

THE CUPHEAG CORNER

VOLUME 11, ISSUE 5

APRIL 2020



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

MARK THE DATES:

- TBA, May General Membership meeting?
- Connecticut Open House Day, Saturday, June 13th, 1-3pm, Judson House
- "I Now Pronounce You Lucy Stone," Thursday, September 3rd, 7:30pm, Stratford Library

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APRIL SPECIAL EDITION NEWSLETTER

Since we sent out our March issue of this newsletter, the world has changed in ways none of us could have anticipated. Due to the unexpected events of the past several weeks, we cancelled our March General Membership meeting, as well as our March and April Governing Board Meetings. We were forced to close the Judson House and the Museum for the time being. We cancelled our Spring school tours for the fourth grades. We thought it prudent to re-schedule our May Special Presentation entitled "*I Now Pronounce You Lucy Stone*" until September. Due to all the unanticipated events, declarations, and reactions to the COVID-19 pandemic, we wanted to make a special effort to reach out to our dear Stratford Historical Society members, and to our beloved Stratford community in

general.

We are living in times the likes of which we've not seen, but which were experienced by the forebearers in our community during the flu pandemic of 1918. We have devoted a page of this special edition to the 1918 Influenza Pandemic due to the many similarities between the two troubling periods of time.

We hope you all are doing well. We hope you all are doing all you can to protect yourselves during this stressful period of time. We hope we will see all of you, again, in the not too distant future. To that end, we would like to ask you to share your COVID-19 isolation, sheltering-in-place, and self-quarantining stories and experiences with us.

Please share your thoughts, journal entries, diaries, or daily experiences with us. If you prefer, rec-

ord your thoughts on a tape, or digital file. We will even willingly interview you by telephone, or by video call should you choose that option. Please email us newsletters@stratfordhistoricalsociety.info and let us know how we can learn more of your daily COVID-19 dealings. We're certain your experiences will be of great value to our future Stratford generations, and during any future pandemics.

What we have learned, thus far, from this pandemic is that history can provide guidance to the future. Self-quarantining, social distancing, and cancelling large public gathering were all used to help stop the spread of the 1918 influenza. These practices are working again 100 years later. History truly can inform our present times. Be safe! Be well! Be mindful of our past!

— ◆ —
 "History repeats itself. That's one of the things wrong with history."
 Clarence Darrow, American lawyer (1857 - 1938).
 — ◆ —

HISTORICAL SOCIETY HAPPENINGS

May General Membership Meeting

Since none of us knows what the trajectory of the COVID-19 virus will be, it's difficult to make plans for Society events and meetings. That said, scheduling a May face-to-face meeting for the General Membership is looking more and more unlikely. We would be interested in your thoughts on holding a "virtual meeting" using the internet and teleconferencing. If this is something that appeals to you, please let us know by e-mailing us at newsletters@stratfordhistoricalsociety.info.

Virtual meetings have worked well for many organizations during this

crisis, and the Society holding a virtual meeting would be a truly historic first.

Connecticut Open House Day

We're still hopeful we'll be able to proceed with Connecticut Open House Day on June 13th. Should you have an interest in all the events planned for June 13th, please visit https://portal.ct.gov/DECD/Content/Tourism/02_Business_Support/Participate-in-Statewide-Promos/Connecticut-Open-House-Day.

Keep Your Society in Mind

With current restrictions on travel and public gatherings, our Society is

suffering from a lack of being able to offer our usual programs and events. That is affecting our ability to generate revenue. Additionally, the stock market has not been kind to our investments. Many people are asking what they can do to help. Please consider a financial gift of any amount made to the Historical Society during this time. In your communications and interactions with friends, neighbors and family over the telephone, through e-mail and social media, please mention the Historical Society and its contributions to preserving Stratford's histo-

Continued on back cover

TOWN'S ANNUAL REPORT 1945



Cover of the 1945 Annual Report of the Town of Stratford.

STRATFORD

Settled in 1639
 Area 19.5 square miles
 400 defense worker families
 175 miles of improved highways
 Thirteen permanent modern schools
 Within the metropolitan area of New York
 Governed by Council-Manager for 23 years
 Valuation ratio 80% of fair market value
 Tax rate under 3% per thousand dollars of value
 197 Federal Housing Agency homes for housing
 6,752 homes of detached one and two - family type

Recreation facilities include: 13 miles of Housatonic River and Long Island Sound frontage for bathing and boating, Community Center, several neighborhood playgrounds, and a two-hundred acre natural wooded park. Protection by adequate zoning and planning insuring controlled growth of residential, commercial and industrial areas.

TOWN TELEPHONES

FIRE —Emergency	7-4411
Other	7-4412
POLICE—Emergency	7-3311
Other	7-3312
Superintendent of Public Works	7-3351
Board of Education	7-4874
High School	7-0550
All Other Town Departments	7-3351
Health Officer	7-0504
Selective Service Board	7-0237
Ration Board	7-4453

TAXABLE GRAND LIST

Year	Grand List	Tax Rate per M
1940	\$31,060,629.00	\$28.00
1941	34,731,654.00	28.00
1942	39,695,520.00	28.00
1943	42,188,391.00	28.00
1944	43,437,668.00	28.00

POPULATION

1920	12,347
1930	19,212
1940	22,184
1945	32,000 (Est.)

Inside back cover of the 1945 Annual Report of the Town of Stratford. The main telephone number for Town Hall was 7-3351. The Grand List totaled \$43,437,688. The town's population was estimated to be 32,000. "Recreation facilities include: 13 miles of Housatonic River and Long Island Sound frontage for bathing and boating, Community Center, several neighborhood playgrounds, and a two-hundred acre natural wooded park."

Town Reports are always an enlightening insight into Stratford town life of the past. The 1945 Annual Report was unique in that it was the longest serving Town Manager's, at that time, William Shea, last report, and the first report of the man who was to serve longer than all other Town Manager, Harry Flood. This was also the last report that would be published during the World War II war years. The report listed the names of all the Stratford men and women serving America at that time. It also contained many recommendations for the future including the building of a new town maintenance garage.



While not clearly visible in this greatly reduced photo of Sikorsky Memorial Airport, the plane to the left of the photo is a Corsair fighter. To the right of the tower are columns, and rows, of Corsairs. This was the airport during World War II.

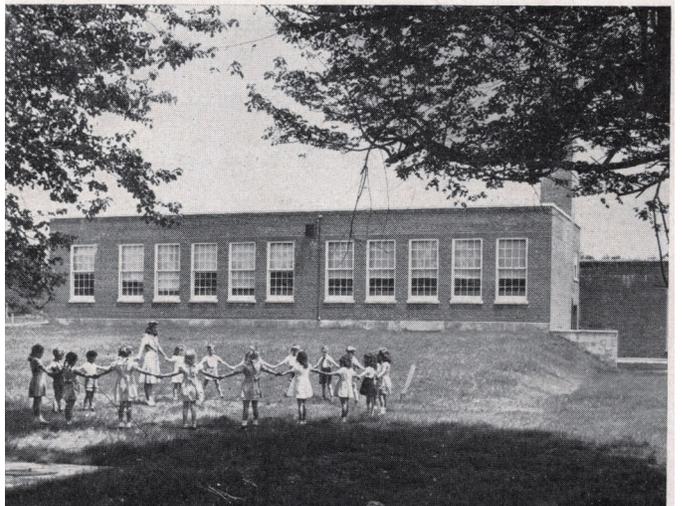
This Report is respectfully dedicated to:



WILLIAM H. SHEA
 who served as Town Manager from January 1, 1935 to March 15, 1945.

Fades the light, and afar
 Goeth day, cometh night and a star
 Leadeth all, speedeth all
 to their rest.

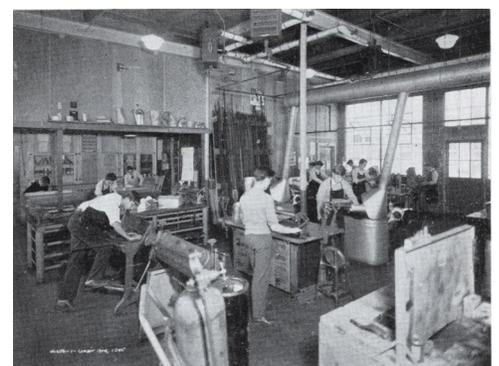
"Taps"—Bret Harte



ELI WHITNEY SCHOOL ANNEX



SENIOR TYPING CLASS



SHOP ACTIVITY OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

JUDSON HOUSE OPENS FOR APRIL 1973

From time to time we are very fortunate to receive items which families can no longer retain, and/or desire to retain. Recently, during a presentation at the Oronoque Country Club, Sabra Burritt shared with us a collection of newspaper articles which her mother had collected. In examining the articles, we found a few about our Historical Society which were extremely relevant. We have displayed a **Bridgeport Sunday Post** article, below, from April 1, 1973. You may download a full-sized copy of this article from our newsletter website's homepage.



HISTORIC SITE — The present appearance of the former Judson House on Academy Hill street, Stratford, probably very closely approximates the way it looked when constructed in 1723.

By JOHN W. SOBER
It's said that when the first settlers came to Stratford in 1639 instead of building log cabins they constructed hillside dugouts to weather the first winter.
Later, one of that hardy band of "seventeen families containing sixty-five souls" used part of the wall of a dugout for the foundation of a more permanent home.
The man was William Judson and his house has not survived, but it's generally believed that his great-grandson, Captain David Judson, used that original 1639 mud and stone wall for a house he built in 1723.
Today, the Stratford Historical society begins celebration of the 250th anniversary of that structure, known as "Judson House", as it opens the doors of the house for the 1973 season.
Currently, Judson House is the only house of the 1700s period in the Bridgeport area open to the public as a museum on a regular basis.
Beginning today, Judson House will open on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. until Nov. 1.

Unique Feature
In addition to the fact that the foundation of the house dates to the 1700s...

(Continued on Page E-11)



'THE LOWER KITCHEN' — Despite the quaint reference, this kitchen on the lower level of Judson House was probably used to house the Judson family slaves. Stratford Historical society president, Elden Dutton, right, discusses details of restoration with member Marshall Nye.

Stratford's Judson House Opens Today for Its 250th Anniversary



GAY NINETIES — Historic Judson House as it looked in the 1890s. The Victorian era added the twin porches, drastically changing the appearance of the house. They were removed in 1926.



PREPARATION — Historical society members Mrs. Frank Scott, left, and Mrs. Stanley Bellick are pictured working on new curtains in the dining room of the Judson House.



UPPER KITCHEN — Historical society members Mr. and Mrs. Donald W. Fowler center in the upper kitchen. The room contains a number of valued artifacts dating from colonial days.



ASTOR PIANO—Gera Bay, restorer of the rare Astor piano at Judson House, tests the action as his wife watches. Manufactured in London in the last years of the 1700s, the piano was once owned by United States Constitution signer and Stratford resident William Samuel Johnson.



FRONT DOOR — Unique Judson House portico is featured on the cover of J. Frederick Kelly's book, "Early Domestic Architecture of Connecticut". Broken pediment design (above door) and glass set in the door, were unknown in this area at the time of construction of the house and may have set the pattern for later colonial architecture in Connecticut.

CUPHEAG CLUB ENDS A LONG RUN

From time to time we are very fortunate to receive items which families can no longer retain, and/or desire to retain. Recently, during a presentation at the Oronoque Country Club, Sabra Burritt shared with us a collection of newspaper articles which her mother had collected. In examining the articles, we found a few related to our Historical Society which were extremely relevant. We have displayed a **Bridgeport Sunday Post** article, below, from February 25, 1979. You may download a full-sized copy of this article from our newsletter website's homepage.

Cupheag folds tent, victim of the times

By ANN V. MASTERS

One of the oldest social clubs in Connecticut, the Cupheag Club of Stratford, is closing, signaling the end of an era. Many such clubs, often of prestigious background and including professionals from actors to writers, have closed in the past decade through dwindling membership, rising costs and a changing lifestyle.

Once highly popular, symbols of status, the social clubs look back with fond memories on events marked by good fellowship, congenial people, a place to entertain friends, a home-away-from-home in a cozy atmosphere where one is surely beloved. But their real heyday now belongs to the nostalgic past. Today, people travel more, play golf, tennis, recreational clubs and find entertainment right in their homes through television. Even the loyalties of close friendship, and the brotherhood of club memberships, along with a respect for family ties, seem rooted in a simpler, pleasanter age.

THE CUPHEAG CLUB was founded in 1888. The town of Stratford started as an English settlement in 1639. A small tribe of friendly Indians, the Cupheags, then lived in a village at the mouth of the Housatonic River. The club drew its name from this source.

The founders of the Cupheag Club were, quite probably, mainly descendants of these early settlers for their names are early American ones, many still well known today.

Since that time, the Cupheag Club has represented something special in Stratford history, for practically every man of prominence has been a member. For decades, all town managers and other town leaders have belonged. Membership was a prized possession. Social events were a quick sell-out.

The young men who founded the Cupheag Club almost 180 years ago met in the rear of the Congregational Church, in traditional New England fashion.

The first recorded vote with its declared purpose "to form a club" reveals many prominent family names in subsequent men history: James U. Sammis, W.H. Rogers, William H. Crawford, David L. Rhoades, George N. Morehouse, F.H. Spencer, Edward M. Waller, Charles E. Beardsley, Frank L. Curtis, and George T. Jewell.

They also decided to rent a billiard table at \$2 a month and to rent Osborne Hall, a room near the cider mill of Edward Osborne, for \$5 per month. The mill was destroyed by fire a year later.

STRATFORD WAS then a quiet, largely farming community of 2,000 inhabitants. There were no electricity, no telephones, and lighting was by kerosene lamps. Social activity was at a premium. Cupheag Club events readily became popular, much talked about and anticipated.

Many fascinating glimpses into small town life, as well as club affairs, are provided in a "History of the Cupheag Club" published on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee banquet marking the 75th anniversary of the organization.

"On Dec. 6, 1886, a vote of thanks was given to Elias Burton for his gift of a rug for the club premises. . . . For a great many years, no longer a resident of his birthplace, he visited the club to talk over old times with his boyhood chums," the history notes, for example.

At his death he left the club a bequest of \$2,000, a sizable sum for those early days.

New England thrift was evident when on Nov. 12, 1886, the men voted to buy a new rug for \$12 "as soon as there is enough money to pay for it."

The Sunday Post
Closeup

PAST AND PRESENT — Many family names still well known in Stratford are represented in photographs of the Cupheag Club in 1888, two years after its founding: from left, top row, Charles K. Stagg, Robert D. Sammis, David L. Rhoades, William H. Crawford, James H. Moschen, William H. Rogers, Fred T. Hotchkiss. Middle row, from left, Noah W. Farley, Charles E. Beardsley, John E. Judson, George N. Morehouse, George T. Jewell, Edmund H. Judson, Samuel Dickinson. Bottom row, from left, C. Edwin DuFour, James U. Sammis, Sidney S. Beardsley, J. Edward Beardsley, William C. Morehouse, William V. Latta, Edward M. Waller. In picture above, Robert Dugany, club president, presents a check from the final club fund to Mary Bliley, aide to the Stratford schools superintendent, for scholarships to Stratford High School students. (Sunday Post photos Ed Brinko)

The first sign of opulence appears on May 28, 1887, when it was voted to hire a man to clean the rooms," the club records state.

In 1889, a fair was sponsored and raised \$300, donated towards the still standing Soldier's Monument on Academy Hill.

On Sept. 15, 1888, for the occasion of the 20th anniversary of Stratford, it was voted "to suspend the rules" but adding emphatically that "no liquor shall be brought into the room except what the committee shall see fit to bring in."

The WONDERFUL shore dinners, an annual event that the Cupheag Club became famed for, began in 1889 and were held either at Misser Smith's on the Housatonic River or at George Smith's at Millford Point.

A ball was sponsored in April 1891 for the benefit of the Stratford Library Association and considerable money was raised.

In 1893, the club moved from its first quarters in Osborne Hall to rooms furnished by John Latta across from the south windows of the club's present card room. In 1895, another move was made across the street to two front rooms in the McNamara Building.

The simplicity of life is revealed when, according to the records, "the modern demand for sanitation appeared and the House committee was ordered to buy a wash bowl and pitcher."

A nice point of honor was settled also when the club refused to accept the resignation of a member because he had borrowed the \$2 initiation fee and had not paid it back.

All members who joined the U.S. Army had their dues remitted, the Cupheag Club decided in a vote taken on May 1, 1888. The Spanish American war was on!

Cultural activities received a nod when in 1888 J.C. Curtis was invited to "exhibit his skill on the string." But other events, shore dinners, clam bakes, regular dances were the mainstay, drawing huge crowds.

The day of the famous "Clam Bake" was held in the summer of 1890, in the apple orchard of Samuel C. Lewis. "To those who attended these affairs," the records state proudly, "nothing need be said. They are one of life's most pleasant memories."

THERE ARE SO MANY old Stratford names that appear in the Cupheag history that it is impossible to mention them all.

James U. Sammis was the first president. George T. Jewell was the first and long-time secretary and treasurer.

In 1891, the name of Charles F. Judson appears for the first time when he was elected to the board of governors. The Judson House in Stratford is a landmark in Stratford today.

Former Governor Raymond Baldwin, now in his 86s who served in that capacity in the 1860s and who was originally from Stratford, was one of its distinguished members.

Committees seem to have been the way of doing things and they were appointed over the years to "buy four windows screens", to purchase a mat, to arrange for three rope fire escapes and oversee that "if the clock does not run for one week, it be sent to the repair shop."

The Cupheag Club absorbed the Stratford Social Club in 1907 and a telephone was installed. The Stratford Social Club had been organized in 1883.

In another point of honor, apparently, at the next election every member in the room refused the presidency. In a solution satisfactory to all, George W. Spall was elected.

A PERIOD of great social activity followed in the space offered in the McNamara Building. The good fellowship extended to the point where the entire club was invited to attend wedding anniversaries and birthday parties. The clam-bakes, the shore dinner parties, were always high spots on the club calendar. To them were added winter parties, dances, pool and billiard matches, and ladies evenings.

The Cupheag Social Club, however, for its first 50 years was strictly a men's club." Robert R. Dugany, the current president, who has served since 1975, pointed out.

It is probably the oldest social club in the whole state operating up to the present. At one time and up until last year, the Cupheag Club held a social dance once a month. We had two bowling leagues of more than 40 persons that used to compete with the Algonquin and Brookhaven Country Clubs. The club had eight to nine billiard and pool tables. World champions came and gave exhibitions.

Dugany has been a member since 1958.

"The Cupheag Club had significance as a social gathering place. The events were all black tie, very formal affairs, with all of the food prepared by our own chef. Then there were picnics and dances. Almost everybody who was of any prominence in Stratford belonged to the Cupheag Club," said the president.

THE CUPHEAG CLUB reached its heyday in the 1920s when it leased quarters, built to its satisfaction, in the then new Lo-vel building, on Main Street near the town center, which the club has remained in until this day. In the 1920s the membership grew to more than 200, and its rooms served as a social center in Stratford.

The quarters of the Cupheag Club occupied the entire second floor of the Lo-vel building and the dances often drew several hundred persons to the commodious facility.

A big step was taken in the 1920s when the first bar was installed. The club steward and chef for dinner events from approximately 1923-1960 was the late Carl Boudreau, a former chef on the North German Steamship Line. Food was served at the big events but not regularly at the club. The bar offered sandwiches, however. Frank Palumbo served from approximately 1966 to the present and Frank Delpia from 1960-1969.

"The big formal affairs were beautiful events," Dugany said, "with cocktail hours and dinner. The food was first-class — hors d'oeuvres, shrimp cocktail, roast beef, salad, and dessert. The tickets were always sold out very quickly."

The Cupheag Club was never expensive. In 1957, the yearly dues were increased to \$20 a year after three attempts to secure membership approval. The highest dues were \$50 a year. The rent

was always reasonable and remained so, right to the present day.

The last big event for the Cupheag Club was in the spring of 1978 and was a bowling banquet.

WITH THE CLOSING of the Cupheag Club, anything of historical value will be donated to the Stratford Historical Society. This will include the pictures of the founders and early members and the etchings of the late Charles E. Whelan, known as "Shang" Wheeler. Any funds left are being contributed to Stratford High School as a scholarship fund.

The Cupheag Club has been more than a social club not only to its members but to Stratford, for it has played an important role in civic events and the town's progress.

"It's the end of an era where social clubs played a prominent part in the lives of its members," Cupheag President Dugany said. "It will certainly be missed by all of its former members."

"I'm going to miss all of my friends," Dugany said. "It was a place to get together and be with them. Everybody knew each other. It was more like a big family than a club."

HENRY SCHIFUL, one of the oldest members and president in 1961, said, "It was just a lot of fun. I enjoyed it immensely. The Cupheag Club was a very nice place to go to stop in twice a week, sit around, talk, play cards, have a drink, a sandwich. I miss the people who belong to the club. I miss the events. It is not any one thing. Anyone ever connected with the Cupheag Club feels sad at its closing."

Richard Ross, treasurer of the club, said "the closing makes me feel like base-

ball fans felt when the Dodgers and Giants left New York. Dugany said "It is the end of a long and wonderful tradition, and I'm left with my happy memories."

Samuel Paquette commented, "as a fairly recent citizen of Stratford, I can truly say the loss of the Cupheag Club, one of Connecticut's finest organizations will be a great loss to the town of Stratford. The good times and memories I've enjoyed in that club could never be forgotten."

Mrs. Eileen Dugany said, "the Cupheag Club members were a wise, witty, charming group of people, who were intimately concerned in each other's lives — rejecting in goodness and supporting in sorrow. The lasting friendships formed in the club rooms over card tables and at dinner dances, extended outside the walls with bowling, picnics, theater parties and travel to Bermuda, Nassau and Hawaii."

"Our children grew to know each other, too, meeting as little ones at Christmas parties, later attending foot-gate dances and always delighting in watching the Memorial Day parades from the big windows of the ballroom fronting on Main Street."

Joseph Ithasz remarked: "I certainly will miss the Cupheag Club. It was a meeting place for good fellowship, good times and good friends. My wife and I will hate to see it go."

Fred Shannon said "The Cupheag Club was a nice place to meet nice people — people whom we kept as friends all of our lives."

Mrs. Helen Mitchell spoke for many when she said "being a member of the Cupheag Club was like being a part of a large family. We will all miss the good times there!"

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FAREWELL GESTURE — Gathered in reminiscence at the Cupheag Club bar, installed in 1930, are current members, from left, Joseph Ithasz, Fred Shannon, Richard Ross, treasurer, and Robert Dugany, president. The club has been a longtime Stratford social center.

TOWN FAIR LANES 1968-69
STRATFORD CONN

DECADE AGO — Bowling was always popular at the Cupheag Club and remained one of the last activities. From left are the late Mrs. Sally Ross, Frank Adzima, the late Lou Toronto and Robert Dugany.

PLANE CRASH IN ROMATZICK BACKYARD



85 Arcadia Avenue photo from Town Tax Assessor's records.



85 Arcadia Avenue aerial from Google Maps. Wakelee Avenue to the left of the homes. 85 Arcadia, in this aerial photo, is three houses in from Wakelee on the bottom row of houses and is circled in yellow.



Photo scrapbook page as sent to us by Robert Romatzick.



Photo from the *New York Daily News*, November 10, 1935.

When we think of historic airplane crashes in Stratford, we generally remember the Mollison plane crash of July 1933 where Jim and Amy Mollison harmlessly crashed their transatlantic flight plane into Great Meadows Marsh. There was a plane crash two years later in Stratford, however, which nearly produced much more tragic consequences.

We have mentioned in prior newsletters the house fire that destroyed Thomas and Ella Romatzick's home in October of 1918. When the Romatzick's built a new home to replace their fire destroyed home, they built at 85 Arcadia Avenue.

Recently, Robert Romatzick, a descendant of Thomas and Ella's, shared with us family photos of another tragedy that occurred to the Romatzick family 17 years later in 1935. An airplane crashed into the Romatzick yard narrowly missing their home. We have included some of Robert's photos on this page along with a newspaper article detailing the airplane crash. Had the plane crashed just a few feet away in any direction, many more lives, than just the pilot's, would have been lost and the Romatzick's could have lost a second home.

New York Daily News
November 10, 1935
Thousands See Cadet Flier Crash to Death
(Special to The News.)

Stratford, Conn., Nov. 9.—An Army flying school cadet, stunting above Stratford in a pursuit plane, was fatally injured today when his ship crashed near the center of town. Thousands of onlookers saw the plane fall.

The cadet, Alton T. Peterson, 17, of Hampden, Neb., brought the plane here from the Army School at Langley Field, Va. Shortly before 3 P. M., he took off from the Mollison Airport, near here, to stunt over the home of a relative, R. C. Dean of Stratford.

Onlookers told police that



Peterson was stunting about ten or fifteen minutes before the crash. Just before the plane fell, he went into a power dive and was coming up on the zoom when he went into a half roll.

The nose of the ship turned down from 400 feet, and Peterson shut the motor off, apparently sensing that the crash was inevitable.

The ship crashed into a tree outside the home of Joseph and David Romatzick. Two youths pulled Peterson from the wreck. He was taken to Bridgeport Hospital where he died three hours later.

The ship was a single place Curtiss biplane, powered by a Curtiss cooled 66-E motor of 675 horsepower. It was attached to the 96th Bombing Squad, 8th Pursuit Group, Langley Field.



TANNER'S BROOK

The Stratford News
c 1920

Tanner's Brook Like Seine, Dividing Business Section; Causes Trouble Sometimes
Stream That Carries Off Much of Surface Water From Barnum Avenue and Broadbridge Avenue Sections, Passes Under Business Blocks in Center — At Present It's Entirely Dry, But At Other Seasons It's Sometimes Quite a Torrent — Town Passed Up Opportunity to Divert Brook

It has been said that every successful and thriving city in the United States built upon a body of water that is or was navigable. Stratford is fortunate in being situated directly on Long Island sound, at the mouth of the Housatonic river, but perhaps if it lacked these magnificent boundaries it still might find it possible to "carry on," because of the existence of Tanner's brook a stream which is decidedly an in-and-out affair, in every sense of the word.

It is possible that few residents of Stratford today are aware that Tanner's brook exists, or what or where it is. Such persons have limited their explorations to distant points, and have avoided back lots and back yards in the main business section of Stratford, or they would know considerable about Tanner's brook.

The brook at times is so tiny, so important as to deserve not even the appellation of rill; at other times, winter and spring storms, with water pouring off the considerable surface that forms its watershed, it is a stream of considerable magnitude and much annoyance, it is one of those things in Stratford for which there is no particular reason for its existence; yet it survives, because nobody does anything about it.

The brook gets its name from the tannery that stood many years ago on the east side of Main street, a short distance from where the east-bound railroad station now stands. Probably the tannery found the stream useful in its operations, and it is quite likely that after using the water, it was discharged, more or less polluted by

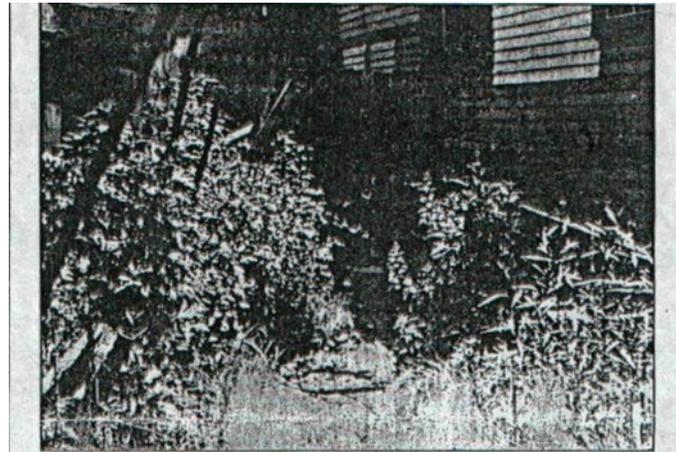
industrial waste, to seek its outlet. The outlet is in Ferry bridge creek, near Ferry boulevard, but before it reaches that point the brook crosses many acres of the most valuable and most important land in town.

Rising in the region north of Barnum avenue and Boston avenue, it extends through the land which in recent years has been sub-divided and developed for residences, consisting of several branches, which have their confluence north of Catherine street. Nichols avenue, Broadbridge avenue, and Barnum avenue are crossed by the brook in its various branches. Surface water from this entire slope has a tendency to drain into the brook which swells it to important proportions at times.

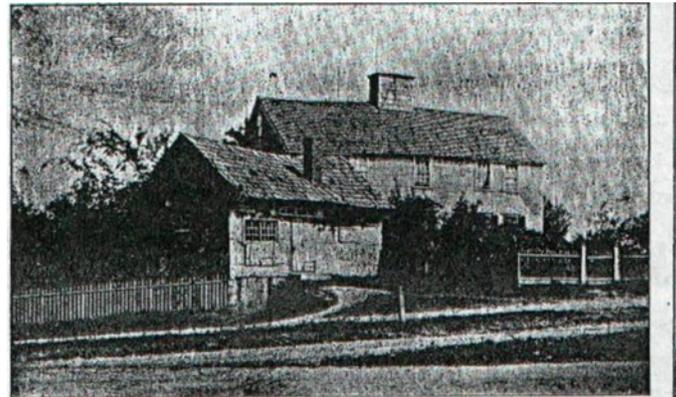
The brook proceeds cross country near King street, until it passes to the south side of the railroad viaduct, to Linen [sic] avenue, several hundred feet west of Main street. Here the stream turns in a southerly direction, and crosses the property on which the Main street business blocks have been built, including the town hall and the new Lovell block, passing along the Lovell property and under the Tuttle block, to cross Main street, then passing under the building occupied by Logan Brothers' store, thence out into the lots in back of Main street. It then finds its way to Ferry bridge creek.

At this time of the year, there is merely the bed of a stream there. It has almost completely dried up, but in other seasons, it frequently proves troublesome to property-owners in the center.

It is recalled that about 15 years ago, a proposition was launched, to divert the stream entirely from the business section, by providing a conduit for it to pass along the railroad right of way, from the point where it comes under the viaduct, south to the creek. At the time, the railroad company and the trolley company were reported as willing to pay one third of the cost each, the town to pay the remaining third. The cost was estimated at \$10,000. However, town officials turned down the proposal, and no further action has been taken.



TANNER'S BROOK NEAR LOVELL BLOCK
The bed of the stream, now temporarily dried up, is shown here, directly in back of the new Lovell block, and passing adjacent to the old Lovell building, which was moved from Main street when the new block was erected.



SPOT WHERE SAMMIS STORE NOW STANDS
This picture, taken about 1875, shows Main street, Stratford, at the point where the S...



Tanner's Brook drainage-way under construction in September 2017. The brook, as shown, snakes behind the condominiums on the corner of Broadbridge Avenue and California Street. Gallows Brook, site of Goody Bassett's hanging, likely drained into Tanner's Brook before the railroad was constructed.

WITCH HAZEL IN BLOOM

Witch Hazel is one of those very unusual plants which few people have ever seen in bloom. The reason is that this native shrub blooms in February and usually grows in wooded areas. Luckily for us, there are a couple of witch hazel shrubs growing on the grounds of Town Hall. The blooming of the witch hazels was prolific and weirdly otherworldly this year. To find witch hazel in Stratford, you generally need to make a trip to Roosevelt Forest where it grows in the wild.

Watching the witch hazel bloom at Town Hall, reminds me, every year without fail, of one of the largest fires in Trumbull in 1974 at the United Witch Hazel Distilleries. To my knowledge, the only remaining witch hazel manufacturer in Connecticut is Dickinson's which was located in Essex.

As a consequence of the recent blooming, it seemed an appropriate occasion to share a few paragraphs from the **Bridgeport Post** on the witch factory's 1974 burning.

Bridgeport Post
November 1, 1974

Flash Fire Destroys Factory Built at Trumbull Site in 1800

TRUMBULL—One workman was burned at 8:20 a.m. today in a spectacular flash fire which destroyed the 174-year-old historic United Witch Hazel Distilleries factory at 40 Broadway in the Long Hill section. Damage could be estimated only at "thousands of dollars" by fire officials.

Only portions of the outer walls of the two and one-half story frame factory building, constructed in 1800, were standing today and will be torn down later in the day.

Long Hill Fire Chief John Randall said the fire apparently started as chemicals were being mixed and fed on quantities of denatured alcohol which are used in the manufacture of witch hazel.

...Flames leaped high in the air at the height of the blaze as stores of alcohol became involved, attracting crowds from nearby homes. Firefighters poured water onto the blaze, using aerial equipment; and kept sparks from spreading to nearby homes.

...the building contained the following items, all of which were assumed to be destroyed:

Two, 30,000-gallon vats for mixing; a 75-horsepower boiler, a snowmobile, two duck hunting boats, three copper stills and quantities of alcohol and other ingredients used in manufacturing witch hazel.

...The factory shipped witch hazel all over the world, and Connecticut is one of the few states in which the aromatic witch hazel shrub grows.

The factory building was first opened as a shirt factory and became a witch hazel factory in the 1930s. Mr. Lane became a superintendent of the operation in 1936 and eventually its owner...



Witch hazel in bloom at Town Hall in February 2020.



HISTORICAL SOCIETY HAPPENINGS

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

Continued from Page 1

ry. Making a gift membership to a family member, or a friend, would be a good, and a generous way, to spread the news of the Society's mission.

Virtual Story Time

If you're looking for a way to fill the hours for a young person in your life, consider **Open Culture** books at:

http://www.openculture.com/2016/08/enter-an-archive-of-6000-historical-childrens-books-all-digitized-and-free-to-read-online.html?fbclid=IwAR1cCqL3R6LV18Z_GrM_BjA0J5MmQWAOmqs2xYoD9-25l5rZ9y4yx3s4EFl. You'll enter a digital archive of 6,000 historical children's, and young adult's, books, all digitized and free to read online.

For yourself, your Stratford Library is still free and accessible digitally. The Library has 100's of current best sellers and magazines available to read for free at <http://stratfordlibrary.org/research/>.

Pleasure Beach Archive

Since we all seem to have an abundance of time on our hands at home during our current crisis, we've found some excellent historical websites. Recently, we discovered a treasure trove of old photos and memorabilia from Pleasure Beach. The history and photos of Pleasure Beach may be found at: <http://oldpleasurebeachct.com/>. The site contains many photos of the old cottages at Long Beach West. If you ever visited Pleasure Beach, or Polka Dot Playhouse on Pleasure Beach, you'll enjoy this website.

www.stratfordhistoricalsociety.org