

# THE CUPHEAG CORNER

VOLUME III, ISSUE 6

APRIL - MAY 2021



Capt. David Judson House c. 1750

## MARK THE DATES:

- May General Membership meeting, Sunday, May 23rd, 2021, 2:00 pm.
- Connecticut Open House Day Saturday, June 12th, noon to 3pm.

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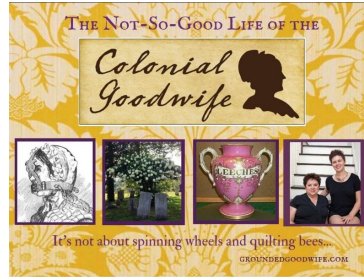
## MAY'S GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Sunday, May 23rd, 2:00 pm, via Zoom videoconference

The herstory unsanitized presentation that launched **Grounded Goodwife** is now virtual! Discover what life was really like for New England's colonial women - because we've always been curious about: menstruation, sex, birth control, childbirth, sickness, and medicine.

For instance, in an era when underwear hadn't been invented, what did women do when they had their periods?

What were early American birth control methods? It was suggested that women try jumping backwards seven times after intercourse to expel sperm, drink water that blacksmiths used to cool metals, or insert a mixture of dried crocodile dung and honey into the vagina.



Ehris Urban/Velya Jancz-Urban will present the **“Colonial Goodwife”** via Zoom on your personal computer or telephone.

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

**The Not-So-Good Life of The Colonial Goodwife** not only makes audiences laugh and grimace - it also honors our foremothers. It's not about quilting bees and spinning wheels - it's a virtual presentation about the little-known issues faced by New England's colonial women.

Perhaps women need to be reminded how far we've come to see how far we still can go.

Join our Zoom Meeting on your PC at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81061905054?pwd=cUc3eVNFc3dEU1dpbVEwdXdtWDZkdz09>

You may also join us by telephone. Dial in number: 1-929-205-6099 Meeting ID: **810 6190 5054** Passcode: **952617**

“To be ignorant of what happened before you were born is to remain a child always.”  
Marcus Tullius Cicero, 107 BC - 44 BC

## HISTORICAL SOCIETY HAPPENINGS

Our offices are open, once again, following the L-O-N-G COVID closing! Our new office hours are Tuesdays and Fridays from 10am until 2pm. We're also open by appointment.

We are currently searching for a Ways & Means Committee Chairperson. We really need someone to spearhead our fundraising efforts. We have a number of improvements needing to be made on our grounds and in our buildings. If you, or anyone you know, is skilled at creating events and fundraisers, we could really use your leadership.

While on the topic of fundraising, we have launched a “Go Fund Me” campaign to raise money to paint the Catharine Bunnell Mitchell Museum and replace the windows in the Museum. Both capital improvements are desperately needed.

Please help us in our fundraising efforts by donating at <https://gofund.me/b2b4ac60>. You may also make a direct donation to the Society by clicking on the “Donate” button on the home page of our website at [www.stratfordhistorical.org](http://www.stratfordhistorical.org).

**Stratford Main Street Festival** is Saturday, June 5 from 10am until 5pm. We will be participating along with many other Stratford organizations. We will also be conducting tours of the Judson House on June 5th.

Saturday, June 12th, from noon until 3 pm, we will be participating in **Connecticut Open House Day**. We will be conducting tours of the Judson House. If you can lend a hand in helping with tours, or helping to manage traffic and social distancing, we'd appreciate your assistance on

June 5th and or June 12th.

We have created an online genealogical research request form. You may find the form on our website under the “Genealogy” tab.

Our Gardens Committee continues to plan, and to work, on creating improvements to our grounds. The committee is planning a flax garden which will be used for educational purposes.

Our Buildings Committee is working on many improvements to the Museum including the needed repairs described at the beginning of this article. In the coming months, you will see an announcement from us on the grand reopening of the Catharine Bunnell Mitchell Museum.

The US Coast Guard has been performing work at the Lighthouse. We're hoping we will soon be able to hold Open Houses there, again.

# I-95 CONSTRUCTION PHOTOS



Aerial view of I-95 under construction in the Spring of 1956.



147 Drome Avenue. Photo from the town's tax records.



Thuway Construction Makes Big Dent in Church Street. POWER SHOVELS working in Church St. this week produced this gaping hole, as they cleaned up behind the blasting crews.



THE ROCK never has a chance against this team of blasters in Church St. The hole drillers...work a few yards ahead of the crew that charges the hold. After a steel cover is placed over the area, the blast is set off.

In April of 1956 construction on I-95 was moving along at a rapid pace. We thought you might enjoy seeing a few of the photos that were printed in **The Stratford News** in the Spring of 1956.

As the quintessential understatement, not everyone was pleased with the construction of the thruway, or its route through town.

Mrs. Marie Rotty was one such person. Mrs. Rotty's husband had passed away just a few years before, and her 80 year old father-in-law, who lived with her family, was killed, a year later, when he was struck by a car on South Avenue. Mrs. Rotty's former home at 147 Drome Avenue survives to this day, so she must have won her battle with the construction company.

(All the newspaper photos on this page were taken from **The Stratford News** March 29, 1956).

## Sunday Herald

April 15, 1956

### Widow Won't Quit Home on Thruway

A spunky widowed mother of two children yesterday vowed she will "not budge" from the four-room home she sold to the State

even if it means delaying construction of the thruway in the (147) D(r)ome Av. area of Stratford.

Mrs. Marie Rotty, whose husband, Joseph A. Rotty, died of cancer three years ago, has been trying to buy the house back from the state ever since shortly after she sold it the property.

"The Highway Dept. representative didn't explain when he came to negotiate for the property that I could buy the house back," she wrote State Highway Commr. Newman Argraves, asking for help.

Mrs. Rotty got a rude shock yesterday when she received a letter from Argraves' office in Hartford. It informed her that the State Highway Dept. has nothing to do with it — "we can promise you nothing."

"I told Argraves I was not getting out; I have no place to go with my two children," Mrs. Rotty told **The Herald**. She emphasized that she is "not seeking charity, only a fair break."

The sequence of events outlined by Mrs. Rotty since she sold the property to the state shows that title to the house has been transferred by the state to the L. G. DeFelice & Sons contracting

firm of New Haven, successful bidder for the thruway section along which the Rotty property is located.

"When I found out that I should have received an opportunity to buy my house back it was too late to negotiate with the state," Mrs. Rotty said.

"Since I had signed final papers, I was told that I would have to bid for it.

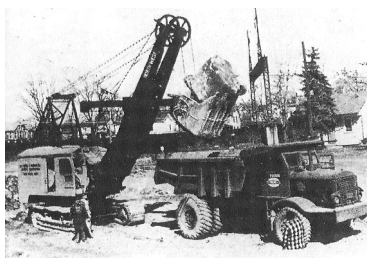
"I waited and waited and the house never came up for bid. Then I was told that the house was in a critical area and they were going to turn it over to a contractor to get it off the premises without putting it up for bid."

Next thing she knew, Mrs. Rotty related, the house was in the hands of DeFelice.

Meanwhile, she received a notice from the state to quit the premises by March 15.

Mrs. Rotty said she then redoubled efforts to purchase the house, "which practically cost my husband his life to build."

She said a friend contacted the DeFelice office in New Haven by phone and was told that the matter would be looked into. When Mrs. Rotty didn't hear from DeFelice for some time she wrote a letter, she said.



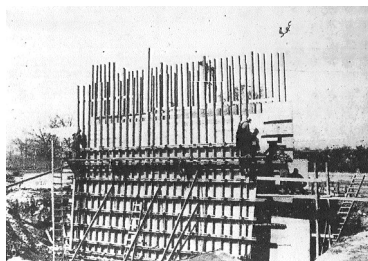
NINE TONS of rock flies lightly through the air, with a boost from the power shovel.



THERE'S NO PLACE like home, but the road will change all that.



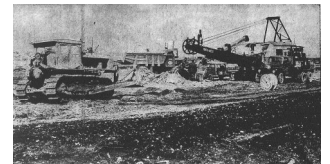
THEY TELL IT where to go. Surveyors working in Church St.



THE FRAME, in which will be poured the West Broad St. Overpass, rises to make a new, but temporary Stratford landmark.



CROSSING STRATFORD AVE. the roadbed plows on toward a row of marked houses.



THRU-WAY CONSTRUCTION: Full speed ahead is the order of the day in this area as work on the Connecticut thru-way moves on. Scene above shows ground levelling on Stratford side of Washington Bridge.

# DATELINE STRATFORD APRIL-MAY 1956

**The Stratford News**

April 5, 1956

**Thruway Cuts Out Barber**

Emile LeReau has closed the doors on his Linden Ave. barber shop in favor of the Thruway, and has shifted his cutting to the Town Hall Barber Shop operated by his sons Emile, Jr., and Frank, in the Barnum Ave. cut-off. Emile has been cutting hair here since 1926, when he first opened a shop in the Stratford Theatre building. Barbering runs in the LeReau family. Of his five sons all are barbers but one (an engineer).

**The Stratford News**

April 12, 1956

**Paradise Green Parking Problems**

The Paradise Green business Men's association has urged the Town Council to consider the possibility of diagonal parking around the town owned Paradise Green park in the center of the north end business area. O. S. Solomonson, president of the association, said that surveys of parking conditions in the Paradise Green area indicate that much business is being driven from the town because of the lack of adequate parking area. The merchants believe that diagonal parking around the park would alleviate much of this condition.

**The Stratford News**

April 12, 1956

**Thruway Work Will Jam Traffic**

Increasing turnpike construction in and around Stratford will multiply the traffic control problem "all out of Proportion" according to Police Chief Patrick J. Flanagan.

"...When all the big work begins, sometime during the summer," he said, "police will need the help of every citizen to alleviate the traffic tie-ups that will result."

**The Stratford News**

April 19, 1956

**Fluoridation Under Serious**

**Consideration**

The Stratford Council of the PTA, working in cooperation with the Fluoridation Committee of the Eastern Fairfield County, has taken action in the form of letters sent to the presidents of the various PTA groups to register either approval or disapproval for the introduction of sodium fluoride to the drinking water.

**The Stratford News**

April 26, 1956

**SHS 'Menagerie' Rated Tops In State Drama Festival**

"The Glass Menagerie," a dramatic presentation of Stratford High has received a top rating from the Connecticut State Drama Festival sponsored by the Connecticut Associations of Speech and Drama. Seven schools entered the competition at Wooster Junior High, April 7.

The one act play, starring Barbara Dedrick as Amanda Wingfield, Bruce Reynolds as Tom, her son, and Peggy Barnish as her daughter Laura will be one of two representing Connecticut schools at the New England Drama Festival held at Concord, N. H., this weekend.

**The Stratford News**

May 3, 1956

**Air Rifles on Way Out**

According to Councilman George Wright air rifles are on their way out in Stratford. Wright says that the Council's Ordinance Committee will recommend immediate adoption of the Police Department's suggested ordinance outlawing the sale, purchase or possession of BB guns. "Wright says the members were unanimous in their feeling that the law should go into effect as soon as possible. The Police drew up the ordinance in an attempt to get better control over the "zip guns," and air rifles and pistols which caused considerable property damage here last year

**The Stratford News**

May 10, 1956

**Waterfront Body Asked to Preserve, Develop Shoreline**

A strong plan for the future development of Stratford's waterfront facilities in the Housatonic River and along Long Island Sound was presented this week by the Citizens River Improvement Committee, which urges the town to set up a powerful Waterfront Authority.

"...In its investigation the committee said it found that erosion is ruining the town beaches and driving away residents.

Large areas, such as Lordship beach, once one of the best bathing beaches in the area, are already unusable, the report says, and of the 190 cottages which might be located on Long Beach east of Pleasure Beach only 32 are standing today.

**The Stratford News**

May 17, 1956

**Great Neck School Given Green Light by Building Committee**

The Town General Building Committee reconsidered its decision of two weeks ago to turn down the low bid on the Great Neck Elementary School at a special meeting last Friday night.

**The Stratford News**

May 17, 1956

**Helen King Reynolds**

Mrs. Helen King Reynolds, founder of the Helen King Reynolds, private school, will be honored Sunday at a reception at the Raven. All parents of pupils, both present and former, are invited to attend. The reception will be held from 2 to 6 p.m.

You may view a slideshow of our collection of newspaper photos from April and May of 1956 on the home page of our newsletter website: [www.stratfordhistoricalsociety.info](http://www.stratfordhistoricalsociety.info).



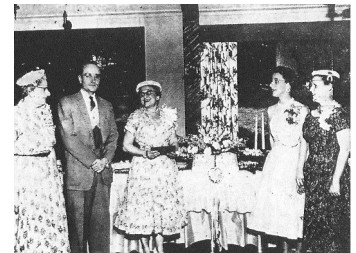
VFW Easter Egg Hunt. From the Stratford News, April 5, 1956.



Young Peoples Mozart Concerts Committee: Mrs. Sidney Penner, Mrs. Simon Frank, Mrs. Edmund Judson, Mrs. Avery Kearney, Mrs. Samuel Rood. From the Stratford News, April 12, 1956.



Shakespeare Luminaries: Maurice Evans, Helen Menken, Mr. & Mrs. Lawrence Langner. From the Stratford News, April 26, 1956.



Helen King Reynolds' retirement party. Mrs. Reynolds center left of photo. From the Stratford News, May 24, 1956.

## NOW SHOWING APRIL-MAY 1956

April 1st	<b>Never Say Goodbye</b>	Rock Hudson, George Sanders
April 8th	<b>I'll Cry Tomorrow</b>	Susan Hayward, Jo Van Fleet
April 15th	<b>Anything Goes</b>	Bing Crosby, Mitzi Gaynor
April 22nd	<b>Meet Me In Las Vegas</b>	Dan Dailey, Cyd Charisse
April 29th	<b>On the Threshold of Space</b>	Guy Madison, Virginia Leith, John Hodiak, Dean Jagger
May 6th	<b>Jubal</b>	Glenn Ford, Ernest Borgnine, Rod Steiger
May 13th	<b>The Swan</b>	Grace Kelly, Alec Guinness, Louis Jordan
May 20th	<b>Alexander the Great</b>	Richard Burton, Fredric March, Claire Bloom
May 27th	<b>Cockleshell Heroes</b>	Jose Ferrer, Trevor Howard



Stratford Theater c 1934

## DEED FOR WASHINGTON BRIDGE MIA



Washington Bridge under construction in 1921.

A Commission to examine the possibility of replacing the fourth Washington Bridge with the fifth was formed by the State House of Representatives in May of 1913. Construction of the bridge was subsequently recommended and approved.

One of the principal demands of Bridgeport, Stratford, and Milford was that the bridge not be a toll bridge. By May of 1921 construction of the new bridge was well underway. It's interesting to note that 25 years earlier, no one knew where the original deed for the Washington Bridge could be found.

**Morning Journal and Courier**  
February 7, 1896

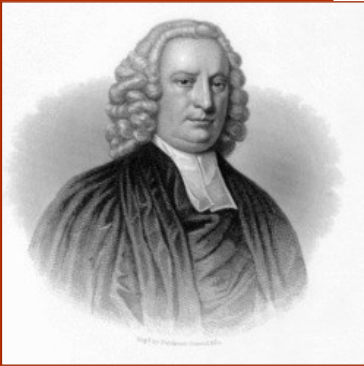
### Deed for Bridge Missing.

Bridgeport, Feb. 6.—County Commissioner Mead went to Stratford today to search for the deed conveying Washington bridge to the counties of New Haven and Fairfield. When the towns transferred their interest in the bridge to the counties, the deeds were drawn for record, but they cannot be found in the town clerk's office here or in Milford. The other town interested at that time in joint ownership of the bridge was Stratford. If the deed cannot be found there, a mystery will be created.

Mr. Mead said this afternoon that a thorough search of Stratford's records showed that the deed was not on record there, and he was somewhat inclined to doubt that the deed had ever been drawn as stated.

**The Bridgeport Times**  
March 2, 1921

Stratford people are vitally interested in the bill that would make the new Washington bridge a toll affair. None yet has been discovered but that thinks the idea an out-of-date thought that should be forgotten before it goes any further.



Rev. Dr. Samuel Johnson  
1696-1772.

## REV. SAMUEL JOHNSON 1771

Rev. Samuel Johnson was in the last months of his life when this article was written. It's rare to find Stratford news articles in the **Hartford (Connecticut) Courant** in these early years of its publication. Therefore, the Dean's visit to Connecticut must have been of utmost import to the Crown. The Dean of Limerick, at that time, was either John Averell or Maurice Crosbie.

**The Connecticut Courant**  
April 30, 1771

### New-London, April 26.

We hear from Stratford, that the Rev. Doc. Johnson, has taken a House in that Town for the Dean of Limrick, whom he expects daily, he being appointed by the King to inspect into the State of the Episcopal Churches on the Continent, and make return annually from this Colony. He is to continue in this Office four years. — Whether this Office is to be established, or whether it is only

to prepare the Way for an American Bishop, we do not yet learn: But this is evident, that the present Method of Information (by the Missionaries in their Letters to the Hon Society) renders it highly necessary that there should be some other Way than what has been usually practiced, for a right information of the Episcopal Churches in these Colonies, & the Conduct of the Missionaries, and the great need they stand in of a Visitor.

## ON MEMORIAL DAY WE REMEMBER...



**UNFORGOTTEN**—James Hartman, Raybestos export manager, recalls Bataan Death March for good reasons. At right, the bearded Hartman during the march. Photo from **Sunday Herald**, April 1, 1956.

James Hartman was a frequent speaker at Veterans' Day, and Memorial Day, presentations around the Stratford area, and in surrounding towns. He was the featured speaker at a few Memorial Day presentations around Stratford in the 1950s and 1960s. Mr. Hartman was born in Shelton in 1918, and died in Newington in 1989.

**Sunday Herald**  
April 1, 1956  
'A Hot, Sleepy Day'  
**Ex-GI Recalls March of Death**

On April 9, 1942, James Richard Hartman of Stratford milled around among other uniformed American kids in the Phillipines [sic]. The day was hot, sleepy,

like any other day, when the Japs rained from the sky and the Bataan Death March began.

Hartman, who is export manager at Raybestos, could not be expected to forget the date.

"I had all my fingernails pulled off, a bayonet wound in my right eye. I escaped, was recaptured and beaten," says Hartman on the anniversary eve.

"I was in nine different camps."

**The climax was on Armistice Day. The Death March had ended and slave labor in the lead mine would be over any minute.**

**When Hartman attempted to call a memorial service, a Jap pushed him down a chute and with a pitchfork so ram-**

**med him, that his back was broken. He still wears a back brace.**

Hartman had begun as bombardier-navigator with the Air Force while also attending the University of the Phillipines [sic]. He is married to Elizabeth Legouri and they have two children, Carol and Patricia, attending Eli Whitney School.

He is past state commander of Disabled American Veterans, a leader in Civilian Defense, and on his own time, holds high school Americanism classes.

**Asked what was his outstanding thought on the anniversary, Hartman said, "We need more Americans like General MacArthur."**

# TAKING A STROLL THROUGH HISTORIC STRATFORD

## The Stratford Star

February 8, 1996

### Hometown History

By Lewis Knapp

Let's go back to 1896 and take a carriage ride from the lighthouse at Stratford Point to the Far Mill River to recall some of the original names for Stratford landmarks.

Stratford Point projects into the sound from the Great Neck. To its west are the high bluffs of Bennett's Cove, and on the river side is Half Moon Cove (Short Beach).

At the West Point end of Great Neck in 1650 is a farm named Lordship Manor, that will give its name to a shore resort, and then to all of Great Neck.

We head north toward Neck Creek bridge, across the creek that stretches from the Housatonic (first named the Stratford, or Great River, then by its Indian name meaning "land beyond the mountains") through the Great Meadows to Lewis's Gut.

Across the bridge, a path leads east to the river at Crimbo Point (Quenby's Neck). Another mile, beyond Fresh Pond (not "Frash"), we pass the road to Woods End, where people once gathered firewood, and a road to Little Neck (where Birdseye Street ramp will be—pronounced BirdZEE, not Bird's EYE).

A mile farther, our horse stops for a drink at the town pump at Hard's Corner. On our right is John Hard's store. Marshall's Tavern on our left, where Lafayette stopped in 1824, will burn to the ground in 1899. The new trolley line comes from Bridgeport along the Lower Road (Stratford Avenue), and turns to head up Main Street.

As we come to the brown and tan Episcopal Church, we see a road stretching diagonally across the base of Academy Hill, where the old academy has been re-placed by a large cast zinc monument. Once called Watchhouse Hill, then Meeting House Hill, perhaps the hill should be re-named Monument Hill.

Another block, past the new granite library and John Sterling's gift house to his mother, we see the flagpole at the Center, (once Smithshop Hill, after Jehiel Beardsley's blacksmith shop). The electric street car line from Bridgeport ends at the flagpole.

We now reach South Parade (West Broad Street), where the highway from New York to Boston runs. It has had many routes and many names: the

Country Road, King's Highway, Post Road, US 1 and I-95.

Church Street to our left runs to the railroad depot and to King Street (called Back Street for awhile after the Revolution). King Street reaches north to Strawberry Hill.

We rumble across the Tanner's Brook bridge (the tannery stood where this brook meets Ferry Creek), and under the new rail-road viaduct; up the hill to North Parade (where the militia once trained) and Esek Lane, (now Essex Place), which leads to the new Airline Road (Barnum Avenue) to Bridgeport, and to Booth Street, the road to the distillery.

Past Teaparty Lane (Longbrook Avenue), named for the 1773 Boston event, past Egypt Lane (North Avenue) where Washington School is being built, we reach Paradise Green.

Huntington Road (once Tory Hill) is to our left. Moving north on the Oronoque Road (Main Street), we pass Walter Wilcoxson's farm and Ox Pasture Lane (Wilcoxson Avenue), then come to Raven Stream.

We pass Cutspring Road, a corruption of Scutspring. To scutch flax was to beat it to obtain the fibers for linen cloth, and it was the practice to ret (soak) the flax in a pool or spring to soften it for scutching.

At the junction of the road to Harvey's Farms (East Main Street), is a farm where the Weatogue (Mill River) Golf Course will be built in 15 years. Down the hill we travel to the icehouse and the old grist-mill/sawmill at Peck's Mill Pond, once owned by Peck's father-in-law, Eli Wheeler.

In 1899, an excursion trolley will plunge off a high trolley bridge across the pond, killing 32. An abutment of that bridge will remain visible in 1996.

We travel up a steep and rocky road to Putney, named for a part of London. The next mile is country road, past one-room Putney School, Putney Cemetery and Putney Chapel in the middle of the road, and down Skidmore Hill to Johnson's smithy at Negro Brook.

Named for an old Stratford family, in 1995 its name was changed to Freeman Brook, in tribute to all the Freemans who have lived in Stratford for centuries, who fought for our country in the Revolutionary and Civil wars, and for Susan Freeman, first black woman to be commissioned in the Army Nursing Corps.

Into Oronoque, we pass the road to Ryder's Landing, where the ferry crosses to the flagstop at Baldwin Station on the Naugatuck Railroad. On down Warner Hill to the little iron bridge across the Far Mill River, the boundary of the town of Huntington (earlier Ripton Parish, and to become Shelton in 1916).

Some of the old names, sources forgotten, are still in use; others have disappeared in the mists of time. Who remembers Nessumpaw's, the Honeyspot, Fool's Hatch, Sandy Hollow or Pissepunk Hill? Wouldn't it be great to dust off and re-use those names that are significant to our history.

  
**Hometown  
History**  
 By Lewis Knapp  




Neck Creek Bridge c 1895



Hard's Corner c 1895

## "WILD AND WOOLY" PARADISE GREEN



Paradise Green c 1927.

It stretches the imagination to learn that some Stratfordites living around Stratford Center considered Paradise Green a distant and unfamiliar part of town. Of course, at the time, Stratfordites were summering at Oronoque and Lordship Beach writing home as if they were vacationing in a distant land.

### **Bridgeport Evening Farmer** March 1, 1921 **Stratford**

*There are people who live right in Stratford who have not been to Paradise Green in years. It seems strange but it is so nevertheless. One party recently who got on*

*the subject was surprised to know that the ice houses no longer grace the banks at Judson's pond, and didn't know that the day was at hand when skaters could enjoy the pond unmolested. Paradise Green today, and the green five years ago, is a different sort of place. The business center there now is almost as extensive as was that in Stratford center five years ago.*

*Immediately at the green will be found a post office substation, an up-to-date drug store, a gasoline station, a hardware store, a barber shop, two markets, two chain grocery stores, a shoe repair shop, dry goods store, garage and a combination news store*

*and restaurant. This will be somewhat of a shock to some of the older inhabitants who still picture Paradise Green as being wild and woolly, but the fact is that the rapid and high class growth, due largely to the agency of Harry Burnes, and the firm of Wood & Varborough, is making this section a community that is going to soon have a voice in Stratford matters that will have to be heard. It is a colony that is permanent, and made up almost exclusively of people who own their own property. If you haven't seen the green section for several years, take a trip up that way. You will be surprised, and agreeably so.*

## SHANG FIGHTS WATER POLLUTION

In the Town of Stratford, and likely throughout America, the name "Shang" Wheeler brings to mind a visage, it's one of the great decoy carver of that name. "Shang", however, was a man of many interests and many talents. He was known for his not infrequent editorial cartoons which ran in the daily and weekly newspapers of the area.

As best we can tell, Shang's first foray into "cartooning", can be seen at the right. Shang was impassioned about the abuse the Housatonic River suffered at the hands of the industrial interests upstream along the Naugatuck River. You might be dismayed to learn the City of Waterbury was discharging untreated waste into the Naugatuck river, which converges with the Housatonic at Danbury, until 1983.

Stratford residents in large numbers had been sickened by consuming shellfish, in the latter part of the 19th century, which had been contaminated by raw sewage discharged, upstream, into the Housatonic River. Shang Wheeler was an early, and vociferous, opponent of such discharges. He was unafraid to take on the upstream manufacturing interests, and, frequently, did so.

### **The Bridgeport Times**

March 12, 1921

#### **'Shang' Wheeler Turns Cartoonist To Help His Well Beloved Oysters**

*Among the many bills being considered by the Connecticut Legislature at this session few would be expected to have wider general interest than the one designated House Bill No. 356.*

*This bill was introduced by Representative F. S. Beardsley, of Stratford, and provides for the total elimination of pollution in the streams, rivers and harbors of the State of Connecticut after January 1st, 1927.*

*The bill was referred to the Judiciary Committee of which A. L. DeLaney of this city is the Senate chairman. A public hearing on the bill which was largely attended was held by the committee early in the present week.*

*The proponents of the bill were led by Charles E. "Shang" Wheeler, of Stratford, an oysterman of large experience, and who is manager of the Connecticut Oyster Farms Company. They charged that the streams and waters of the State were grossly polluted and that this pollution was caused by the wastes and acids turned into the streams by the manufacturing concerns and also by the city sewage which was allowed to discharge into the streams. As an effect they pointed out the menace to public health; the economic loss of millions of dollars of*

*valuable materials; and the depletion of the oyster and fishing industries to a point near extinction. Their evidence was supported by reports of the United States Bureau of Chemistry and also reports of the United States Bureau of Fisheries, bearing on the cause and effect of the pollution.*

*...The opponents admitted the conditions and effects but objected to the bill on the grounds, that the period of six years was altogether too short a time for the manufacturers to provide other means and methods for the disposal of their wastes. This was the only point which they made in opposition to the bill.*

*They were subjected to a very vigorous cross examination by members of the Judiciary Committee, especially Senator DeLaney, House Chairman Buckley of Union; Judge Nickerson of Cornwall; and Frederick L. Perry of New Haven, who was at one time connected with the State Shellfish Commission.*

*...Mr. Wheeler told the committee of being at the National Convention of the American Game Protective Association held in New York city just a year ago, this month. At this convention J. T. Travers, Supervisor of Streams in the state of Ohio, and connected with the Ohio Department of Agriculture, demonstrated a patented method of treating all kinds of manufacturing waste and sewage which made them harmless.*



From *The Bridgeport Times*,  
March 12, 1921.

# IN PURSUIT OF BRIDGEPORT'S DATE OF ORIGIN

We were interested to note a recent story in *The Connecticut Post*, "Emerging from the pandemic, Bridgeport aims to mark city's 200th anniversary". The story is interesting in that it's really hard to assign a date to Bridgeport's found.

In the late 17th century, Stratford's Congregational minister, Israel Chauncey, worked with the residents of the Newfield to build a church for their community. The founding of Newfield could easily be considered the genesis of the City of Bridgeport. Newfield was eventually consumed by the Borough of Bridgeport as the center of Bridgeport settled around Bridgeport harbor.

Samuel Orcutt writes in his 1886 *A History of the Old Town of Stratford*, "The borough of Bridgeport was incorporated in 1800, with two hundred and fifty inhabitants, and by a rapid growth it gradually absorbed the dwellers of the more ancient settlement. In 1821 the town of Bridgeport was erected and the parish of Stratfield, practically, ceased to exist." "In 1800, the borough of Bridgeport, the first in the State and a

pattern for others, was chartered, and as a commercial and manufacturing community, BRIDGEPORT commenced her career of enterprise and progress."

Bridgeport Borough was founded with its own rudimentary government. Captain Amos Hubbell a farmer, Boston coaster, a West India trader and an active Whig in the Revolution was a merchant at Newfield. Soon after the Revolution he built the wharf near the foot of Bank street, and was the first Warden of the Borough of Bridgeport.

So, it would seem appropriate to consider 1821 as the date of Bridgeport's official founding. Bridgeport became a city in 1836, and in 1936 Bridgeport celebrated its one hundredth anniversary. We assume that in 2036 Bridgeport will hold a 200th anniversary celebration.

1691? 1800? 1821? 1836? Which year to observe for Bridgeport's genesis? What we do know is that in 1821 Stratford officially, and formally, parted ways with Bridgeport. Stratford's

Representative, David Plant, asked the support of Connecticut's House of Representatives to officially cleave Bridgeport Borough from Stratford. He did so against the wishes of the residents of Bridgeport, and despite the residents of Bridgeport voting against the separation.

## Connecticut Courant June 19, 1821

On Monday last, agreeably to resolve of the late legislature, the freemen of this town assembled in the Rev. Mr. Waterman's Church, and organized themselves by choosing the following gentlemen to their respective offices, to wit:

Selectmen—James E. Beach, Noah Plumb, Reuben Tweedy, Wilson Hawley, Enoch Foote, Joseph Knapp, David Nichols, jun.

... Voted—That whereas this meeting is convened in pursuance of a resolve of the General Assembly at their session in May 1821, by which we are commanded this day to meet and organize ourselves as a town, according to the laws of this state; and whereas our so doing may

be construed into a willing acquiescence in the condition in which we are by said resolve placed; which to prevent, and to make known to our fellow citizens throughout this state, the light in which we view the whole transaction, which has resulted in a necessity of submitting to the strong hand of power however exercised. We do most solemnly protest against said re-solve for the reasons following, to wit: -

Because said Resolve is in our opinion most palpably unconstitutional and unjust, in that by it, a majority of the inhabitants of the town of Stratford living in a particular section thereof are wholly disfranchised and deprived of all their rights as citizens of that town against their will, and at the instigation of a minority of said inhabitants living in another section thereof; and in that, said majority are deprived of the privilege of sending two representatives to the General Assembly, without their consent or agreement, by the vote of said minority, only at a meeting in which said majority were forbidden to act...(Read this article in its entirety on our website).

# IGOR SIKORSKY HERE; HELICOPTERS IN EUROPE

The year 1921 was a momentous year in the history of aviation. After The Great War ended in 1918, several of the European nations began looking to new types of weaponry to be better prepared and mobilized for any future conflicts.

Igor Sikorsky arrived in America on March 30, 1919. It would be two decades before he successfully piloted his first helicopter at the site of today's Army Engine Plant.

Meanwhile, in Europe, three helicopters were successfully tested and flown in the Spring and Summer of 1921. The French were particularly interested in developing a viable helicopter as a possible weapon in any future conflict with Germany. Interestingly enough, the Germans developed a helicopter in 1936 which they used, on a very limited basis, during World War II.

While we in Stratford often think of Sikorsky as the helicopter's inventor, the first successfully flown helicopter was launched just up the road in Derby in 1909. J. Newton Williams of Derby built a helicopter that lifted off the ground in 1909. You may read more of Mr. Newton at [http://electronicvalley.org/derby/halloffame/Williams.J\\_Newton.htm](http://electronicvalley.org/derby/halloffame/Williams.J_Newton.htm).

We also tend to think of Sikorsky as Stratford's only helicopter factory. Bendix helicopter moved to East Main Street in Stratford in April of 1946. For a few years, Stratford had two successful helicopter companies producing their vertical lift aircraft in town.

Igor Sikorsky worried that helicopters like his would only be used for war related purposes. He had a much broader view of how helicopters could benefit mankind. He saw their future in search and rescue, emergency transportation, and other humanitarian missions.

Returning to 1921, however, in Europe, helicopters were all about prosecuting war efforts.

## The Kansas City Star June 12, 1921

### The "Latest Things" in the World of Flight

You have heard of the helicopter? Beware of it. Its promise is sinister, though it is wonderful. The helicopter's chief use will be for war.

We are rapidly entering the glorious Epoch of the Air. Yet people, all over Europe, are full of agitation and worry.

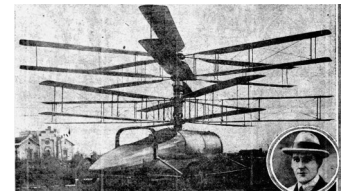
.. Exactly in the same way, it is

known that, during the war, several of the best high-speed airplanes of the allies had been able to remain in the air in a vertical position, tail down, supported only by the up-pull of their airscrews - a performance commonly known as "hanging on the prop." It is true they were only able to hang thus for a minute or so, because their patrol feeds were not arranged to keep the engine going in this position, but with a suitable arrangement of the engine such a position could be maintained for a long period.

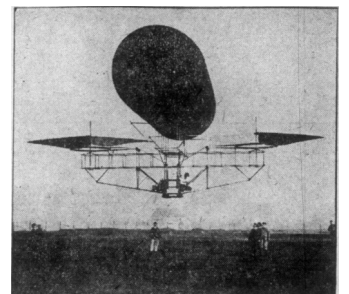
... The helicopter is a wonderful machine for observation work in connection with artillery fire. It will pop up vertically, swiftly, straight up, up, and hover on the spot, then drop like a stone, on the same spot, and land as gently as a feather. The Helicopter will be grand for war.

... The men of war are snatching at the conquest of the air to desolate the earth. Already we hear that giant aircraft form the backbone of the modern army.

.. But in peace or war, aviation developments are bound to furnish a long and interesting chapter in history.



The Pescara helicopter, latest machine of its kind, has achieved vertical ascent...Pescara (in circle), a Spanish nobleman, is working in conjunction with French army engineers. *The Allentown Morning Call*, July 31, 1921.



The Oehmichen-Peugeot Helicopter. *The Allentown Morning Call*, June 5, 1921.

# THE STRATFORD TOP 10

**T**hose 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's colleague), in 1789, writes: Stratford is better built than either Fairfield or Norwalk...The inhabitants have long been agitated by religious and political controversies.*"

## **The Bridgeport Times**

April 12, 1922

*One well known citizen and member of the "Rudder club" did not attend the battle royal at the Town hall Monday night. Instead he wended his way to the Casino on State street, Bridgeport, and looked over the Ross-Delaney*

*go, and the preliminaries. "I'd rather see fights that are organized and have regular referees," he explained. "Besides you can see a fight like that in Stratford most any Monday night."*

**Number 6** is the attempted ouster of Stratford's first town manager just a few months after he was hired. Most of the Town Council members had opposed changing the form of government in 1921 to a Council-Manager form. The voters approved the change by a 2-1 margin. When Rutherford Hayes Hunter was hired as the town's first Town Manager, it was inevitable that he would face stiff opposition from the majority of the Town Council.

When Mr. Hunter purchased two garbage cans from Lovell Hardware, without prior approval from the Town Council, the Council struck. They accused Mr. Hunter of committing a misdemeanor and replaced him with a town manager who had also opposed the change of government, Walter Hubbell.

Ultimately, Rutherford Hunter was



restored to his position as town manager, but not before the voters initiated a recall election to replace the seven Town Council members who had voted to replace Mr. Hunter.

As the "Rudder Club" member stated referring to Monday night Town Council meetings, "*you can see a fight like that in Stratford most any Monday night.*" As the old saw goes, "*the more things change....*"

To view past editions of our **UPDATE** newsletter, and/or to view current as well as historical photo slide shows and videos, visit [www.stratfordhistoricalsociety.info](http://www.stratfordhistoricalsociety.info).



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

[www.stratfordhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.stratfordhistoricalsociety.org)