

THE CUPHEAG CORNER

VOLUME III, ISSUE I

AUGUST / SEPTEMBER 2020



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

MARK THE DATES:

- Lighthouse Open House
- Suffragettes in Corselettes, December 12th at 2pm. VIRTUAL program.

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LIGHTHOUSE OPEN HOUSE

Saturday, October 17th, 10:00—4:00pm, 1275 Prospect Drive, Stratford

Stratford Point, and its lighthouse, has a rich, lively, and intriguing history dating back to the settlement of the Town of Stratford. The earliest history of Connecticut published in 1781 by Reverend Samuel Peters reflects on the experiences of Stratfordites attempting to co-exist with the native American population celebrating on Stratford Point as well as the hungry Stratford Point mosquitoes which are legendary in Stratford's history.

For most of the modern history of the Stratford Point Lighthouse, it



Stratford Point Lighthouse c 1913

has largely been inaccessible to the general public. Mayor Hoydick, in June of 2019, struck a deal with the U.S. Coast Guard whereby the Town would have access to the lighthouse and its surrounding buildings and property provided the Town paid for the care and maintenance of the same.

The lighthouse itself is filled with lead contamination and cannot be entered, or viewed from the interior, at this time. Mayor Hoydick has been exploring options on how to contain the lead contamination and make the lighthouse available to the public.

In the meantime, the keeper's cottage may be accessed and so may the lighthouse grounds. The former gun club property, under the management of Audubon Connecticut, is

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

also available to the public during the work week.

On Saturday, October 17th, from 10am until 4pm, the Stratford Historical Society, in conjunction with the Town of Stratford, will be hosting a limited Open House of the lighthouse property. A slideshow presentation will be available of the interior of the lighthouse, and an historical walking tour will be offered of Stratford Point.

Three program time slots are available at 10am, noon, and 2pm. Advance registration is required through the Stratford Recreation Department. Register at <https://townofstratford.recdesk.com/Community/Program>. Just scroll down until you see "Lighthouse Tour".

Tour size is limited to 10 individuals per time slot, masks are required, and social distancing will be maintained. The Historical Society hopes to make this a monthly program available to the general public.

—◆—
"He knows not his own strength who hath not met adversity."

William Samuel Johnson, c 1800

—◆—

HISTORICAL SOCIETY HAPPENINGS

Despite the continued inconvenience of dealing with the COVID-19 virus, your Society is keeping busy with many projects.

First off, we have created a daily puzzle from historic Stratford photographs which you may enjoy working on, at puzzle.stratfordhistoricalsociety.info.

Secondly, our Education Committee is busily working on a "virtual" presentation which can be given in lieu of Judson House tours. At this point, it appears it will be some time before we'll be able to conduct school programs on the Society's grounds.

We have scheduled the "Suffragettes in Corselettes" program for Saturday, December 12th

at 2pm. This presentation should be a fun way to end our year of commemorating the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage. The program is a "virtual" one, and we'll provide more details in the very near future.

We're hoping to restart our Suffrage presentations to the Town Council. COVID has interrupted these presentations, and we'd like to continue them through this year.

In addition to the Lighthouse Open House scheduled for October 17th, we're hoping to begin our walking tours throughout Stratford once more. Depending on the weather, we're hoping to start our walks before year's end.

In the event you missed it, Mayor Hoydick issued a Proclamation de-

claring August 12th Lillie Devereux Blake Day in Stratford. Should you be interested in reading, or re-reading, the proclamation, you may find it at <http://townofstratford.com/qcontent/NewsFeed.aspx?FeedID=2789>.

We're planning to celebrate the anniversary of the Washington Bridge next November. We hope to combine our efforts with those of the Milford Historical Society.

Additionally, we're working on creating a memorial, with Mayor Hoydick, for Goody Bassett. We hope to install the memorial during the month of May of 2021.

Just a reminder, membership dues are now due in January rather than in September.

ANNIVERSARY OF 19TH AMENDMENT RATIFICATION



WOMEN VOTE

Connecticut Suffrage Centennial

The official website for Connecticut's celebration of the Suffrage Centennial is <https://votesforwomenct.com>.

The battle for women's suffrage took a bit of a different path in Connecticut. The 19th amendment was signed into law at 8am on August 26th, 1920. However, the amendment's standing was called into question when the state of Tennessee revoked its ratification of the amendment early in September of 1920.

Connecticut's Governor Holcomb, who had never supported the suffrage amendment, called the Connecticut legislature into session on September 14th to ratify the amendment, thereby removing all doubt as to the amendment's legal standing. While Governor Holcomb was no supporter of the amendment, Connecticut's House and Senate were. The Connecticut State House voted 216 to 11 to ratify the 19th amendment while in the Senate the vote was unanimous.

The next day, Governor Holcomb refused to certify the action taken by the legislature, but Connecticut's Attorney General ruled the Governor's

action made no difference as the vote of the legislature was legal, and stood, despite the Governor's opinion to the contrary.

The newspaper articles surrounding Connecticut's ratification of the vote are extremely enlightening, and you may read them at suffrage.stratfordhistoricalsociety.info.

Stratford's women were elated by the vote, and turned out in great numbers to register on the first day that they could register to vote.

The Bridgeport Times

September 18, 1920

Women Storm The Registrars In The Rust To Be Made

With thousands of women anxiously awaiting their turn to get up to the desk in the town clerk's office to be "made voters" in order that they be ready to cast their first vote in a general election, or rather in the town elections to be held on Monday, October 4, next, Connecticut election officials are today literally

swamped with business.

The ruling of Attorney - General Frank K. Healy, which removed all doubt as to the eligibility of women to vote on that date, providing they had filed application to be made voters on or before September 16 started the stampede which today in Stratford, Fairfield and Milford created a scene about the town offices that looked like the premier rush for seats at the opening of the world's series of base ball [sic] games. At Stratford their [sic] were hundreds in line when the board opened their doors to begin the day's work. In Stratford town there were almost 1,000 women registered on September 16 and 1,600 men, so that the task confronting the election board is a big one. The board will remain open until 8 o'clock tonight.

...At noon today the election board at Stratford had completed the task of making 300 women voters and 150 men had also been qualified. Scores of women were in line waiting their turn at that hour.

95 YEARS PRESERVING, CHERISHING, CARING FOR HISTORY

The Stratford Historical Society celebrates its 95th birthday this year. On August 8th, 1925, the inaugural meeting of the Society was held to nominate officers for the Society. An organizational meeting had been held, earlier, on July 14, 1925.

There had been a desire on the part of many Stratfordites to form an historical society for three generations. However, with the death of Celia Curtis earlier in 1925, and her wish to donate her home to a town historical society, it became imperative that action be taken on forming a Society.

Additionally, new residents moving to town were being asked to donate to the preservation of Celia's former residence, the erstwhile Captain David Judson home, The new residents didn't understand why they should donate.

It seems beneficial to re-read the purpose of the Society as detailed by the Society's founders in 1925.

History of Stratford, 1939

By William Howard Wilcoxson

On January 17, 1925, Articles of Association, were filed by Mrs. Adelaide Curtis Gunther, Miss Frances B. Russell, Mrs. Margaret Beardsley DeLacour, Rev. George W. Judson, Mr. John C. Wilcoxson and Mr. Charles H. Welles, associating them selves as a body politic and corporate, under the name of The Stratford Historical Society, Incorporated. The purposes of the society were stated to be "to preserve, cherish and care for all historical material, whether written matter or material objects relating to the history of the town of Stratford, Connecticut; to maintain a building for the preservation and exhibition of such material; to collect and expend money for such purposes and to hold funds and property in trust for such purposes." How well the society has succeeded in its objects, is evident to all who visit the headquarters of the society in the historic Judson House.

It's also interesting to review the details of the July 25th organizational meeting.

The Bridgeport Telegram
July 15, 1925**New Historical Society Stirs Up Unfavorable Comment About "Who's Who" in Old Stratford**

The formation of a Stratford historical society which has been discussed for more than three generations reached the state of temporary organization last Friday night, and incidentally has brought about one of the biggest social and political mixups [sic] that the town has ever witnessed.

Objection is made in many quarters as to the methods of calling the preliminary meeting to complete the temporary organization and now the argument has been reopened as to just who are the best people in Stratford rather than how many of the townspeople could be induced to interest themselves in the history of Stratford....



Captain David Judson House c 1925

DATELINE STRATFORD AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 1955

The Hartford Courant

August 1, 1955

Sikorsky Lauded by Bush For Contributions to U.S.

STRATFORD AP – Sen. Prescott Bush (R-Conn.) cited Igor Sikorsky today as a prime example of the “loyal citizens of Russian birth or descent” to whom, he said, “America has reason to be grateful.”

...Concerning Sikorsky, Bush said:

“To him and to his devoted associates in the pioneering days, all refugees from Soviet Communism, we owe many contributions to the science of flight. To Sikorsky we owe the amazing development of the helicopter, which has become such a useful tool to our armed services and which holds such promise for the progress of civilian air transportation.”

The Stratford News

August 4, 1955

New Fire Truck for Stratford

Firechief [sic] Theodore Lockwood announced on Wednesday that the town has purchased a new firefighting apparatus. The latest addition is a Maxim truck equipped with a 750 gallon pump.

On Wednesday afternoon, firemen gave the engine, which will be known as Booster No. 2, a three hour test run at Peck’s Mill Pond.

The Stratford News

August 4, 1955

1470 Receive Polio Shots In Stratford

A total of 1470 Stratford school children received their second polio vaccine shot last Tuesday, according to health department officials. This is approximately 50% of the 2944 eligible children from Stratford.

Robert Mundy, Town Sanitarian, reports that a makeup clinic will be held during the week of Aug. 15 at the Health Department to take care of the children who were out of town last week.

The Bridgeport Telegram

August 5, 1955

Judson House Open With New Curator

The Stratford Historical society has named Fred Booth of Putney as new resident curator of Judson House, Academy hill, Stratford, and plans to open the museum Mondays, Fridays and Saturdays from 2 to 5 p.m. and other days by appointment.

A nominating committee has been appointed by Robert Scott, president, to prepare a slate of officers for the next meeting. Robert Beardsley is chairman of the committee...

The Bridgeport Telegram

August 11, 1955

Sikorsky Will Dedicate New Factory on Oct. 26

Dedication ceremonies for the new Sikorsky Aircraft division of United Aircraft corporation \$17 million plant alongside the Housatonic river, Stratford, are tentatively scheduled to take place Oct. 26.

The new facility, rapidly nearing completion and considered the most modern and complete plant in the area, will open its doors officially in October to the top brass of all military services, town, state and Federal government officials and representatives of the various news services.

At the present time approximately 800 persons are working in the new plant...

The Stratford News

September 8, 1955

Garden Club Show Planned for Sept. 14

Plans are being completed by the Stratford Garden Club assisted by the Lordship Gardeners Club for a flower show Wednesday, September 14 in the American Legion Hall. The event will be open to guests from 2 to 9 pm, and refreshments will be served.

...Awards will be made in 47 classes of horticultural Exhibits, 12 artistic

arrangement classes and an Invitation class.

The Stratford News

September 15, 1955

Harold von Schmidt To Give Exhibition At Sterling House

Harold von Schmidt, one of America’s best known illustrators, will open the Sterling House Art Season with an exhibition of his original paintings as a test this Sunday at 2:30, according to an announcement by William McCracken, Chairman of the Sterling House Art Committee and instructor at the Famous Artists School in Westport. Mr. von Schmidt will be present at the tea to discuss his work with the public, who are invited to attend.

Gray Line Bus Route Approved

The Gray Line Bus Co., of Bridgeport, has received the okay of the State Public Utilities Commission in Hartford after amending their original plan for extending bus service to the Shakespeare Theatre.

The Gray Line route will run from the junction of Main St. and Stratford Ave., along Stratford Ave. and Elm St. to the entrance of the Shakespeare Festival Theatre. Also, from the north exit of the front parking lot of the Theatre, across Stratford Ave....

The Hartford Courant

September 26, 1955

Stratford Wins World Amateur Softball Crown

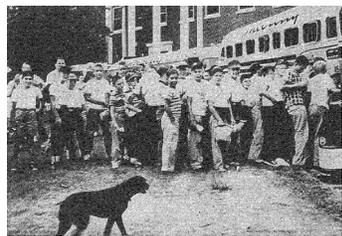
CLEARWATER, Fla., - Stratford, Conn., defeated Clearwater, Fla., Saturday 2-0 in a 10-inning game to win the Amateur Softball Assn. World world tournament.

The Clearwater team defending champion had won a earlier game from Stratford 2-0 to force the playoff game. ..

Neither team scored through nine innings of play. The Stratford’s Nick Santo tripled deep into center field.



The Stratford PAL Junior Rifle Club team looks happy and confident. (L-R) Sgt. Joe Carton, Barbara Winton, Don Dobras, Bruce Reynolds, Judy Mortenson. From *The Hartford Courant*, August 4, 1955.



200 members of the Raybestos Knot Hole Club boarding buses to watch a NY Yankees game. *The Stratford News*, August 4, 1955.



Sydney Smith interviewing Chandler Cowles and Roddy McDowell. *The Stratford News*, August 18, 1955.

NOW SHOWING AUGUST – SEPTEMBER 1955

August 7th	Seven Little Foys	Bob Hope, Milly Vitale
August 14th	How to Be Very, Very Popular	Betty Grable, Sheree North
August 21st	Purple Mask	Tony Curtis, Coleen Miller
August 28th	We're No Angels	Humphrey Bogart, Joan Bennett, Aldo Ray
September 4th	Mister Roberts	Henry Fonda, James Cagney
September 11th	The Shrike	Jose Ferrer, June Allyson
September 18th	Pete Kelly's Blues	Jack Webb, Janet Leigh
September 25th	The McConnell Story	June Allyson, Alan Ladd



Stratford Theater c 1934

WASHINGTON BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION

The Bridgeport Times September 8, 1920 **The New Washington Bridge**

Out at Stratford, where the Post Road crosses the Housatonic, there is beginning to emerge from the false work the graceful concrete arches of a modern bridge. It is the largest bridge of its type in Connecticut and when it is complete there is no reason why, barring an earthquake or the deliberate use of dynamite, it should not be as enduring as the pyramids and sphinx.

There are six spans and two approaches. The spans are each of a hundred feet except the channel span which is 125 feet. The approach on the Stratford side is 600 feet long and that on the Milford side 300. The approaches are carried on small decorative arches. A novel feature of the bridge is the fact that the roadbed is carried on six arched ribs in each span instead of one solid span as has always been the custom. The main bridge is 870 feet long and rests on five deep water piers and two abutments. Four of these piers rest on concrete piles driven 70 feet below low water to solid rock. It is said to be the only bridge in New England built on concrete piles.

The crown of the roadway will be 38 feet above the level of the water in the river. There will be double trolley tracks in the centre of the roadway with a driveway for teams on either side. The roadway from curb to curb will be 50 feet wide. On either side of the roadway there will be an eight foot walk. Outside the walks will be a balustrade of concrete of the latest design. The whole width of the bridge over all will be 68 feet.

There will be a bascule type of drawbridge, two sections with a rolling device for raising them into the air. This will be furnished by the Bethlehem Bridge Company. There are to be two bridge tenders' houses of handsome design built of concrete and tapestry brick with tile roofs.

The bridge is built of reinforced concrete in which 75,000 barrels of cement will have been used by the time it is done.

The bridge was designed in the office of the State Highway Commissioner, Charles J. Bennett, and is to be paid for jointly by the state, the two counties of Fairfield and New Haven, and the trolley company.

Work was commenced on it on June 22, 1919, and the cement work which is about ninety-one per cent completed will be done late this fall or early next spring

according to the weather. The contract for the draw calls for it to be ready to operate September 1, 1921. This is the probable date of the opening of the bridge to the public.

The total cost of the bridge will be about one million dollars...

A glance at the old bridge over which traffic has to go at present is enough to show the great need of a new structure. Traffic officers stationed at the old bridge to prevent accidents have made a good many counts to the number of autos going over the bridge in twenty-four hours and say that a fair average is from seven to eight thousand each twenty-four hours, and that it is no uncommon thing for traffic to average five hundred an hour for two, three, and sometimes four hours on a stretch.

For many years the bridge across the Housatonic has been known as the Washington Bridge. The first one was begun in 1797 and finished in the next year. Previous to that time travellers [sic] were ferried across the river at a point a little farther up the river than where the present bridge is...

The new bridge is being built some little distance up stream from the old one in order to straighten the road and do away with a sharp turn and a bad grade on a curve.



THE NEW WASHINGTON BRIDGE

How Work on the structure Across the Housatonic Has Advanced.

Work progressing on "new" Washington Bridge. From *The Bridgeport Times*, September 8, 1920

STRATFORD CHARACTERS

Stratford Faces



Tax Collector Harry Pyle at his desk at Town Hall.

The Stratford News, April 3, 1952.

Harry Pyle was the son of former Bridgeport Mayor, Henry H. Pyle, who was Mayor of Bridgeport in 1885. A more dedicated town employee would be near impossible to find. Harry went to work for the town at the age of 60, retirement age in his day. Harry worked until he reached the age of 80.

Harry's work was exemplary and was praised by those who knew him best in town.

"Tax collector Harry Pyle began a drive to collect \$5300 in unpaid personal tax bills dating from 1931 to 1934. The town was over the worst pains of the Depression but had not yet fully recovered. As the holidays approached merchants announced that trade was improving, but local jobless still filled census cards and the Welfare Depart-

ment made its annual call for Christmas toys and clothing."

In Pursuit of Paradise, 1989,
Lewis Knapp, page 269

The Bridgeport Telegram
August 5, 1955

Harry C. Pyle, 80, Is Retired As Tax Collector After 20 Years

...Employed Jan. 20, 1934, as deputy tax collector, Mr. Pyle became tax collector on April 1 a year later and served that post until last week. Effective date of his retirement was Aug. 1.

Allen B. Vermilya, director of the Department of Finance, expressed "keen regret" in the loss of Mr. Pyle and said, "The Town of Stratford will be lucky if they ever get a replacement will prove to be his equal."

He pointed out that the tax collector never had collected less than 99.4 per cent of all collecti-

ble taxes during the past 10 years. Last year he collected \$3,229,340.86—99.47 per cent.

And, Mr. Vermilya said, Mr. Pyle had, during his service here, collected as much as \$175,000 in excess of the estimate of collectible.

"When he came here," Mr. Vermilya continued, "there was more than \$450,000 in taxes in arrears. But as of this year, taxes in arrears for the 15 years allowed by law, do not total \$15,000.

"Only one other municipality in the state can boast of such a record," he said.

Mr. Pyle, said he will continue to reside in 15 Melville street, Stratford.

Mrs. Mabell Pyle passed away on March 28, 1957, and Harry followed her on April 25th.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OFFICERS 2020-2021

We recently voted on amending the by-laws of the Stratford Historical Society. The amended by-laws were adopted by the membership of the Society. Following the ratification of the amended by-laws by the general membership, nominations were made, according to the provisions of the amended by-laws, for officers of the Society for fiscal year September 2020 through August 2021. Here are the Stratford Historical Officers for 2020-2021.

We are still in need of chairmen for the Buildings, Finance, and Grounds Committees. If you are interested in serving as chair of one of these committees, please let Gail Liscio know of your interest.

- Directors:**
- President:**
- Vice-President:**
- Treasurer:**
- Recording Secretary:**
- Corresponding Secretary:**
- Buildings Committee:**
- Education Committee:**
- Finance Committee:**
- Gardens Committee:**
- Grounds Committee:**
- Hospitality Committee:**
- Hosts and Hostesses:**
- Membership Committee:**
- Newsletter Committee:**
- Programs Committee:**
- Publicity Committee:**
- Research Committee:**
- Statistics Committee:**
- Ways & Means Committee:**

- Carole Fanslow
- Christina Kazanas
- Stephanie Philips
- Gail Liscio
- David Wright
- Shirley Clevenger
- Kevin Moore
- Amanda DeBiase
(Open)
- Joe DiMenno
(Open)
- Kevin Moore
(Open)
- Karen Constantini
- Barbara Firsin
- Melinda Acosta
- David Wright
- Gail Liscio
- David Wright
- Gina Pezzullo
- Georgene Fasanella
- Pam Hutchinson

SHAKESPEARE THEATRE STRATFORD, ONTARIO

Star Phoenix
(Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada)

August 19, 1955

Right Name, Wrong Place

STRATFORD, Ont. (CP)—Since the opening this year of the Shakespearean festival at Stratford, Conn., officials of this city's festival have been waiting for it to happen.

Tuesday night it did.

"Right day; wrong play; wrong Stratford," said a program seller checking tickets of an elderly couple from the United States who came to the wrong country but the right city. The confused couple who planned a night at "The Tempest" spent it instead with "Julius Caesar," 900 miles away.

And, so, misunderstandings of Stratford's American Festival Shakespeare Theatre began at the beginning, including where the Theatre was actually located. The town, the Town Council, the neighbors with properties abutting the Theatre, and the town merchants were frequently at odds with the American Shakespeare Festival Theatre.

The differences between the Shakespeare theaters in Stratford, Ontario, Canada and Stratford, Connecticut couldn't be any more stark.

The Canadian Shakespeare theater was a grass roots project fueled by a "local boy" who excited an entire community to give

Shakespeare a try. The entire community jumped aboard the Shakespeare train sensing a cultural and economic boom about to blossom.

The Canadian theater started small; in a tent. As interest grew in the theater, the assets of the theater grew eventually culminating in the building of a permanent theater.

The Canadian theater was a financial success from its second season. The theater's mission was broader than the ASFT's wanting to meet the needs of attendees interested in productions other than Shakespeare. The critics were also kinder to the Canadian Shakespearean productions.

Canada's Shakespeare theater's first season was in the summer of 1953. **The Reader's Digest**, in October 1955, ran an article entitled **Stratford (Ont.) Hails Will Shakespeare** in which it detailed the genesis and successes of the theater to date. The opening paragraph of that article reads thusly:

In Nine weeks during the summer of 1954 the little town of Stratford-on-Avon, Ontario, (population 19,000) was host to more than 125,000 visitors. They came from all parts of Canada, the United States and from Europe. Six nights a week they packed themselves, almost 2,000 at a time, into an amphitheatre under a gaily pen-

noned tent to watch a troupe of actors perform Shakespearean plays, in this, the town's second Shakespearean Festival. In 1955, though records are incomplete at the time of writing, the throngs have been even more remarkable.

The Canadian theater was envious of the wonderful building Stratford, Connecticut had constructed on the Housatonic. They were also aware that a high bar had been set against which they were well aware they were competing.

The Ottawa Journal

August 23, 1955

Stratford's Success -- Again

...Well, 68,600 came to the theatre the first year, 125,155 the second — and this year's figure will be about 126,539...

...MONEY-WISE, the picture pleases. A loss of \$4,000 the first year became a profit of \$36,000 the second year and this year it may be a profit of \$30,000. But for a probable loss of \$20,000 in the music portion that \$30,000 might have been \$50,000.

...The Americans (bless 'em) still take most of the seats but Canada's support increases, notably that from Quebec province. The music program fared best from Montreal visitors and Stratford's directors nurse the hope that those who come from Quebec for music will stay to taste the theatre in increasing numbers.



Interior of the Stratford Shakespearean Festival Theatre-Tent showing the three sided, open-type stage. The theatre is a canvas and concrete structure, 3½ tons of canopy walls and roof, 1,240 tons of concrete foundation, 150 feet in diameter, 61 feet in height from peak to stage, with 16 seating tiers accommodating an audience of 2,000 people. Photo from **The Ottawa Journal**, August 23, 1955.



Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford, Ontario, Canada. Picture from nhpr.org.

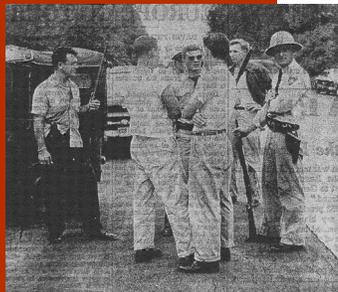
TRAGEDY TAKES STRATFORD WORKER



Robert Hart, Jr. All photos from *The Stratford News*, August 18, 1955.



...the murder car is seen with the door still open. The '55 Chevie was later taken by the police to be analyzed. The killer is still being sought.



...a group of police preparing to enter the woods to seek the murderer. Stratford Detective McNamara is shown at extreme left.



Bedell Benjamin c 1887

The Stratford News August 18, 1955 **Murder Occurs Just Over Town Line** **Dragnet Out for Bob Hart Killer**

The murder of mild mannered Robert Hart, Jr., 26, whose body was found sprawled across the road near his '55 green Chevy Sedan with bullets in his head, heart and spine, presents the state police with one of the most unusual killings in many years.

Hart, a mechanic employed by Henderson Chevrolet, Main St., Stratford, was found at 1:20 Wednesday afternoon on Route 8 in Shelton near the Stratford town line.

One of the earliest arrivals at the scene of the murder was Michael Skurat, 26, of Ansonia, an insurance investigator, who observed the body on the roadway and the Chevy on the side of the road. Two bakery company employees reported that they saw the murderer flee into the woods on the south side of the road.

Body Found Quickly

Within minutes after the murder was reported police from Trumbull, Stratford, Shelton and the State Police Barracks were on the scene. Lieutenant William Troland, of Stratford, was a member of a helicopter crew which searched the area for several hours. Bloodhounds were brought to the scene but too many persons had been in the murder car since the body was found, and they failed to pick up the scent.

Patrolman Michael DelVecchio of Trumbull found a .25 caliber shell on the floor of the Chevy and later another was found on the nearby highway.

The case is unique in that the body was found almost immedi-

ately and police were hot after the murderer in minutes. There also were many speculations that arose in the first hour of the case. These included a phone call received by Hart from an unidentified woman shortly before he left for lunch. The phone call was later identified as being from his wife.

Abandoned Car

Also an abandoned car found near the murder scene was examined Hart also is reported to have told fellow workers at Henderson's that he might be a few minutes late in returning to work on Wednesday afternoon, [unreadable] and empty pack of "Luckies" the front seat of the car also entered into the case.

Killer's Description

The only description of the gunman was that he was wearing a white shirt and brown pants. The murderer, according to police, is white, and between 20 and 30.

Hart lived with his wife, Olive, on Lot 59, Fairchild Trailer Park, Rt. 8, Shelton. His wife is seven months pregnant. Employees at Henderson's claim that he usually went home for lunch. At one time, Hart boarded in a Stratford boarding house.

State Police believe that Hart was murdered by a hitch-hiker and are still hunting the killer in the Beaver Dam woods area.

The Stratford News August 18, 1955 **Conscientious And Quiet Was Bob Hart**

Co-workers at Henderson Chevrolet described Robert Hart as a "common, ordinary guy." He was a quiet and conscientious worker who got along with everyone.

Hart came to Stratford about two years ago from New London and was studying accounting at

the University of Bridgeport at night. He had hoped to eventually become a certified public accountant.

Married for two years, he had been looking forward to the birth of his first child. Just last week he had purchased a trailer home for himself and his wife.

Army Veteran

An army vet, serving in Germany, Hart had never been in "trouble with the police. Fellow employees at Henderson had noticed no change of attitude in Hart at any time during his working hours.

He spent a great deal of time on his hobbies, coin collecting and photography. He often look-[unreadable] finding a valuable coin.

His murder shocked everyone who worked with him in Stratford.

The Bridgeport Telegram August 18, 1955 **Kin of Slain Man Hope, Pray For Speedy Capture of Killer**

As State police pressed their search for the slayer of Robert Hart, Jr., at an early hour today, relatives of the murdered man sat quietly in the newly purchased trailer "New Moon," hoping and praying the killer will be captured quickly.

"Why would anyone want to shoot Bob?" asked Robert Hart, Sr., 60, gray-haired father of the slain Stratford garage mechanic as he walked with a cane in the trailer.

'Quiet, Level-Headed'

"I just can't understand it—he was a quiet, level-headed-boy who never bothered anyone," Mr. Hart said.

The father of the slain man said his own wish was that "Bob" had lived a little longer, "as he would be able to tell who did it."

BICYCLIST PROBLEMS 1895

The Newtown Bee August 16, 1895

A small child of Bayard Butler was struck by a bicyclist, who was violating a town ordinance, by riding on the sidewalk. The child escaped without serious injury.

The Newtown Bee August 16, 1895

Notices have been posted warning bicycle riders to keep off the sidewalks.

The Hartford Courant

August 21, 1895

Residents of Stratford, Milford, Fairfield and Southport scattered their streets with tacks Sunday to annoy bicyclists. Bridgeport wheelmen have consulted counsel to see if their rights cannot be protected.

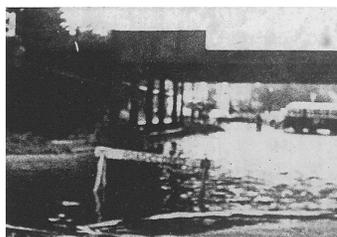
FLOOD OF AUGUST 1955

The flood of 1955 was devastating to much of Connecticut, particularly the Naugatuck valley. However, in Stratford, the primary effects seemed to be flooded roadways, high waves, and energized volunteer efforts to aide those most effected by the flooding. Reading the front page of *The Stratford News* for August 14, 1955, just days after the flood destroyed much of the northern half the state, would seem to indicate all that was on Stratford's collective mind in August 1955 was the opening of the American Shakespeare Festival Theatre.

Harbormaster J. Fletcher Lewis, commenting on the Flood of 1955, indicated that he thought the flood of 1955 paled in comparison to the effects of the hurricane during the summer of 1954. Examining photographs from 1954 and 1955 would seem to validate Mr. Lewis' observations.

Stratford's turn was yet to come. October of 1955 brought a terrific storm to Stratford. That story, however, is for future coverage by this newsletter.

In the meantime, you may learn more about the flooding of 1955 from Youtube at <https://youtu.be/>



DETOUR SIGNS WERE posted underneath the viaduct on Main St. last Saturday as Hurricane-Connie unleashed some of her fury on Stratford. This happened underneath other railroad crossings cutting the town in half. Photo from *The Stratford News*, August 14, 1955.



MERMAIDS LIKE THESE Stratford girls weren't going to let Connie spoil their weekend as they swim in the rough surf along Lordship Beach. Most people were content to watch the rising water from their cars. Photo from *The Stratford News*, August 14, 1955.



FLOOD VOLUNTEERS and Red Cross Aides are shown preparing canned goods to be sent to the disaster areas in the basement of St. James Church in Stratford. The local Red Cross Headquarters was inadequate to handle all the food, clothes and blankets that were donated this week to aid flood victims. Photo from *The Stratford News*, August 25, 1955.

ZtozWtmrEnQ.

The Hartford Courant

August 24, 1895

Weather Bureau Explains Inadequate Flood Warning

WASHINGTON, Aug. 23 (AP) - The Weather Bureau said today current scientific knowledge of forecasting—and available facilities — just weren't sufficient to provide sufficient warning for the great Northeast flood disaster.

But under enlarged appropriations for new facilities and research, officials reported, steps were under way even before the floods struck which will lead to "great improvements" in the future.

"If all this had happened two years hence," said W. E. Hiatt, chief of hydrologic (river warning) service, "the savings in property and life would have been tremendous."

GLORIANA FOLSOM RECALLED THROUGHOUT THE NATION

In 1870, on the one hundredth anniversary of the Gloriana Folsom marriage to a Scottish Baron, many papers throughout America ran the following story.

Alexandria (VA) Gazette

September 5, 1870

A Romantic Story.

From the Nation.

At the commencement of the present century a young man made his appearance in Stratford, and spent a few weeks at the tavern, which then existed to afford shelter to stage-coach travelers [sic]. Whence he came and what his business none could guess. Directly opposite the tavern stood the small cottage and forge of a blacksmith named Folsom. He had a daughter, who was the beauty of the village, and it was her fortune to captivate the heart of the young stranger. He told, his love; said he was from Scotland; that he was travelling incog., but in confidence gave her his real

name, claiming that he was heir to a large fortune. She returned his love, and they were married. A few weeks thereafter the stranger told his wife that he must visit New Orleans. He did so, and the gossips of the town made the young wife unhappy by disagreeable hints and jeers.

In a few months the husband returned, but before a week had elapsed he received a large budget of letters, and told his wife that he must at once return to England, and must go alone. He took his departure, and the gossips had another glorious opportunity to make a confiding woman wretched. To all but herself it was a clear case of desertion. The wife became a mother, and for two years lived on in silence and hope. At the end of that time a letter was received by the Stratford beauty from her husband directing her to go at once to New York with her child, taking nothing with her but the clothes she wore, and embark in

a ship for her home in England.

On her arrival in "New York she found a ship splendidly furnished with every convenience and luxury for her comfort, and two servants ready to obey every wish that she might express. The ship duly arrived in England, and the Stratford girl became the mistress of a superb mansion, and, as the wife of a baronet, was saluted by the aristocracy as Lady Samuel Stirling. On the death of her husband, many years ago, the Stratford boy succeeded to the title and wealth of his father, and in the last edition of the Peerage and Baronetage he is spoken of as the issue of "Miss Folsom, of Stratford, North America." When the late Professor Silliman visited England, some years since, he had the pleasure of meeting Lady Stirling at a dinner party, and was delighted to answer her many questions about her birthplace in Connecticut.



THE PHILIP BENJAMIN HOUSE
Built in 1759

Standing at the head of historic "South Parade" and opposite the famous Benjamin's Tavern, this ancient dwelling must have been the silent and inanimate witness to such events as the arrival and romance of Sir John Stirling and the beautiful Glorianna Folsom, the arrival of Washington and Lafayette, as well as the passing of the stage coaches, horses with pillians and wayfarers, as they traversed the old King's Highway, generations ago.

From History of Stratford, 1939, by William Howard Wilcoxson

THE STRATFORD TOP 10

Those of you night owls who were able to stay awake for *The Late Show*, or you insomniacs, no doubt recall David Letterman's **Top 10** lists. Letterman's top tens were regularly reported on by other media sources as well. Letterman has sauntered off into retirement, but it occurred to us that it might be educational to create some **Stratford Top 10** lists.

For instance, what are the Top 10 Stratford political events? "President (Timothy) Dwight (of Yale and William Samuel Johnson colleague), in 1789, writes: *Stratford is better built than either Fairfield or Norwalk...The inhabitants have long been agitated by religious and political controversies.*"

While there have been countless memorable Stratford political moments, including Town Council members duking it out in the high school parking lot, we decided to be a bit more restrictive, and systematic, highlighting only those events which had state, national, and/or international impact.

English historian Sir John Seeley said around 1880, "*History is past politics, and politics is present history*". Few statements could better characterize number 10 on Stratford's Top 10 list of political events.

Number 10 on our list is the replacing of our post master and our lighthouse keeper by the federal government in 1841

and 1843 respectively. The postal department, and the appointment of lighthouse keepers, had become highly politicized during Andrew Jackson's administration. President John Tyler continued in the trend, and, apparently, David Brooks (post master), and Samuel Budington (lighthouse keeper) both ran afoul of the Tyler administration.

Despite the Tyler administration, both Brooks and Budington were restored to their former positions. Both went on to serve Stratford for many more years as postmaster and as lighthouse keeper.

The Hartford Courant June 30, 1843

CHANGE.—The Bridgeport Sentinel says that Samuel Budington, keeper of the Stratford Light House for twenty years, has been removed in favor of William Merwin of Milford.

The Bridgeport Evening Farmer September 1, 1969

The two Budington's (father and son) the elder for the last thirty years keeper of the Light-house at Stratford Point, as was his father before him, for perhaps as many more, have been removed by the Collector of this port, for political reasons. That Light has the reputation of being one of the most faithfully attended—and it will stand shipmasters and pilots in hand to keep a wary eye upon that revolving light, and not to be misled by



the blunders of Mr. Budington's successors.

David Brooks was Stratford's third postmaster serving from 1803 until October 1841 and, again, from February 1843 until 1857. The interruption in Postmaster Brooks' continuing service was, apparently, occasioned by the Executive branch changing from the Democratic party to the Whig party. Mr. Brooks was loyal to the Van Buren leaning branch of the Democratic party. John Tyler became President of the United States in April of 1841 and was a loyal Whig. Tyler appointed a new Postmaster General in September of 1841 who, likely, didn't care for Mr. Brooks' brand of politics.



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

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