

THE CUPHEAG CORNER

VOLUME III, ISSUE 7

JUNE-JULY 2021



Capt. David Judson House c. 1750

MARK THE DATES:

- September General Membership meeting, Saturday, September 25th, 2021, 2:00 pm., Stratford Library
- October 24th and October 31st "Strange Stratford" bus tours.
- October 31st "Specters Galore from Forest to Shore" walking tour.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Pharmacist John Collins	2
Miss Wilcoxson "Wonder Woman"	2
Dateline June—July 1956	3
Dick Steele	4
Dog problems	4
Helen King Reynolds	5
John Bond's Training Camp	5
Old Town Hall Torn Down	6
Nero Hawley	6
Bicycle Club	7
Travel Book	7
Toad Blocks Fire Hose	7

SPECIAL BONUS ISSUE

Up until July 2017, we did not publish a July newsletter. We had no membership meetings in the month of July, so we published no newsletters in July.

Welcome to another July "Bonus Issue". We only publish the July issue electronically, so if you wish to read this issue on paper, you'll need to DIY (do it yourself) on your own printer.

Nevertheless, there is much to report in this special issue. First of all, our Lighthouse Open Houses are back! July 31st, August 21st, and September 18th are the dates of the Open Houses thus far. These dates have all filled up. The lighthouse will close after our September open house for lead remediation work.

Our September Meeting has been scheduled for Saturday, September



25th at 2pm. We're back at the Stratford Library! Our program is entitled "Secret Connecticut". You won't want to miss learning about lesser known special places in Connecticut.

Our November program will occur November 13th. We will be celebrating 100 years of the current Washington Bridge. Weather permitting, we plan to walk the Washington Bridge after first meeting for a slide presentation at the Stratford Library.

On Saturday, October 24th, and

Saturday, October 31st, Mary Ann Vlahac will be leading bus tours to "Discover Strange Stratford." We'll provide additional details as they become available.

On Saturday, October 31st at the Historical Society Museum, we will be meeting for a walking tour entitled "Specters Galore from Forest to Shore". We will be exploring several of the "haunted" locations in the historic district of Stratford.

2021-22 Meeting Calendar

Saturday November 13th	2pm
Sunday January 23rd	2pm
Sunday March 27th	2pm
Sunday May 22nd	2pm

"Why should we not honestly and candidly investigate the errors and crimes of our ancestors that we may correct, reform, and avoid them?"

John Adams, 1818

HISTORICAL SOCIETY HAPPENINGS

If you've not visited the Judson House or the Museum recently, you may wish to stop by to view some of the many visible enhancements to our grounds and buildings.

Grounds and Gardens chair, Kevin Moore, has planted a wonderful flax garden between the Judson House and the Museum building. Kevin intends to use the garden to demonstrate the process of converting flax to fiber for linen.

Buildings chair, Roger Salls, has placed a beautiful new light in front of the Judson House. The light graciously illuminates the front of the Judson House and grounds.

Other improvements at the Society include: exterior painting of the Judson House; upgrading the fluorescent lighting in the Museum to LED; installing automatic light sensors in the Museum's interior; installing exterior motion detection

sensors for the exterior lights; replacing our antiquated and ineffectual humidifiers; replacing the gravel bed of our driveway; and, repairing storm damage to the Museum. Many, many thanks go to Shirley Clevenger and Roger Salls for their tireless efforts in making our facilities safer, brighter, and more pleasant.

We are genuinely in need of a Ways and Means chair. If you know of someone, perhaps yourself, who knows how to fund raise and how to obtain grants, please email Gail Liscio, gardenlady1952@optonline.net. We have many projects in need of funding and we desperately need to begin holding regular fund raising events.

The Connecticut Air & Space Museum will hold a **First in Flight Celebration** August 14th. Details are available at <https://www.ctairandspace.org/copy-of-corsair-car-show>.



New light outside the Judson House. Photo by Roger Salls.

The Museum will be holding its annual **Car Show** on September 19th. Detail are available at <https://www.ctairandspace.org/corsaircarshow>.

If you're looking for music any Tuesday evening, stop by Paradise Green at 7pm for **Concerts on the Green**.

POPULAR PHARMACIST DIES UNEXPECTEDLY



John W. Collins c. 1885. Photo from the Stratford Historical Society photo archives.

When the extremely popular pharmacist, John Collins, passed away in 1896, his funeral was one of the most largely attended in Bridgeport or Stratford. Mr. Collins was well known, and well respected, in both towns. His store was burglarized in January 1895 and it was very big news in Bridgeport. His passing created even deeper feelings of loss throughout the area.

The Morning Journal and Courier (New Haven)
May 23, 1896

PASSED AWAY SUDDENLY
Druggist J. W. Collins Dead—Was for Years Westville's Druggist—Leaves Two Brothers Here.

Dr. J. W. Collins, for years past the well known druggist in Stratford, was found dead in bed yesterday morning when Mrs. Saunders, his housekeeper, went to call him. As far as can be directly ascertained, says the Bridgeport Standard, he went directly to his home Thursday night after leaving the store about 8:15. A few minutes before leaving Mr. D. P. Rhoades had brought him a large piece of strawberry short cake, and on receiving this the "doctor" remarked that he "intended to

have a feast before retiring."

He took the cake with him when he departed. That he had company during the evening was plainly evident from the fact that there were two plates and two knives and forks that had been used. Nearly all of the cake had been eaten, much more than one person would have disposed of.

After his company had gone no one will ever know how death came. With the exception of his dog, he occupied the house alone. When Mrs. Saunders arrived yesterday morning to do her usual cleaning she at once, as was her usual custom, knocked on the druggist's door. She would have supposed that he had already risen, had not his door been locked. After repeatedly knocking she hastened to the street to find help. Mrs. F. P. Beardsley, who was passing at the time, hurried in, forced the door and found the apothecary lying on the bed lifeless. The coroner, Dr. W. B. Coggsell, was at once called. After an examination he pronounced death due to apoplexy.

The man had been dead some hours, probably expiring between the hours of 10 p. m. and midnight. It is thought that he was taken ill while preparing for bed, as when found he was only par-

tially undressed. His brother, who manages the news stand at the railroad station, was notified. He and his sister arrived at 12:30 o'clock. The death of Mr. Collins will be a great shock to his many friends. He was one of the best known and most popular men in Stratford. He conducted the business about ten years, his store being the only one on Main street that has neither changed its location or its name for the past five years.

He was a member of St. John's lodge, F. and A. M., Royal Arcanum, Knights of the Golden Eagle, O. U. A. M. and a member of the chapter. He was a brother of Henry Collins, who kept a cigar store on Chapel street, New Haven, which he sold a year ago. He was also a brother of Joseph Collins, who conducts the news stand in the New Haven railroad depot.

The remains will be brought to this city, where he was born about fifty-five years ago. At the time of his death he was a member of the Knights of the Essenic Order, the O. U. A. M., the Masons and the Royal Arcanum.

STRATFORD WOMEN NOT TO BE TRIFLED WITH

The Bridgeport Herald
June 14, 1896
FOUR SHOTS AT A BURGLAR.

Miss Wilcoxson Protects Herself and Mother From Being Robbed.

Four pistol shots, loud and clear, sounded on the stilly night Tuesday a few hours after sundown and startled the residents of Torry hill, Stratford. The shots were fired by Miss Wilcoxson at a mysterious person who has been prowling around her mother's home for two weeks with the evident in-tention of robbery.

One man who was on the

watch for him a week ago gave chase and shot at him without effect.

The other night Miss Wilcoxson decided to wait for the stranger and give him a reception that he merited. She repaired to an unlighted room upstairs. She watched from an open window and waited patiently for the stranger who showed up about 9 o'clock. He crept stealthily up to the window he had peered through so often before and was just in the act of glancing in when Miss Wilcoxson took deliberate aim and fired two shots in rapid succession.

The stranger beat a hasty retreat and the courageous young woman fired two more shots after him. The reports aroused the neighbors and in a short time they were scouring the vicinity for the unknown rascal. No trace of him was found however, and since then he has not been seen in the neighborhood.

Last fall about half a dozen houses on Torry [sic] hill and vicinity were burglarized and a number of articles stolen. It is thought the stranger Miss Wilcoxson shot at was the burglar on a return visit.



While we lack a photo of Miss Wilcoxson and her home, this photo is of the Walker Lewis home on Tory Hill (today's Huntington Road) c 1900.

DATELINE STRATFORD JUNE—JULY 1956

The Stratford News June 7, 1956

POLIO INJECTIONS NOW 96 PC.

More than 96 per cent of the children between the ages of three and 12 years have received at least two injections of polio vaccine to date, Dr. Chester E. Haberlin, Acting Health Director says, in a report on the vaccine program sponsored by his department during the past year. Records of the department show that to date 6,341 children have participated in the program, believed to be a record for the state. The vaccine clinics were sponsored by the Health Department last year and again this spring with the cooperation of the local doctors and nurses. The department records for the clinics recently completed showed that 3,471 children received the second injection of vaccine, an increase of 433 over the number receiving the first injection in March. Dr. Haberlin said that many children who missed the first injection in March reported to their private physicians for the initial dosage and then participated in the clinic for the second injection. The Health Director said that the record of more than 3,000 children participating last year and an equal number this year indicates that the major portion of the children of the town have received two injections and should be protected for the present polio season.

The Stratford News June 14, 1956

BOOTHE REPORT

During the month, of May, 60 groups used the facilities of Boothe Memorial Park. A total of 2748 people attended these functions and permit fees totaling \$233 were collected. Use of the facilities was divided as follows: Dance Hall, 21 groups; Dining Hall, 22 groups; Redwood Building, three groups; Homestead Building, three groups; and the Picnic Grove, eleven groups. Fourteen groups used

more than one facility at a time and were charged accordingly.

The Stratford News July 5, 1956

LIA Bans Outsiders from Beach Noisy Teen Parties, Abuse of Facilities Aggravate Residents

In an effort to end the rowdy parties on the beach, the Lordship Improvement Association voted to close the eight acres of Russian Beach to non-residents.

Outsiders have been accused of fiercely abusing the hospitality of beach privileges granted them by the Lordship people. The area has been posted with signs stating, "This beach is for Lordship residents only" and a special policeman has been hired to enforce obedience of the signs.

Another gripe of the Association is that the Lordship streets are being used as speedways by non-resident teenagers, endangering the lives of children in that area.

At one point the Lordshippers were aroused when they learned that no radio-patrol car was in the area when a resident called police to break up a teenage stag party. The regularly assigned car was on duty at the Shakespeare Theater.

Because of poor conditions at Short Beach due to erosion, and the near disappearance in last year's hurricane of Lordship Beach, non-residents have been using the Russian Beach facilities.

Sunday Herald July 22, 1956

'150-Acre' Land Sale In Lordship Big Goof

There was much ado about nothing in Lordship yesterday when a report circulated that the Lordship Park Assn. had sold "150 acres of land, including houses," for only \$2,000.

John H. Ives, agent in the transaction, quickly explained that a mistake

had been made in the deed by one of the parties involved which greatly exaggerated the amount of land sold. He said the error would be rectified this week-end.

Headed by William L. Lashar, whose late father, Walter B. Lashar, owned the property, the Park Assn. sold a parcel of marshland to Mianus Realty, a firm which includes Roderick and Kenneth McNeil. Manager of Lashar's interests is Richard T. Staples.

Some persons riffing through deeds at Town Clerk Howard Wilcoxson's office came across the Lordship deed. Attached was a revenue stamp for \$2.75, while the deed described in detail a vast expanse of Lordship.

Sunday Herald July 22, 1956

IF YOU GO to Lordship next Sunday (July 29), you may be puzzled to see one grinning gunner being punched in the ribs or slapped on the back by innumerable other shooters. It'll be Bridgeport's popular sportsman Rudy Pistey being honored with a testimonial shoot by the Fairfield County Fish and Game Assn., and the Connecticut Skeet Shooting Assn., rain or shine.

Rudy is one of those fortunate outdoorsmen who experienced the game "way back when." His parents moved to the Park City around the turn of the century in the days when you had merely to buggy a couple of miles from the center of town with the old hammer guns to find covers teeming with small game.

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.



Your Community Theater: The Polka Dot Playhouse
Stage full of activity: While technicians are putting the finishing touches on the set for **The King of Hearts**, director Dick Forsyth polishes up the actors in a scene from the play, From **the Stratford News**, July 26, 1956.



Sidney Milwe, President of the Stratford Town Fair, is shown presenting Bruce Reynolds, President of the Stratford PAL Junior Rifle Club a check to help in financing the rifle teams to Camp Perry, Ohio. From **The Stratford News**, July 19, 1956.



Ed Samuleman receives a hot dog from Bil Smith, fireman helping out PAL group. Donations were made by the H.C. Lovell Co., Stratford Bottling, French Bakery, Fairfield Beef, Rotary Sport Shop, Sportsmen's Den, Arctic Sport Shop, Cutrufello's. From **The Stratford News**, July 12, 1956.

NOW SHOWING JUNE—JULY 1956

June 3rd	A Tribute to a Bad Man	James Cagney, Stephen McNally
June 10th	Maverick Queen	Barbara Stanwyck, Barry Sullivan
June 17th	Foreign Intrigue	Robert Mitchum, Genevieve Page
June 24th	The Man Who Knew Too Much	James Stewart, Doris Day
July 1st	Trapeze	Burt Lancaster, Tony Curtis, Gina Lollobrigida
July 8th	The Leather Saint	Paul Douglas, John Derek, Cesar Romero
July 15th	Nightmare	Edward G. Robinson, Kevin McCarthy, Connie Russell
July 22nd	Santiago	Alan Ladd, Roassana Podesta
July 29th	The Catered Affair	Bette Davis, Ernest Borgnine



Stratford Theater c 1934

FROM THE AUGUST *BALDWIN BEACON*

We know we have amazing volunteers at the Historical Society, so it's very gratifying when other organizations are also able to appreciate our dedicated volunteers.

Many of you will remember Dick Steele as our former newsletter editor. Dick published this newsletter, and the Oronoque community newsletter, for many years.

At a spry 99 years of age, Dick remains a contributor to our town and its volunteer organizations. Thanks for all you do, and have done, Dick!

Senior Spotlight

This month we are brightly shining the spotlight on Stratford resident, Major Richard Steele. One of six children, Richard was born in his home on February 11, 1922 in Montclair, New Jersey. After high school, Richard enlisted in the United States Marine Corps in 1942. Richard, or Dick, as his friends and family lovingly know him, went through Basic Training, was then accepted into Aviation Ordinance School, and graduated as an enlisted pilot. He was later deployed to the South Pacific during WWII in 1944 where he flew scouting and bombing missions. When Richard returned home from his service, a military friend who remained overseas still serving, asked Richard to check-in on his sweetheart; coincidentally from Richard's home town. Richard honored his friend's request, and when his friend's sweetheart's sister walked through the door, Dick for the first time laid eyes on the love of his life, and future wife, Florence Rodey.



Following WWII, Richard went into the Marine Corps Reserves where he was promoted to First Lieutenant. In 1952, he was recalled to active duty, and served in the Korean War, once again flying planes for our great country until 1955. Richard flew many planes including the Helldiver, Sky Raider and Panther. One that became most dear to him when he moved to Stratford was the Chance Vought F4U Corsair. In 1987, he retired from the Marine Corps Reserves with the rank Major.

Richard has led a beautifully fulfilling civilian life. He was married to Florence for 68 years, has two lovely daughters, Mildred and Katherine, and one granddaughter, Amanda. Putting his GI Bill to good use, Richard graduated from NYU and became an accountant for ConEd in New York City. In order to be closer to his family, Richard moved to Stratford 30 years ago and has been a vibrant member of our community since. Active in Oronoque Village, Richard took pictures and wrote for the Oronoque Villager, and also started a ping-pong group. He was very active in the Historical Society. Some of his passions include the restoration of the Corsair plane he once flew, as well as genealogy (Richard can trace his ancestry back to Stratford's own Curtis and Judson lineage!). Some words that have been used to describe Richard include even-tempered, delightful and boyish. His "Live and Let Live" attitude has led him to live an amazing life, with a broad circle of friends. We are so proud and honored to have him as one of Stratford's own. Keep on shining Major Steele!

BAD DOG. BAD, BAD DOG.

Bridgeport Daily Standard
June 27, 1871

Much complaint has been made lately of the great number of dogs which are allowed to run at large here. The post office appears to be the headquarters for them at mail time, and such a snapping and snarling as they

keep up is hardly equaled at a New York dog pound. A few days since, two ladies, while on their way to the depot were attacked and severely bitten, and although a number of persons were near by at the time, none interfered in the least, looking on as though it was an every day

affair. 'Twas mosquitoes that bit the ladies, not the dogs. We mention this 'cause some might think 'twas mosquitoes. They are quite thick here by spells, 'though 'taint considered polite to say so.



Stratford Post Office c. 1888. Photo from SHS archives.

HELEN KING REYNOLDS RETIRES

The Stratford News
May 24, 1956

Helen King Reynolds Day

For the past 25 years Helen King Reynolds has been the symbol of the "second mother" to hundreds of Stratford families whose children have been students in her private day school.

Sunday many of these parents — and many of the students who are now grown and parent themselves — gathered at the Raven to honor Mrs. Reynolds on the Silver Anniversary of the school. More than 200 persons attended the tea.

The school, which includes pre-school children from 4½ years old, through the first six grades of school, is operated on the principle that these

are the formative years of a child's life, and the time when he learns habits of character.

"We try to develop each child to allow him to make the best use of natural talents in his own way, and to make the most of his opportunities," Mrs. Reynolds says.

While the school might be called "progressive," she also stresses that the teaching of discipline is essential in developing respect and consideration for others. "Only by observing the rules of discipline," Mrs. Reynolds says, "can children become constructive members of society."

In addition to the regular school subjects, her students receive special training at the school. There are

regular afternoon French classes for all the six grades, and music appreciation periods for all children. The school also offers special dramatics training, through which the children develop good habits of enunciation. Piano instruction is given in small groups that have the effect of private teaching.

It is little wonder that those whose children have enjoyed this school's training, and those who have received it themselves, turned out Sunday to pay tribute to the woman whose vision and leadership have created a truly rare institution for Stratford children.



Town Manager Harry Flood jokes with Mrs. Reynolds. **The Stratford News**, May 24, 1956.



Ruth Reed, John Reynolds, Mrs. Reynolds, Mrs. Robert Brenner, Mrs. Francis Perkins. **The Stratford News**, May 24, 1956.



John Reynolds, Mrs. Reynolds, Rev. Dr. Alderson. **The Stratford News**, May 24, 1956.



Town Council Chair Ed Dorne, Mrs. Reynolds, Judge Raymond Ruebens. **The Stratford News**, May 24, 1956.

REMEMBERING JOHN BOND'S TRAINING CAMP

The Bridgeport Evening Farmer
June 9, 1921

HITTING THE SPORT TRAIL

With Geo. E. Firstbrook

Lee Meldin, well known prize ring critic, who was one of the regulars at Capt. Bond's old roadhouse and training quarters in Stratford only a few years ago, becomes reminiscent of the old days here when he attempts to make a comparison of the old Bond place to the training camps of Dempsey at Atlantic City and of Carpentier at Manhasset. Says Lee:

"I think of the old days at John Bond's place in Stratford and wonder if in present day training quarters there's such a company of genial souls as gathered at Bond's long ago. John L. Sullivan was frequently there, and Terry McGovern, Tommy Ryan, Packy McFarland, Jack Kritton, Joe Humphreys, Sam Harris and a host of others. And when Willie Cobb, who composed "School Days," came up, they sang songs around the piano. Capt. Bond's dog Tessie, given to him by Tom O'Rourke, was there last sum-

mer. That's all the old crowd, but perhaps in Carpentier's and Dempsey's camps there "are just as interesting folks, if one knew it."

Meldin contends that most distinguished men of a country have been followers of the prize ring. But the improvement among the fighters themselves is that they have learned to manage their pocketbooks, as well as their fists. Lee, who is still remembered by the old sport gallery in Bridgeport, has taken the time to dig up some ancient history on ring matters which will no doubt prove interesting as fight talk is saturating the air as a result of the public interest in the pending Carpentier and Dempsey go which will be staged in Jersey City, July 2.

To shudder at boxing is to show that you have no right appreciation for the manly art is associated with the most famous names of the heroic age, says Lee. Kings, and even demi-gods, did not think it beneath them to witness or participate in a good fight.



John Bond's Club House c 1908.



John Bond's Home c 1908.



John Bond's boxers c 1900.

OLD TOWN HALL TORN DOWN



Final Portrait of an Old Friend. ABOUT READY to exit from the life of our town is the original Town Hall Building. Photo from *The Stratford News*,

The Stratford News
July 5, 1956
Original Town Hall To Exit As Thruway Interrupts Center
By BERTIE LANESE

Soon one of the oldest buildings in Stratford will exit from the life of our town, falling before the new super highway construction. The original Town Hall building, on the west side of Main St. just south of the railroad tracks, long the house of many public offices, will be torn down this week.

Constructed in 1869 for occupation by St. John's Masonic Lodge, the lower floor was leased by the town on January 30, 1875 for ten years at an annual rent of \$400. Seat accommodations [sic] for 300 persons were arranged and two offices at the rear of the

hall were set up for Selectmen, Town Clerk, and Judge of Probate.

A vault was built at the rear of the building to provide protection for land and Probate Records. An enlarged and new vault was built in 1919 and town offices were removed to the second floor.

March 12, 1887 marked the date when the Town of Stratford bought the building for \$12,000, and continued to occupy it as Town Hall until January 31, 1937. At that time the lower floor was rented to the U.S. Government for use as a post office.

Prior to 1875 all town officers conducted the affairs of their respective offices in their own homes, shops, or stores. The Town House was only a place for assembly and town meetings. A

new era was ushered in with the lease of the Masonic building.

Today a new era is beginning. The public offices of the old town hall have been moved to the ... headquarters in the Town Hall building. The Police Department is now located in the new Municipal Building, opposite the Town Hall.

Maybe sentimentalists will complain about pushing aside the old for the new, however a town such as ours cannot travel backwards in the quest for new ideas and improvements, nor can it remain static and be by-passed by everything worthwhile. Thus we must go forward and cope with our sentimental side, which constantly looks back to "the good old days."

NERO HAWLEY'S GRAVE MARKING CEREMONY



Nero Hawley's grave in Riverside Cemetery, Trumbull. Photo courtesy of Ethan & Barbara Stewart.

Prior to the Revolutionary War, Trumbull, Shelton, Monroe, Bridgeport, and a small part of Easton were all part of the Town of Stratford. During the Revolutionary War, several slaves from this much larger Stratford volunteered to fight for their manumission in the Revolutionary War.

The British were offering freedom to any slave who went over to the British side to fight for the British. The Loyalists realized they also needed the help of strong, able black men to fight for their cause.

Nero Hawley who lived in what is today's Tashua section of Trumbull volunteered to fight on the side of the Loyal-

ists. Following his military service, Nero was manumitted. He became a successful entrepreneur in the Town of Trumbull and earned the money he needed to buy the freedom of his wife and children.

Nero's life story was first documented by E. Merrill Beach of Trumbull as part of America's bi-centennial celebration in his book *From Valley Forge to freedom: A story of a Black patriot*. Prior to 1964, precious little had been known, much less documented, of Nero Hawley's life.

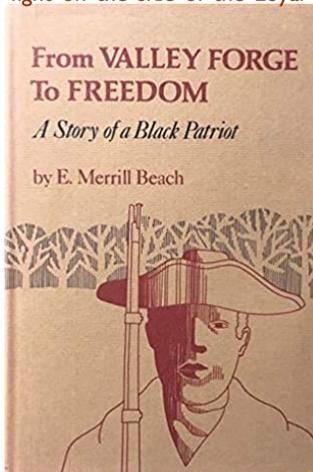
Ethan and Barbara Stewart spoke to us at our March Membership Meeting about their work restoring Stratford's Christ Church Ceme-

tery. Ethan and Barbara hosted a grave marking ceremony for Nero Hawley in Trumbull at his burial site in June. Other patriot Revolutionary War soldiers were also honored that day.

Nero is buried in Riverside Cemetery in Trumbull. The cemetery is not that easy to find, but the effort to do so is rewarded with some beautiful and serene scenery. We were able to attend the ceremony and we took photos and videos of the ceremony. A link to the video of the ceremony may be found on the homepage of our newsletter website.



E. Merrill Beach founder of Trumbull Historical Society. Photo from the Trumbull Historical Society.



Color guard presenting the colors at Riverside Cemetery in Trumbull.



Ethan and Barbara Stewart standing behind Nero Hawley's gravestone at Riverside Cemetery in Trumbull.



STRATFORD FORMS BICYCLE CLUB

The bicycle was invented in Germany in 1817. However, the bicycle never caught on with the masses until about 1885 when the "safety bicycle" came along. The "safety bicycle" is the design upon which all current bicycles are patterned.

Interestingly, stories about bicycles in Stratford did not begin appearing in the local newspapers until 1895. Then, most of the stories published concerned irresponsible riders who'd ride, illegally, on sidewalks around town.

In one month alone in 1896 three Stratfordites were struck by cyclists riding where they shouldn't have been. Local residents decided to strike back by spreading tacks on roads and sidewalks to flatten bike

tires. Needless to say, those anti-bike attacks were not popular with cyclists.

In part, as a reaction to the ill will felt for irresponsible cyclists, Stratford enthusiasts created their own bicycle club.

The Bridgeport Herald
July 12, 1896

Stratford citizens are annoyed by the practice indulged in by certain cyclists who speed along the sidewalks but the policy adopted to stop the practice cannot but be decried. Tacks, broken glass and other obstructions is not the way to cure the evil. Frame ordinances and have them enforced.

The Stratford Bicycle club, organized Tuesday, held its first regular

meeting Friday night. The following gentlemen comprise the officers:

President, John E. Judson; vice president, S. B. Middlebrook; secretary, H. S. Devine; treasurer, E. M. Wells; chaplain, S. B. Middlebrooks. The executive committee consist of A. Bedell Benjamin, W. A. Stagg, E. H. Judson, A. DeT. Wheeler, C. E. Stagg; committee on by-laws, F. S. Beardsley, E. M. Wells, W. A. Stagg, C. E. Beardsley, E. H. Judson, A. Bedel Benjamin.

The recent state meet of the Wheel club was a gratifying success, financially. After paying all the expenses entailed the club had nearly \$500 to the good. Their efforts were deserving of this result.



Bedell Benjamin on his bicycle in Stratford 1887.

TRAVEL BOOK 1836

The magazine, **Connecticut Explored**, is a resource of great historical value. Issue after issue brings to light hidden, or little known, tidbits of Connecticut's historical past.

In the most recent issue, historical travel books were featured. Among the several travel books described in the magazine, John Warner Barber's **Connecticut Historical Collections, Containing a General Collection of Interesting Facts, Traditions, Biographical Sketches, Anecdotes, Etc., Relating to the History and Antiquities of Every Town in Connecticut with Geographical**

Descriptions was one which really captured our interest. If you're so inclined, you may download this 1836 tome from our [newsletter website](#).

In the Stratford section of this book, the author covers such topics as: John Birdsey coming to town; how Stratford was named; William Judson settling in Stratford in 1638; churches in Stratford in 1836; and, description of General David Wooster. John Barber does not relate the story of John Birdsey kissing his wife, in violation of the Blue Laws, on Sunday, then escaping to Stratford to avoid punishment.

The book also contains a number of historical wood cuts. Shown at the left is the only Stratford wood cut. It is of Christ Church as it appeared in 1836.

This book is probably the second published history of Stratford. The first was written by Rev. Samuel Peters shortly after the Revolutionary War. Peters' history is illuminating with several unique Stratford legends. This 1836 book is more of an historical guide designed for the, then, contemporary traveler. It's well worth a moment or two of your time.



Wood cut of Christ Church 1836.

TOAD BLOCKS FIRE HOSE

Stratford had a very hard time forming and maintaining an effectual fire department. In the 1890s, there were those in town who believed less damage would be suffered in the event of a fire if the fire department was not called to the scene. There were dueling fire companies in the town, at that time, who'd compete for supremacy during a fire.

When Stratford High (Center School) burned in the winter of 1921, residents realized something must be done to create a more effective firefighting response. Despite the need, there were many residents who were unwilling to have their taxes raised for the pur-

pose of improving the fire department's equipment.

Bridgeport Evening Farmer
June 15, 1921
Fire Board Will Ask Special Tax For Equipment

Stratford to Have Special Open Town Meeting to Decide on Purchase of Pumping Engine—Toad In Hose At Recent Honeyspot Road Fire Cut Off Water Supply at Critical Time.

The Stratford High school fire, and the recent blaze in the Honeyspot road section have convinced those who have the town's destinies in their trust that it is impossible to quench fires with a line of hose that

is blocked by a playing toad. This is exactly what happened at the last blaze, when water such as there was, suddenly stopped coming from the nozzle.

A hurried investigation participated in by the firemen, some members of the fire board and with the assistance of the police department disclosed the toad camping in the hose, and the pressure was not enough to dislodge him.

Whether they are satisfied with their town the way it is, with occasional additions and alterations or whether they want to see it all burn down and rebuilt, will be decided by the voters of Stratford at a special town meeting...



Fire Chief Alan Judson aboard his fire truck in Stratford Center c 1911

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 5 is an international incident from 1955. Rarely does the international spotlight focus on the Town of Stratford. However, when the American Shakespeare Festival Theatre opened in 1955, eyes from all over the world were witness to Stratford scenes.

The opening of the Theatre was such a spectacle that it even garnered attention from the Soviet Union. The Soviets were,

apparently, very fond of William Shakespeare's plays.

The United States' relationship with the Soviet Union was very tense in 1955. When the Soviets determined to send a reporter to Stratford to view the Theatre and review a play on the Theatre's stage, the U.S. State Department responded.

Sunday Herald
July 17, 1955

World Press Tells Success of Herald's 'Pravda Incident'

...*The Herald, through Cong. Albert Marino of Greenwich, asked the State Dept. to relax the policy so that the reporter designated by Pravda, Yevgeny Vladimirovich Litoshko, could visit Stratford to attend the Shakespeare opening.*

Moreno passed the request on to the State Dept., urging that it be given "favorable consideration" and "high level" consideration.

Moreno, once personally attacked by Pravda as a "war monger," said that he felt this would be a positive step toward better Anglo-Russian relations.

The State Dept. did consider the request on a "high level" with Sec. of State John

Foster Dulles himself making the favorable decision.

Dulles said the Pravda correspondent would be allowed to visit Connecticut "on invitation of The Bridgeport Herald." He stressed that it was hoped the Soviet government would see fit to treat Americans in Russia similarly...



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*Our mission is to preserve,
protect, cherish, and
celebrate the history of the
Town of Stratford.*

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