

THE CUPHEAG CORNER

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 2

MARCH 2019



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

MARK THE DATES:

- March's General Membership Meeting: Saturday, March 23rd at 2:00 pm at the Stratford Library
- Governing Board Meeting, Monday, April 29th, 1pm
- May's General Membership Meeting: Sunday, May 19th at 2:00 pm at the Stratford Library

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MARCH'S GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Saturday, March 23rd, 2:00 pm, Stratford Library Lovell Room, 2203 Main Street

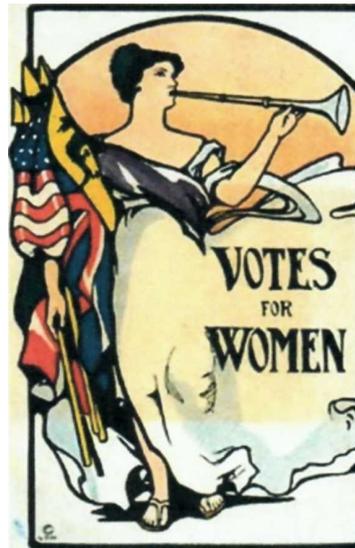
Stratford Historical Society Presents:

Votes for Women!

Celebrate the 72 years of valiant struggle and sacrifice that led to women's suffrage

Saturday, March 23, 2019, 2:00 p.m.

In 1848, the first women's rights convention was held in Seneca Falls, New York. But it wasn't until 1920 that the 19th Amendment was ratified, giving American women the right to vote. In this special program, the titanic struggle



for suffrage will be told through period photos, political cartoons and editorials. The presenter, Carolyn Ivanoff, Assistant Principal at Shelton High School, will dress in period clothing in honor of the women who fought valiantly so that future generations would have the right to fully participate in our democracy.

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

“...it (the Shakespeare Theatre fire) serves as a reminder about all the other history in our midst — from abandoned theaters to closed factories and historic homes. They won't last forever, and neglect will only hasten their demise. If we want to preserve the past, the price can be steep. But what we stand to lose is immeasurable.”
Connecticut Post, Editorial, **Shakespeare Theater Fire a Loss of History**, Tuesday, January 15, 2019

WILLIAM SAMUEL JOHNSON DAY

It's back! William Samuel Johnson Day is officially back in the Town of Stratford!

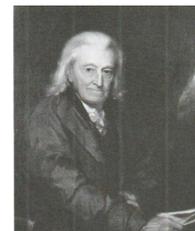
In 1939, as part of the Town's Tercentennial Celebration, the Town Council passed an ordinance declaring William Samuel Johnson's Birthday, October 7th, a town holiday.

In 1947, a subsequent Town Council rescinded the 1939 ordinance due to the fact that the Johnson holiday frequently created a hardship for the town as it occurred so near the Columbus Day holiday. As a result, William Samuel Johnson faded into obscurity and his birthday was all but forgotten.

For many years, former town

historian, Lew Knapp, worked to bring back a special William Samuel Johnson Day in Stratford.

On Monday, February 11th, the current Town Council passed an ordinance once more establishing Johnson's birthday as a day of remembrance in town. You may view the Town Council proceedings at wsj.stratfordhistoricalsociety.info.



William Samuel Johnson c. 1800. Picture from *In Pursuit of Paradise*.

2019 Meeting Calendar

Saturday	March	23rd	2PM
Sunday	May	19th	2PM
Sunday	September	29th	2PM
Sunday	November	24th	2PM

Governing Board Meetings

Monday	April	29th	1PM
Monday	June	24th	1PM
Monday	August	26th	1PM
Monday	October	28th	1PM

R.I.P. SHAKESPEARE THEATRE



Photos from News 12's video coverage of the burning of the Shakespeare Theatre.



Many of us awoke on Sunday morning, January 13th, to read, in disbelief, the newspaper headlines, and to view the TV news stories, describing the burning of the Shakespeare Theatre. The stories were surreal, but the images being broadcast on the TV news were all too real indeed. By the time the sun rose on Sunday morning, all that remained of the Theatre was a pile of smoking ash, twisted metal, and collapsed concrete.

Like moths drawn to a flame, the news stories weren't believable until you actually drove by the site of the former Theatre. Most of us could not imagine a Housatonic River skyline devoid of the long shuttered Theatre. The weathered teak which covered the Theatre was so hard, and seemed so resilient, that it was virtually unthinkable that the Theatre, through the flames of one fire,

could have been completely destroyed.

You may view the News 12 coverage of the Theatre's burning at aft.stratfordhistoricalsociety.info.

In the hours and days immediately following the conflagration, people from all over the world expressed shock at the loss of the Theatre. Mayor Hoydick, and her emergency services personnel, held a news conference to explain what little was known of the fire's origin. As of the date of publication of this newsletter, no cause has been determined for the Theatre's burning.

The Mayor formed a new Shakespeare Property Committee to begin the process of determining what would come next for the Theatre property. The committee has already held a couple of meetings and



will be holding a number of public input sessions.

Of historical interest, "the Stratford-on-Avon Globe Theatre, in 1613, was destroyed by fire on the 29th of June. During the play, "Henry the V", a small spark from a cannon accidentally caught the roof on fire, and in less than an hour the Globe Theatre had burned to the ground.

In 1642, the Puritans in Parliament passed a law that suppressed the production of plays. Puritans felt that the theatre was an ungodly place, and they were perhaps also wary of entertainments that would take people away from church. ... In 1642, the Puritans ordered the Globe Theatre closed, and it was destroyed in 1644." (From <https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/why-did-puritans-close-down-globe-all-together-61973>).

SHAKESPEARE THEATRE BEGINNINGS

The Stratford News
March 18, 1954

Theatre Backers Confident
Lawrence Langner Slated To
Answer Council Inquires

Plans to bring Shakespeare back to his namesake town have been receiving some pretty rough treatment lately, but backers of the American Shakespearean Theater and Festival are confident that the matter of land desired for the project as well as the legality of using the park, will be settled in the very near future.

The Town Council in an attempt to air the situation has called for a meeting Wednesday, March 24, in the Municipal Building to discuss the proposed project and iron out a few questions with the sponsor of the plan, Lawrence Langer.

James Morey, Council Chairman reported that Mr. Langer will be asked to discuss with the council the amount of land required for the academy and theater, the buildings to be erected, and the amount of money to be paid to the town for use of the

land.

How Much Land?

The Academy organizers have indicated a desire for more than the original six or eight acres, which Mr. Langner first informed the Council group the project would require. A proposal for use of 16.7 acres has been vetoed by the Council group and a new layout has been made by Richard E. Blake, director of Public Works, after conferences with Boothe Memorial Officials.

The question of how much land the project would require arose during a recent meeting of the Council during action on the proposed lease agreement.

Originally Councilman George Wright opposed the resolution referring to the matter as "a moral obligation" in accordance to the wills of the late Stephen and David Boothe, which left the property to the people of Stratford for their own use as a public park. Mr. Wright said he would not give his agreement to the theater unless the people of Stratford had a chance to declare their feelings in the matter either

at a public hearing or by ballot.

Other Councilmen joining Mr. Wright in protesting the legality of the Council leasing the park to outside interests are: Joseph McNamara, First District; Robert Beers, Third District; and Ellsworth Speer, Seventh District.

Public Behind Project

Public reaction to the proposed \$500,000 theater and academy which will train actors and actresses in the art of Shakespeare drama as well as stage Shakespeare plays, has been 100 percent in favor of the project to date.

The proposed contract will give the Shakespeare Academy a 50-year lease of the property and calls for the proposed building to be constructed within 18 to 24 months.

Also scheduled to attend the meeting next Wednesday are members of the Town Shakespearean Committee headed by Albert M. Pickus as well as representatives of the Bridgeport City Trust Company, trustees under the wills of the late Boothe brothers.



Model for the Shakespeare Theatre as originally proposed. From *The Stratford News*, September 3, 1953.



Council Chair, D. James Morey; Lawrence Langer; and, Stratford Chamber President, Raymond O'Connor discussing the proposed Theatre. From *The Stratford News*, October 15, 1953.

DATELINE STRATFORD FEBRUARY - MARCH 1954

Sunday Herald
February 7, 1954

Angry Owners to Push Tax Appeal en Masse

Charging that even torn-down buildings are being assessed, residents of Stratford's Ninth District have banded together in a fight to the finish over the forthcoming tax hike.

Petitions are making the rounds in Putney and Oronoque. They call for relief from what a spokesman calls "an impending 14 mill increase in the tax rate."

...The spokesman points out that if the rate is adopted, it would mean an actual tax bill of about 58 mills per thousand.

The Hartford Courant
February 17, 1954

Funeral Service Today for Charles Disbrow

STRATFORD, Feb. 16 (AP) - Funeral services will be held here Wednesday for Charles Robinson (Charlie) Disbrow, 72-year-old retired state game warden and for many years one of the nation's top rifle shots.

...Disbrow was instrumental in launching the movement designed to preserve Nell's Island, at the mouth of the Housatonic River, which wildlife authorities have characterized a highly important nesting and feeding area for teal and other ducks.

A close friend of the late Charles N. "Shang" Wheeler,...

The Stratford News
February 18, 1954

Theater Gets Green Light Summer Completion Possible

Shakespeare and Lawrence Langner were given a solid "vote of confidence" this past week when local residents turned out to officially voice their opinions of locating the proposed theater and academy in the Putney-Oronoque sec-

tion.

...Before approximately 100 persons at the Boothe Memorial Hall, proposed site of the project, Mr. Langner accompanied by other theater notables, explained his desire to locate Shakespeare here "only if Stratford wantd [sic] such a project." The response on the part of local residents was unanimously in favor of having the theater and festival located here.

The Stratford News
February 18, 1954

Thruway Completion By '57; Commissioner Hill Reports

...it (the thruway) will serve to relieve the increasingly dangerous traffic congestion in Fairfield County and at other points along the route. It will serve to open up and vastly improve the economic potentialities of great areas of eastern Connecticut. Its construction will give employment to many state firms and workers during the coming four years.

The Stratford News
February 18, 1954

"Full Time Health Officer"

(The following is a statement by Dr. Bernard Krug, Town Health Officer, regarding the recent move by the Town Council to do away with a full time health officer).

"The abolishment of the position of full time health officer for the Town of Stratford is a definite backward step by the town. It is also questionable as to its being a true measure of economy as a great deal of the gains made to date will be lost. As time goes on the need for a full time health officer will be demonstrated and all the ground work must be done again.

"Unfortunately, the great bulk of public health work is of an intangible nature. We do not have concrete evidence to show as results. Public health work is the work of

every citizen in a community. The health department work is in the relation of the teachers to his pupils. They educate the public in how to live, but the individuals must apply the lessons learned in their daily living...

Sunday Herald
March 7, 1954

Stratford HSD Stunned Over Loss to Hartford

...Ray Needham's North Paradisers, the first tourney team to feel the wraths of a stunning upset, had words of praise for his squad. He admitted it was a hard pill to swallow, with the resulting effect comparable to one's feeling at a funeral parlor. He went on to explain "it was just one of those nights when nothing was done right. If anyone were to come up with the explanation and remedy for such an occurrence, there would be very few upets [sic]." Logical thinking.

Stratford ballplayers took the loss of the ball game real hard as they found it difficult to believe they were eliminated.

Sunday Herald
March 21, 1954

Suburbs' Growth Here Tops State

The outlying sections of the Bridgeport metropolitan area have experienced the highest rate of population increase of any similar area in the entire state in the past 50 years, a survey by the University of Connecticut revealed yesterday.

In all, the population of the Bridgeport metropolitan area showed an increase of 205.4% for the period which was the second highest of Connecticut's six metropolitan areas.

Only the Stamford-Norwalk area with an increase of 221.1% topped the Bridgeport area's growth.



Paul Kurmay and his mother. **Sunday Herald**, February 21, 1954.



Mrs. Herbert Hunter, Alan Gates, George Kuck, Francis Lambert, Thomas Donahue at Wooster Junior High. **The Stratford News**, March 18, 1954.



SHS Majorette Corps. **The Stratford News**, March 18, 1954.

NOW SHOWING FEBRUARY - MARCH



Stratford Theater c 1946

February 7th	Forever Female	Ginger Rogers, William Holden, Paul Douglas
February 14th	The Eddie Cantor Story	Keefe Brasselle, Marilyn Erskine
February 21st	Taza, Son of Cochise	Rock Hudson, Barbara Rush
February 28th	Cease Fire	Korea Documentary
March 7th	Riot in Cell Block 11	Neville Brand, Emile Meyer, Frank Faylen
March 14th	Money From Home	Dean Martin, Jerry Lewis
March 21st	The Long, Long Trailer	Lucille Ball, Desi Arnaz
March 23rd	The Glenn Miller Story	James Stewart, June Allyson, Harry Morgan
March 28th	Red Garters	Rosemary Clooney, Jack Carson

PUBLIC INTEREST IN SCHOOLS LACKING

Bridgeport Herald
Sunday, February 2, 1919
**MORE PUBLIC INTEREST
IN STRATFORD HIGH
SCHOOL WOULD HELP
MUCH**



Center School eighth
grade 1918

Not so many years ago, Stratford had a party of conservatives who strenuously objected to all things modern. Whether they were too artistic, after the manner of the old families of the South, or whether it was simply a jar in their way of loving, I have not been able to determine. Be that as it may, once upon a time, many of the older settlers objected by vote and propaganda to the coming of street cars to the city of Stratford; to the city water

works; to the sewage system; to all those frivolous modern inventions called "improvements" by a shiftless new generation.

Of course the conservatives lost out on the deal. Progress has a way of riding over aristocracy. But there is some of that spirit still in evidence. Stratford has a high school so inadequate to the needs of the pupils that it is a standing rebuke, and yet nothing is done toward a new building. There are at present 1,200 children going to school half time in Stratford because there isn't room for them all. But that's all right! It gives the morning pupils a chance to go to Poli's in the afternoon and the afternoon pupils a chance to help mother do up the work in the morning.

...In 1911 there were thirty rooms in the four buildings of the town; and, thirty teachers. Now there are sixty-nine rooms, ten buildings and 85 teachers. The appropriation has increased since 1911 from \$31,000 to \$103,000, but the increase, while of course it helps greatly, is not sufficient for the needs of the community.

...Stratford needs more interest in the school by the people at large... Until the people themselves awake to the fact that children are cheated out of a great deal of the time due them,...Stratford will probably continue to pursue its leisurely course, saying, "What is to be will be," and "This sort of thing has always been good enough.

"TYPICAL" TOWN MEETING

Bridgeport Herald
Sunday, March 9, 1919
**Stratford's Screw Driver
Town Meeting Gave All
Voters an Equal Chance**



IVAN MOREHOUSE

Ivan Morehouse, Town Meeting Moderator

If Moderator Ivan Morehouse hadn't need [sic] a screwdriver for a gavel things might have been different. But the right of a tool that is universally recognized as the instrument of the "fix-it" man, in the hands of the chairman of the town meeting Monday evening upset everybody. The fact of the matter was that the conventional gravel [sic] was being used elsewhere that evening, and the only thing about the town hall which could be used for pounding purposes was the screw driver. And so Mr. Morehouse used it.

All sorts of mistaken inferences were drawn from the simple fact. Some of the citizens took it as a reflection upon themselves that the chairman seemed to be intimating there were some screws loose in town, or perchance some nuts that needed adjustment. When the meeting had concluded First Selectman Lalley had made up his mind that the chairman had intended prying the first selectman loose from some of his popularity and influence during the meeting. Needless to say, this object was not accomplished.

As things turned out, the chairman didn't need a screw driver at

all. What he did need was a pair of pliers to extract the purpose of the town meeting from a great parliamentary snarl into which it worked. It is no exaggeration to say that never in the history of the world was there such a demand for a clear head as was seen at this town meeting when the matter of a business like road improvement policy was suggested by Representative Elliot Peck. He is a man of few words and much sense, so his proposal was very simply put. It was that the town decide upon an expenditure of \$15,000 for road work for the next five years, the money to be spent under the direction of a competent road builder...

What It Is.

For those readers who have recently come to Connecticut and are not familiar with that greatest of democratic institutions, the town meeting, a definition of a town meeting may be helpful. It is hard to define because its possibilities are beyond all limits. And yet, it will help some to know that a town meeting is a public assembly of voters who have little or no opportunity to express their thoughts publicly at any other time.

It is the great Yankee forum; a part of the world already and irretrievably made safe for democracy; a condition of self-determination that needs no league of nations to improve it. It

is the voice of the people at the highest possible pitch. There men compete with one another to show that each is more miserably treated by the town officials than any other. There every taxpayer insists that he is held up, beaten and robbed by his chosen officials, and he vows "This sort of thing has got to stop." This civic duty having been done, the voter goes home and awaits the calling of the next town meeting where he repeats.

Nobody ever thinks of sticking to the point in a town meeting. There are no rules that need bother anybody with an idea to express. For instance, if the motion is to lay a tax of two mills for the exclusive purpose of road building, it is perfectly O.K. for any voter to arise and go into the ethics of the second and third selectmen; the relative virtues of native road builders and other road builders; the cost of teams and labor; the discrimination shown against certain sections of the town in favor of certain other sections of the town; the efficiency of special committees as compared with that of regularly elected officials; and, anything else that may enter a man's head and skip off his tongue. This is why nobody needs build a vaudeville house in Stratford. It couldn't survive competition with a town meeting...



ELLIOTT W. PECK
Stratford

Representative Elliott W.
Peck

FROM OUR PRESIDENT—GAIL LISCIO

Greetings from Gail.

Many of you know me, but many don't.

At this time, I would like to introduce myself again as your newly elected President of The Stratford Historical Society. My name is Gail Marie Liscio. I have lived in Stratford for the majority

of my life. To me, Stratford means home.

My love of history started in 3rd grade when as a student of Garden School I visited for the first time the Captain David Judson House. I was hooked. Many years have come and gone; however, my love for history has remained constant.

I ask all to join me on this jour-

ney and continued quest to bring the past, present and future of the Stratford Historical Society and the Town of Stratford to its fullest potential.

Thank You Gail Marie Liscio
President Stratford Historical Society



Gail Liscio, President

BIG Y PROMOTION

We have some great news!

We have been chosen by the Big Y located at 355 Hawley Lane as the latest non-profit to benefit from the Community Bag Program. This means that for the entire month of March, the Stratford Historical Society will receive

a \$1 donation every time the Community Bag is sold, unless otherwise directed by the customer through the Giving Tag.

All you have to do to support the Stratford Historical Society is go to the Big Y located at 355

Hawley Lane throughout the month of March and pick up the bag! Thank you for your support.

For more information on the Big Y Community Bag Program, visit bigy.bags4mycause.com.



OFFICE OF THE STATE HISTORIAN

Walt Woodward and The Band of Steady Habits Are Going On the Road This March! **Music! Poetry! History!**

Two Special Shows! Four Different Venues! One Great Time!

State Historian Walt Woodward and The Band of Steady Habits will be presenting our special brand of toe-tapping, image-rich history stories in Vernon, Southbury, Farmington, and Saybrook this March.

THE IRISH IN CONNECTICUT

The story of the Irish people and

their more than 350 years in the Land of Steady Habits holds an important message for all Connecticutans. And if you're Irish, this is your story in words, music, and pictures. Join us for a tale you'll tell your friends about.

Sunday, March 3rd 2:00pm, Vernon Historical Society, 734 Hartford Turnpike, Vernon.

Thursday, March 7th, 7:30pm., Watermark at East Hill, 611 East Hill, Southbury.

Saturday, March 16th, 2:00pm., Acton Public Library, 60 Old Boston Post Rd., Old

Saybrook.

FROST SEASON: The Poetry of Robert Frost in Story & Song

In this special fund-raiser for Hill-Stead-Museum's Sunken Garden Poetry Festival, you'll have a unique opportunity to enjoy the works of American poet Robert Frost paired with songs that reflect and amplify the power of New England's most beloved poet's words.

Walter Woodward was once a hit songwriter and is now an award-winning author of books.



BOOKS OF NOTE

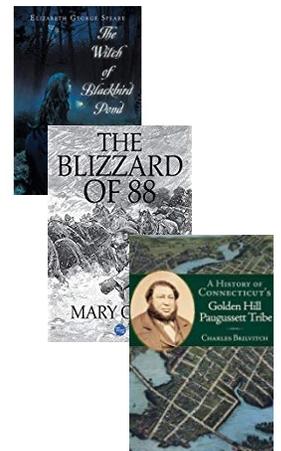
Three unrelated but very interesting history books are: *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*; *The Blizzard of '88*; and, *A History of Connecticut's Golden Hill Paugussett Tribe*.

The Witch of Blackbird Pond is aimed at a target audience of middle schoolers. However, the book does a great job of depicting early Puritan life in the Connecticut Colony. It also demonstrates how Connecticut's fear of witches evolved in the mid-17th century.

Life in the cities quickly became dependent on trains and trolleys. When the blizzard of 1888 struck, life in the urban areas of the northeast came to a disastrous standstill. While *The Blizzard of '88* depicts the blizzard's impact on New York City, any urban area hit by the blizzard would have been brought to a standstill. Life without the trains and trolleys had become near impossible by 1888.

While many of us lived through the impact of the Paugussett Tribe

in the early 1990's, little information existed on the Tribe's operations in the Town of Stratford. Mostly, we were aware of the Tribe's Trumbull Reservation on Huntington Road. *A History of Connecticut's Golden Hill Paugussett Tribe* was written by Bridgeport historian, Charles Brilvitch. Charles details the Paugussett's farm ownership on James Farm Road in the mid-1800's and explains how James Farm Road came to be.



ANNAMAE ANDREWS' SCRAPBOOKS

Annamae Andrews graduated from Stratford High in 1937. From 1932 until 1945, Annamae kept scrapbooks of newspaper articles she found important or interesting. Here are two more newspaper articles from Annamae's scrapbooks.

Stratford Latin Club Officers, February 1, 1934. First row, l

-to-r, Mary Steel, Kathryn Hall, Dorothy Stegeman, Betty Tracy. Second row, l-to-r: Robert Martin, Helen Perkowska, Elsa Anderson, Eleanor Dimick, Mary Zink, Selma Bliss, Burton Church.

Girl Scouts Hold Court of Awards, March 10, 1934. Nearly 100 Girl Scouts of Stratford and vicinity gathered at Stratford Con-



Nearly 100 Girl Scouts of Stratford and vicinity gathered at Stratford Congregational church yesterday for a Court of Awards, when certificates and badges were distributed. Miss Cornelia Goddard (right), Stratford girl scout is shown being given certificate by Mrs McLaren Stevenson (left), deputy commissioner of Stratford. Looking on are Mrs. Nathaniel Worthen, (left center), commissioner from the Bridgeport council; Mrs. Allen Johnson, deputy commissioner of Fairfield (center), and Miss Hazel Lewis, general chairman of the court of awards and assistant director of the Bridgeport council.

gregational church yesterday for a Court of Awards, when certificates and badges were distributed. Miss Cornelia Goddard (right), being given a certificate by Mrs. McLaren

Stevenson (left). Looking on are Mrs. Nathaniel Worthen, (left center), Mrs. Allen Johnson, (center), and Miss Hazel Lewis.



Officers of the Latin club at Stratford high school are shown above. They are, first row, (left to right), Mary Steel, quaestor; Kathryn Hall, consul; Dorothy Stegeman, consul; Betty Tracy, scribe. Second row, (left to right) Robert Martin, aedile; Helen Perkowska, publicity agent; Elsa Anderson, aedile; Eleanor Dimick, faculty advisor; Mary Zink, aedile; Selma Bliss, aedile; Burton Church, student council representative.



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

www.stratfordhistoricalsociety.org