

THE CUPHEAG CORNER

VOLUME III, ISSUE 2

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2020



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

MARK THE DATES:

- Suffragettes in Corsettes, December 12th at 2pm. VIRTUAL program.

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SUFFRAGETTES IN CORSELETTES

Saturday, December 12th, 2:00—3:00pm, “Virtual” Meeting on Zoom

For centuries, women have allowed themselves to be squeezed, twisted, and squished to conform to desired shapes. The history of underwear reveals a lot about women’s changing roles in society – how we perceive ourselves, and how we’re viewed by others. The 1910s saw an end to the hourglass figure with a tiny waist. Women were finally able to breathe and move more freely. Did the demise of tight-lacing help women gain the right to vote in 1920? Underwear matters.

Ehris Urban and Velya Jancz-Urban of *Grounded Goodwife* are inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting. You may join the meeting with video on your personal computer or tablet. You may also dial in by phone, or cell phone, to listen to the presentation.



Ehris Urban & Velya Jancz-Urban

Join Zoom Meeting on your PC

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81369746186?pwd=bnl6NmgyVzUzQkkwUUEwYjFUMHNYQT09>

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

One tap mobile:

+19292056099,,81369746186#,,,0#,,044493# US (New York)

Dial by your location

+1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

Meeting ID: 813 6974 6186

Password: 044493

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/kd6EHZKvOn>



“The forces that shape the world are bigger than individuals, bigger than single moments. History isn’t a tree, it’s a meadow. It’s a million individual threads twining and unraveling in the wind. When you’re in the midst of it, it’s chaos. It’s only from a great distance that you can discern the shape of it—and fool yourself into believing that it is one single, coherent thing.”

Yankee Magazine, November/December 2020, p 133

HISTORICAL SOCIETY HAPPENINGS

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

We’ll have much more about the work that’s been done on the Society’s grounds in the following pages of this newsletter. That said, there was some front page activity on the grounds over the past few weeks.

Our Gardens Committee Chairman, Kevin Moore, and his crew of dedicated workers, uncovered an historic stone with the word

ABNER inscribed on it. We have a theory as to who did the inscribing. Turn to page 4 for details and more photos.

Our Education Committee continues to work on a video which can be used in Stratford’s schools to “virtually” replace the school visits to the Judson House.

We’ve had two highly successful open house presentations at the Stratford Point Lighthouse. Six sessions have been offered thus far, and all six have been completely filled. Thanks to Mayor Hoydick for allowing us to conduct these open houses.

We’d like to have one open house at the lighthouse every month once the weather turns warmer. If you’d like to help out with the Open Houses, please call the Society with your

contact information.

We’re planning to celebrate the anniversary of the Washington Bridge next November. The bridge’s opening in 1921 was marked with a large parade co-sponsored by the City of Milford. We hope to combine our efforts with those of the Milford Historical Society for a November 2021 commemoration of the bridge’s opening.

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.

SUFFRAGISTS MAKE GOOD

1920-2020
100

WOMEN VOTE

Connecticut Suffrage Centennial

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



Mrs. Agnes Hawley who celebrated her 84th birthday last week was the first woman to arrive at town hall when Stratford women were made voters. Mrs. Hawley has been a suffrage pioneer since 1872. **Bridgeport Telegram**, September 30, 1920.



Stiles Judson male leader of the Suffrage movement in Stratford and in Connecticut

As we have long known, but few outside of Stratford know, Stratford was a unique leader in the Women's Suffrage movement. Uniquely Stratford is the fact that many men were actively, and fervently, involved in the Suffrage movement from its inception.

Stratfordite, noted politician, and thought leader, Stiles Judson, made a strong speech in Bridgeport to the Bridgeport Men's Club on the subject of women's suffrage in September 1903. Years before there was an organized Suffrage movement in Stratford, attorney Judson spoke out.

"Woman has been obliged to fight for all the rights she has". He spoke of the mockery and hypocrisy of the wedding ceremony, during which the man says—"With this ring I thee endow with all my worldly goods", when at the same instant the law vests in the husband everything she possesses. The time is coming when we shall have to meet the question of female suffrage, and whenever the majority of women want it they will have it. When that time does come there will be less corruption at the ballot box, and boss rule, which now holds sway in both political parties, will be done away with. There is a political duty confronting many men of substance which is not discharged. The speaker urged all men to attend the primaries, and said it is not enough to attend a few hurrah meetings of the G. O. P., and take joy in the flight of the American eagle. If a citizen neglects this duty he makes a bill of sale of the suffrage to the few. It rests on men, like the members of this club, to keep up the standard maintained by our forbears. These duties are as practical today as then.

Stratford had at least 100 members in its Stratford Equal Suffrage Association. Most recently we learned of Agnes Hawley who moved to Stratford around 1900. She'd been a suffrage leader in Michigan before moving to Stratford. Ms. Hawley was born in New York in 1836 and was a generation older than most of Stratford's female suffrage leaders.

The Bridgeport Telegram

September 29, 1920
Oldest Suffragist Is First At Town Hall "To Be Made" Mrs. Agnes Hawley Remembers Clearly Julia Ward Howe as She Stumped for Fillmore and Susan B. Anthony as She Worked for Women's Rights—Suffrage Worker Since 1872.

Stratford's oldest suffragist, Mrs. Agnes E. Hawley, was also the first woman to appear at the town hall when the recently enfranchised were made voters. Mrs. Hawley has been an ardent suffragist from 1872, claiming her conversion to the Women's Rights party in Grand Rapids, Mich.

"Women would send petition after petition to Congress and no matter how long and how many appeals, because they were signed by the unenfranchised [sic] they were of no avail..."

Mrs. Hawley celebrated her eighty-fourth birthday last week. She remembers Susan B. Anthony well. Susan B. Anthony's early fights in the convention of school teachers for the equal salary for equal service was also retold. "I remember clearly what a fine impression Julia Ward Howe made in Grand Rapids when she was stumping for Millard C. Fillmore in his campaign for the presidency," she declared.

Mrs. Hawley has taken an active part in the achievements of Stratford Suffrage league, and while not naming those whom she would vote for smiled as she stated, "I will vote according to my convictions." Mrs. Hawley reads the newspapers each day. She now makes her home with her daughter, Mrs. Peter Dosch of Broadbridge road, Stratford.

Agnes' daughter, Amaratt Dosch, and her granddaughter, Margaret Dosch, were also very active in Stratford's suffrage movement. Stratford's Suffragists were ready, willing, and prepared to vote in 1920. When they voted, they had a significant outcome on the election of 1920. In 1921, the women of the town forcefully altered the structure of Stratford's town government.

The Bridgeport Times
September 18, 1920
Women Storm The Regis-

trars In The Rush To Be Made
Stratford and Fairfield Boards Find Difficulty in Accommodating the Crowds of Women Who Want to Vote in the October Election.

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.

...The process of "making" a woman a voter is exactly the same as a man only there is a wide latitude allowed her in giving her age. The man must give his exact age, the woman need but satisfy the board that she is of eligible age, further than that she need not go. In addition to her age she must establish her eligibility in regards to citizenship and all other governing qualifications for a voter.

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.

...Contrary to all expectations and predictions the women are well prepared for the work and answer the questions rapidly and correctly.

DATELINE STRATFORD OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 1955

The Stratford News

October 6, 1955

Patricia Langston and Bruce Murray Receive S. H. Awards

The Sterling House outstanding girl and boy selections for the past season were announced at the Annual Sterling House Outdoor Sports Roast, conducted in Sterling Park yesterday. Patricia Langston, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ural Langston, of Bush Ct., wone the coveted title of "Outstanding Girl"; while the "Outstanding Boy" award went to Bruce Murray, son of Mr. and Mrs. John Murray of Broadbridge Ave.

Miss Langston, a graduate of Stratford High School, was a member of this year's champion Sterling House JV Girls Softball team, winners of the Recreation girls Softball League. She performed as a second baseman and pitcher, hurling the Jayvees to a one-hit, 6 to 1, win over the Holy Name CYO Girls in the playo9ff game for the league title. She often served as the necessary spark for the team with her words of wisdom on the field, as well as her lusty long ball hitting.

Bruce Murray was a member of the Sterling House Little League team, coached by Michael Montecalvo; and Bruce also was a member of the Sterling House Chess team, which won the Youth Agency Chess League as well as taking part on the Sterling House Midget basketball team this season. Though small in stature, Bruce competed with a big heart and a lot of pep, which is so often needed for team competition.

Sunday Herald

October 9, 1955

Bard Enthusiasts Laud New Policy

While mistakes of the first season are now spilt milk, bard enthusiasts want the theater to "stay alive" as long as possible until the lights go on again.

A welcome switch this week was the theater's signing for three concerts by the new Stratford Community Concerts. This will open Feb. 12 with the

famed Cleveland Symphony the first orchestra to occupy the big stage. Rental for the three nights is \$1,400.

The Stratford News

October 27, 1955

Buffett Dinner to Precede Our Town Opening Nov. 8

Mrs. J Leon Simons, chairman of the buffet dinner which is to precede the opening night performance of *Our Town* at the Polka Dot Playhouse on Nov. 8, reports that the combination dinner and theatre tickets are rapidly being reserved, and that anyone who is especially desirous of attending the dinner theatre party should purchase their tickets as soon as possible.

The dinner will be at the Housatonic Lodge on Barnum Ave. Ext. in Stratford and will be from 6 to 8 p.m. Curtain time for the opening night performance of *Our Town* is 8:30.

The Stratford News

October 27, 1955

Stratford Woman Seeks Tree Program To Curb Flooding

Mrs. Natalie J. Harrold, of Cutspring Road,...has come up with a solution to help curb some of the damage caused by recent rainstorms in this area.

Mrs. Harold stated that "If your neighbor and mine and your and I each planted just one tree, think how much more water would be absorbed by the roots of those trees. We can't stop the rains, ...

Sunday Herald

November 13, 1955

Polka Dot Players Hoping to Get Barn

The rain was seen dribbling through the roof Thursday night, just as Emily Webb's mother dabbed her eyes in the "Our Town" wedding scene. It reminded the Polka Dots that their thru-way-doomed playhouse in Stratford was a many-splendored wreck.

Still, they hate to go. Before they do, they will have two "Golden Nights," Nov. 25 and 26, for

a review flashing bits from all their 15 plays. Director David Reed hopes with these last two show to raise \$1,000 to buy an old barn, or buy a new one.

Sunday Herald

November 13, 1955

Plans for Sterling Center in Works

The land back of Sterling House in Stratford is going to the thru-way. But this only gives a forward look to the teeming center.

Looking ahead, there are the assets: \$30,000 will be paid by the Strate Highway Commission, it is estimated. The House has in addition \$25,000 willed by Catherine Bunnell Mitchell. Through the annual Fund-o-rama, the building fund stands at \$10,000.

Donald Bundock, president of Sterling Council, with his associates, is hungrily eying a plan for the future, made by William Valus, Jr. of 25 Reitter St. This is a luscious picture. It brings Sterling out Northward toward the Congregational Church. It includes what would be the town's first swimming pool. Also an auditorium, and covered terrace for play on rainy days.

Sunday Herald

November 27, 1955

Avco to Tackle 'Top Secret' Work

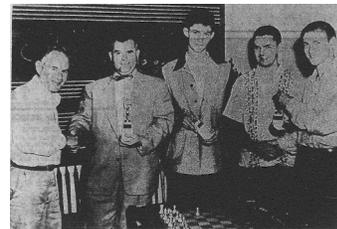
Top secret government work will be going full blast at Stratford's guarded Advanced Development Division of the Avco Manufacturing Corp. within a year-and-a-half., The Herald learned yesterday.

Within 18 months a specialized group of production personnel and a top-flight group of scientist [sic] and engineers, comprising the total staff of the division, will be hard at work at the section's headquarters, 155 Sniffen's La., Stratford.

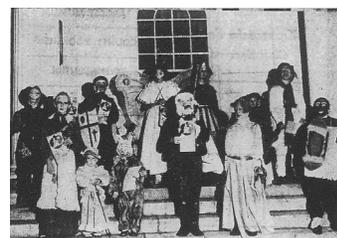
A number of the country's leading scientist [sic] will spearhead Avco's development.



Girl athlete of the year, Patricia Langston receives award from Sy Knepler. From *The Stratford News*, October 6, 1955.



Sterling House chess champs. L to R: Abe Arroyo, Jack Stock, Hal Wallach, John Ishkan, Herb Benjamin. From *The Stratford News*, October 6, 1955.



Children Trick-or-Treating at Town Hall. *The Stratford News*, November 3, 1955.



Community Concerts Dinner. Rev. Selleck and Mary Hardy at left. *The Stratford News*, November 10, 1955.

NOW SHOWING OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 1955

October 2nd	Night of the Hunter	Robert Mitchum, Shelley Winters
October 9th	Love Is a Many Splendored Thing	William Holden, Jennifer Jones
October 16th	Blood Alley	John Wayne, Lauren Bacall
October 23rd	Phenix City Story	John McIntire, Kathryn Grant
October 30th	Ulysses	Kirk Douglas, Silvana Mangano
November 6th	Naked Street	Farley Granger, Anthony Quinn, Anne Bancroft
November 13th	The Girl in the Red Velvet Swing	Ray Milland, Joan Collins, Farley Granger
November 20th	Lucy Gallant	Jane Wyman, Charleton Heston
November 27th	I Died a Thousand Times	Jack Palance, Shelley Winters



Stratford Theater c 1934

LANDSCAPING AT THE SOCIETY



Cassandra Bryant on the left from Rayzors Edge and Evan Tibbals on the right from Tibbals Landscaping.



Juan (gray shirt) and Phil from Tibbals Landscaping removing boxwood shrubs from in front of the Judson House



Juan, Cassandra, Phil and Evan removing boxwood shrubs from in front of



History can be “uncovered” in many ways and from many different sources.

Gardens Committee Chair, Kevin Moore brought personnel from Rayzors Edge and Tibbals Landscaping together to do some much needed grounds work at the Judson House.

Between the two companies, they invested about \$1,000 dollars worth of landscaping removal and installation. Evan Tibbals, and his crew, under the direction of Cassandra Bryant, installed several new plantings. Evan, and crew, also removed the non-native boxwood shrubs from in front of the Judson House. Next, they turned all the beds and laid down new grass. It went seamlessly.

Cassandra went way out of her way to not only buy some of the ferns, but also convinced the nursery she works with to donate some as well. As a professional arborist, donating her time, getting the plant materials, and coordinating with Evan, Cassandra has jumped into beautifying the Society grounds with both feet.

Cassandra is researching colonial era gardens, and talking about donating a dogwood tree along with other period trees. Cassandra and Kevin spent at least 6 hours performing this work.

Our many thanks go to Kevin, Cassandra, Evan, Juan, and Phil, Rayzors Edge, and Tibbals Landscaping for the donations of time, materials and plantings!

Now for the historical part of this story. While removing the boxwood shrubs, and preparing the beds for planting, the crew uncovered the stone shown at the upper right. The inscription ABNER appears on the stone with the “N” reversed. In *A History of the Old Town of Stratford and the City of Bridgeport Volume I*, by Rev. Samuel Orcutt, 1886, he writes:

Mr. John W. Barber, writing in 1836, says:



It’s tough to see in this photo, but the rock, above, was recently uncovered by the Gardens Committee crew removing shrubs and planting new ferns at the Judson House. Circled in yellow, above is the inscription:

ABNER

The first settlers appear to have located themselves about one hundred and fifty rods south of the Episcopal Church, the first chimney being erected near that spot; it was taken down about two years since. The first burying ground was near that spot. Mr. William Judson, one of the first settlers, came into Stratford in 1638. He lived at the southwest corner of Meetinghouse hill or green, in a house constructed of stone. Mr. Abner Judson, his

descendant, lives on the same spot, in a house which has stood one hundred and thirteen years, and is still in good repair.

Deductive reasoning would lead us to the conclusion that the inscribed stone was placed at the Judson House sometime in the early 1800s by Abner Judson. We have no guess as to why Abner would have carved the “N” in his name in a reverse fashion however.



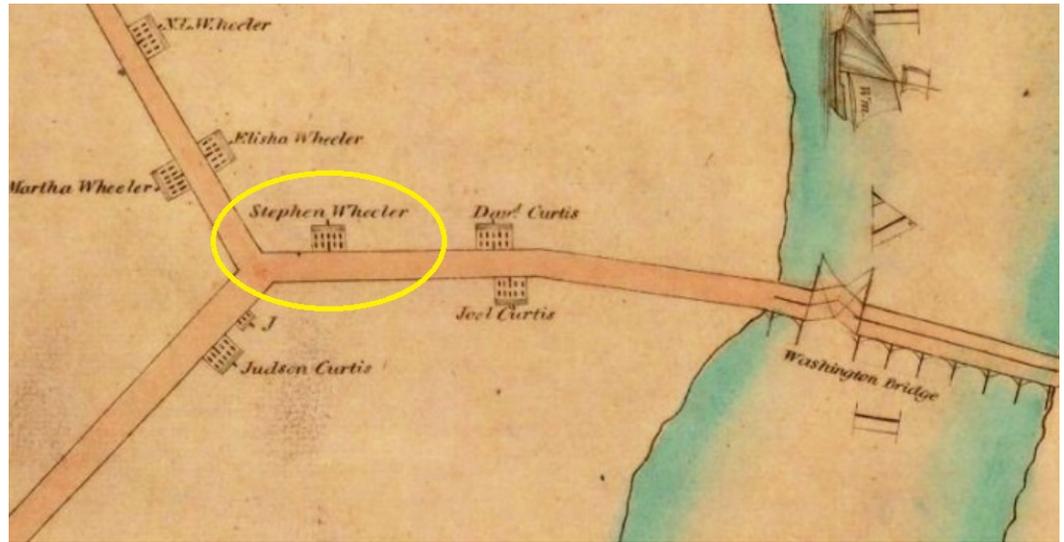
Judson House with its new plantings in place. Our many thanks go to Kevin Moore, Rayzor’s Edge, and Tibbals Landscaping for their many hours of labor to beautify the Society’s grounds. (All photos on this page contributed by Kevin Moore).

MRS. WHEELER THWARTS ARSON ATTEMPT

Hartford Daily Courant

November 8, 1845

A singular affair occurred at Stratford on the morning of Sunday week. It seems, says the Bridgeport Standard, that Mrs. Wheeler, (wife of Mr. Stephen Wheeler, who resides near the Washington Bridge,) on rising very early, saw a light in the barn near the house. On going to ascertain the cause, Mr. Wheeler found a man in the act of setting fire to the hay and straw upon the barn floor. In attempting to seize him, a scuffle ensued, and Mr. W. was thrown down. In the meantime, Mrs. Wheeler came out with a pail of water, extinguished the fire, and went to her husband's aid. She broke the pail over his assailant's head, and after a good deal of exertion the fellow was secured. It is said that he is a stranger in Stratford, and may perhaps be insane. He stated that he merely wished "to roast some eggs!" - has, of course, been taken into custody.



From the Map of Stratford 1824

RAYBESTOS CARDINALS WORLD CHAMPS

The Bridgeport Post

September 30, 1955

More than 2,000 persons put out the welcome mat at the Stratford railroad station yesterday afternoon for the Raybestos Cardinals, who returned from Clearwater, Fla., as softball champions of the world.

The high school band, directed by John Meerbach, furnished the musical background, and banners proclaiming "Welcome Home Champions," were unfurled as the team, led by Don Beers, manager and coach, left the train.

Parade to Town Hall

William S. Simpson, Raybestos division general manager, and Norman Leeds, Jr., factory manager, were at trainside to extend their congratulations to each player.

A parade was formed and led by the high school band. The team was escorted to the Municipal building where Town Manager Harry B. Flood extended the official congratulations of the town to both the team and the Raybestos company.

Glenn Laudenslager, Sr., former state softball commissioner, acted as master of ceremonies. The speakers included Mr. Flood; Mr. Simpson; Vincent "Wee" Devitt, former coach of the Cardinals; Mr. Leeds; Jack Keenan, chairman of the welcome

program; Al Haynes, former athletic director for Raybestos; William Hoyle, one-time softball commissioner; and, Earl Mastro, district commissioner.

Gus Holmgren, representing Stratford Little league, also sponsored by Raybestos, introduced Ronald Fiorella, of the Raybestos Little league team, who extended the league greetings to the new world champions. William Kalinich spoke on behalf of the Knothole club.

Don Beers, speaking for the team in thanking the people for the celebration, said that the team had thought winning the title "was the biggest thrill of our lives, but this celebration is the nicest thing that ever happened to us."

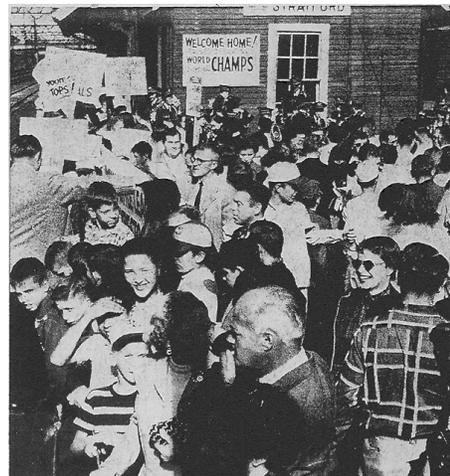
When the celebration concluded, Johnnie Spring and Howie Wieland, the ace pitchers of the club, and other players were besieged for autographs.

Police Capt. John Geary was in charge of the special traffic details at the railroad station and the Municipal building. The sirens on Fire headquarters and the apparatus were sounded by order of Chief Theodore Lockwood when the team members marched onto the municipal green.

Stratford's World Softball Champs

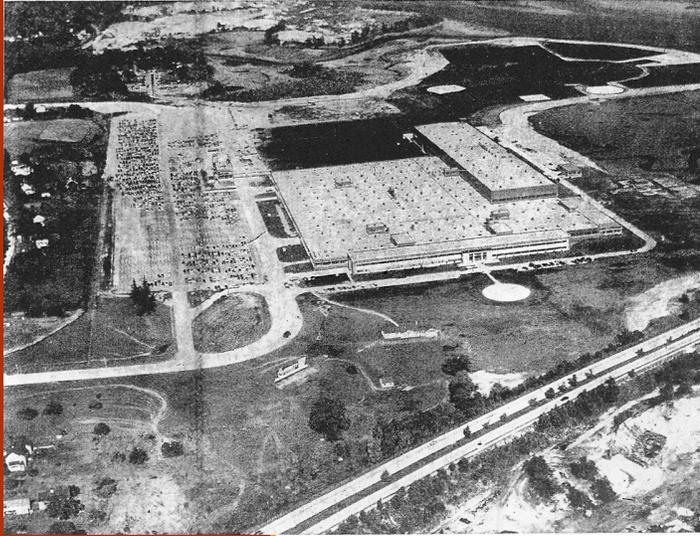


The Stratford News, September 29, 1955.



Crowd at the train station. **The Stratford News, October 6, 1955.**

SIKORSKY PLANT DEDICATION



AERIAL VIEW of the new multi-million dollar Sikorsky Aircraft division of the United Aircraft Corp. here in Stratford. The new plant was officially dedicated at ceremonies held Wednesday in Stratford. The 250 acre site, which is adjacent to the Merritt Parkway on the Housatonic River, will employ 4,000 persons. Photo from **The Stratford News**, October 27, 1955.

The Bridgeport Post October 26, 1955 **New 'Copter Plant** **Opened By Sikorsky in** **Stratford**

The new multi-million dollar plant of the Sikorsky Aircraft division of the United Aircraft corporation in Stratford was formally opened this morning. For UAC officials it was the realization of a dream to make Bridgeport and its adjoining town the "helicopter center of the world."

Many Attend Ceremony
Several hundred persons, including officers from the various state and local officials and UAC executives attended the ceremonies which were launched with a Flag raising program.

Igor I. Sikorsky, engineering manager of Sikorsky Aircraft, said the opening of the new facility was a "dream come true."

"Just 16 years ago today," Mr. Sikorsky said, "the first helicopter the VS-300 successfully completed all flight tests and was proclaimed a true 'copter."

"Today the production of helicopters is a major undertaking and is responsible for the employment of thousands of persons," Mr. Sikorsky asserted.

Mr. Sikorsky pointed out that to date, the 'copter has saved untold thousands of lives.

'Copter Contributions Seen
"I believe," Mr. Sikorsky said "that the helicopter will contribute vitally to the military security of the country and to commercial aviation progress."

Following registration and Flag raising ceremonies, guests were guided on a tour of the new plant.

Sections of the modern facility visited included the offices, manu-

facturing space and production lines and then to the immense hangar where various models of Sikorsky helicopters were on static display.

In addition to visiting most areas of the plant, visitors also witnessed flight demonstrations by all models of Sikorsky helicopters currently in production, including the huge twin-engine S-56.

The new facility, begun early in the Spring of 1954, and opened on a limited basis in April of this year, contains more than 800,000 square feet of floor space, with about 630,000 square feet being devoted to direct production.

The plant was built to produce Sikorsky's twin-engined S-56 transport helicopter for the Marine Corps and Army. In addition to the S-56, the S-55 of Korea war fame the only transport helicopter currently certified by the Civil Aeronautics Administration for civil [sic] use, also will be produced at the new plant.

To Employ 4,000

One peak production is reached, early next year, the plant will employ approximately 4,000 men and women, both office and production personnel...



Flooding in Stratford Center



Flooding at Pootatuck Yacht Club

THE "FORGOTTEN" FLOOD

While much of the State was besieged by the August flood of 1955, Stratford escaped with little damage. The October 1955 flood, however, wreaked havoc in the town.

The Stratford News October 20, 1955 **Town Still Recovering** **From One of the Worst** **Floods**

Stratford has spent a week in recovering after one of the worst floods in the town's history which occurred this past weekend. The cleanup campaign of the flood which caused hundreds of thousands of dollars' damage locally, will probably not be completed for months, in some situations.

On Wednesday, Governor Abraham Ribicoff stopped briefly at Stratford to survey the damage on Bruce St. during his journey through flood stricken Fairfield County.

The Stratford Red Cross has announced that Evelyn Maley has been assigned to Fairfield County of the National Disaster staff to handle Red Cross aid to the county residents. William W. Reed, of Bosie [sic], Idaho, who has been working with the Red Cross in Ansonia, has been reassigned to Stratford to aid rehabilitation. He is report to have a great deal of disaster experience.

Local Damage

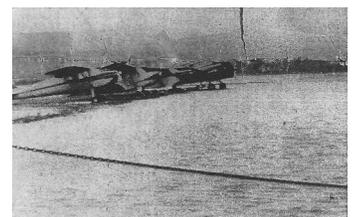
Local damage consisted of flooded cellars and streets, streams overflowing their banks, many trees damaged and downed electric wires. A dredge and tug capsized in the Housatonic River, and part of a railroad abutment at the Bridgeport-Stratford town line was also washed out.

Over 50 persons were evacuated from their homes and temporary shelter was set up in the American Legion Hall...

Also suffering tremendous losses in the storm were many boat owners and merchants in the town business center, which was turned into a lake by the flood.



Street flooding



Flooding at the airport...

SHANG WHEELER DECOYS IN LOOK MAGAZINE

We recently came across a copy of the **LOOK** magazine from November 1, 1955. We couldn't wait to share one of the articles from that issue of the magazine with you. The informal "Stratford School of Decoy Carvers" has long been recognized as having produced some of the finest decoy carvings in the world. While largely unknown today, the national spotlight shone on our decoy carvers in 1955.

The first recognized Stratford decoy carver was Albert Lang who lived, and carved, in the white house on Shore Road adjacent to the Shakespeare Theatre grounds. Shang Wheeler, third generation decoy carver, is best known of all the Stratford decoy carvers for the detail he painted into his carvings.

Sadly, to view most Stratford decoys not held by private collectors, you'll need to travel to the Shelburne Museum in Shelburne, Vermont. We have a few decoys on display at the Bunnell Museum on the grounds of the Historical Society.

We have included the text from the 1955 **LOOK** magazine article in

the following paragraphs.

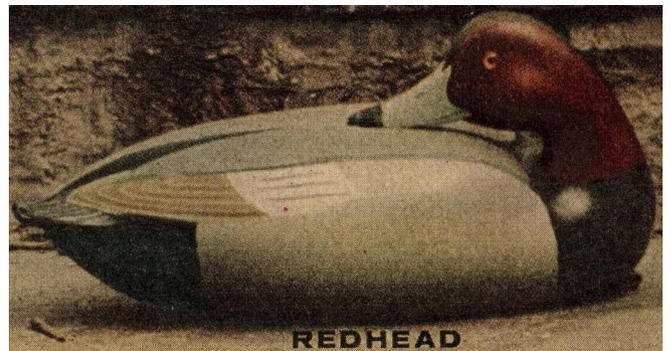
Text on left hand page.

The hunting season of 1955-56 promises to be the biggest of all time. There will be an abundance of ducks, the result of an unusually fine breeding season. Nearly 2½ million duck hunters are expected to take to their boats and blinds.

Text on right hand page.
DUCKS & DECOYS

SO LONG AS MAN has hunted ducks, there have been decoys. They are depicted in early Egyptian tomb carvings, and decoys used by the Indians over a thousand years ago have been found in Lovelock Cave in Nevada. During the nineteenth century, artisans of Stratford, Conn., combining their skill as cabinetmakers and their love for hunting, began carving decoys for "market gunning" (hunting fowl to be sold on the market). These decoys, now famous for their beauty and accuracy, were also sufficiently durable to ride over the slush ice which flows down the Housatonic River every spring and autumn. The decoys on these pages are the work of a modern master of Stratford, the late Charles E. (Shang)

Wheeler, a well-known hunter and naturalist. In 1923, his mallard won first prize at one of the first exhibitions of decoys ever held in this country. Constructed of pine and made hollow so they'll be more buoyant, Shang Wheeler's ducks are distinguished for the rich feathering on their backs and their beautifully colored heads. They are somewhat larger than life-size so that they can be seen more readily by fast-flying ducks. Many experts consider Wheeler's female shoveler (bottom row, second from right) to be the finest ever made.

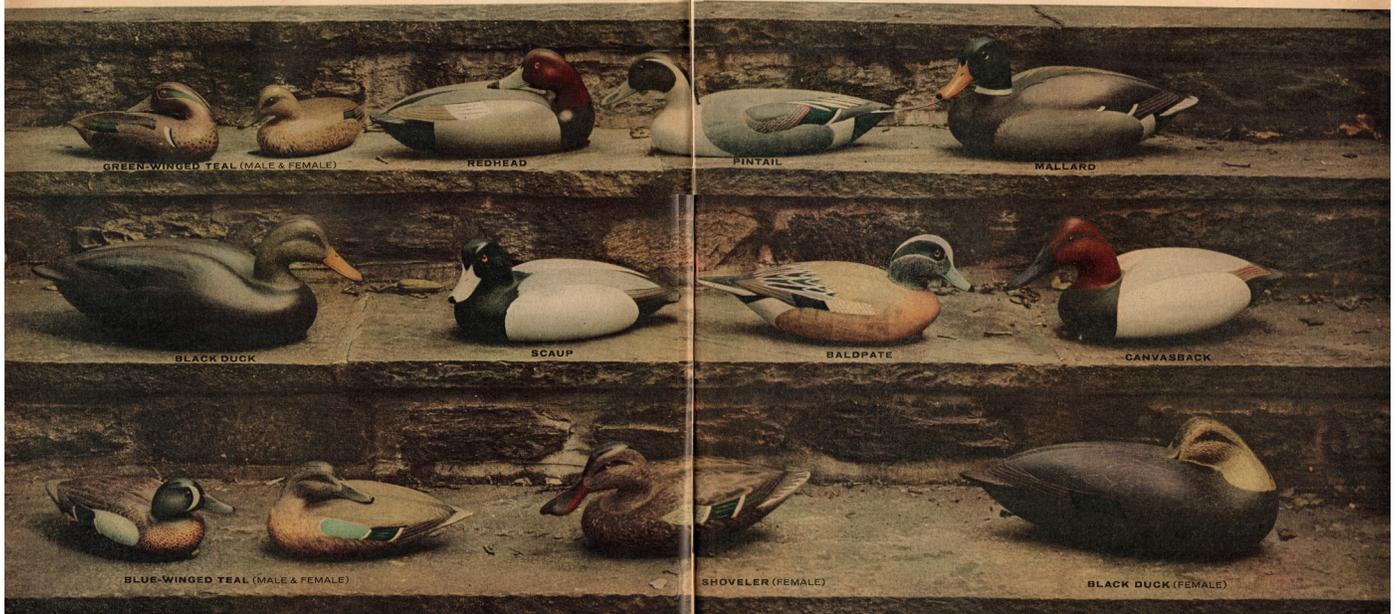


DUCKS & DECOYS

SO LONG AS MAN has hunted ducks, there have been decoys. They are depicted in early Egyptian tomb carvings, and decoys used by the Indians over a thousand years ago have been found in Lovelock Cave in Nevada. During the nineteenth century, artisans of Stratford, Conn., combining their skill as cabinetmakers and their love for hunting, began carving decoys for "market gunning" (hunting fowl to be sold on the market). These decoys, now famous for their beauty and accuracy, were also sufficiently durable to ride over the slush ice which flows down the Housatonic River every spring and autumn. The decoys

on these pages are the work of a modern master of Stratford, the late Charles E. (Shang) Wheeler, a well-known hunter and naturalist. In 1923, his mallard won first prize at one of the first exhibitions of decoys ever held in this country. Constructed of pine and made hollow so they'll be more buoyant, Shang Wheeler's ducks are distinguished for the rich feathering on their backs and their beautifully colored heads. They are somewhat larger than life-size so that they can be seen more readily by fast-flying ducks. Many experts consider Wheeler's female shoveler (bottom row, second from right) to be the finest ever made.

Duck decoys photographed by ARTHUR ROBINSTEIN



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.*"

Number 9 on our list is the tearing up of West Broad Street in 1870 to benefit just two residents over the objections of everyone else in town.

Hartford Courant
November 15, 1870

The vandals of scenery do not all live in Hartford, we are sorry to learn. There was a magnificent street in Stratford from 120 to 150 feet wide, and half a mile long, bordered on each side by gigantic elms, very old and superb. Through this avenue ran an excellent country road, wide enough for all purposes;

*and the remainder of the avenue was lovely green sward, the pride of the village and the delight of its inhabitants. But it seems that there were a few depression in this green in which, in a very wet time a little water sometimes stood. Two of the citizens, therefore, petitioned the town to have the whole street plowed up, in order to get rid of this transient effect of a spring thaw. The town refused to spoil its fine green, but did devise a play, by which all the defects were obviated. This, however, did not satisfy the two citizens, who hunted up an old law which gives the county commissioners power to repair roads which the town neglects, and under this law got the commissioners to plow up the road and turnpike it in its entire width between the trees., thus says a writer in the **Standard** "converting our magnificent avenue and park into two deep ditches and a dyke." And this law never could have contemplated any such abuse. It was intended only to "protect the general public against extreme cases of parsimony in the neglect of outlying roads." But, continues the correspondent: -*

The measure was totally uncalled for, except by the willful persistence of tow individuals, noted for certain missing senses. The town protested and remonstrated, the property owners on the street petitioned—not on of them, expect the complainants, was in



favor of it—nearly the whole population denounced it: the damage to property was estimated by those most competent to judge at fifty thousand dollars. Let the people of each town in the state have our experience—that is, let three strangers, crude men, of no particular qualifications for the task, come into their town, in to the very center of it, and uproot, devastate and subvert the street and public squares according to the crotchety schemes of tow men, or, of their own dull comprehension, and I would dare swear that the fragment of Connecticut law under which they "placed the fantastic tricks" would not survive the next May session.



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