls, homemade bread and butter and a platter of cold cuts with lemonade and iced tea followed by an assortment of incredible desserts, the presentation began.

Ginny Reinhard of the Orange Historical Society and daughter of Garo Ray shared with the group the remarkable odyssey of her father, Mr. Ray, who restored the eighteenth century Astor Pianoforte that has graced the West Room of Judson House since 1971.

He was an Armenian growing up in Turkey at the time of Armenian persecutions. In 1916 he was given a scholarship to the Robert

College of Electrical Engineering, an American institution in Istanbul run by the Presbyterian Church where he spent six years learning everything he could for the ultimate goal of becoming an American citizen.

After receiving an award of \$250 he made his way to Greece and then to America. Speaking and writing perfect English and able to play the organ and piano as well as being a trained engineer, he arrived in New York City in 1923 working at various jobs in the communications field as well as engineering. He later married, raised a family, bought a house in Stratford, Connecticut and in it built an organ.

He visited Judson House in the nineteen fifties during its renovation and there he discovered an antique pianoforte in pieces once owned by the Johnson family of Stratford, loaned to Mount Vernon where it remained for over fifty years, and eventually returned to Stratford and the Historical Society.

After a year of fabricating, assembling, refinishing, and tuning it to playable condition, he returned it to Judson House where it is now on display in the West Room. Although it is no longer played, there is a tape (CD) that represents how it sounded at the time of its restoration and that is played for visitors.

Garo Ray Restorer

Garo Ray restored the eighteenth century Astor Pianoforte in the West Room of the Judson House.

To the right is a photo of Garo Ray in 1973 playing the Pianoforte he restored on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Stratford Historical Society .



When you are a fiddler, fiddle you must - Ouka Tutt. So, the Stratford Historical Society urged me to play the 1776 Astor piano, I restored for them the previous year, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Society, open house. (1973)

Historical Walk

On a cool, early, and beautiful Saturday, October 17th, the Society hosted a walk through parts of “ye olde Stratford”. Led by Sandy Rutkowski, our walk led us over Academy Hill, behind St. James, down Elm Street, and up West Broad Street to the Perry House. Along our walking route we paused in front of several of Stratford’s historic sites and houses including the



General Walker House

Captain Pulaski house, the David Plant House, and the General Walker House. The walk concluded at Christ Church Burying Ground where several costumed volunteers shared the stories of many of those laid to rest in the Burying Ground.

At the Burying Ground, two actors, portraying Benjamin Franklin and Dr. William Samuel Johnson, described their roles in the formation of our country and their roles in writing and editing the Declaration of Independence. Our intrepid walkers stuck with it to the very end and seemed to thoroughly enjoy their nearly 3 hour journey.

Many additional photos of our walk may be found on our newsletter website at walkingtour.stratfordhistoricalsociety.info.



Sandy Rutkowski leads several walkers

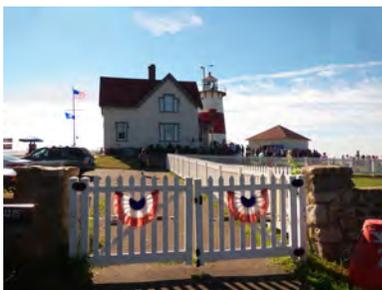


Reverend Samuel Johnson

Stratford Point Lighthouse Tour

Not since 1971 has the U.S. Coast Guard offered tours of the Stratford Point Lighthouse.

On a very early Saturday, warm and sunny, August 8th, hundreds of highly motivated, and deeply interested, visitors arrived at the Lighthouse for a Coast Guard tour. The Coast Guard had set up several informational displays and placed several uniformed tour guides around the property.



The Lighthouse is being offered for sale by the Coast Guard and its ultimate disposition is not yet known.

At the completion of the interior tour of the Lighthouse, guests were required to wash their hands with soap and water to remove any lead residue they may have come in contact with while touring the Lighthouse. The view from the upper deck was spectacular! A full, unobstructed 360 degree view of Stratford and Long Island Sound would, likely, be impossible from any other location in town.

All our Lighthouse photos may be viewed at lighthouse.stratfordhistoricalsociety.info.



The US Coast Guard has stated they intend to offer additional tours of the Lighthouse in the near future.

Dateline Stratford October-November 1950

VEAL SCALOPINI
WITH WINE SAUCE, \$1.25
DOMENICK'S
140 Boston Ave., Stratford
Ample Parking Space
PHONE 7-9180

The standings:
COUNTY CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	P	PP
Harding	3	0	0	6	1.000
Stamford	1	0	0	2	1.000
Danbury	3	0	1	7	.875
Central	4	1	1	9	.750
Greenwich	2	1	0	4	.667
Stratford	1	3	0	2	.250
Norwalk	1	3	0	2	.250
Fairfield	0	3	0	0	.000
Bassick	0	4	0	0	.000

DISTRICT TITLE

	W	L	T	P	PP
Central	3	0	0	6	1.000
Harding	3	0	1	7	.875
Fairfield Prep	1	0	1	3	.750
Bassick	0	2	0	0	.000
Fairfield	0	2	0	0	.000
Stratford	0	3	0	0	.000

October 1950 - A stiff battle opposing the recommendation that the Nichols Av. fire station be abandoned is in the offing.

October 8, 1950 - Stratford - on Housatonic, not Avon - got into the act this week with a bid for Lawrence Langner's Shakespearean theater.

The idea delighted Langner, elder statesman of the Theater Guild and owner of the Westport Playhouse. He could take over a 'famous product, name and all.

Up to now Langner has been Westport-minded. Seven acres there, back of the Vaast garage, have him reciting.

October 22, 1950 - A stiff battle opposing the recommendation that the Nichols Av. fire station be abandoned is in the offing. The proposal was contained in a survey series of suggestions made by the National Board of Fire Underwriters, all of which was released by Town Mgr. Harry Flood this week.

October 29, 1950 - Local contractors fuming over the way the job of clearing the Nichols Av. Junior High School site was handled. They claim Neil Ahearn got the job with-



VETERAN FULLBACK . . . Hunk Hannah, who has been a key backfield man for the Stratford Rockets ever since 1946, will be expected to do much of the "Substantives" ball carrying this afternoon when they face the Derby Lafayettes at Longbrook Park.

The Stratford Rockets were enjoying a fabulous 1950 season. Hunk Hannah, above, starred as full-back.

out enough bids being heard . . . Joe Janosko told a Fourth District rally this week that any checkup investigation of town departments will be taken care of pretty soon and Wolf's offer for a committee isn't necessary.

November 5, 1950 - The Chance-Vought property was quietly purchased by the Marcus Hirsch Company of Bridgeport for \$2 million. No one even suspected the Hirsch Company was in negotiations for the property. Subsequently, it was learned that Hirsch was working on a deal for United Aircraft to lease the property from them.

November 12, 1950 - The talk about the open air theater caused plenty of furor earlier this year and has cropped up again with much hush-hush conversation. Word is that the defeated proponents are plenty mad about the way the matter was handled and it's hinted that a few names will be revealed regarding failure to push for town okay.

Serve Ice Cream
For Thanksgiving
IN A DELICIOUS
ICE CREAM CAKE
MANY SIZES FROM \$2.00 UP
WE ALSO HAVE FRUIT TARTS and ICE CREAM ROLLS
Cake and Ice Cream Party Brick
Top Old Year Thanksgiving Dinner with Any of These Beautifully Decorated Ice Cream Creations
25c EXTRA FOR DRY ICE PACKING
PHONE 7-1066
CUTRUFELLO'S CREAMERY
1318 Barron Avenue Stratford

Playing at the Stratford Theater 1950

STRATFORD

"OUR VERY OWN"

— with —
Ann Blyth
Farley Granger
Joan Evans

- | | | |
|---------------|---------------------------------|--|
| October 8th | My Friend Irma Goes West | Marie Wilson, Dean Martin, Jerry Lewis |
| October 15th | A Life of Her Own | Lana Turner, Ray Milland |
| October 22nd | Sunset Boulevard | William Holden, Gloria Swanson |
| October 29th | Rocky Mountain | Errol Flynn, Patrice Wymore |
| November 5th | Fancy Pants | Bob Hope, Lucille Ball, Bruce Cabot |
| November 12th | Union Station | William Holden, Nancy Olson |
| November 19th | The Glass Menagerie | Jane Wyman, Kirk Douglas |
| November 26th | Breakthrough | David Brian, John Agar, Frank Lovejoy |

Mercer Coal Towers Demolition

After closing in 1979, the Mercer Coal property sat empty and decaying. In 2011, the Town of Stratford foreclosed on the property for non-payment of property taxes. The Town, then, sought, and won, a grant to bring down the remaining buildings and towers on Stratford Avenue. On Wednesday, October 7th, Town contractors began demolishing the towers. Today, the towers are gone and the site will be redeveloped.

Mercer Coal was founded by Charles James Mercer in 1923. In

1928, Charles relocated the company to Stratford Avenue across the street from St. Michael's cemetery.

The company continued in operation under the leadership of the Mercer family for many years. Its product lines evolved into home heating oil and furnace servicing as homeowners converted their furnaces from coal to oil. At the time the Town seized the former coal company property, the property was owned by 1037 New Haven Avenue, LLC.

Photos and video of the towers



being demolished may be found on our Newsletter website at <http://mercer.stratfordhistoricalsociety.info>.

Demolition of the coal towers began October 7th, 2015.

Society News

Since our September newsletter went to press, there has been a flurry of activity at the Stratford Historical Society. First off, several visitors came to the Society offices seeking research assistance. Our visitors came from Texas, Virginia,

Florida, New Hampshire, Maine, North Carolina, Ohio, and, naturally, Connecticut.

Updated Society By-laws were distributed to the membership. After reviewing the By-laws, mem-

bers returned their unanimous endorsement via newsletter ballot.

Lastly, our membership unanimously endorsed the nominated slate of Society officers for the 2015-2016 fiscal year.

“The Wee Explorers” is a new pre-school program being offered in January by the Society.

New Society Program: The Wee Explorers

The Stratford Historical Society will be starting a new program, **THE WEE EXPLORERS**, for pre-schoolers ages 3-5, in January 2016.

Each session will be one hour long, about a theme to do with a holiday or an event.

There will be a story or songs and a related activity.

An adult must accompany the child and remain with them for the duration.

The cost is \$5 a session. You may pick and choose those programs that you would like to attend when they come available.

However, you must call to reserve a spot before the event since space will be limited.

Events, with the time and dates, will be announced on our website at www.stratfordhistoricalsociety.org and on our Facebook page at Stratford Historical Society.

We will also advertise each upcoming class in the Stratford Star and the Connecticut Post. Feel free to call us for info at 203-378-0630.

Please join us and enjoy the activities with your child, grandchild or other special child in your life!

Electronic Newsletters

Much is happening with your Society's newsletter. First off, should you wish to receive a copy of your newsletter through e-mail, please send a request, including your e-mail address, to newsletters@stratfordhistoricalsociety.info.

Secondly, we have been busy scanning and archiving copies of past editions of our newsletters. Our archive, at present, stretches back to 1999. We're working on having all past newsletters online, soon, back to the 1960s. You may view all newsletters online by clicking the word "[NEWSLETTERS](#)" on the left-hand side of our Home page.

Thirdly, each month, as soon as the newsletter is published, we will make the previous month's newsletter available online. You may view the

previous month's newsletter at currentnewsletter.stratfordhistoricalsociety.info.



Our newsletter archive may be viewed by clicking on the word "[NEWSLETTERS](#)" on the left hand side of our website's home page.

Furthermore, there's only so much information you can make available in a printed newsletter. Therefore, we will be augmenting our printed newsletters with additional online information including photos, slide shows, documents, and the like. All additional content for each newsletter will be listed on that month's newsletter's webpage. You may, alternatively, view our specially prepared newsletter slideshows, directly, at slideshow.stratfordhistoricalsociety.info.

Lastly we would appreciate your thoughts, feedback and ideas for future news stories. Please e-mail your newsletter thoughts and recommendations to newsletters@stratfordhistoricalsociety.info.



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

www.stratfordhistoricalsociety.org