



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

Stratford Historical Society UPDATE

VOLUME XXII, ISSUE 2

NOVEMBER 2017

MARK THE DATES:

- November's General Membership Meeting: Saturday, November 18th at 1:00 pm at the Stratford Library
- Governing Board Meeting Monday, January 8th at 1pm.
- January's General Membership Meeting: Sunday, January 28th at 2:00 pm at the Stratford Library

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Tree with Provenance	2
Docent Luncheon	2
Holiday Medallion	2
Dateline Stratford Oct-Nov 1952	3
Stratford "Characters" John Seiler	4
Arnold's Effigy Burned	4
Mollison Movie	4
Neighborhood Visit	5
Grave Marking Event	5
September Meeting	5
Business Member Reception	5

November's General Membership Meeting

November 18th, 1:00 pm, Stratford Library Lovell Room, 2203 Main Street

There will be a cartoon presentation on Saturday, November 18 at 1:00 PM, by Douglas Smith the award-winning editorial cartoonist at HAN Network, whose weekly cartoons appear in *The Stratford Star* as well as HAN Network's other 11 newspapers.

Doug will be discussing his career as an editorial cartoonist. The talk will include displays of his work, a PowerPoint presentation, question and answers, as well as drawing for the audience.

A resident of Stratford for two decades, Smith was raised in Wilton and has been drawing professionally since 1984. He is a four-time recipient of the New England Newspaper & Press Association's (NENPA) award for editorial cartooning as well as a recipient of two awards from the Connecticut Society of Professional Journalists (CTSPJ).



Douglas Smith—photo from Doug's Facebook page.

Doug was awarded first place from the CTSPJ for his editorial cartoon in response to the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting.

Doug hosts a weekly segment called "Drawing Conclusions"

All meetings are free and open to the general public. Please bring a friend! Donations are gratefully accepted.

on HAN Network's online news broadcast "CT Pulse." During the segment, he discusses how the politics, news, and trends of the day influence his work. Doug is also a successful freelance advertising illustrator and the author of six Kindle Edition books available on Amazon.

Doug's original artwork has been exhibited widely in solo and group exhibitions at venues such as the Edith Wheeler Memorial Library in Monroe, the Wilton Library, the Trumbull Library, the Plumb Memorial Library, and the Derby Library. In addition to HAN Network Newspapers, Smith's cartoons have also appeared in publications such as, *The Champlain Valley News* (Burlington, VT), *Graphic Arts Monthly*, *The Journal Inquirer* (Manchester, CT), *The Meriden Record Journal*, and *The Whittenburg Door* magazine.



Please Renew Your Membership

If you've not already done so, and to remain an active member of the Society continuing your membership benefits, please renew your membership



Civil War Re-enactors Visit Stratford

The 14th Connecticut Volunteer Infantry came to Academy Hill on September 23rd. The men and women from the 14th setup camp and demonstrated cooking, camping, bed roll making, fire arms, drilling, signal flag handling, and musical techniques from the Civil War era. Toys from the era were on display as were tools used by doctors and

dentists of that era.

Carolyn Ivanoff, who has addressed our Society many times over the years, also setup a display of several artifacts from the 19th century.

You may view photos and videos of this year's Civil War Re-enactment by visiting:

<http://cwd.stratfordhistoricalsociety.info>.



Children practice drilling with wooden "fire arms."

A Tree with Provenance



By Dolores Hoctor
Monday, the 23rd of September saw the demise of a huge copper beech tree that had graced the grounds of the Stratford Historical Society for almost 150 years. Early that morning demolition equipment was in place on the grounds – the bucket crane to the wood chipper, a huge truck to catch the chips, a dumpster for the large branches, the machine with claws to lift boughs into

the dumpster, the saws and the Razor's Edge crew.

How did this majestic tree meet such a fate? A recent injury caused by a neighboring tree that grazed it and broke some branches, exposing a section of this dichotomous tree that was obviously dead. An arborist came to remove the damage and feed the roots, but to no avail. Insects could be seen boring into the trunk and bark fell off in chunks. The

remaining branches on the good side leaned precariously toward the back of the Society's Museum.

The events and activities will continue without the protective shade of the copper beech. Its stump remains and a seedling the tree produced will take its place to flourish and stand witness to the continuing growth of the Stratford Historical Society.

Docent Luncheon

By Dolores Hoctor

The last Thursday in August found thirty-five volunteers of the Stratford Historical Society assembled in the Museum for the Annual Thank You Luncheon. Food was provided this year by the Open Door Tea shop at Paradise Green. Pam Hutchinson took charge of the food, Barbara Firisin handled the set-up and Dolores Hoctor issued the invitations.

The assembled volunteers enjoyed a lunch of finger sandwiches, quiche and three kinds of tea including 'Liberty Tea', a staple of those patriot colonists who refused to pay the tax on tea. Desserts were

prepared by volunteer docents Gail Liscio, Carolyn Shannon, Judy Kurmay, Liz Rivera, Marie Guman, and Mary Ann Vlahac.

Carol Lovell received special recognition from the volunteers for her years of untiring service to the Stratford Historical Society. She is a life member who has served as docent, president, research assistant to authors of Society publications and accessions chair responsible for accepting and cataloguing the Society's enormous collection of eighteenth century artifacts. She is presently Curator and Director of the organization.

Ray Vermette was again

called upon to speak about an illustrious early citizen of Stratford. This time his subject was William Samuel Johnson, son of Stratford's first Anglican minister, Samuel Johnson. Ray recounted his early life in Stratford, his father's influence on his early education and William Samuel's struggle to break from his position in the Anglican ministry to the broader field of law. Another struggle began with the approach of the Revolutionary War when he believed in reconciliation with England in order to avoid the horrors of war.



Volunteer Luncheon in the Catharine B. Museum August 31st.



Holiday Medallion Available

This new medallion is second in a series that The Society is producing in an effort to increase public awareness of our connection to the community and the history of Stratford.

This second medallion is co-

sponsored by the Police Benevolent Association. They will be available for purchase at the next general meeting and at the Historical Society for \$10.00 each.



Oronoque Schoolhouse

Flag Raising at Oronoque School

Bridgeport Evening Standard

October 24, 1892

Stratford

The Oronoque schoolhouse was the scene yesterday of very interesting flag raising exercises. Miss Bertha Clark and her pupils, with the officers and speakers, were seated on a platform in front of the building. Mr. George Booth, as master of ceremonies, announced

the following programme: Singing, "Marching Through Georgia;" essay, "America in 1492," by Nellie Cook; recitation, Abbie Tomlinson; recitation, Emma Cook; recitation, May Palmer; Columbus recitation in costume, by Frank Cook; "America in 1892," an essay by Grace Blakeman; "Columbia," Bessie Palmer; singing, "Columbia the Gem of the Ocean;" flag drill, pupils; singing, "Star-

Spangled Banner;" recitation, "Red, White and Blue," by four girls, Flag raising. Two little pupils May Palmer and Nettie Cook, performed in ceremony. Addresses were then made by J. H. Blakeman, S. T. Palmer, Wilfred M. Peck, Selah G. Blakeman and the Rev. Joel S. Ives.

Dateline Stratford October - November 1952

Sunday Herald

October 5, 1952

Stratford Griddler Breaks Leg in Game

Robert Jasenec, 18, of 412 Second Hill Lane, Stratford, a member of the Stratford High football team, suffered a broken leg yesterday afternoon at the Danbury-Stratford game at Longbrook Park.

Jasenec was taken to Bridgeport Hospital in the Stratford Police ambulance.

Sunday Herald

October 12, 1952

Merchants Smiling

More than 100 merchants will put on their brightest smiles this week when the second annual Old Fashioned Trade Week gets under way.

This is the time when the stores want to introduce themselves to new customers—that's the reason for the smiles. All merchants are offering tempting tidbits in the way of bargains. Most stores have dressed themselves up to carry out the "old-fashioned" idea. Old-fashioned prices are hoped for but not expected.

Sunday Herald

October 26, 1952

86 Towns To Use Vote Levers for First Time

Eighty-six Connecticut towns—more than half of the state's communities with nearly one-eighth of the state's population—will use voting machines on Nov. 4 for the first time in a state or national election.

Until July 1, only towns of 10,000 population or larger had to employ voting machines, though smaller towns might use them. But a law passed by the 1951 General Assembly outlawed the paper ballot alto-

gether.

Sunday Herald

October 26, 1952

Property Owners Gripe Over New Zoning Rules

Property owners in Stratford were raising an audible grumble this week against the new regulations for garden apartments.

They want to change the zoning rules so that no such development may be approved without a public hearing. As the law now reads, no hearings of any kind need be held before a permit is issued. And the garden apartments may go up in any residential zone.

The Stratford News

November 13, 1952

Lordship Addition Okay Brings Grants to \$68,699

Official approval of the Lordship school addition has been received from the U.S. Office of Education.

This means that the Town of Stratford will receive \$68,669 in cash from the Federal government toward the construction of the addition.

Sunday Herald

November 16, 1952

Thruway Meeting Tests Sentiment

Still one more protest meeting against the proposed thruway route will be held tomorrow evening in the Municipal Building, but not many persons are expected to be present.

The meeting, called by Councilman Nathan A. Dahl, is intended to "sell" the Southern route as opposed to the one recommended by State Highway Commr. G. Albert Hill.

Stratford is credited with more thruway meetings than any other

town or city along the route, and opinion in the town is sharply divided.

The Stratford News

November 27, 1952

The Architect's Drawing of the Second Hill School:

To be constructed of brick, the building will be all on one floor. The main section will have two wings, to house the primary department in one and the intermediate grades in the other. The kindergarten will occupy part of the administration section...The new building is to have 12 classrooms and a kindergarten room, plus a utility room which may be used for meetings, a gym or possibly for cafeteria purposes.

The Stratford News

November 27, 1952

Historical Society Meeting Friday

The regular bi-monthly meeting of the Stratford Historical Society will be held in the Boothe Memorial Park on Friday, November 28 at 8 o'clock, Harold M. Sturges, newly elected president, will conduct the business meeting.

W. Earle Hawley, the program chairman, has announced that Harold C. Warren of Stratford will speak on "Historic Virginia." His talk will be illustrated with Kodachrome slides. Mr. Warren has traveled extensively throughout this area as well as in many other locales.

Following the program, a social hour will be held. Mrs. W. Earle Hawley, hospitality chairman, announces the hostesses for the evening to be Mrs. Stanley Johnson, chairman, assisted by Marjorie Netleton and Mrs. Theodore Fichtel.



The booth at the Stratford Chamber of Commerce Exhibit, "The Hat Shoppe," was designed by the Stratford Historical Society. **The Stratford News**, October 23, 1952.



Susan Hancock and Stephen Kochiss with pumpkins at John Pirhala Farm. **The Stratford News**, October 23, 1952.

Now Showing October - November 1952

October 5th **O. Henry's Full House**

October 12th **Son of Paleface**

October 19th **Crimson Pirate**

October 26th **Just For You**

November 2nd **Somebody Loves Me**

November 9th **The Miracle of Our Lady of Fatima**

November 16th **Springfield Rifle**

November 23rd **Operation Secret**

November 30th **The Big Sky**

Jeanne Crain, Farley Granger, Anne Baxter

Bob Hope, Jane Russell, Roy Rogers

Burt Lancaster

Bing Crosby, Jane Wyman

Betty Hutton, Ralph Meeker

Gilbert Roland

Gary Cooper

Cornel Wilde, Steve Cochran, Phyllis Thaxter

Kirk Douglas



Stratford Theater from the 1944 Stratford High School Log

Stratford Characters - "Gramp" Seiler



Donald and Dolores Piskura were the children John Seiler assisted and then was struck by a car. Photo from the *Sunday Herald*, October 18, 1942.

One of the many things that makes Stratford a uniquely interesting place is the individuals who live amongst us who perform extraordinary acts of heroism in the course of their "ordinary" daily lives. John Seiler was one such exceptional Stratford resident.

John Seiler was born in Germany in 1868. He moved with his wife and her two sons to Stratford in the early 1920s. John opened a small grocery store with a gas pump at 603 Ferry Boulevard.

John clearly loved the neighborhood children and they loved him in return. He would often give the children four pieces of candy for a penny when his asking price was three pieces for a penny. In return, the children affectionately nicknamed him "Gramp."

Donald and Dolores Piskura went to Seiler's store to buy a soda. Worrying about their

safely crossing back over Ferry Boulevard, John guided them across the street, as he had done for many other children, and was struck and killed by a delivery truck on his return trip back across Ferry.

The neighborhood boys were so distraught, they took up a neighborhood collection for Seiler's widow. The boys collected \$25 which, converted to 2017 dollars, equals \$389.41.

The Stratford News

October 23, 1942

By Hollis Stevenson

A Real Neighbor — Did you know that Stratford lost one of its best citizens last week? Maybe, you never even heard of him. But ask any child who lives in the neighborhood of Ferry Boulevard about John Seiler.

Our friend ran a small grocery store and gas station pump on the Boulevard, from which business he and Mrs. Seiler made a fair living.

Neighbor Seiler, who was 75, used to see the kids across the street safely, as he feared for them the way speeding cars and trucks try to beat the light at that spot.

John had just returned piloting two of his charges to the other side when a truck got him. Brother Seiler is no more! All I can think of at the moment is rationing of gas and rubber, speed limits, shortages of war materials etc.

Oh, what's the use of fighting a war across the water when such unnecessary things like this happen in our own neighborhood? Air raid wardens you're wasting your time in your tireless efforts for Civilian Defense.

A beautiful tribute to Seiler ran in the *Bridgeport Herald* on October 18, 1942. You may read the tribute at seiler.stratfordhistoricalsociety.info.

Benedict Arnold Burned in Effigy

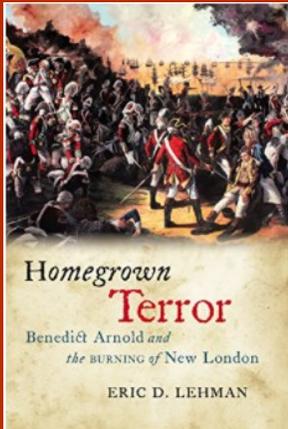
Perhaps one of the most enigmatic people from Connecticut's history, Benedict Arnold, had indirect ties to Stratford through such Revolutionary War heroes as Generals John Lamb and David Wooster.

The September issue of *Connecticut Magazine* highlights a festival held annually in New London, *The Burning of Benedict Arnold's Effigy*. You may read all about this festival at

[arnold.stratfordhistoricalsociety](http://arnold.stratfordhistoricalsociety.info)

[.info](http://arnold.stratfordhistoricalsociety.info).

You may also be interested in a recently published book, *Homegrown Terror*, which focuses on Arnold's burning of his hometown, New London, after turning traitor to the British in 1779. Much has been written, examined and speculated on concerning Arnold's treachery. However, Eric Lehman's treatment of Arnold is unique in that he portrays Arnold as a homegrown terrorist in terms more familiar to us in the 21st century.



Benedict Arnold's effigy is paraded through the streets of New London and set on fire each September.

Photo by Vincent Scarano

Mollisons' Life on the Silver Screen

James and Amy Mollison took off in their airplane, *Seafarer*, from Pendine Beach in Wales, on July 22, 1933 on the first leg of what was to be a new long distance flight record. They never made it to New York and crashed in Great Meadows Marsh just short of the runway at what is known today as Sikorsky Memorial Airport.

Many Stratfordites are familiar with photos of the crashed *Seafarer* resting with its wheels skyward in the marsh. What is much less familiar is the actual

story behind the Mollisons.

In 1942 a British filmmaker documented the Mollison's story in a movie entitled *Wings and The Woman*. The world was led to believe Amy was behind the controls when the *Seafarer* crashed in the marsh. Actually, the Mollison's story would have had a more successful ending had Amy been at the controls. James was flying the *Seafarer* at the time of the crash and many believe it was James' bravado and derring do that led to the unfortunate downing of the

Seafarer.

Jim and Amy were taken from the crash scene to the Bridgeport Hospital. The *Seafarer* was scuttled never to be flown again. Jim was widely viewed as an inveterate womanizer whom Amy divorced not long after the marsh crash.

Both continued to strive for flight fame. Just prior to Amy's last flight, Jim proposed they remarry. Amy accepted immediately setting off on a flight during which she crashed and drowned. You may read the entire story at mollison.stratfordhistoricalsociety.info.



Jim and Amy Mollison in Bridgeport hospital following their ill-fated landing attempt at Bridgeport Airport July 23, 1933.

Neighborhood Visit

By Dolores Hoctor

The Stratford Historical Society hosted a group of ten Senior Citizens from Hall Neighborhood House in Bridgeport for a guided tour of the Judson House and a look at the exhibits in the Catharine Bunnell Mitchell Museum on Tuesday, August 22, 2017. After signing the guest book and photographing each other viewing museum exhibits they went into the House. The tour began in the

West Room, considered the 'company room' because of the fine furniture on display there. As the tour continued the group learned something about the Judson Family, the history of the House and life in eighteenth century Stratford.

Barbara Firisin arranged the tour and Dolores Hoctor assisted in showing the House. All guests were very impressed by the size and quality of the House and the amazing collection of artifacts used

in furnishing it. They were most enthusiastic and eager to spread the word about our house and museum to other organizations.

Groups from all organizations are welcome to arrange guided tours of our facilities to view one of the most beautiful and completely furnished houses in the area, once considered a 'mansion', and to browse the exhibits that include dioramas of the town's history and collections of Stratford related items.



Senior Citizens from Hall Neighborhood House in Bridgeport visit the Judson House.

Grave Marking Ceremony

The Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution were in Stratford on August 26th to repair and restore neglected headstones and graves in Christ Church Burying Ground. A \$10,000 grant for

the work was provided by Columbia University in memory of William Samuel Johnson. A dedicatory program was held at the burying ground which included a history of the cemetery, a reading of the

names of the 18 patriots buried there, and a musket salute. The printed program of the day's festivities may be downloaded from cbg.stratfordhistoricalsociety.info.



Christ Church cemetery gates

September Meeting/Business Member Reception



Library artifacts on display in the Stratford Library Lovell Room at our September 23rd General Membership Meeting.

The new venue at the Stratford Library for our membership meetings proved to be a good choice. Sheri Szymanski, Library Director, gave us a wonderful, illustrated history of the Stratford Library. Sheri also displayed library artifacts from the late 19th century and early 20th century. Refreshments by Pam Hutchinson were enjoyed by all.



L to R: Howard and Chris Aspinwall of Mellow Monkey and Andy and Karla Glad of Glad Graphic Design.

SHS recently held a business member reception which included a visit to the Catharine Bunnell Mitchell Museum and tour of the Judson House. Pictured at the left are Howard and Chris Aspinwall of Mellow Monkey and Andy and Karla Glad of Glad Graphic Design.

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The Mellow Monkey
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Milford Bank
203.783.7000 | 3651 Main St.

The National Helicopter Museum, Inc
203.375.8857 | www.nationalhelicoptermuseum.org

Open Door Tea
203.345.9659 | 3552 Main St.

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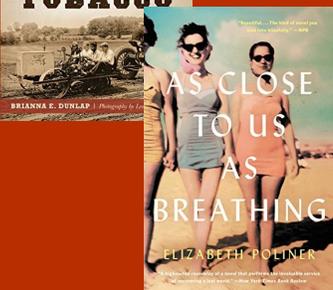
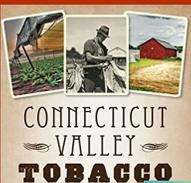
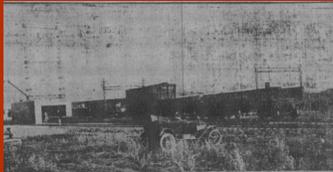


Bridgeport Evening Farmer
December 5, 1917
STRATFORD NOW "BONE DRY" FOR AN ENTIRE YEAR

Bone dry prohibition voted at the annual town election held in October went into effect Monday night at 11 o'clock. The death blow was handed to 13 drinking places located in various sections of the town. Of this number two places have not dispensed with any liquor since Oct. 5 as they did not ask the county commissioners at Bridgeport a month's extension in order to settle up their affairs. They were Joseph Motil of Paradise Green and William B. Tuttle of Ferry Boulevard...



Housatonic Ship Building Co.



The Day Stratford Went "Dry"

Bridgeport Evening Farmer
October 2, 1917
FIFTEEN LICENSES LOST IN STRATFORD THROUGH VOTE TO MAKE TOWN DRY

By voting to be as dry as the Sahara desert, the Town of Stratford has thrown 11 liquor licenses, two club licenses and two drug licenses into the cold world without being worth a cent to anybody. The result of the vote on the license question in the county yesterday shows that Stratford was the only town or city to change from one column into another.

Early reports stated that New Canaan had voted in

favor of license but the county commissioners were informed this morning that official reports kept New Canaan in the dry column for another year.

Danbury, Newtown, Fairfield and other nearby towns which voted, remained the same as last year.

The vote in Stratford has caused a very interesting situation in regard to the saloons on the border between this city and Stratford. There are five life-saving stations, two on Stratford avenue and three on Barnum avenue and the proprietors are preparing to build additions to their bars and make the brass rails longer in order to accommodate the

rush of customers from Stratford.

There is a possibility that the Town of Stratford may remonstrate against these five places. They could take such action on the ground that these saloons being so near the town limits are a detriment to the community.

After Nov. 1 the only places in Stratford where liquor will be on sale will be the two drug stores and there it can be obtained only on a doctor's prescription. It is said a number of men complained today that they had been feeling under the weather lately.

Housatonic Ship Building Co.

Bridgeport Herald
November 25, 1917
Getting Ready to Build Ocean Going Ships In Stratford

The Housatonic Ship Yard in Stratford is one of the best situated ship yards in the country, and when the work of construction has been completed, it will be one of the best equipped.

It has already been provided with one of the finest planing and beveling machines known to the ship industry. There are only three machines of this

type in the United States, the other two being in use on the Pacific Coast. Pneumatic boring machines, planes and hammers will soon be installed.

The structures already erected are the office building, the boiler house and two or three other buildings are in course of construction, and when completed, Manager Hawkins' present work force will be augmented to about 1,500 men.

The yard of the Housatonic Company is an enormous one, covering 42 acres. Those in charge declare that it would be

impossible to find a better location for a ship-yard than this stretch of ground in Stratford.

Ten wooden freight ships of the standard size recently decided upon by the government will be constructed at the Housatonic yard. The Company's facilities make it possible for eight of these ships to be built simultaneously.

A siding which connects with the N. Y., N. H. & H. R. R. has been installed, and this will greatly facilitate the handling of supplies...

Books of Note

Connecticut Valley Tobacco and *As Close to Us As Breathing* are two excellent historical books, one fact and one fiction, recently published by Connecticut authors.

Connecticut Valley Tobacco is the story of the tobacco industry rise, fall, and rebirth in Connecticut. One thoughtful paragraph from the book reads: "The secret to history is that it lies beyond the textbooks for most people. The ability to

visit a region and location directly ... is invaluable. Beyond that feeling associated with the cultural sites is the fact that history does not preserve itself. It is people who preserve the very land that we hold dear—and it is better to hold onto that land in real life than only in our society's collective memories." There is much to enlighten and inform in this uniquely Connecticut history.

As Close to Us As Breath-

ing is a lyrically written tale of Jewish life in Connecticut in 1920s through the 1950s. The setting for the book is a combination of Middletown and the Woodmont section of Milford. Ms. Polander's meticulous crafting of beach scenes from the early and mid parts of the 20th century will have you smelling the sea air and feeling the sea breezes on your cheek. The novel details the changes wrought on family life when tragedy strikes.

Stratford Police Force

Bridgeport Herald

November 11, 1917

Members of Stratford Police Department

Stratford now has a police department. It consists of three uniformed policemen, Chief Nichols, Captain Barnum and Sergeant Smith. For many years the town got along with the aid of constables, with once in a while the assistance of the state police, but today she is taking on the garb of a regular city and any afternoon one can see a patrolman on duty in the center.

James Lalley, the first selectman, discovered that the town had power to have the city properly guarded so the matter was brought before the board and met

with approval. William Nichols was appointed on June 1, and since that time it has been necessary to add two more. H. Brig. Barnum received his appointment [sic], on June 1, and Benjamin Smith the following October 22.

The decision to have a police department was a necessity with the first selectman, as the town's people kept calling him up every time an officer was needed and he found it hard work to get the constables to do their duty without pay. One night matters got so bad that after he had sent two up to the house on complaint of a woman and neighbors that a man was beating his wife, and neither one of the constables arrived there, he enlisted the services of "Bill" Nich-

ols who got busy and made the arrest. That is one of the reasons that Bill is now chief of police.

Since the department was organized there have been 117 arrests, 92 convictions, 11 cases nolle and 7 bound over to the higher court. Since May 10 there have been 104 complaints answered and quite a large assortment of stolen goods recovered, five automobiles, one motorcycle, a number of rubber tires and several tents.

The fire department has been increased in efficiency and places have been filled in the volunteer force made necessary by the draft and under the able work of Chief Judson the police department has had a great deal of assistance by use of the fire apparatus on most police calls.



L to R: H. Brig Barnum, Chief Wm. Nichols, Benjamin Smith



Fire Chief Allan Judson

Stratford Leads in Soldiers

Bridgeport Herald

November 11, 1917

Stratford Leads State in Sending Soldiers Off to the War

In lessons of patriotism the towns of the state can well take a few from the little town of Stratford. Under the progressive leadership of James Lalley, the first selectman, the town is more than doing its bit.

When it became necessary for the town to furnish its quotas for the draft, it was suggested that they be given a proper send off. The matter was broached to the first selectman, but there being no provision made to use the town

funds for such purposes, Mr. Lalley gave the word to go ahead and volunteered to finance the undertaking. The boys were to leave on the following day. However, despite the limited time, eight of the public spirited citizens got together and went to work. At 11 o'clock Corporal Belden started to turn out the Co. L of the Home Guards, and by 1:30 he had all the company together with orders to be on hand at 7 o'clock the next morning. A band was hired, the Boy Scouts were notified, the fire department offered its services and in a short time the work was spread throughout the town and all citizens were invited to take part.

Stratford's quota was to consist of thirty-two. The committee was of the mind that they ought to be provided with lunches. Some suggested pipes and tobacco, others kits. It was finally decided to give them all these to which was added pencils and post cards to write home while en route.

This was not enough. Stratford was unselfish, and Lalley, when informed that the other small towns were included in the quota, decided to include them in the patriotic demonstration, and Wilton, Trumbull, Shelton, Westport, Fairfield and Newtown were furnished with lunches, the same as if they were her home boys...



First Selectman James Lalley at his desk

Stratford Miller's Lower Costs

Bridgeport Herald

November 18, 1917

Stratford Miller Comes to Aid of People to Reduce Cost of Living

James H. Peck of Stratford fails to see why he, an ex-miller, cannot be of assistance in the work of conserving the article of food that the government is most anxious to conserve - wheat, and why, incidentally, he cannot make it possible for the people of this vicinity to live more cheaply.

...Mr. Peck will make three

kinds of table meal, coarse, medium and fine, all of which will be sold at the same price. The coarse meal most conforms to the food administration's ideas, but all three varieties are wholesome and nourishing.

...Peck is making excellent headway in the work of transforming the Beach Power House into a mill. Much of the machinery has been installed and the arrival of the remainder of the apparatus is expected during the course of

the present week. So that the mill is expected to be in operation very shortly.

...Miller Peck will issue directions for the preparation of the various dishes that can be made from cornmeal and the other products which he will manufacture. He will install an experiment range and a baker will be hired to determine the best method of preparing corn and "war" breads.

Read the entire article at flour.stratfordhistoricalsociety.info.



Miller Peck and his mill (below)



National Helicopter Museum



National Helicopter Museum on north-bound side of the Stratford Train Station.



S-76C Commuter Copter



Best Commercial Entrance 2017
1600 Cutspring Road



One of the entries in this year's car show

A recent visit to the National Helicopter Museum caused us to think back to the planning for, and opening of, the Museum. The Stratford Historical Society, particularly Lew Knapp, was very interested in, and supportive of, the Museum's opening. We located the first articles announcing the Museum in our Newsletter back in 1982 and 1983. Those articles are reproduced below. Additional photos of from our recent visit to the Museum may be viewed at vnhm.stratfordhistoricalmuseum.info.

SHS Newsletter
September 1982

NEW MUSEUM IN STRATFORD--With your help there may be a new museum of national importance in Stratford. THE NATIONAL HELICOPTER MUSEUM is currently an idea with much exhibit planning and backing already ac-

complished and a Stratford location. The premise of the Museum is that there is no museum in the nation devoted to the history and development of the helicopter. Stratford, as the location of both Igor Sikorsky's early successes and the present Sikorsky Division of United Technologies, Inc., is a very logical location for such a museum.

SHS Newsletter
January 1983

NATIONAL HELICOPTER MUSEUM Your response to the Sept. appeal from the Helicopter Museum proposed for the south side Stratford railroad station [sic] was marvelous! I have received a copy of the Museum's membership list through Oct., 1982 and find that 32% of the addresses and 55% of the individuals are

members of the Stratford Historical Society! How wonderful! Your support is most appreciated!

If you have now decided to become a founding member of the National Helicopter Museum, you may send your contribution to: The National Helicopter Museum, Inc., 2480 Main St., Stratford, 06497. All contributions are tax deductible. "For \$10 you can help atart [sic] a local cultural institution which will help commemorate Stratford as the Kitty Hawk of the helicopter industry." Please mention the Stratford Historical Society with your contribution.

You may view **The New York Times** article, published in 1983, announcing the opening of the Museum at nhm.stratfordhistoricalsociety.info.

Beautification Committee Awards

For the past 19 years, the Beautification Committee of the Town of Stratford has recognized individuals in town who have successfully endeavored to make their homes and businesses truly beautiful show places. On Thursday, September 21st, in the Council Chambers of Town Hall, the Stratford Beautification Committee

held its most recent recognition awards.

Awards night is always a pleasant time at Town Hall where slides are shown of winning properties and winners are feted with awards and desserts. You may view the entire awards ceremony at sbca.stratfordhistoricalsociety.info.



160 Old Coach Lane

CASC Car Show

Each year, over the past few years, the Connecticut Air & Space Center has held a Car Show Fundraising in the parking lot between the airport hangers and Stanziale's Restaurant. This year the car show was held on Sunday, September 17th.

In addition to the many beautifully restored and maintained cars at the show, the Air & Space Center

displayed their meticulously, lovingly restored Corsair fighter. Additionally, a replica of Gustave Whithead's No. 21 plane from 1901 was displayed by its creator, Andy Kosch.

You may view a slide show of all the scenes from the day at the CASC Car Show Fundraiser at casc.stratfordhistoricalsociety.info.



Restored Corsair fighter plane at the Car Show

Great Pumpkin Festival

Saturday, October 21st, saw many carved pumpkins and costumed children at Boothe Memorial Park. Each October, on the third Saturday, the Great Pumpkin Festival is held. Each year, there are several fun events for children and several town departments and agencies setup information booths for attendees. This year's activities included two falcons, an egg toss, an animal display and handling area, a bounce house, and, perhaps best of all, the children's costume



parade.

The Boothe Park buildings were open and staffed with helpful volunteers. The weather was simply perfect and the leaves of the trees were just beginning to show signs of their colorful Fall glory.

Pictured here are two of the pumpkin carving entries from this year's carving contest. We have several photos and videos from this year's festival which you may view at bmpf.stratfordhistoricalsociety.info.



Piping Plovers

Piping plovers were nearly wiped out across America. By 1986, only 790 breeding pairs remained along the Atlantic Coast. To stem the inexorable march to extinction, piping plovers were classified endangered. Today, perhaps only 2,000 breeding pairs exist along the Atlantic Coast.

Stratford, once the principal breeding ground for piping plovers, has seen very low reproductive rates for about the past 10 years in

the plovers nesting in Stratford. 2017, however, was a banner year for plovers in Stratford. Between Short Beach and Long Beach, 26 plovers hatched and fledged. This is a record high for Stratford!

Since piping plover eggs are beach sand colored, and, since plovers always nest in areas of the beach heavily trafficked by humans, predation of plover eggs and chicks is phenomenally high. US Fish and Wildlife volunteers patrol the

town's beaches during the breeding season to attempt to protect nesting plovers, their eggs, and plover young. These volunteers have made a huge difference in the breeding success of plovers.

With time, dedicated volunteers, and caution on the part of beach goers, piping plover populations may rebound even faster in the future. Stratford's 2017 breeding success is a very hopeful sign!



Photo courtesy of US Fish & Wildlife <https://www.fws.gov/northeast/pipingplover/#>

The "Melonheads" of Roosevelt Forest

By the time you're reading these lines, the "bewitching hour" has already past, and our thoughts are turned from scary Halloween stories to pastoral, epicurean thoughts of Thanksgiving dinners. Before Halloween passes too far into the distant recesses of our stored memories, it seems appropriate to reminisce some of Stratford's "scary stories" of days gone by.

Foremost in our minds when it comes to Stratford hauntings is, quite naturally, the Phelps Mansion where knives and tables inexplicably flew through the air in 1865. Less well known, perhaps, are the stories of the ghostly face that appears in the upstairs window of the Boothe mansion, or the glowing headstone at St. Michael's cemetery.

If, however, you grew up in Stratford in the late 50's, 60's, or 70's, and, you had reason to camp overnight at Roosevelt Forest, you may recall tales of the never seen, but death-dealing, "melonheads"

who frequent the Forest at night.

It's uncertain when tales of melonheads first became part of Roosevelt Forest folklore, but the tales seem to date back to the late 1960's. The melonhead stories have several varied origins.

One origin story tells of some "extra-Puritanical" Puritans who self-exiled themselves from New Haven. Over time, this religiously extra-conservative group produced offspring with melon shaped heads either through inbreeding or Hydranencephaly (also known as "water on the brain").

Another origin story springs from the mental institution in Newtown where a fire in 1960 produced a diversion permitting inmates to escape. Escapees from the asylum setup camp in the woods of southwestern Connecticut existing on forest creatures, and, the occasional human. Their descendants were marked by melon shaped heads.

A third origin story traces to Trumbull where a family accused of

witchcraft sought refuge in the woods of Trumbull, and, over time, produced off-spring with melon shaped heads.

However the melonheads came into existence, they chose several towns throughout the greater New Haven area in which to settle. In Stratford, the melon heads "put down roots" in Roosevelt Forest. The melonheads, due to their appearance, keep hidden during the day and only come out after dark to prey on unsuspecting Roosevelt Forest night-time visitors.

Traditionally, the melonheads have plagued the Boy Scout camps of Roosevelt Forest. Before the Boy Scout camp was situated at its current location, the camp was located nearer to Beaver Dam Road. At either location, the melon heads are rumored to haunt, sometimes murder, unsuspecting, inattentive campers there.



Washington Bridge Re-opens

Bridgeport Evening Standard

October 14, 1867

Stratford

- Travel has resumed over Washington bridge, which is now in good shape, as doubtless the traveling public will be pleased to learn. Smith the dispenser of these invigorating tonics, whose place near the bridge is always open as his heart to receive the wayfarer still lives, ready and willing to wait on his numerous friends. Bass still abound in the vicinity, of the right stripe. Bait and boats furnished as usual.

Bridgeport Evening Standard

November 13, 1867

Milford

WASHINGTON BRIDGE.—About \$1,000 have just been expended in repairing Wash-

ington bridge, and the probability is that the structure has been repaired for the last time. This bridge was built in 1805, sixty-two years ago. It is the only passage across the Housatonic river, from its mouth to Derby, and were it moved, teams would be obliged to go to the latter place, making a distance of about twenty-two miles to reach Stratford and Bridgeport, which now are only respectively one and a half, and seven miles from the river. This bridge should be thrown open to the public free of toll. Bridgeport is much interested in accomplishing this object in order to secure the entire trade of Milford. The road between Bridgeport and Milford is a good one, much more

level and easier to drive over than that to New Haven, and if we understand the feelings of the citizens of M. they had much rather trade in Bridgeport than elsewhere. But Stratford and Milford are the towns to be the most benefited by making the bridge free, and we trust these places will soon purchase the structure, which can be obtained at a very reasonable price. We are assured that the piers of the bridge are perfectly sound. The price of toll under the present company is about one-half of the legal rate. The road from Milford to Stratford is even now a great thoroughfare, but take away the toll and the travel would soon be largely increased.



Second Washington Bridge from 1809-1868

Bridgeport Evening Standard

November 2, 1867

- The keeper of the Stratford beacon reports that the late heavy storm injured the beacon very much, tearing off the deck and deck beams, and injuring the stone-work.

Bridgeport Evening Standard

October 21, 1867

- A genuine specimen of the Stratford mosquito [sic] tribe can be seen at John Stevens' store on Water street.

“Sore eyes” at Booth’s Hall

Bridgeport Evening Standard

October 26, 1867

Stratford Indignant.

MESSRS EDITORS: - We had a Soiree in Booth's Hall last night. They are called sore eyes—not unfrequently—nor without reason—and this one last evening must have been most emphatically so. A delightful evening was made hideous by demoniac yells, and obscene speeches, at a pitch of voice, which made them easily heard in the private rooms of the neighborhood. These

young rowdies—calling themselves gentlemen, hail from Bridgeport, and it is understood, are mostly *dead beats*, who have run out their credit in that city, and now for fear of the police, come to Stratford. We are always glad to see decent and orderly young men—we do not ask that they be superfine—but the vile low crowds that come up, and swing to and fro between Pendleton's saloon and Booth's Hall, screaming and howling, as if they were demons, we do

ask in mercy to never to see their faces more. And it will be well for them to remember that we shall not ask them again, if reported, but, apply those sterner remedies, which the law gives, and an outraged community can find, to rid themselves of so terrible a curse. Forbearance has well nigh ceased to be a virtue in this case, and men are ready for the fray if necessary.

Stratford, Oct. 26, 1867.

DECENCY.

Tramping Through Town

Bridgeport Evening Standard

November 6, 1867

STRATFORD ITEMS.—**ANTICIPATING [SIC] THANKSGIVING.**—A few nights since, two tramps, whether disgusted with the new arrangements at the hotel here or not, we cannot say, proceeded to the school house on the Bridgeport road, where they pried off one of the shutters, and raising one of the windows, went in, and having built a rousing fire in the stove, proceeded to dress their bird, scattering feathers and entrails over the floor, and were anticipating a good time, when a

change suddenly came over the scene. Mr. Mecham, a gentleman living near, who of late sleeps with one eye open, saw the light at the school house, and thinking it was on fire, called his hired man, living next door, and both started on the double-quick to quench the flames. Upon arriving at the school house they found the two men engaged as above stated, and on being asked what they were about, they were quite indignant a being interrupted, and began abusing Mr. M. for his interference. Mr. Mecham not relishing this much, drew off and struck out

from the shoulder, landing Mr. Tramp promiscuously in one corner, where after a little reflection, he came to the conclusion that he was not “sound on the goose.” About this time, a party of Bridgeport boys, who had been to a dance in Stratford, arrived, and upon learning the facts in the case, went in and gave the tramps such a drubbing as they probably had never had before...The thanks of the public are due to Mr. Mecham for his prompt action in this matter, and the Bridgeport boys who kindly lent a helping hand.

Columbus Day Exercises at the Graded School

Bridgeport Evening Standard

October 24, 1892

Stratford

The Columbus day exercises of the graded school were carried out as announced in the STANDARD. The programme in each department was varied and showed much skill in arrangement and execution. These services

were finished and then the school went to the lawn where Principal Bartley announced the order of exercises. The Rev. Mr. Cornwall, rector of Christ church, read the presidents' proclamation and the Rev. E. D. Bassitt of the M. E. church, the governor's proclamation. The Rev. J. S. Ives of the Congregational church read Edna

Dean Proctor's ode. Patriotic Songs were sung, and J. H. Thomas on behalf of the veterans raised the stars and stripes and the whole school and visitors saluted. Eloquent addresses were made by Wilfred M. Peck and Howard J. Curtis. The services concluded with the singing of "America."



Graded School c 1889

Judson Guard Torch-light Parade

Bridgeport Evening Standard

October 20, 1892

Stratford

Judson guard, with the drum corps, had a grand torch-light parade last evening. Owing to the number of urgent invitations the scope of the parade was considerably extended and instead of adhering to their original route as planned the line of march was follows: The company formed at republican headquarters at the Town hall, and followed by citizens in carriages, marched up Main to Barnum avenue, to King street, to Railroad avenue, to Broad street, to Main, to Riverview place, to Elm, to Parrott, countermarch to New lane to White, to East Broadway, to Main, countermarch to

East Broadway and to Minor Smith's, where lunch and coffee was served, after which a meeting was held and plans made for having a grand demonstration here as soon as arrangements can be perfected. The club then marched back to headquarters and were dismissed. People all along the line of march demonstrated their interest in the Judson Guard and the occasion by illuminating and burning red fire. King street led in the matter of illumination, and was in a blaze of light through its entire length. On Broad street the residences of Postmaster G. H. Spall and Mr. T. B. Fairchild were essentially noteworthy. Mr. C. L. Young on Main street made a grand display of pyrotechnics. The illumina-

tions of the residences of Mr. Skaats, Mr. C. Gunther and others on Main street were brilliant. Riverview Place and Elm street were in a blaze. The illuminated decoration in front of John Edwards's house was unique and characteristic. All the residences on Academy Hill were handsomely decorated and illuminated. Bon fires were kindled all along the line of march and on White street. Captain Charles Crane had a pyramid of fire which was loudly cheered, and directly opposite, the residence of Town Clerk H. P. Stagg was in a blaze of bunting and brilliant lights. East Broadway was also fully alive to the occasion and displayed a good deal of skill in decoration and illumination.



Judson Guard

Road Work Around Town

Bridgeport Evening Standard

October 26, 1892

Stratford

A town meeting is warned for

Monday the 31st, to present the matter of grading Skidmore hill and of constructing a new road by the river from Wheeler's mill to Mr.

Clark's. There seems a necessity for improvement in the hill mentioned, as it is the most difficult on the road and travel is greatly increasing.



Skidmore Hill c 1900

Fire House in Disarray

Bridgeport Evening Standard

October 26, 1892

Stratford

The other day when the fire occurred in Ezra Whiting's house, the members of the Hook and Ladder company ran to the truck room to get the ladders out, but found the apparatus and the room

in confusion. It is one of the unvarying rules of the organization that everything shall be kept in perfect order, ready for instant use, but on this occasion it appears, some one had obtained entrance into the room without permission and had taken one of the ladders, and although it had been returned, every-

thing was left in disorder and the time required to get it ready for use, was enough to decide the fate of a house. This is altogether too dangerous an experiment to be repeated, when the lives and property of our citizens are at stake.



Stratford Fire House c 1897

Food for Thought...

Available from the Historical Society's bookstore we find *Lippincott's Magazine of Literature and Science*, July 1879, article "Stratford-on-the-Sound". The article paints a lovely, serene, and picturesque portrait of pre-twentieth century Stratford and shares with us the many early tales of Stratford such as: John Birdsey being arrested in Milford in 1649 for kissing his wife on a Sunday; the founders of Woodbury departing Stratford 1660 (est.); the only "armed conflict" visiting Stratford in 1812; and, a detailed portrait of the haunting tales of the Phelps Mansion during the "Stratford Knockings" of 1850.

Also available from our Society office, and also available for purchase, the following is a recipe selected from our historic cookbook,

"Paradise Enow ... Treasures from Yesterday's Kitchens."

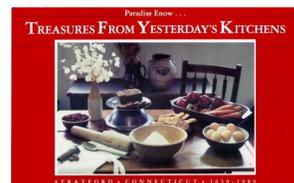
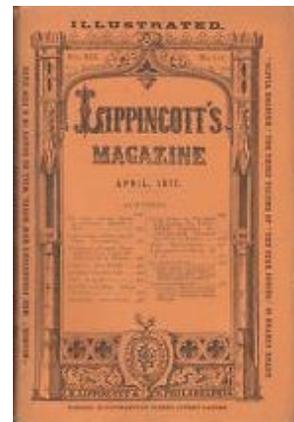
Nellie Coe's Cider Jelly

1 box of gelatin
1 pint cold water
1 quart hot water
1 & 1/2 pints sugar
1/2 pint cider
2 lemons
1 or 2 sticks cinnamon

Tester's Note: I used 4 tablespoons (4 envelopes) gelatin and 1/2 cup lemon juice. Soak gelatin 20 minutes in cold water. Heat water with cinnamon stick added to near-boiling. Remove from heat and stir in gelatin mixture to dissolve. Add cider, lemon juice, and sugar, stirring well. Strain and pour into molds and chill. (Amount filled

one ring mold plus one medium sized bowl.) The "cider" in supermarkets is not the real cider of 100 years ago. Real cider would be preferable more tang. (N.K.)

The Stratford Historical Society is the fortunate owner of a handwritten book of recipes "written for Nellie Coe by her mother." Another section in a different hand says "written by Mary Coe". The book is undated, but internal evidence is convincing that it was written between 1840 and 1860. The Coe family played a prominent part in early Stratford history. Read about Ebenezer Coe's role in the Revolutionary War (In Pursuit of Paradise, Ch. 21).



To view past editions of our **UPDATE** newsletter, and/or to view current as well as historical photo slide shows and videos, visit www.stratfordhistoricalsociety.info.

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

www.stratfordhistoricalsociety.org