

THE CUPHEAG CORNER

VOLUME V, ISSUE 3

DECEMBER - JANUARY 2023



Capt. David Judson House
c. 1750

MARK THE DATES:

- January's General Membership Meeting, Sunday, January 29th, 2pm, Stratford Library
- Traditions of the Mohegan Tribe, Sunday, January 8th, 2pm, Stratford Historical Society Museum
- March's General Membership Meeting, Sunday, March 26th, 2pm, Stratford Library

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JANUARY'S GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Sunday, January 29th, 2:00 pm, Stratford Library, 2203 Main Street

Carolyn Ivanoff is a retired high school administrator, educator, author and independent historian. She writes and speaks frequently on American history at local, state, and national venues and provides programming and professional development for diverse organizations. In 2003 she was named Civil War Trust's (now American Battlefield Trust) Teacher of the Year. In 2010, 2011 and 2013 her education programs received Awards of Merit from the Connecticut League of History Organizations. In 2016 Carolyn was honored by the Connecticut Council of Social Studies with the Bruce Fraser Friend of the Social Studies Award. In 2018-19 Carolyn served as project coordinator for the 17th Connecticut Flagpole preservation and rededication



Carolyn Ivanoff.
Portrait courtesy of Carolyn Ivanoff.

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

project on Barlow's Knoll at Gettysburg National Military Park. This project was honored with a 2019 Award of Merit from the Connecticut League of History Organizations for preservation. Her book, **We Fought at Gettysburg**, scheduled for publication in 2022, features first-hand accounts by the survivors of the 17th Connecticut Infantry and their experiences on the greatest battlefield of the American Civil War.



"Time is the acid rain of historical memory. Slowly, often over generations stretching into centuries, important details of the past can fade one by one until what once was crucial to the life of a time and people is all but forgotten."

Creating Connecticut: Critical Moments That Shaped a Great State, Walt Woodward, State Historian

HISTORICAL SOCIETY HAPPENINGS

Much activity has been occurring, and more is planned, at your friendly, neighborhood Stratford Historical Society.

We've been busy developing our new online membership renewal system. Your Membership dues are due and payable in January. Dues for 2023 are as follows:

- Senior \$20
- Individual \$25
- Family \$35
- Life \$300

You may renew your membership in one of three ways: (1) by mailing us a check; (2) by calling us at 203-378-0630; or, (3) by visiting our membership website at stratfordhistorical.app.neoncrm.com/login. (If it is your first time logging in, click "Having trouble logging in?" to get started).

Individuals with a Life Membership are eligible for the benefits that are available to an Individual Member for the rest of their life

without the need to renew.

As a reminder, your membership provides you:

- Free admission to the Captain David Judson House and the Catharine B. Mitchell Museum including our extensive genealogy library
- Discounts on events and programs
- Exclusive member events
- A choice of a digital or printed newsletter delivered 5-6 times per year
- Discounts on gift shop purchases
- A free hour of research by our research team (a value of \$20) Please renew soon!

Our renovation work continues at the Museum. We have been busy stripping and waxing the Museum's floors, and renewing our displays in the museum. We hope you will visit soon.

Join us for an afternoon of music, dancing, and Native American culture. David Eichelberg, Outreach Specialist, presents the traditions of the Mohegan Tribe with hands-on activities and a performance!

Sunday, January 8, 2023
 2:00 to 3:00 p.m.
 Catharine B. Mitchell Museum
Eight Refreshments for Eating
Members \$7 Non-members \$5

Traditions of the Mohegan Tribe, Sunday, January 8th, 2pm, Stratford Historical Society Museum.

2022-23 Meeting Calendar

| | | |
|--------|--------------|-----|
| Sunday | January 29th | 2pm |
| Sunday | March 26th | 2pm |
| Sunday | May 21st | 2pm |

A PARK IS BORN



Brewster's Pond 1938.

In the annual town report for 1923 Stratford "Has a constantly growing Park system of great possibility." The Town of Stratford has 41 "official" parks in its park system today. It wasn't always so. Until the establishment of Longbrook Park, parks were created, and used for other purposes, as the needs for land in a particular area arose. With the establishment of Longbrook Park, Stratford's park system began to flourish.

The method of acquiring the land, through tax abatement, was also employed to acquire much of the land that would become Roosevelt Forest in 1934.

The Bridgeport Telegram

January 1, 1923

Offer Pond to Town

At the next meeting of the Town council, a report is looked for from the Town manager, relative to the advisability of accepting an offer from Mrs. Sally M. Brewster to turn Brewster's or Judson's pond over to the town for park purposes.

Harry J. Burnes, representing the Brewster interests, has made an offer to deed Judson's pond, near Paradise green, to the town with enough land around it to permit the building of a 50 foot driveway around the pond, providing the town, in turn, will abate back taxes on the Brewster property to the amount of approximately \$6,000. The Town Manager has, during the past few days, been making an investiga-

tion to determine whether the pond and the driveway property surrounding it, would be worth \$6,000 to the town. Abatement of the back taxes would virtually amount to purchasing the pond for the sum of \$6,000. The question for the Town manager to determine, is whether the pond and driveway would be worth \$6,000 as a town park. Scores of young people use the pond for skating during the winter months. It is one of the beauty spots of the northern part of Stratford.

Whether such a transaction as that proposed by the Brewster interest could legally be entered into by the town is one of the aspects of the case which the Town manager is looking into at the present time.

FIRST ANNUAL MANAGER-COUNCIL REPORT

The first annual town report under the Council-Manager form of government was an interim report to move the reporting time frame to an appropriate fiscal year. Preparing the report must have been a trying experience for Town Manager Rutherford (R. H.) Hunter since the Town Council had fired him, then was court ordered to restore him as Town Manager.

Much town business had occurred in the few months Mr. Hunter was at the helm, and much more needed to be done. *The Bridgeport Telegram* printed a summary of the report in its January 19, 1923 edition. We have chosen the following as a summary of that first report.

Has a constantly growing Park system of great possibility.

Famous from Colonial times for its able citizens and patriotic endeavor.

A modern residence Town with easy access to all large eastern Cities.

Has good local banking facilities.

Zoned as to residential business and industrial districts.

An active Planning Board.

A Safe and Beautiful Harbor.

Within trucking distance of New York.

Has gas, electricity, and water service by private companies with unexcelled service.

Served by a modern Council-Manager Government, with motorized Fire companies, and efficient Police force, and one of the best Sewage Disposal systems in the United States...



Photo from page 6 (Red Cross and Nursing page) of the **Town of Stratford 1923 Annual Report.**

adopted, has had more or less difficulty while passing through the transition period. It is to be expected that there are some elements, of almost any community, that will be slow to accept the new order of things and therefore refuse to co-operate. Indeed, it is a rare community where all elements will, from the start, co-operate to the extent of offering helpful suggestions or offering constructive criticisms. The plan has been working successfully for fifteen years in this country and we believe it is proving so here.

A Town or City will have the sort of government that a majority of its citizens want, if they want it enough to work for it and co-operate with those administering it.

Stratford is headed in the right direction and has great possibilities, but she still has some distance to travel.

Annual Report of the Town of Stratford Connecticut August 31, 1922—October 10, 1922.

Settled in 1639.

One of the most beautiful Towns of the State. Area, 12,331 acres. Over 70 miles of roads. Located on the Boston Post Road.

Gateway to Central New England and the Naugatuck Valley.

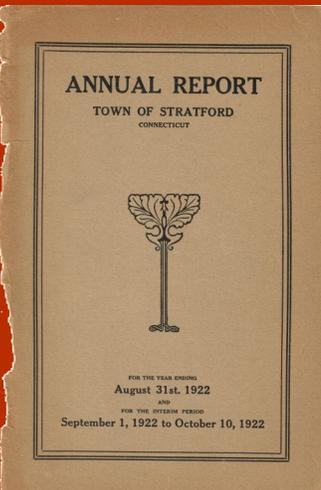
Bordered on the East by the Housatonic River.

Served by Auto highways, railroad, trolleys and waterway.

Has the finest beaches on the north shore of Long Island Sound.

COMMENTS

During the past year there have been numerous difficulties to interrupt the smooth running of the affairs of Stratford and on account of these difficulties the new form of government has by no means had a fair trial. But Stratford does not present a new experience, though the difficulties may have been more pronounced than in many communities where the Council-Manager form of government has been adopted. Almost every community, where this form of government has been



| INFORMATION DIRECTORY | | |
|----------------------------|---------|-------------------|
| SUBJECT | PHONE | ASK FOR |
| Animals—Astray or Dead | S-712 | Deak Sergeant |
| Assessments—Tax or Special | S-792 | Mr. Wilcoxson |
| Beggars | S-712 | Deak Sergeant |
| Birth Certificates | S-236 | Miss May Marchant |
| Building Lines | S-761 | Mr. Hunter |
| Building Permits | S-761 | Miss Judson |
| Burial Permits | S-236 | Miss May Marchant |
| Bills | S-761 | Miss Beach |
| Charity | S-353 | Mrs. Beers |
| Damage Claims | S-712 | Deak Sergeant |
| Death Certificates | S-236 | Miss May Marchant |
| Dogs at Large | S-712 | Deak Sergeant |
| Dog Licenses | S-236 | Miss May Marchant |
| Fine | S-297-2 | Anyone answering |
| Health Matters | S-259 | Dr. Lewis |
| Licenses, General | S-761 | Miss Beach |
| Police | S-712 | Deak Sergeant |
| Road Repairs | S-761 | Mr. Hunter |
| Schools | S-558 | Mr. Thompson |
| Sewer Connections | S-761 | Mr. Caham |
| Street Lights Out | S-712 | Deak Sergeant |
| Taxes | S-792 | Mr. Wilcoxson |

DATELINE STRATFORD DECEMBER-JANUARY 1958

Sunday Herald
December 1, 1957
'Sergeants' Ticket Sale Going Well

The sale at the Shakespeare box office in Stratford shows that the fame and laughter around "No Time for Sergeants" has reached this area. Last night almost the entire orchestra section was sold out for the coming Thursday night, Dec. 12.

A smash hit on Broadway, this is the first big venture of the Shakespeare Guild whose president is Mrs. Donald Sammis. It also is the first drama-merchandising by the Community Concerts office.

Stonybrook's 'Strike' Slated

A large number of the 400 families living at Stonybrook Gardens in Stratford will refuse to pay monthly rent increases of between \$10 and \$17 when they fall due tomorrow, it was reported yesterday.

About 150 members of the Stonybrook Tenants Assn. were advised at a meeting Friday night by Theodore Koskoff, who is serving as their legal counsel, that they are required by law only to pay a "use and occupancy" charge.



KRIS KRINGLE'S HELPERS ... Committee members for the Kris Kringle Fair at Garden School in Stratford gather gifts to be sold at the fair booths. Seated, L-R: Mrs. Robert Andes, Mrs. Peter Giannone and Mrs. Leonard Horner. Standing, Mrs. Edward Keane, Mrs. Richard Basso, Mrs. Robert Meaney and Mrs. Robert Baxter.

Sunday Herald
December 20, 1957
STRATFORD

TOYS AND CLOTHING for 22 families with a total of 76 children have been received by Mr. and Mrs. Edmund Sastram, chairmen of the Christmas Toy Program, American Red Cross. Regular contributors pitching in were the Junior Red Cross, the Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts.

JUNIOR RED CROSS children at the high school are busy dressing dolls for the Christmas Toy Program under the direction of Mrs. Pauline Dennett, their teacher-sponsor. Emphasis has been placed on the spirit of Christmas.

Sunday Herald
December 29, 1957
Son Shoots Dad, Takes Own Life

Mark M. Richardson, Jr. 25, died at 1:40 yesterday afternoon, four hours after he slightly wounded his father, president and headmaster of The University School, and then shot himself through the head.

The Hartford Courant
January 3, 1958
23,225 Vehicles Use Turnpike in 5½ hours

STRATFORD, Jan. 2 (AP)—The number of vehicles using the Connecticut Turnpike today from the time it opened at 2:30 p.m. until 8 p.m. totaled 23,225.

The toll station, here acting as headquarters for the vehicular count, issued the following breakdown:

Norwalk toll station 6,000 vehicles; Stratford, 5,200; West Haven, 5,000; Branford, 3,000; Madison 2,111; Montville, 1,187; and, Plainfield, 727.

The Hartford Courant
January 9, 1958
S. E. Gluharess, Dies; Amphibious Plane Developer

STRATFORD, Jan. 8 (AP)—Serge Eugén Gluharess, 54, pioneer developer with Igor Sikorsky of amphibious

planes, died today at the Fairfield State Hospital in Newtown after a long illness.

Gluharess was project engineer on the first successful single engine amphibian plane in this country. He was also the project engineer on the first four-engine flying boat built for the Pan American Airways in 1930 as well as the Twin-engine seaplanes used by the U.S. Navy.

He also assisted in the development of the first Sikorsky helicopter.

The Hartford Courant
January 18, 1958
Safety Record Ends At Stratford Firm

STRATFORD, Jan. 17 (AP) - Twelve million man hours of factory safety were ended at the Lymorning [sic] Division of Avco Mfg. Corp. here when a man knocked his leg against a pile of boards and aggravated a previous condition. The company said today it had held a 13-month safety record and was approaching the state safety mark, held at 12.7 million man hours by the Remington Arms Co. of Bridgeport.

The Hartford Courant
January 19, 1958
Mother Saves 4 Children in Stratford Fire

STRATFORD, Jan. 20 (AP) - A Stratford housewife discovered her home was on fire this morning. She ran upstairs, woke her four children and then jumped with them 15 feet to safety.

The children were unhurt, but Mrs. Charline Capuano, 36, of 680 Cutspring Rd. was taken to Bridgeport Hospital with burns of the face and legs. Her condition was reported as "fairly good" by hospital officials.

The fire was limited to the downstairs of the house, firemen said, but flames blocked Mrs. Capuano's way down the stairs with her children. So she and her three sons and one daughter jumped from a second-floor porch.



Graham Houghton and Janice Mihalko teenage royalty at Mill River Country Club. Photo from the **Sunday Herald**, December 29, 1957.



Mrs. Donald Sammis, son Wilson Sammis, and Donald Sammis. Photo from the **Sunday Herald**, January 12, 1958.



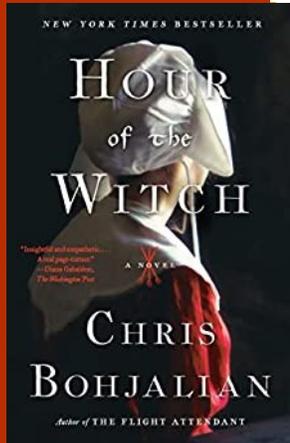
Lycoming national record-breaking safety streak snapped. Photo with Fred LaBranche from the **Sunday Herald**, January 19, 1958.

NOW SHOWING DECEMBER—JANUARY 1958



Stratford Theater c 1934

| | | |
|---------------|-----------------------------|---|
| December 1st | Stopover Tokyo | Robert Wagner, Joan Collins, Edmund O'Brien |
| December 8th | Baby Face Nelson | Mickey Rooney, Cedric Hardwicke |
| December 15th | Jailhouse Rock | Elvis Presley |
| December 22nd | The Invisible Boy | Richard Eyer |
| December 29th | The Tin Star | Tony Perkins, Henry Fonda |
| January 5th | Pursuit of Graf Spee | John Gregson, Anthony Quayle |
| January 12th | Sad Sack | Jerry Lewis, David Wayne |
| January 19th | Legend of the Lost | John Wayne, Sophia Loren |
| January 26th | Tarnished Angel | Rock Hudson, Robert Stack, Dorothy Malone |



Hour of the Witch: A Novel by Chris Bohjalian. Many books have been written about the witchcraft trials that were held in Connecticut in the mid-17th century and in Massachusetts at the end of the 17th century. The books all approach the topic from a third person perspective where the accused witch is described in fairly detached, dispassionate terms.

What was so intriguing with this historical novel was its approach to the topic through the mind and thought processes of an accused witch. The accused witch in this novel was guilty of nothing more than

attempting to separate from an abusive husband. She discusses an accused Connecticut witch in the following paragraph.

"She was sent to the scaffold because she had a sharper tongue and a shrewder mind than her accusers. It is always the case when men hang women. Look at Magistrate Caleb Adams: there is nothing that frightens that man more than a woman who does not live happily under a man's thumb."

In another revealing passage, one of the accused witch's friends tells her:

"Isn't it obvious? If thou were alone—a woman unmarried, no longer wed to Peregrine's fa-

ther—it would be just one more reason to suppose thou were possessed." "Because Peregrine's baby died?" "Yes! First William Stileman and now this baby! Mary, 'tis obvious: some people would say for sure thou were a witch!"

The accused witch escapes being hanged through a set of fortuitous events leading to her husband's death. Along the way we're able to witness the community "process" which ultimately led to an accused witch's hanging. Any deed, good or bad, could be misconstrued to provide the needed justification for an accusation of witchcraft.

A PAIR OF STRATFORD SANTAS

What were you hoping Santa would bring you this year? Did you receive all you wanted? Looking back 65 years, it doesn't seem that children are all that different today than they were "way back when."

Sunday Herald

December 8, 1957

Want to Play St. Nick?

Better Learn Your Trade!

The modern day Santa Claus is the kind of a guy who can sound off on everything from haute couture to Sputnik.

No longer can old St. Nick expect to entrance his juvenile audience with a few jolly words and a warning that "you'd better be good." Today's youngsters are hep lo everything and that includes Santa.

Take that from two modern Santa Clauses who know. They are George Benham, Read's department store's Santa and his opposite Robert Foley at Rowland's department store.

Foley is 26 years old and is helping St. Nicholas out for the first time this year. During the rest of the year he studies for his Ph. D. degree at New York University. He lives at 84 Jane St., Stratford.

Benham at 78 is also a Stratford resident who worked at Read's for many years before retiring four years ago except for a Yule time stint as Santa Claus.

"It's a job to convince children of today to believe in Santa Claus. The first thing they ask about is all the Santas they have seen. Understandably enough they

want to know which one is the real Santa Claus," said Benham.

The 78-year-old Santa declared that he explains to the children that the various Santas strolling about town are all helpers to St Nicholas, who is the head Santa with headquarters in the North Pole.

"You've got to be prepared for anything when you take a youngster on your lap today. They're liable to throw everything from sex to sports at you. And, you'd better have an answer ready."

Just to prove how versatile Santa is at handling controversial questions The Herald tossed a few at him.

On the thorny subject of the new sack look which has been foisted on the female figure by Paris designers the two astute Santas took the following positions:

Foley declared that "I've never seen anything like it" He said that it was a very novel approach to fashion, but predicted that the women won't go for it.

There are some women who will wear anything if Paris dictates it," said Benham.

Read's Santa Claus said that he admires a girl who makes up her own mind about the clothes she wears without hanging on the every word of a Parisian designer.

"I don't approve of those low cut dresses women wear nowadays. If they were simpler and less revealing I'd like them a lot better."

The coming of the Russian

Sputnik produced some interesting reactions from the two Santas.

"It didn't surprise me one bit when the Russians hurled their Sputnik into outer space. It's a shame they beat us to the punch but maybe at the same time it has served to awaken us to the situation we're in" Foley said.

Benham offered the opinion that the U. S. would be better off if it yielded satellite rights to the Russians and instead devoted all of its efforts to building more and more rockets.

"This is the important area in our rational defense anyway. What difference does it make if the Russians make experiments in outer space. That's not vital."

Benham lives at 216 King St., Stratford, and has been Santa's helper at Read's for the past four years. Before donning his Santa suit, Benham was an employe [sic] of Read's. Now retired he spends the Christmas holidays making dreams come true for Bridgeport youngsters.

"I'll never forget the day that a four-year-old youngster came into the store and approached me. He thanked me profusely when I gave him a book I distributed to the children.

"However, a few minutes later he came back and asked me if he could have two more.

I said, "of course," and asked him why. He said that one was for his two-year-old brother and the other was for another brother or sister due to arrive within the next month."



SANTA (Robert Foley) CLAUS
"Women will never go for the sack look."



SANTA (George Benham) CLAUS
"We need rockets not sputniks."

A SHAKESPEAREAN FORESHADOWING

The Stratford News, The Hartford Courant, The Bridgeport Telegram, and the Sunday Herald all wrote in 1957-8 about the importance of Stratford fully embracing the Shakespeare Theatre for Stratford's cultural and economic development. The newspapers all acknowledged the theatre was a gem that had fortuitously dropped into the town's lap.

Moreover, the papers recognized that the Theatre was an exceptional tourist draw for Fairfield County, the State of Connecticut, and the entire northeast region. However, the newspapers all felt it was up to Stratford to ensure the Theatre felt welcome and supported.

Sunday Herald

January 12, 1958

Stratford's Big Chance

With snow on the ground and ice in the crevices, and skating and skiing more topical subjects than baseball and swimming, it

might be concluded that the Summer theater season is in the remote future. Actually it is not too far off and what we shall talk about, see and enjoy in Summer playhouses in July and August is being planned now.

Of all Fairfield County's cultural jewels, admittedly prejudiced as we may be, we are proudest of the American Shakespeare Festival Theater and Academy at Stratford on the Housatonic.

Some weeks ago, a letter came in from Lawrence Langner, chairman of the group's executive committee, from which we quote:

"We shall be unable to proceed with our . . . Summer season and Academy classes unless we are successful in raising the necessary capital for our production and other expenses.

"We have about half of this in sight, as the result of contributions already promised. Following the success of our last season, we are hopeful that our organization will ultimately be able to pay its

own way, although both the Festivals at Stratford-on-Avon in England, and Stratford, Ontario in Canada, are subsidized by their respective governments."

To suggest that Washington or Hartford subsidize the Shakespeare Festival Theater in the frigid mental climate we have for such assistance would be absurd. We hope and are confident that Lawrence Langner has much more than half in sight from contributions to finance this year's budget.

Just let's put this down as a must: The Shakespeare Festival Theater, beautiful in itself and in its beautiful setting, cannot be permitted to lapse or languish after the remarkable critical and popular success it achieved last Summer.

If necessary we'll enlist people to pass the hat along the main streets of the county's cities and towns, and among those passing the hat we'll include ourselves.

A final foot-note: There have



American Shakespeare Festival Theatre, April 1963.

been those in Stratford who were cool, if not unfriendly, to the Shakespeare Festival Theater. Their reasons may not have been obscure, but never noble. We believe Stratford as a whole has become more warmly receptive and will become increasingly cooperative.

Stratford's best bet to become world-famous, with its cash-register echo, is to tie itself tightly and enthusiastically to the Shakespeare Festival's encircling sputnik in the theatrical orbit.

STRATFORD CHARACTERS

The "Stratford School" of decoy carving was informally organized by Albert Davids Lang in the late 1800s. The second generation of Stratford School carvers was maintained by Benjamin Holmes through the late 1800s and into the early 1900s. The third generation of carvers featured such greats as Shang Wheeler and Roswell Bliss.

Third generation carvers all paid tribute through their carvings, modeled after Lang and Holmes, to the "school's" early founders. Here we feature a rare photo of Roswell Bliss.

Lew Knapp wrote about Roswell Bliss in his Stratford history, *In Pursuit of Paradise*. . .Thus the general principles of decoy making pioneered by the three leading Stratford carvers, Albert Laing (1811-1886), Benjamin Holmes(1843-1912), and Charles E. Wheeler (1872-1949), gained wide acceptance in the

area, and became recognized as the "Stratford School." The work of Roswell Bliss (1887-1967), Willard C. Baldwin (1890-1979), Louis Rathmell home is unchanged, even to the brick boat shed where a century later decoy historian Tom Marshall kept his duck boats...Many third-generation carvers have copied Holmes, but few have managed to recapture his strong interpretation of form. Reg Culver and Roz Bliss owe as much to (Benjamin) Holmes as to (Shang) Wheeler.

Sunday Herald

January 19, 1958

Local Man's Duck Decoys Scattered Length of U.S.

Seventy-one year old Rosewell [sic] E. Bliss has been forced to give up the duck hunter's pre-dawn vigil in cold Connecticut marshes, but he continuous [sic] to be one of the country's few surviving craftsmen still fashioning duck decoys by hand.

Bliss gained fame throughout the United States for the hand-wrought decoys he makes in his own pattern shop in the backyard of his home at 192 King St., Stratford.

He began his craft at the age of 14, when he wanted decoys for his own duck hunting, and found the manufactured ones available at the time, too crude

and too expensive.

Friends admired the decoys he created for himself, and asked him to make more for them, starting him out on the business that has won him a score of blue ribbons and orders from sportsmen throughout the country.

Bliss also designs the decoys to decorate homes and offices. The decorative ones are a little more elaborate with simulated feathers. He fashions the decoys from white pine, hollowed out inside so they float, gluing a small board over the bottom opening to make them water-tight.

"You can't tell them from the real thing," Bliss declares. "Ducks light right into them."

He used the decoys himself to snare ducks up until a year ago when he gave up the strenuous sport of hunting.

Though he won his fame for his life-like decoys, the wood-carving is just a sideline to Bliss' main trade, making wood patterns for machinery parts. He apprenticed as a pattern-maker at Bullard Co. from 1905-1909, and was a foreman at Manning, Maxwell and Moore for four years.

In 1947, he retired to run his own shop in the backyard of his home on King St., where he has lived for 70 years, since a year after his birth in Bridgeport.



Roswell Bliss in his backyard workshop. Photo from the *Sunday Herald*, January 19, 1958.



Roswell Bliss' black duck decoy on display at the Historical Society's Catharine Bunnell Mitchell Museum.



192 King Street today. Roswell Bliss' home in 1958.

FEBRUARY IS BLACK HISTORY MONTH



FIRST BLACK OFFICER. Town Clerk W. Howard Wilcoxson swears in George Force as patrolman at Town Hall ... New patrolman is first black officer in department's history. *The Stratford News*, September 12, 1957.

Stratford's first black policeman was George Lee Force. He was sworn in as a patrolman in September 1957. Today we remember George for the basketball courts that are named for him on Woodend Road.

George was born in White Plains, New York, November 26, 1926. He served in the Navy during WWII. George never married. He served as Vice-president of Stratford police local. George was in-

jured in car crash in September 1960. He was still working as a Stratford police officer at the time of his passing, December 24, 1981. He was buried in St. Michael's cemetery.

The Bridgeport Post September 5, 1957 **George Force Named As** **Policeman**

Town manager Harry B. Flood has announced the appointment of George L. Force, of 67 Van

Rensselaer avenue, Stratford, to the police department. Patrolman Force will fill the vacancy caused by the resignation on Aug. 31 of George Hannah.

Police chief Patrick J. Flanagan said that Force, who topped the eligibility list, will report for work on Sept. 9. The new patrolman was born Nov. 25, 1926, and served in the Navy as a petty officer from 1942 to 1946. He is presently employed by the General Electric company.

EARLE HYMAN—ASFT STAR

Earle Hyman appeared a number of times on the stage of the American Shakespeare Festival Theatre. While performing in town, he lodged at the home of Susan Freeman, 1433 Stratford Avenue.

Earle was interviewed by the *Sunday Herald* where he described his experiences as a black actor in a Shakespearean acting company.

Sunday Herald September 8, 1957 **A Negro Looks at** **Prejudice**

...He lives at the home of Mr. and Mrs. A. W. Freeman. The house, one of the oldest in Stratford, stands in the morning shadow of a new Connecticut Turnpike bridge that spans the highway a few feet from the wood-frame building.

"When I first joined the company here three years ago, I told the lady who was arranging for rooms not to

try to get me a place without telling the owner first thing that I was a Negro," Hyman said.

The most practical solution seemed to be to place Hyman with one of the town's Negro families.

"I told them I didn't think Earle would want to live in an old-fashioned place like this, and of course we'd no idea what he'd be like. But he's still with us and we like him fine," Mrs. Freeman said. Hyman later agreed his Stratford living has been ideal from his point of view.

"If there was a mansion out back there I wouldn't want to live in it rather than here. Living with people as wonderful as the Freemans means more to me," he said.

"When I eat in Fagan's Restaurant or the Duchess Diner, there's never any problem. I admit I was a little uneasy about living in Stratford at first, and I'm sure there are other places in

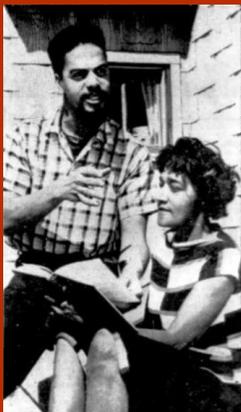
Connecticut where it wouldn't be this way," Hyman said.

"It always used to make me mad in New York when I had to live way uptown when all my work would be downtown with off-Broadway groups. And I always had to pay more rent in Harlem than the same rooms would cost any place else, because the landlords knew then the Negro had no place else to go.

"But I finally got the kind of place I wanted in the Village. Things are better in that way now than they used to be to," he added.

"I mean integration is here," he emphasized.

Hyman said the full schedule of acting or constant studying demanded by the kind of career he has determined on, coupled with the kind of things he enjoys doing, have kept him from encountering much prejudice...



Earle Hyman and Susan Freeman at Susan's home. Photo from the *Sunday Herald*, September 8, 1957.



Miles Lewis Davis' military service photo from findagrave.com.

MILES LEWIS DAVIS, JR., TOWN COUNCILOR

FindAGrave.com

Miles Davis was born July, 24, 1937.

Deacon Miles Lewis Davis, Jr., age 76 of Stratford entered into eternal rest Tuesday, June 3, 2014 at Bridgeport Hospital.

Born in Henderson, NC to the late Miles Lewis and Maggie Dent Davis, Deacon Davis has been a resident of Stratford for the past forty-nine years and prior to that was a resident of Bridgeport for several years. He was a graduate of Bassick High

School and served his country in the U.S. Air Force and was honorably discharged. He went on to receive two Masters Degrees, one in Business Administration and one in Finance both from the University of Bridgeport. He was employed over thirty years with Mechanics and Farmers Savings Bank as a Manager and Assistant V.P.

His spiritual needs were met as a disciple of the First Baptist Church of Stratford forty-nine years and he served as a Deacon,

Sunday School Teacher, Men's Choir member, Floral Ministry member, Sympathy Ministry member and former Pastor's Aide member.

Outside of the church he was a former councilman for the Town of Stratford and former member of Doric Lodge #4 PH F. & A.M. Davis was active in public service being elected to several terms as Councilman to the Second, now Third, district.

Miles died June 3, 2014 at the age of 76.

PRISCILLA TEA ROOM

The Priscilla Tea Room opened in 1920 a few short years after druggist George Wilson passed away. The tea room was opened by George Wilson's widow, Nellie, in her home at 2288 Main Street next to the building that had been Wilson's Drug Store. Nellie was an active member of the Stratford Equal Suffrage Association.

The home had been David Brooks', Stratford's third postmaster, home in the 1800s. Dinner cost 75¢ a plate, and was considered quite a bargain by

many living in town at the time.

The Bridgeport Post
January 18, 1923

The Letters of Natalie

Nothing could be nicer for coasting or skiing. Some evening soon we want to arrange a coasting party. We'll get together here in Stratford for dinner at the Priscilla Tea Room and coast afterward on Academy Hill. Meanwhile I'll practice coasting with my boys. We have races to see who gets the rosiest cheeks and then go to enjoy waffles and maple syrup for tea at the Priscilla Tea Room. I wonder sometimes that

more Stratford people don't get the habit of having dinner there regularly once a week, at least, just for the change and variety. It's only 75 cents a plate and no woman's husband could say it isn't home cooking. There are lots of women in Stratford who don't stop to think what an opportunity a place like this is for escaping from the routine of one meal after another to prepare every day. Some tea rooms close in the winter but we owe it to ourselves to see that this one is too busy to close. For my part, I don't know how I should get on without it.



Priscilla Tea Room, 2288 Main Street, c 1935.

TROLLEY EXTENDED FROM SHELTON

Bridgeport Herald
December 12, 1897

SHELTON EXTENSION GRANTED

THE PEOPLE living along the river from the Housaton-Shelton [sic] to

Bridgeport are very directly interested in the extension of the Shelton street railway from Shelton to the terminus of the Bridgeport Traction company at Paradise Green Stratford. About 6 o'clock last night Judge

George W. Wheeler finished his decision in relation to the extension of this line and left it with the clerk of the Fairfield county superior court to file.

Judge Wheeler gives the Traction

company right to extend its line from Shelton along the west bank of the Housatonic river to Paradise Green, where it will connect.

HUSBAND STEALING IN STRATFORD?

Bridgeport Herald
December 19, 1897

THE PEOPLE of Stratford are just now more or less agitated over the actions of a pair of the town's well known characters. A resident asks the "Herald" the following question:

"What are the good people or wives of Stratford to do, are they to sit down and fold their hands while women who are perfectly lawless take their husbands?"

"Every day," continues the "Herald's" informant, "a woman chases a

man who has a devoted wife and daughters. The wife is heart broken and the woman laughs. It shows very poor taste on Mr. ——'s part, as his wife is the daughter of an admiral while the other woman is a cobbler's daughter."

Evidently there will be an indignation meeting held by the wives of Stratford who believe in propriety unless this liaison referred to is carried on less openly.

Sunday Herald, Sunday, Dec. 22, 1957

Christmas Lights Shine Messages of Good Cheer



HIGHLY STYLIZED is this lovely Christmas decoration at Nichols Methodist Church on Huntington Rd.



TRADITIONAL Christmas costume is worn by Stratford's Town Hall, always one of the brighter sights of Greater Bridgeport during merry yule season.



VIRGIN AND CHILD are framed in decoration devised by Michael Ivanko, 134 Barnum Ter., Stratford.

HOLIDAY DECORATING CONTEST 2022

During the town's 375th anniversary celebration year in 2014, a new Christmas tradition was begun by the Stratford Beautification Committee, namely the Holiday Decorating Contest. Each year, about Thanksgiving weekend time frame, the Beautification Committee asks residents to decorate their home for the holidays, then invites all residents to help with choosing the con-

test winners by participating in an online voting and selection process.

Each year at this time 20-30 homes are nominated in each of four categories: first place, second place, third place, and "over the top." The "over the top" award is presented to the home or property exhibiting the largest,

widest selection of decorating flourishes.

This year 21 homes were nominated and about 350 votes were cast. The various winning homes, or properties are displayed below. Should you wish to

view all the nominated properties you may visit <http://www.townofstratford.com/hdcnominations>.



First Place Award Winner—95 Speer Drive



"Over the Top" Award Winner (TIE)
74 London Avenue



Third Place Award Winner—100 Freeman Ave



Second Place Award Winner—94 Cedar Knoll



"Over the Top" Award Winner (TIE)
15 Ryan Avenue



Special Business Award Winner
Dal Mare Pizzeria—346 Stratford Road



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

www.stratfordhistoricalsociety.org