



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

Stratford Historical Society UPDATE

VOLUME XXII, ISSUE 3

JANUARY 2018

MARK THE DATES:

- January's General Membership Meeting: Sunday, January 28th at 2:00 pm at the Stratford Library
- Governing Board Meeting, Monday, February 26th at 1pm.
- March's General Membership Meeting: Sunday, March 25th at 2:00 pm at the Stratford Library
- Craft Fair, Saturday, September 8th, 10-4, Judson House

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January's General Membership Meeting

January 28th, 2:00 pm, Stratford Library Lovell Room, 2203 Main Street

Editor's Note: Due to a water main break in Stratford Center, which closed the Stratford Library for the day, Doug Smith's presentation was re-scheduled to January from November 18th.

There will be a cartoon presentation on Sunday, January 28th at 2:00 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.



Douglas Smith—photo from Doug's Facebook page.

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

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).

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

For additional information, please see our November *UPDATE* Newsletter at www.stratfordhistoricalsociety.info.

President's Message

Stratford Historical Society Members and Friends,

Please join me in welcoming a new and exciting year for the Society:

1) We are currently working with The Smithsonian to send our "Flora" silhouette for a limited display at the Smithsonian in Washington D.C.

2) We are working towards a Colonial Handcrafts Show on the SHS grounds in the latter half of 2018.

3) We are in the process of identifying new ways to expand our identity and image within the Stratford community and beyond.

4) There will be additional projects still in the planning stage...any of these additional projects will depend

on our time and energy available.

Again, please join with me and the hardworking SHS Board in what promises to be a busy, challenging, and, yet, rewarding year.

**Dennis Brunelle,
President**

Forget to
renew your
member-
ship?

STRATFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Box 382, Stratford, CT 06615 • Tel. (203) 378-0630 • judsonhousestfd@aol.com

MEMBERSHIP

MEMBERSHIP OPTIONS

- Senior \$15.00
- Individual \$20.00
- Family \$30.00
- Business \$50.00
- Life \$200.00
- Extra Gift - \$ _____

(Dues and contributions are tax-deductible)

Name

Street Tel.

Town & State Zip

Email

Annual Dues are Due and Payable Oct. 1

Please make checks payable to Stratford Historical Society. Please send a GIFT MEMBERSHIP in my name to:

Name

Address

Minor Smith Burned Out 1892

Minor Smith's hotel was THE place to be in the late 1800's. All the really important social events were scheduled there. The loss of Minor Smith's establishment created a void that was tough to fill. Minor Smith immediately began searching for a new location for his hotel. This fire began a lengthy town political discussion concerning the adequacy of the town's fire protection.

The Sunday Herald
December 11, 1892

MINOR SMITH BURNED OUT.

THE OLD HOSTELRY WENT UP IN SMOKE AT 5:30 LAST EVENING.

A Defective Flue is Said to be the Cause of the Fire. – Some of the Furniture Saved. – Mr. Smith Keenly Feels the Loss of His Property.

MINOR SMITH'S hotel is no more. It was burned to the ground last night and one of the oldest landmarks in Fairfield county was wiped out of existence. The fire was caused by a defective flue. At 5:30 o'clock Mrs. Smith went to the upper part of the house and discovered smoke issuing from one of the rooms. She summoned her husband and he attempted to enter the room. The flames drove him back and

his next thought was to move the furniture.

The house was an old one and burned like tinder. The Stratford fire department was soon moved. The department consists of an old style hand hook and ladder truck. The firemen have no hose and their services were of no avail. Wall after wall fell and at 8:30 there was nothing left but the smouldering [sic] ashes. The two large chimneys stood upright but were badly warped and were expected to fall at any moment.

Minor Smith, the proprietor of the once well known and hospitable hotel, stood by watching the last sparks. He said to the writer, "I am homeless now," and seemed to have lost all courage. It is indeed a severe blow to him. He depended on his hotel for a livelihood and many a Bridgeporter can attest to the merits of his cuisine. Minor said his loss would not be covered by \$3,000 and his insurance is but \$1,600.

His wife and family were removed to Milford Point, his brother's home. Mr. Smith had many offers to go elsewhere but preferred to remain in the barn for the night. A more dejected man it would be hard to find. Minor is well liked by all and his misfortune

will be learned with sorrow.

His loss is entirely on the furniture as he did not own the building. The house is the property of P. R. Scott of Stratford. A Herald reporter called on him last night but he was unable to give it for more than one hundred years back. He said the house was fully two hundred years old. It is believed by the older inhabitants that George Washington slept in the house. This statement Mr. Scott could not vouch for. A century or more ago the property belonged to a man named Peck and remained in the family till twenty-five years ago. It was then purchased by Dwight Bishop of Yonkers.

Mr. Bishop was Mrs. Scott's father and he left it to his daughter. Up to April, 1888, it had always been a private residence. On that date Mr. Scott leased it for a term of five years to Minor Smith. It has since been conducted as a hotel and has gained a reputation for serving first class shore dinners.

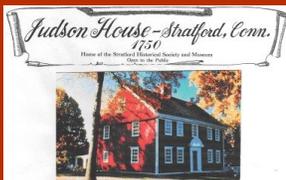
Mr. Scott says that since it has been in his wife's family \$3,000 has been spent repairing and remodeling it but the original frame was allowed to stand. He estimates his loss at \$5,000 and says he is insured for \$3,000.



Located on Housatonic Avenue at the river. From the *Postcard History Series*



Marie Blake photo from her *Connecticut Post* obituary.



Remembering Marie Blake

Marie Blake passed away on Christmas Day 2017. You may read Marie's obituary at <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/ctpost/obituary.aspx?n=marie-blake&pid=187681923&fhid=6429>.

Marie's contributions to the Stratford Historical Society are

legion, and any attempt to recount them, here, is guaranteed to miss one or more. However, we'll try. Marie served as chair, or co-chair, of the Accessions/Exhibits, Corresponding Secretary, Library, Newsletter, and Programs committees for multiple years.

Marie served on the Nominating Committee for several years. She was an active Hostess for years. She was a contributor to the Book of Remembrance. Marie co-chaired the "*Stratford and the Sea*" exhibit in 2003 and co-chaired the Tag Sale of 2007.

Please Join the Docent Team

The Stratford Historical Society Friends of Education invites you to join **THE DOCENT TEAM**.

If you like to work with children; if you want to teach them about local history; and, if you have a few hours to

perform a real community service by conducting school tours, then six **DOCENT TRAINING CLASSES** are in February and March, and two sessions are in September. Training classes run from 9:00 – 11:00

a.m. at the Judson House & Museum, 967 Academy Hill, Stratford 06615.

Please call Dolores Hctor (203) 378-6842 or Judson House (203) 378-0630.

Dateline Stratford December 1952 - January 1953

Sunday Herald

December 7, 1952

Honeyspot Residents Ready To Fight Industry Invasion

The burghers in the Honeyspot of town are up in arms.

They've been told that it's "only a matter of time" before the whole First District is converted to light industry.

Leslie Oakman, intelligent and outspoken Planning Board member from the Ninth District, is the boy who did the telling, and Oakman knew that his little speech at the Planning Board meeting on Wednesday night wasn't going to win him any popularity honors.

It happened this way:

A petition was brought before the Planning Board, seeking a change of zone from business I to light industrial of a piece of property just 150 feet from Honeyspot School.

The folks in the Honeyspot area opposed the petition, pointing out that a metal finishing plant, with its acids and all, would present a very real danger to their children. They also condemned it as spot zoning.

The Stratford News

January 8, 1953

Students Study Stratford

Pride in Town Fostered Early in Our Schools

Students in Stratford High School are known for their citizenship activities, cooperating with town agencies and performing services as they get to know their community better.

Long before they arrive in high school, however, groups are busily engaged in studying various aspects of Stratford and its history.

First graders take walking trips in the area around their school, and make picture stories of what they

have seen.

One group at Stony Brook School is publishing a special newspaper [sic] featuring news and events of the past in Stratford and other parts of Connecticut.

Others are doing research work on "Indians in Stratford," "History of Education in Stratford," and "Customs, Manners, and Homes in Stratford." Still another group is preparing a special exhibit, "Natural Resources in Connecticut."

A special social studies project by Lordship's combination second and third grade class features a mural depicting churches and other town buildings, supplemented by card-board models.

Sunday Herald

January 25, 1953

END OF AN ERA

Production of Chance Vought Corsairs, formerly built in Bridgeport, has ended at CV plant in Dallas, Texas. XF4U-1 was first in a fighter line dating from World War I that has lasted longer than any in military history. Though still widely used in combat, Corsair is the last piston-engine, propeller fighter to be built for U. S. armed forces. During the war thousands of contributions made possible gift of a Corsair, "The Spirit of Bridgeport," to the nation on behalf of people of Bridgeport.

Sunday Herald

January 25, 1953

SNET, Now 75 Years Old, Lists 88,740 Phone Here

From a humble beginning of a 21-phone exchange, Southern New England Telephone has progressed to a point, that on its 75th anniversary Wednesday, there will be 88,740 telephones listed in Bridgeport proper alone.

In Fairfield County, not counting Greenwich which is not under this office, there are 216,403 telephones listed.

Partners in the original undertaking in New Haven were George W. Coy, a telegrapher, and Herrick P. Frost, a former grocer.

Coy had heard Alexander Graham Bell, who patented the telephone two years earlier, discuss its possibilities at a lecture-demonstration in New Haven in 1877.

He was intrigued with the idea of a telephone exchange as a commercial venture—offering a service to the public by which homes and businesses could be connected by telephone through a central office.

Coy bridged the gap between the invention of the telephone and its public use. This he did by constructing the world's first practical switchboard.

Sunday Herald

January 25, 1953

Audience Limited, Council Hearings Won't Be Moved

THIS IS CONFIDENTIAL, top secret, and strictly between us solid Stratford citizens: At the moment, most members of the town council have no idea what they are going to do with the budget and have no idea what the tax rate is going to be.

THERE ARE SO many angles to the matter of this year's budget that councilmen's heads are spinning with confusion at this point.

Most are hopeful that the public hearing on Tuesday will serve at least to acquaint them with the temper of the town, and most will be looking for comments and observations from a few new faces.



Eli Whitney students sing Christmas carols in front of their three-dimensional mural. *The Stratford News*, December 18, 1952.



Close to 1,000 persons attended the official Town Hall lighting. *The Stratford News*, December 11, 1952.



Stratford High basketball team I to r: Andy Van Etten, Steve Rukan, Stanley Getter, Joe Vitko, and Dick Kopsick. *The Stratford News*, January 22, 1952.

Now Showing Dec. 1952 - January 1953

December 7th **Bloodhounds of Broadway**

December 14th **Iron Mistress**

December 21st **My Pal Gus**

December 28th **Cattle Town**

January 4th **Cleopatra**

January 11th **Abbott and Costello Meet Captain Kid**

January 18th **April in Paris**

January 25th **Prisoner of Zenda**

Mitzi Gaynor, Scott Brady, Mitzi Green

Alan Ladd, Virginia Mayo

Richard Widmark, Joan Dru

Dennis Morgan, Amanda Blake

Claudette Colbert, Henry Wilcoxon

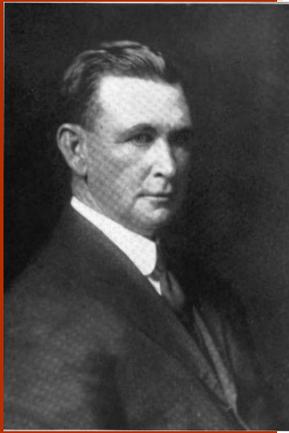
Doris Day, Ray Bolger

Stewart Granger, Deborah Kerr, James Mason

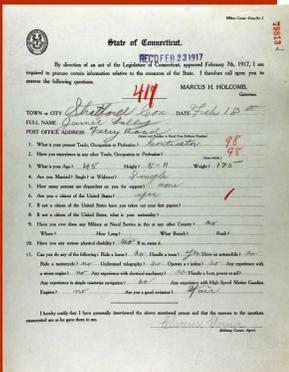


Stratford Theater from the 1944 Stratford High School Log

Stratford Characters - James Lally



James M. Lally
Photo from *History of Bridgeport and Vicinity*
1917.



James M. Lally's
Military Registration
1917.

Even though widely forgotten today, James M. Lally will ever factor large in Stratford's history as he was Stratford's last First Selectman. James was born to Irish immigrant parents in 1871. James' parents came to America and established their home in Stratford in 1857. James was one of seven children, and he attended Stratford's public school system until he was 16 years old. He then entered the first phase of his working life.

James entered into politics as the town's tree warden, in 1909, then was elected to selectman in 1913. James was elected First Selectman in 1915, succeeded himself for an additional term, then, was defeated for a third term. In 1919 he ran for First Selectman, again, and this time held the position until Stratford's government changed to a Town Manager/Council form in 1921.

James served his town, faithfully, during what was, almost assuredly, the town's most challenging period. Stratford's population soared from 5,712 in 1910 to 12,347 in 1920. No other decade in Stratford's history has experienced a 216% growth rate. Due to all the people moving into town, Stratford was building a new school, or adding on to an existing school, nearly every year of James' political career.

Stratford "went dry" in October of 1917 and stayed dry until prohibition was repealed. However, liquor and still confiscations in town kept the local gendarmierie very busy during Stratford's dry years. Liquor and

still confiscations rose 300% from 1919-1926.

The first sewers and power lines were laid during James' years of public service. A feeling began, and grew increasingly more ardent through 1940, to jettison Avon Park and Hollister Heights to Bridgeport. Stratford felt it was too expensive to provide services to these parts of town where so little was collected in taxes.

Women were granted the right to vote in 1920. In Stratford, that meant women were able to change the form of Stratford's government to a Manager-Council form. The majority of politically connected men opposed changing the form of government.

The Stratford town Republican Party was ripped asunder by Judge Charles Peck in 1917 as he formed his own "sub-party" as retaliation for those who supported his "ouster" as longtime Stratford Probate Judge. The party was further challenged by a progressive wing, following in the Bull Moose tradition.

A whooping cough epidemic raged through Stratford in 1917. A draft was instituted for World War I in 1917 which was the first military draft since the Civil War. James Lally registered for the draft. A troubling coal shortage struck the northeast which caused businesses and the town offices to reduce their hours. Along with the coal shortage, many residents of Stratford were facing food shortages.

After just establishing the Stratford Police Force, Chief Nichols was swept into the military draft. Mr. Lally had to face the prospect of losing his new police chief for an indeterminate period of time, and having the police force reduced by at least one officer.

Personal loss over-shadowed much of James' political life. His mother passed away in 1913, and his uncle passed in 1917.

Less life-threatening, but no less time consuming, prominent and influential citizens were fighting the State Utilities Commission over the widening of East Broadway in order to "double-track" the street for increased, and improved, trolley traffic to Ferry Boulevard.

In the middle of all these many challenges, James Lally surprised his friends when he married Brooklyn school teacher, Ella Harman, on January 22nd, 1918 in New York City. James made his first home with Ella at 117 Warwick Avenue.

James' commitment to his hometown extended well-beyond his duties as Selectman. When the Kubisko family was evicted in March of 1916, James went to work to assist them in finding a new place to live. When funding was tough to come by for a new fire truck, James went to Hartford in 1917 to plead the town's case. When construction help was needed for town projects, James freely lent his time and expertise.



Clearing Goody Bassett's Name

A great deal of recent scholarship has been devoted to the Connecticut witch trials of 1647 through 1700. Several recent, insightful books have been published on the topic including the three shown at the left.

The New York Times published an October 26th article entitled "Where Was the First Woman Condemned for Witchcraft? Not in Salem" in which Beth Caruso, a Windsor resident and a founder of CT Witch Memorial, suggests it's high time for Connecticut to exonerate all those accused of witchcraft in the Connecticut

colony. Since Stratford was home to two accused witches (Goody Bassett being the only accused witch put to death in Stratford), it would seem Stratford has a "dog in this fight." Perhaps we as a Society should recommend to the Stratford's Town Council that it's time to clear the names of our accused witches.

Connecticut Witch Trials: The First Panic in the New World

"Why exonerate our citizens wrongly accused so many years ago? Though the governing body of colonial times in Connecticut

believed they were protecting their community members by prosecuting those suspected of practicing witchcraft, today we recognize that those convictions were unfounded and acknowledgement of their innocence through a formal resolution will serve to correct the official record, as well as educate the public on the dangers of judicial scapegoating. Mob rule has left its ugly mark many times during social unrest in America, from colonial witch hunts to the lynchings in the segregated south. The term witch hunt is still used today when we perceive an unjust search for the truth."

The Rev. Samuel Orcutt Killed

Rev. Orcutt was very involved in the writing of various Connecticut histories until his death. Rev. Orcutt's history of Stratford was consulted and excerpted by both William Howard Wilcoxon and Lewis Knapp in their later compilations of their Stratford histories.

The Bridgeport Daily Standard
January 16, 1893
Struck by the Ghost Train at the South Avenue Crossing.

While rushing swiftly towards the station Saturday afternoon, the Ghost train struck and almost instantly killed the Rev. Samuel Orcutt, the well known historian, at the South avenue crossing, thus in one day making three persons killed in this city by the trains of the Consolidated road.

A little before 4 o'clock the Rev. Mr. Orcutt left the rooms of the Historical society to go to the freight office at the foot of South avenue. A recent gift to the society from one of its friends in this city was expected to arrive Saturday, and he went to look after it.

The box containing it was found and securing an expressman, Mr. Orcutt had him take it in his wagon and start for the new building of the society. He walked a little in the rear of the wagon on foot. The Ghost train was late and just

then came thundering up the rails. The flagman tried to warn Mr. Orcutt of his danger, but his efforts were useless.

The pilot struck his feet and threw him backwards against the front of the boiler. His head struck with fearful force against the solid steel and in a second his body was hurled to one side. The flagman and one or two bystanders hastened to his side and as he was still alive sent in a call for the ambulance. The injured man was made as comfortable as possible and the ambulance soon arrived. An examination by Dr. Gordon showed that there was no hope and in less than a minute death had occurred.

Rev. Mr. Orcutt was a native of Sullivan County, N.Y., nearly 67 years of age. He lived in Patchogue, L.I., for a number of years, and was there educated for the Methodist ministry. He had charges in several places in Long Island and New York, but afterwards became a member of the Congregational denomination and located in Torrington.

There his taste for literary work developed, and he wrote the history of Torrington. This was followed by the histories of New Milford, Derby and lastly [sic] by the combined history, in two vol-

umes, of Bridgeport and Stratford. He came to this city in 1881 and the history was published in 1886 under the auspices of the Fairfield County Historical society. In its preparation he was assisted greatly by Messrs. W. B. Hincks, G. C. Waldo and R. B. Lacey and in the preface to the work alludes to their aid and gives Mr. Lacey well deserved praise and thanks for his assistance.

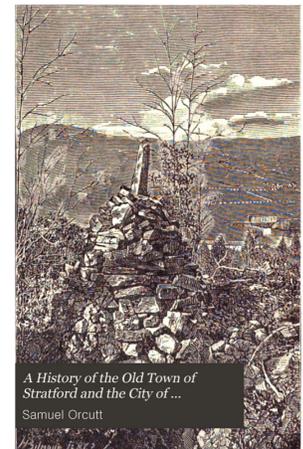
In addition to these works he wrote and had published a history of the town of Wolcott and one of the Indians of the Housatonic valley. Mr. Orcutt had also been engaged during the past year and a half in writing a history of the Burton family.

Mr. Orcutt was secretary of the Historical society, and was engaged in arranging its collection in the new Barnum institute.

Some years ago his wife and he separated and have not had any dealings with each other since. One son, Herbert C., remained with his mother and cared for her until his death, which occurred last spring. Another son, Edward, lives in Providence, and is now in this city, having been summoned as soon as the sad accident occurred. Another son and a married daughter live in Crescent City, Cal. After the death of her son, Mrs. Oacutt [sic] left the city, but returned some time ago and now resides on Stratford avenue.



Rev. Samuel Orcutt from **A History of the Old Town of Stratford and the City of Bridgeport Connecticut, 1886**



A History of the Old Town of Stratford and the City of ...
Samuel Orcutt

Hugh Croatia - The Other Stratford Witch

The Witchcraft Delusion in Colonial Connecticut,

by John Metcalf Taylor, 1908

"Hugh Croatia, Thou Standest here presented by the name of Hugh Croatia of Stratford in the Colony of Connecticut in New England; for that not haveing the fear of God before thine Eyes, through the Instigation of the Devill, thou hast forsaken thy God & covenanted with the Devill, and by his help hast in a preternaturall way afflicted the bodys of Sundry of his Maj esties good Subjects, for which according to the Law of God, and the Law of this Colony, thou deseruest to dye." **Record Court of Assistants, 2: 16, 1693.**

The arrest—Satan the accessory—An alibi—The confession—A contract to serve the devil

"Fairfield this 15 Novembor 1692 acording as is formed that hugh Croatia is complained of by a gerll at

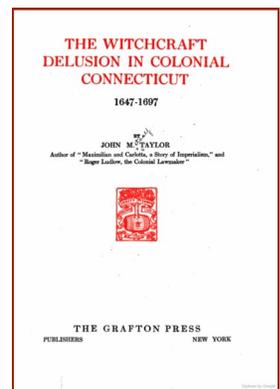
Stratford for aflicting her and hee being met on ye road going westward from fayrfeild hee being met by Joseph Sturg and danill bets of norwak and being brought back by them to athority in fayrfeild and on thare report to sd authority of sum confesion sd Croshaw mad of such things as render him undar suspecion of familiarity with satan sd Crosha being asked whether he sayd he sent ye deuell to hold downe Eben Booths gerll ye gerll above intended hee answered hee did say so but hee was not thar himself hee answereth he lyed when he sayd he sent ye deuell as above.

"Sd hugh beeing asked whether hee did not say hee had made a Contract with ye deuell five years senc with his heart and signed to ye deuells book and then seald it with his bloud which Contract was to serve ye deuell and the deuell to serve him he saith he did say so and sayd he ded so and wret

his name and sealed ye Contract with his bloud and that he had ever since been practising Eivel against every man : hee also sayd ye deuell opned ye dore of eben booths hous made it fly open and ye gate fly open being: ajksed how he could tell he sayd he deuell apeered to him like a boye and told him hee ded make them fly open and then ye boye went out of his sight.

"This examination taken and Confessed before authority in fairefeild before Us Testis the date above
"Jon. Bur, Assist
"Nathan Gold, Asist."

" The Grand Jury upon consideration of this Case returnd, Ignoramus. . . .
" This Court do grant to the said Hugh Croatia A Gaol Delivery, he paying the Master of the Gaol his just fees and dues upon his release and also all the Charge laid out on him at Fairfield, & in bringing him to prison.

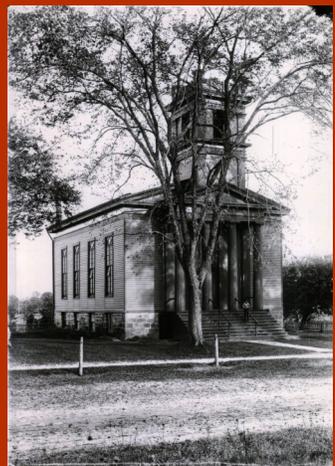




Alice C. Judson c 1910



Mayor Laura Hoydick (photo from Mayor Hoydick's Connecticut State Rep Facebook page).



Methodist Church 1839-1902

What's past is prologue

Alice Judson was born the eldest daughter of Stiles, Sr. and Caroline Judson. Alice was born in 1860 and was one of five children. Her younger brother, Stiles, Jr., was very active in state and local politics. Her younger sister, Cornelia, was known for her missionary work in the Far East. Yet, it's likely that none of Stiles, Sr's children had more of an impact on Stratford than did Alice.

Alice's name begins appearing in local newspapers in 1889 when she is appointed to the Decoration Committee for Stratford's 250th anniversary celebration. We then find Alice involved in local church and missionary work as well as running for the board of the Stratford Library Association.

By 1909, Alice decides to travel the world, at least in part due to her sister Cornelia serving a Christian Mission in Japan. Alice visits Europe, Egypt, China, India and Japan during her 1909 travels, then returns to Stratford where she spent the next 2 years making presentations to local audiences about her foreign travels.

By 1912 Alice has become one of the outspoken leaders

of the Stratford Suffrage Association.

Bridgeport Evening Farmer
October 16, 1912

In an interview over the telephone this morning, Miss Alice Judson, vice-president of the newly formed woman suffrage association which will hold its initial meeting in Redmen's hall, tomorrow night, announced that her association did not desire to affiliate with the state league and would work independently. Also that every member had joined the association with the understanding that the association would not seek to join the state organization. The leaders of the new organization had ignored the town leader of the state league and discovered after the speakers had been announced that the officer of the state league would not take part in the meeting unless recognized. A written invitation was sent to the town leader yesterday to avoid this.

Bridgeport Evening Farmer
November 7, 1912

The Stratford Woman Suffrage Association met yesterday afternoon at Bethany Mission hall with an attendance of over 30 ladies... Mrs. H. Leroy Lewis, the presi-

dent, was in the chair. Miss Edith Hastings, one of the delegates, whose family have been suffragists for generations, gave an extended report. The executive committee is arranging for a big meeting in the town hall at which Miss Inez Muholland, of New York, will be the principal speaker. Miss Alice Judson in her report criticised [sic] Mrs. Hepburn of Hartford for her announced determination to entertain the members of the Legislature at the tea rooms established by the State League in Hartford. The next meeting will be held in the same place next Wednesday afternoon.

Alice became President of the Stratford Suffragists and remained so until the 19th amendment gave women the right to vote in America.

It's difficult to imagine that Alice would have been anything but deeply fulfilled in seeing the results of this November's election. Three women, and no men, were contending for the office of Stratford's Mayor. Alice would have felt her life's work had reached its apotheosis as Stratford inaugurated its first female Mayor, Laura Hoydick, in December.

Methodist Church Re-opens 1867

Bridgeport Daily Standard
January 7, 1868

Re-opening—Stratford M. E. Church

The Stratford M. E. Church, Rev. T. D. Littlewood, pastor, having been closed for extensive improvements, and repairs, was re-opened for divine worship, on Sunday, January 5th. Large congregations were present through out the day. Rev. E. L. Janes, of the Central Church, Brooklyn, N.Y., preached two excellent discourses, of which we can only give the bare outline...

The whole amount of expenditures for the alteration and repair of the church, including a new roof added to the building last fall, and al-

ready paid for, is between twelve and thirteen hundred dollars, of which \$275 remaind [sic] on Sunday to be raised. Nearly one hundred of it was raised in the morning by simply passing around the plate. In the afternoon, the subscription plan was resorted to, and before we were aware of it, to the surprise of every one, the secretary announced no need for further subscriptions, as more than one hundred dollars over the amount asked for had been already raised. At the Sunday school Concert held in the evening, there being no further necessity for raising money, it was left to every one to give what they pleased towards purchasing a new organ

for the church. What the amount was we have not yet learned, but as the house was densely crowded, we have no doubt it was a goodly sum.

With respect to the improvements it may be enough to say, that praise of the church was on every lip. The ready response to the collection is of itself evidence as to how well every one was pleased. We have now as comfortable, tasteful, pleasant, and attractive a church edifice to worship in as any one need wish. We were glad to see friends from Bridgeport, East Bridgeport, Birmingham, and some from Nichols Farms. For all favors rendered, they will please accept our thanks.

The Sikorsky Archives

At the November 2017 meeting of the Milford Historical Society, Dan Libertino, President of the Igor. I. Sikorsky Historical Archives, made a presentation on the life of Igor Sikorsky. Mr. Libertino worked closely with Mr. Sikorsky for many years. Mr. Libertino shared a photo of Mr. Sikorsky's office at Sikorsky Aircraft which

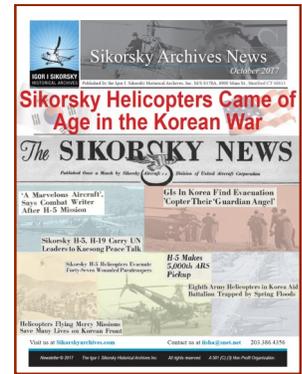
is still maintained as Mr. Sikorsky left it when he retired.

The Sikorsky archives, while not generally open to the public, may be accessed by making special arrangements with Mr. Libertino. The Archives are located at the Sikorsky plant in Stratford.

The members of the Historical Archives have created a website which provides a great deal of

information online. You may access the website at <http://sikorskyarchives.com>.

The Historical Archives publish a quarterly newsletter which may be downloaded from the Archives' website, or printed copies are available with a paid membership to the Archives.



Sikorsky Archives Newsletter, October 2017

Bela Lyon Pratt Exhibit at Slater Museum

In 1914, state Senator Stiles Judson passed away. Stiles was a very well-known Stratford politician and citizen. Stiles left \$5,000 with instructions to his wife, Minnie, to create a lasting tribute in his honor. \$5,000 in 1916 would be, roughly, equivalent to \$120,000 today.

Mrs. Judson contracted with the well-renowned and respected sculptor, Bela Lyon Pratt, to

create a memorial to her husband. The story of the monument Bela created appeared in the May 2016 **UPDATE** newsletter.

The Slater Museum in Norwich, CT, recently exhibited a retrospective exhibit of Bela's work. It seemed appropriate that our Society send representation to the Slater to document the other works of Bela Pratt

and gain whatever additional information there might be to link the Judson Memorial on West Broad Street with Bela Pratt.

Most interestingly, Bela Pratt was born to the famous, talented, artistic Pratt family of Norwich. A photo slide show of the retrospective exhibit of Bela's work may be viewed at <http://bela.stratfordhistoricalsociety.info>.



Photos from Carol Lovell's archives

We are fortunate to have been loaned the photos and postcard, below, by Carol Lovell. The photos are from Carol's mother-in-

law's, Beatrice Beach Lovell, personal effects. We would appreciate you taking a close look at the photos, particularly the post card. Please let

us know if you recognize any of the individuals pictured in these photos.



Putney School August 1929

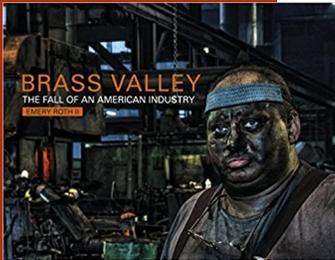


"Helen and her knickers" April 1922



This photo is from a post card. Do you recognize either, or both, men?

Brass Valley Presentation at Library



On Sunday, November 5th, the Stratford Library hosted author Emory Roth who presented a very informative slide presentation on Connecticut's Brass Valley: Waterbury south through Derby. Mr. Roth was able to document in photos and interviews the remnants of the still operational brass businesses in the Naugatuck valley.

Mr. Roth has written a book, "*Brass Valley: The Fall of an American Industry.*" It is a remarkable book in that Mr. Roth was able to enter and photograph operating brass businesses and, also, to enter

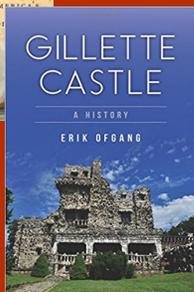
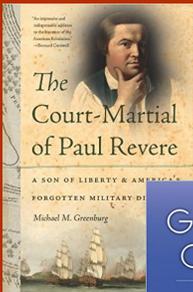
areas of former brass operations not open to the public. The book is well worth spending time with just to learn how much has been lost with the loss of the brass industry.

The Brass Valley may seem to have little connection to Stratford until you remember that the Naugatuck River was the primary waste removal system for the Brass Valley. Stratford residents were complaining of the damage done to the Housatonic as far back as the beginning of the brass businesses in the Naugatuck Valley.

Further, piano factories

sprung up in towns close to the Brass Valley because of their need for a steady and inexpensive supply of brass. A piano factory opened in Stratford in 1917, likely, for that very reason.

Anson Phelps, one of the founders of the brass industry in Brass Valley, stood with Levi Curtis gazing out at Paradise Green at the end of the nineteenth century and remarked, "this must be paradise." Unfortunately, Mr. Phelps' brass operations would soon begin to diminish Stratford's paradisiacal qualities.



Books of Note

The Court Martial of Paul Revere: A Son of Liberty and America's Forgotten Military Disaster

When we think of Paul Revere, his "midnight ride" is generally what comes to mind. Few of us know of Revere's military career. Revere was commissioned as a colonel to lead a group of men in a charge against the British fortress in Penobscot, Maine in 1776. Many accounts were given of what Paul Revere's actions were during that battle. Most accounts were very un-

flattering including an account provided by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's grandfather, Peleg.

Revere denied all charges against him, but narrowly missed being court marshaled for deserting his post during that battle.

Gillette Castle: A History

William Gillette and his Gillette Castle would seem to have no connection to Stratford. However, like so many other things, there is a Stratford link.

After Gillette's death in 1930, the State of Connecticut eventually assumed control of the Gillette Castle property.

While the Castle was in transition, and in an effort to save it from destruction, fundraising was undertaken by soliciting funds from wealthy and/or influential potential donors. Igor Sikorsky received a solicitation letter, but he replied he couldn't afford a donation of any amount over \$25. His response letter is on file at the Gillette Castle.

Stratford Corn "Amaizes" All

Bridgeport Daily Standard December 11, 1867

Stratford.

Hold on There! — Our Nichol's Farms friends, E. W. Plumb and Capt. E. P. Curtiss, will no doubt be as much astonished as we were, to hear from Old Stratford on the corn question, in the following shape: John Wilcoxson and Sons, practical farmers, have forwarded to our office, three ears of corn, of a crop raised the past season with no other than ordinary cultivation, the kernels on which count up as follows: 995, 1002, 1004: aggregate 3001! Now as Mr.

Plumb's aggregate was 1,825, and Mr. Curtiss' 2,739, and the most seedy ear produced by either of the gentlemen, numbered only 959 kernels, 36 less than Old Stratford's short cob, it appears to the Court as if Old Trumbull would have to hoe those rows over again next year. The Salt Hay boys further allege that their three ears were not selected at all, but merely grabbed for in the dark, out of a large crib full of the same sort, only more so. This last statement Old Trumbull, will be allowed to question if she sees fit, but as for the corn, we have it on exhibi-

tion and are prepared to amaize our friends with a sight of it. Furthermore, the Messrs. Wilcoxson offers to count, weigh or measure their ears against Old Trumbull or any other man. Now for the next "nubbin."

...Messrs. Clark & Smith, butchers, of this place, slaughtered a porker raised and fattened by Mr. Dykeman, which weighed 604 lbs. They also killed, the same day, twelve other hogs weighing over 400 lbs. each. We think they must have been raised on the Messrs. Wilcoxson's corn.



Ox Pasture Lane (today Wilcoxson Avenue) c 1920 looking west towards Main Street. Wilcoxson farmhouse on the right.

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Milford Bank

3651 Main St. | 203.783.7000

The National Helicopter Museum

203.375.8857 | nationalhelicoptermuseum.com

Open Door Tea

3552 Main St. | 203.345.9659

Joel F. Pleban, CPA, LLC

joel@joelplebancpa.com | 203.375.1040

Pickle Barrel Deli & Catering

203.380.0338

Rotary Drug

1030 Barnum Ave. | 203.378.9394

Scott Insurance

bscott@scottinsurance.com | 203.375.5847

Goody Bassett's Ice Cream

2404 Main St. | 203.612.8075

JM Home Improvement Group

203.556.8652

The Mellow Monkey

203.379.1860 | Howard@mellowmonkey.com

First Community Christmas Tree

Sunday Herald

December 9, 1917

STRATFORD BOYS AND GIRLS USEFUL CLUB TO GIVE TOWN CHRISTMAS TREE

Stratford is all anticipation over its Christmas tree, the first of its kind ever raised in the town. For the past 250 years, there have been Christmas trees, big ones and little ones, but never before has there been one for ALL the children of Stratford, and all the grown-ups too for that matter. Consequently, when the word got around that the little members of the Boys and Girls' Useful club and the Billy Sunshine Useful juniors, were going to have a tree on Academy Hill for EVERYBODY Christmas Eve, Stratford Town sat up and began to take notice.

For a proper understanding of the full significance of the plan something must be known about the little Usefuls whose organizations are referred to in the preceding paragraph. We'll call them "Usefuls" for short because their really, truly names are pretty long, and after all the "useful" is the important part of the title.

The town was always chock-a-block full of Usefuls in short pants and dresses, but nobody seemed to realize this to any great extent until Mrs. Richard

Howell got busy and coordinated their usefulness. In other words she fathered a lot of little Usefuls into two organizations where they would all work together toward a common useful purpose.

The older boys and girls were given the name of Boys and Girls' Useful club, and took two mottoes for their guidance for the girls, "Love, Friendship and Sympathy;" for the boys, "By Work and Honor." Miss Dorothy Buck, twelve years old, a Freshman in the Stratford High School, is president....

Now to get back to the Christmas tree. With Christmas coming on those Usefuls took a peep into their treasury to see how much money they had with which to make Christmas merry for a lot of other children. They found they had \$124. This was enough for a start. What would they do? It was the unanimous opinion that they ought to give the town a Christmas tree, and invite all the children of Stratford to partake in the festivities which went with the tree.

Everybody wanted to help when the idea became known. For once, there were more proffers of assistance than there was need for it. But the selectmen of the town and all the churches begged so hard they were permitted to do something. The selectmen are going to plant the tree on Academy Hill.

The churches are going to have a "Penny Sunday" one week from today when everybody in Stratford is going to give a penny or more to make the Christmas tree a big

success.

The women of Stratford are going to make their fingers fly sewing the cheese-cloth stockings - 2,000 of them - which will be filled with candy and distributed to all the children at the tree, who are twelve years of age or under. The cheese-cloth is already purchased and cut, so the women who want to help in the sewing have only to communicate with Captain Howell and be provided with the unsewed stockings.

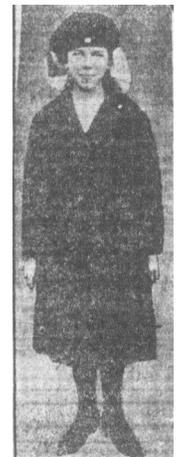
The Usefuls have bought the electric lights and wires out of their own money and after the Christmas is through with them for the holidays, the light apparatus will be donated to the town for use at succeeding Christmases.

Every child under twelve who attends will be given candy, nuts and an orange.

The time of the affair will be Christmas Eve so that the children can all have a good time, go home and go to bed before Santa Claus arrives. Just when he will arrive nobody knows for sure, but it is known positively that he will not come until every Stratford boy and girl is fast asleep Christmas Eve. If necessary he will stay over in Bridgeport all night waiting for the sandman to close every little peeper in Stratford...



Miss Evelyn Pratt



Miss Dorothy Buck

Bridgeport Evening Standard

January 31, 1918
Play This Evening

Everything is in readiness for the annual class play to be presented this evening by the senior class of the lo-cal High school at Red Men's hall, Church street. The play, entitled "The Lady of the Library," and a comedy in three acts is highly amus-ing, giving excellent opportunity for the budding talent of the class to show itself. Members of the class have been diligently rehearsing for the past two months. The cast of characters is as follows: Judge Oliver Whitcomb, R. Carpenter; Burr Edgeworth, Arnold Hart; Rev. Harding, Sidney Follett; Postman, Benjamin Graham; Sam, Irving Bennett; Mrs. Edgeworth, Rose Cal-cateria; Miss Crompton, Marie Emery; Mrs. Nelson, Lucy Baldwin; Ruth, Ethel Judson; Katherine Carter. Gertrude Keneough; Susanne, Pauline Veit, Almira, Agnes Ryan; Rachael, Marion Beach; Pearl, Josephine Reitters; Avis, the Lady of the Library, Doris Brenting. The play will commence at 8 o'clock. Dancing will follow until 11:30 o'clock.

Baby, It's Cold Outside! But ...

Bridgeport Telegram
January 15, 1928

Old Timers Aver Bridgeport's Weather Is Far from What It Was in Bygone Days

When the mercury slides down to within a few degrees of the zero mark, it is at once a signal for probing into past winters in order to see what the winters were like in the old days.

A study of statistics involving the state of the weather, the elements and the varying degrees of temperature of a half century or more ago in Bridgeport, shows that round that time there was invariably at least a month or two real winter before the opening of the New Year.

In other words, winter used to set in, it seems, in real earnest somewhere around the beginning of November and hold the country in its unrelenting grip until the sun was well on its way north again.

Change For Better

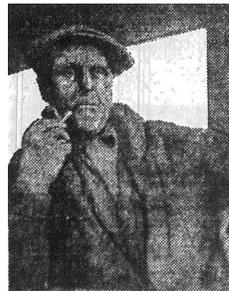
Old timers say that in the last 50 years there has been a very remarkable change in the climate of Bridgeport a change for the better.

When winter commenced then in November and sometimes October the cold weather season ow does not make its real and Official appearance until after January has begun. Zero conditions were common enough in those days, while old times declare that there was more snow, more wind, and more ice.

"When the thermometer goes down towards the zero mark, these days, there is great to-do and out come the stories about it

being the coldest spell in many decades."

This is what Theodore Judson of Stratford who has seen more winters come and go in Bridgeport than most people, says. About 50 years ago he declares, it was a common thing to experience extreme cold here. Zero conditions were common in those days and no-one cared much or worried.



Theodore Judson
Stratford Point Lighthouse
Keeper 1880-1919

Severe Winters

"Since that time, however, there has been a steady improvement in the winter weather generally, with the exception of a very infrequent cold snap or heavy snow fall."

When "Uncle Thee" as Mr. Judson is affectionately called by his Stratford friends was keeper of the first Stratford Point lighthouse—that is, of the first approach to a modern beacon, the winters were extremely severe. There were times, he says, when we had to be up all night cutting ice off the windows of the lantern room. Very frequently the ice would form in solid cakes all over

the glass, several inches thick, and covered with snow would form a serious obstruction to the light seawards.

Blizzards were far more common then than now. Today we look on a blizzard with something akin to awe. It is the subject for big headlines in the papers and all sorts of stories are woven round.

"No-one ever thought much about a snow storm or an ice storm in those days" says Mr. Judson. "They were all part and parcel of the winter. And the snow, why, it was real snow then and the youngsters I believe used to actually pray for severe winters so that they could get out with their sleds and sleighs. Many's the coasting run we have had down the hills of Stratford.

It was a hard job to keep the oil-fat which was used then for an illuminant in the Stratford Point lighthouse, soft. In order to keep a proper flame the bowl of oil-fat had to be liquid so that the wick floating about in it could ignite properly. As the oil burned down it was necessary to replenish the bowl.

"This could not be done unless the supply, of oil was soft. So in zero weather we had to keep a barrel of oil handy near a lighted coal stove in order to insure the stuff being ready for use."

Mr. Judson remembers the time when after an exceptionally heavy blizzard the snow was so deep and the ice piled up on the beach so thick as to reach almost up to the lantern room of the lighthouse...

Derby Historical Society 12th Night

By Jeanette Caron
(January 7, 2018)

A few of us from Stratford took a "busman's holiday" and enjoyed an afternoon of hospitality and cheer. We were greeted by a lively fire, costumed docents, a groaning board laden with 18th cen-

tury cakes, fruit breads, hot soup and apple cider. A good number of gentlemen from the 6th Connecticut Regiment displayed their fine uniforms and weaponry. Even the preacher came by with his bible and watchful eye. A good time on a cold day.



Georgene Fasanello, Derby "pastor", Dolores Hctor

Good Reads and Good Grub...

Available from the Historical Society's bookstore we find *The Autobiography of Aunt Hagar Merriman of New Haven, Conn.* Born a slave in New Haven, Connecticut about 1805, "Aunt Hagar" Merriman, at the age of nine months, was bought by Mrs. Ezekial Lovejoy of Stratford. Hagar lived at the Lovejoy Tavern just across Harvey Place from Christ Episcopal Church on Main St. in what is now the Historic District. Through the eyes of this young black slave girl we glimpse people, locations and activities of early nineteenth century Stratford.

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.*"

SELINA GRAY'S CASSEROLE OF DUCK

5 to 6 pound duck, cut in serving pieces

flour

4 tablespoons fat

salt and pepper

1 medium onion, chopped fine

3 tablespoons chopped parsley

1 clove garlic

pinch of rosemary

pinch of sweet basil

pinch of thyme

1 cup good claret

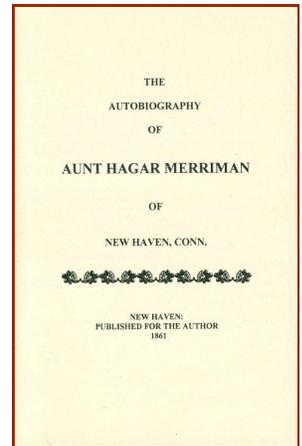
1 cup sour cream

Dredge duck in flour, salt and pepper and sear quickly in hot fat. Remove to casserole. Simmer giblets in just enough water to cover, until tender. Chop and add to casserole with onion, garlic and herbs. Add wine. Cover. Cook 1&1/2

hours at 350 or until almost tender. Stir in sour cream and bake another 30 minutes. Serve with wild rice.

Tester's Note: I used naturally soured cream. No doubt the wine and spices disguised the strong flavor of wild duck, but the sauce is of magnificent flavor in itself. Serves 3. (V.K.)

We are not sure who Selina Gray was. The recipe was in a collection made by Sarah Jane Gray Silliman, who was born in 1845, and had evidently been handed down from an earlier generation. Wild duck was common, and its strong flavor required heavy spicing. Market gunners supplied New York with duck from Stratford marshes. (*In Pursuit of Paradise*, Ch. 39)



To view the expanded online version of this **UPDATE** newsletter, 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!

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