

THE CUPHEAG CORNER

VOLUME V, ISSUE 6

JUNE-JULY 2023



Capt. David Judson House
c. 1750

MARK THE DATES:

- Eric Chandler, Sunday, August 20th, 2pm, Stratford Historical Society Museum.
- Judson House Anniversary Celebration July 30th.
- Candlelight Historical Walks begin August 15th at 7pm.
- Historic Gardens Presentation Saturday, August 19th, SHS Museum

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STRATFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESENTS

Sunday, August 20th, 2:00 pm, Historical Society Museum, 967 Academy Hill

Cloak and Dagger - Espionage in the American Revolution

Spying may be the world's second oldest profession, even recounted in the Old Testament.

By the time of the Revolution England already had a long tradition of the Great Game, its tentacles spread through the British Isles and deep within the European Continent.

But on this side of the Atlantic with 13 separate and competing colonies?

Enter George Washington – first in war, first in peace, first in the hearts of his countrymen....and America's first spymaster.

As the new Commander-in-Chief George Washington would have to make it up as he went along, through trial and error, sometimes with disastrous results.

AMC's *TURN* told only part of the story. "Cloak and Dagger – The Revolution's Secret War" will take you be-



Eric Chandler

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

yond the Culper Spy Ring. We'll see who spied for love, who for greed.

We'll explore the who, the how, and the successes and failures of America's first foray into intelligence gathering and the part it played in the ultimate success of the American War for Independence.

Eric Chandler is retired from a 30+ year career as an underwriter for a leading land title insurance company. He has been involved in American Revolutionary War Living History since 1974. He has portrayed infantry, light infantry, whale-boat raider, and mounted and dismounted dragoons. He is currently serving his third term as a member of the Norwalk Historical Commission and sits on the Norwalk Historical Society Board of Directors.

His artistic endeavors included writing and recording a comedy CD, and decades as a musician.

The falsification of history has done more to impede human development than any one thing known to mankind.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, philosopher, writer

HISTORICAL SOCIETY HAPPENINGS

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

First off, join us for our Ice Cream Birthday Party to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the Judson House, July 30th. We will be celebrating with ice cream, games, activities, and some history of the Judson House!

Next up we have scheduled a new season of seven Candlelight Historical Walks. They begin August 16th and you may register at walks.stratfordhistoricalsociety.org.

Flora's silhouette is now being exhibited by the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture. You may view their catalog entry at <https://bit.ly/fsilhouette>.

Laurie Masciandaro will be speaking about historic gardens across the state. Laurie will share her extensive knowledge of gardening from an historian's perspective on Saturday, August 19th at 10 a.m. at

the Society's Museum. Laurie is the Site Manager at Historic New England's Roseland Cottage in Woodstock, CT. Details at <https://stratfordhistorical.app.neon.com/event.jsp?event=12551&>

Thirty-five years ago Town Historian Lewis Knapp created a masterful history of our town, *In Pursuit of Paradise*. Lew's haunting first paragraph still causes us to reflect: *"THIS MUST BE PARADISE!"* exclaimed Anson Phelps. The nineteenth-century industrialist was standing on the front porch of his friend Levi Curtis, gazing out across the Upper Green in Stratford. From that moment, the Upper Green has been known as Paradise Green. But, as historian Howard Wilcoxson has observed, it is no longer Paradise. When Curtis's great-great-great-granddaughter Clarabel Spamer looks out from the same porch on Huntington Road today, a very different scene greets her eyes. The great elms are gone, and cattle no longer graze on the green. Instead, she sees a group of busy stores across the green, and



Ice Cream Social and 300th Anniversary Celebration, July 30th at the Judson House.

watches traffic roar past, spewing dust and noise and fumes, challenged at the lower end by a twenty-three-unit traffic light. And so it is with Stratford.

If you've not read Lew's book, you're in luck. We still have several copies available for purchase. Please contact the Society for a copy.

STRATFORD CHARACTERS



Edward A. Conner. Photo from *The Stratford News*, May 21, 1948

The Stratford News
 May 21, 1948
'It's Been An Interesting Life,' Says Retired Inventor Whose Brain Children Form Part of Your Everyday Life

There are few persons in the civilized world today who can go through an entire day of their lives without encountering in some form a manifestation of the inventive genius of your neighbor, 72-year-old Edward A. Conner, of 69 Stiles street, retired experimental engineer.

The fruits of Mr. Conner's mind are represented every time you

drive an auto, or step on its brake pedal; or an airplane flies, or taxis to a stop.

When you shave—it doesn't matter whether you use an electric, safety, or magazine-loading type of razor—the Conner touch is there.

If you cross a large suspension bridge, it is quite likely to be a better bridge because of Mr. Conner.

When you play a phonograph — use a dictating machine — ammunition — skid chains— player piano — yes, ladies, even your corsets and bras — all, and many more of the things which

form a part of our everyday lives today have received some contribution from Mr. Conner's fertile mind.

Mr. Conner, who retired January 1 of this year as head of the experimental department of the American Chain and Cable company, Inc. Bridgeport, after 32 years with the firm, has patented well over 30 inventions since his first in 1916, all of which have been assigned to the company.

You may read this fascinating article, in its entirety, on the home page of our newsletter website. It's worth a read!

BARBARA FIRSIN: EVERYONE'S FRIEND



Barbara Eliza Firsin
 1939-2023

A kinder, sweeter, gentler, more genuine person than Barbara Firsin would be hard to locate. Her thoughts pertaining to our Society were always shared in such a way as to be direct but kind, probing but insightful, observant but aware of personal feelings and sensibilities.

Barbara served for many years as a dedicated Docent and a Hostess. She served as Chair of the Hosts and Hostesses Committee from 2016-2018, and 2020. Barbara was

our Recording Secretary from 2005-2007, and 2011. Barbara was Corresponding Secretary in 2015, and headed up School Tours in 2007. She chaired the Education Committee in 2006. Lastly, Barbara's toughest Society challenge was when she chaired our Governance Committee from 2020, through 2023.

From Barbara's obituary: During the fifties, Barbara attended Sacred Heart Academy and Albertus Magnus College. She earned her MSW from Smith

College, and enjoyed many adventures traveling abroad and skiing in Europe and Vermont.

Barbara is remembered for her many years of care for children and families as a social worker for Trumbull Schools. After retiring as the Director of the Trumbull Preschool, Barbara moved to Stratford. She followed her love of history and became an active volunteer serving on the Board of Directors of the Stratford Historical Society. Barbara's greatest happiness was found with family and friends.

GLORIA DUGGAN REMEMBERED



Gloria Allen Duggan.
 1924-2023
 Photo from tributearchive.com.

While I always delight in receiving a telephone call from our former Historical Society President, Shirley McCormick, I was deeply saddened to learn Shirley's call bore the sad news of the passing of our former Librarian/Researcher/Stratford History authority, and friend, Gloria Duggan.

To say that Gloria has been missed since she determined her failing eyesight would no longer permit her to come to the Society on a semi-weekly basis would be a gross understatement. Sitting with Gloria over lunch from the Pickle Barrel was always a treat. Her dry wit, "caddy" knowledge of Stratford characters, and her insights into Stratford residents long since passed was a delight to experience.

Nothing pleased me more

than when Gloria would share some historic photo, some audio recording, or some story of which I'd been previously unaware. I felt as though I'd just been endowed with a pearl of great price.

Gloria must have been 92, or thereabouts, when she politely informed me I'd misidentified a photo I'd posted on Facebook. I didn't know what to be more amazed by: a 92 year old user of Facebook or her ability to locate a copy of the photo I'd posted on Facebook from our archives properly identified.

Gloria was an Historical Society volunteer for over 25 years. Gloria served on the Historical Society's Board as a Director from 1998-2000. She served as Research Librarian from 2000-2018.



GLORIA J. ALLEN
 "Glor"

108 Fairview Avenue
 A true blue girl in every way.
 Clarion 3, Business Manager 4;
 O. F. F. 3; Ushers' Guild 2;
 Girls' Sport Club; Log Editorial Board. Photo from the 1943 Stratford High Log.

DATELINE STRATFORD JUNE — JULY 1958

Sunday Herald

June 8, 1958

Great Eastern Shoot Due at Lordship

The world-renowned shooting ground at Lordship will be the scene of the 26th annual Great Eastern Skeet Championships on June 20, 21 and 22.

The Great Eastern, for years acknowledged to be one of the outstanding events in the "clay" target sport, always draws top skeet shooters from all over North America. Indications are that this will be no exception.

The shoot is also famed for the international flavor it generates.

Sunday Herald

June 8, 1958

STRATFORD

Mrs. Donald Sammis, president of the Shakespeare Guild, has announced that the group will sponsor a float in the Shakespeare Festival parade June 21. Mrs. Vincent Hardy and Mrs. Frank Repas are co-chairmen assisted by Mrs. G. Edward Buda, Mrs. Luther Heidger, Mrs. Albert Malafronte, Mrs. M.T. Metzger and Mrs. William Thornton. More helpers are needed to aid with the building of the float and volunteers can reach Mrs. Hardy at Sterling House for information.

Sunday Herald

June 22, 1958

Flood Stands Firm On Fireman Hours

No matter how Stratford firemen want their work week hours reduced, Town Mgr. Harry Flood said yesterday he still wants to put the smoke-eaters on an eight-hour a day basis with rotating monthly shifts, the same as the policemen.

...He met with representatives of the firemen recently. They pointed out that the eight-hour day is not feasible for fire-fighters and would prove more costly to the town.

The firemen expect to meet with the Town Council soon to discuss lowering the work week to 40 or 42 hours instead of the 56 now worked.

Sunday Herald

June 22, 1958

Battles Bruise Stratford Cops In Twin Cases

Stratford police were singing the Saturday night blues last night after four of them were injured while making two separate arrests.

Three of the men in blue were hurt while corralling 265-pound Alexander Leko, 41, of 85 Kenyon St.

Ptlmn. Gene Freeman was first to respond to a call from a neighbor about a fight going on in the Leko home. ...Ptlmn. George Szabo and Joseph Burke arrived to aid Freeman.

...Ptlmn. Robert Gerte, meanwhile, was having trouble with James F. Kuehn, 29, of Sandy Hook, who went berserk at the Raven Restaurant at 1560 Main St., Stratford.

Sunday Herald

June 22, 1958

Cops Declare War On Violent Vandals

Stratford police, busily chasing truck toll dodgers, have also declared war on youthful vandals who have been terrorizing the town's Public Works Dept. by damaging high priced equipment.

...With the Summer vacation on hand, police are also keeping their eyes peeled around school areas for vandals who like to sharpen their pitching arms by tossing pellets through classroom windows.

...Within the past few weeks, according to authorities, just about every type of Public Works equipment left on the street has been damaged.

Sunday Herald

June 29, 1958

Brackettes Defeat Jersey '9' Twice

PLAINFIELD, N. J.—The Raybestos Brackettes swept a National Girls Softball League twin-bill from the Marauders here last night, 5-0, behind Bertha Ragan's no-hitter, and 4-3 in an overtime eight-inning finale. Mary Hartman had a homer, triple and single in the first game.

Mrs. Ragan, third of three pitchers in the nightcap, drove in Brenda Reilly with the lead run with a pinch-hit single, then protected the edge in the bottom of the eighth. Rusty Abernathy, who relieved Joan Joyce in the fifth, was the winner.

Sunday Herald

June 29, 1958

Council Will Demand Revised School Budget

Members of the Stratford Town Council are reported ready to refuse to accept the Board of Education's word that it will try to live within the allotted fiscal budget. They will demand a revised school budget in writing as requested earlier.

...Council members are reported up in arms over the fact that the school board refused to do as directed in a compromise move aimed at settling the budget over-spending issue.

...Increased class room size, with a minimum of teachers, is in the planning stage as the Board of Education endeavors [sic] stay within its budget.

Sunday Herald

July 6, 1958

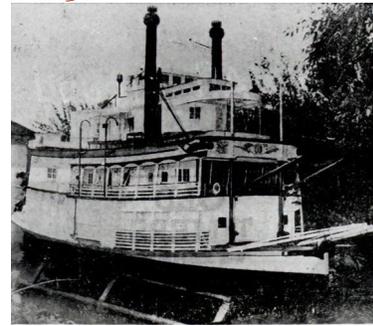
Rocket Copters May Hike Output At Sikorsky Plant

Three rocket-firing Sikorsky helicopters, unveiled for the first time this week in a demonstration at Ft. Bliss, Texas, may open the door to increased production at the Stratford plant.

Called by the Army as the "Cavalry of the Atomic Age Battlefield," the copters stole the show at a demonstration of Army rockets and missiles at the Texas proving ground.

...A spokesman for Sikorsky said that if the helicopters are ordered by the Army on a large scale it could mean "definite improvement" in business.

The Army has been experimenting with helicopters to determine if they can be converted into a combat weapon.



Riverboat Mark Twain built by Robert MacKellar of Stratford for the Barnum Parade. Photo from the **Sunday Herald**, June 8, 1958.



Stratford High School Connecticut State Baseball Champions. Photo from the **The Stratford News**, July 4, 1958.



Stratford High graduates: Wesley Kleppe, most likely to succeed; Diane Ludwig, best looking; and, Paula Pjura, most likely to succeed. Photo from the **The Stratford News**, June 5, 1958.



Jewish Community Group picnic at Boothe Park. Photo from the **The Stratford News**, July 18, 1958.

NOW SHOWING JUNE — JULY 1958



Stratford Theatre c. 1948.

June 1st	Another Time, Another Place	Phyllis Logan, Giovanni Mauriello, Gianluca Favilla
June 8th	Fraulein	Dana Wynter, Mel Ferrer
June 15th	Desire Under the Elms	Sophia Loren, Anthony Perkins
June 22nd	Too Much Too Soon	Dorothy Malone, Errol Flynn
June 29th	The Sheepman	Glenn Ford, Shirley MacLaine, Leslie Nielsen
July 6th	The Law and Jake Wade	Robert Taylor, Richard Widmark, Patricia Owens
July 13th	Don't Go Near the Water	Glenn Ford, Gia Scala, Keenan Wynn, Ann Francis
July 20th	Ole Yeller	Fess Parker, Dorothy McGuire
July 27th	Sayonara	Marlon Brando, Miiko Taka, Red Buttons

WILL'S GARDEN IS BORN



Will Geer and Helen Deegan in Will's Garden during National Vegetable Week.

Photo from *The Stratford News*, August 1, 1958.

Sixty-five years after actor Will Geer created his first garden at the American Shakespeare Festival Theatre, it is still maintained by a group of local, dedicated volunteers. You may follow Will Geer's Shakespeare Garden Facebook group at <https://bit.ly/wggarden>.

In the event you aren't familiar with Will Geer, he played Grandpa Walton on *The Waltons* TV series which ran on CBS from 1972 through 1981. We thought you might be interested in learning more about the founding of Will's Garden in 1958. Mr. Geer was a fascinating, and, at times, controversial actor.

The Stratford News August 1, 1958 Editor's Interview with Will Geer

...Will Geer fits in no category that I could discover. Well over six feet, broad of shoulder and lean of frame, the actor strode along Main Street with his shoulder-length hair blowing back in the slight breeze.

...I love Stratford," he enthused, "it's so different from other towns you come to and live in on tour."

...It's so wonderful to have my own garden here," he continued. I'm pretty much of a vegetarian and I like to grow what I eat."

We'd arrived at his cottage and sure enough a magnificent garden stretched well over 50 feet along the side of a large grassy plot. Lunch was ready in less time than it takes to write about

it. We sat at a garden table and munched busily away like two eager bunnies.

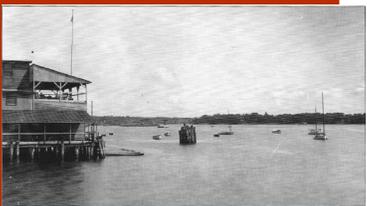
Our fabulous menu consisted of fruit juice, garden salad (cooked beets, ruby lettuce, cucumber, rhubarb, chard, snap beans, kohlrabi, onions, broccoli and mushroom) and raspberries with sour cream for desert. "I have a larger garden" said the actor between crunches," in Mahopac, Putnam County. I feed 30 dancers there from that one."

Since Mr. Geer is playing in all 3 current offerings at the Shakespearean Theatre, how in the world does he garden not only this huge plot, but also in Putnam County? "I usually work here between 7 and 10 in the morning" he said, "and run down to Mahopac on my day off."

POOTATUCK YACHT CLUB HISTORY



Captain Fred Viner's "Melissa" to Defend Cup in Pootatuck Yacht Club Races Saturday. Photo from *The Bridgeport Telegram*, June 15, 1923.



H. J. Lewis Company c 1902.



Pootatuck Yacht Club 1917.

As we enter the prime boating season of 2023, it's interesting to look back on the two very old boat clubs still located in town: the Housatonic and the Pootatuck. This issue we'll reflect on the less visible of the two, the Pootatuck.

The Bridgeport Telegram June 16, 1923 Pootatuck Yacht Club to Hold Opening Races

Over, a four mile course on the Housatonic river at Stratford tomorrow, a number of contestants will race for the Pootatuck cup in the Pootatuck Yacht club's annual regatta. This event promises to be one of the outstanding features of the summer's yachting activities. The race will start promptly at 2 o'clock daylight saving time. Each entrant will have to pass the clubhouse float four times during the race. It has been arranged so that the run may be observed from the clubhouse veranda.

...In addition to the race for the Pootatuck cup an interesting program of events for boys and girls as well as the older folks has been completed.

...The cup defender tomorrow will be Captain Fred Viner in his boat "Melissa." Following the races and other field events, a supper will be served at the club house. Complete details with the entries for the regatta will be published in the *Telegram* tomorrow morning.

The Stratford News May 28, 1948 Pootatuck Yacht Club Celebrates Its Fiftieth Anniversary

(The history of the Pootatuck Yacht club was written especially for readers of THE STRATFORD NEWS by Mrs. Louis H. Burrirt, 743 Judson place, a member for 48 years and treasurer since 1900.—Ed.)

By MRS. LOUIS H. BURRTT

The Pootatuck Yacht club of Stratford looks back over 50 years of uniform, consistent and successful growth from a very small beginning with considerable pride, and the following facts will be interesting to its many members and friends

In the spring of 1898 the club was organized by nine young men. They wanted very much to find a name for it, so some one thought of the Indians that came to Stratford some 300 years before, who were named Pootatuck, and that was the name given their little club. Next they needed a little house but could not find one. There was an old discarded hull of a sloop on the bank of a creek, known as New Lane Creek (editor: today's Ferry Creek) in back of Peter White's property. There was a fair sized cabin on it, so they decided to keep their fishing tackle and oars in it under lock and key.

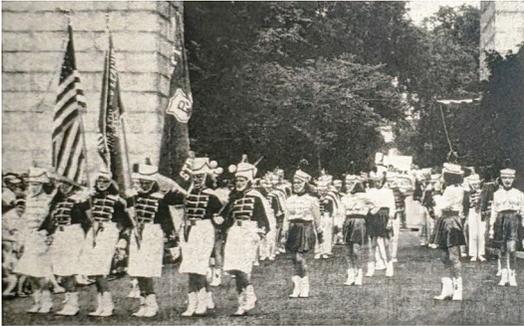
That cabin was the first home of the Pootatuck Yacht club. But very soon more wanted to join

and then Mr. White helped them to have a little shanty with one big room about 10 by 12 feet. It had one big window in it, and a big long box on the outside for a locker to keep their things in. The little house wasn't far from the old sloop. Again their membership increased, and this time they rented and moved into the front of the old H. J. Lewis oyster house which used to stand just south of their present club house. They moved into it in 1902 and the club was incorporated in 1903. They stayed in this place until the end of 1916. On January 1, 1917, they moved into their present home, which had been built by some of the members who were carpenters, during the year of 1916.

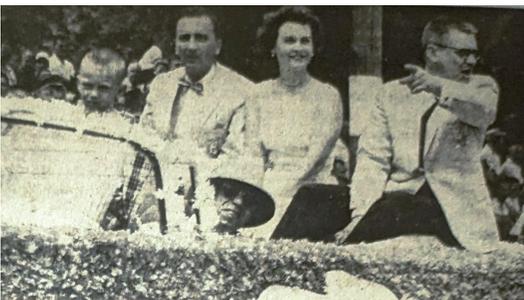
There were nine charter members, of which three are still living: A. P. Beers, Megs Russell, and Herbert Smith. The others were B. H. Weller, Hiram Smith, J. F. Houghton, L. H. Wells, R. B. Hard and David Wohlgamouth. There are five honorary members: Mrs. Walter Wheeler, Mrs. R. C. Fields, Charles (Shang) Wheeler, Ted Palmer and Mrs. Frank Curtiss.

The club is known far and wide for its hospitality and has entertained some 200 members of other clubs during the summer season. We have been told that when boatsmen leave on a cruise from other clubs they are told to be sure to visit the Pootatuck Yacht club on the Housatonic river in old Stratford.

BARNUM PARADE JULY 1958



Girls of the Stratford PAL dressed in their West Point style uniforms.



Co-m Marshals of the Barnum Festival Parade. Joe Barber, his wife and son.



Stratford Little Leaguers.



To the left, the Stratford High School leader of the Twirlers.

Below, the Stratford High Twirlers.

All photos on this page are from *The Stratford News*, July 11, 1958.



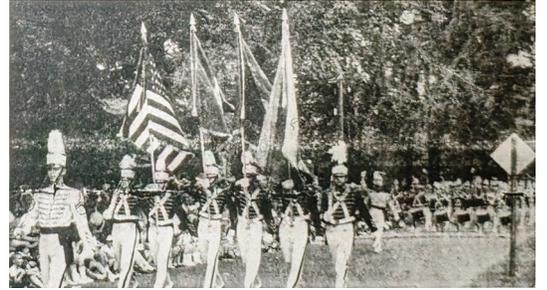
At one time, Stratford's "Stratford Day" was held the weekend before the Barnum Parade. Stratford was very much on the Barnum Festival Committee's agenda. These photos recall a time when Stratford was well-known not just throughout Connecticut, but also around the Nation.

The Stratford News
July 11, 1958

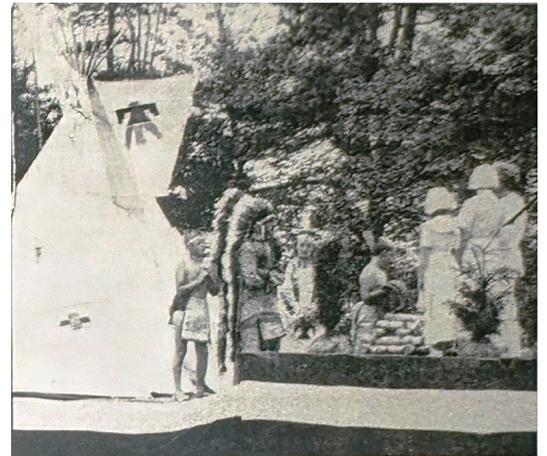
Local Folks And Floats Make Bit Hit In Barnum Parade

Stratford onlookers at last week's Barnum Festival Parade had a lot to be proud of . . . and a lot to think about. Some of the top floats and marching units in the hour and a half parade came from Stratford, and, of the top winners in all classifications from our town.

There were many who watched who felt next year's Miss Juliet American Shakespeare Festival parade could rival the Bridgeport offering, if work was begun almost immediately on setting up committees, and inspiring town-wide interest. Those studying the whole Festival remembered too that the Festival of Champions, hailed as a top attraction of the week-long celebration, was an original Stratford creation, and was first held at Longbrook Park for a number of years. On this page are a representative number of entries from our town in the Barnum Parade, taken for the Stratford News, Owen Hjerpe.



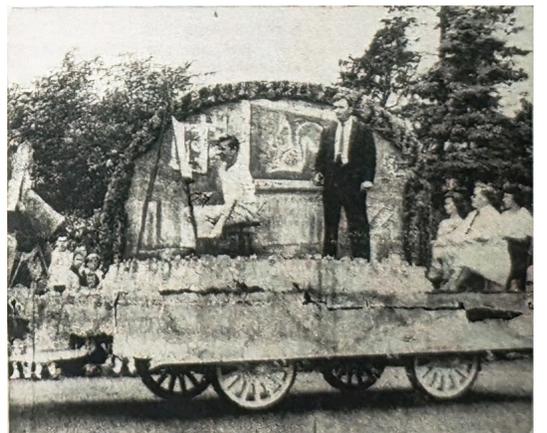
Connecticut Yankees Drum and Bugle Corps of the American Legion.



Stratford Cub Scouts depicted signing a treaty with the colonists.

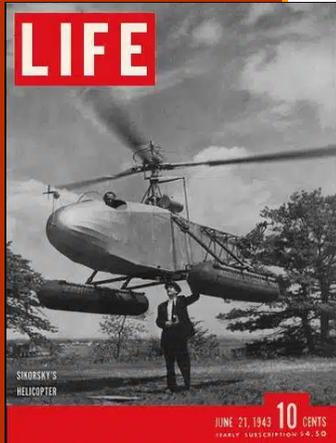


The Lycoming Girls Club won first place as best float in the parade.



Polka Dot Playhouse float. Polka Dot Playhouse began in Stratford.

SIKORSKY AIRCRAFT 100 YEARS



Life Magazine
June 21, 1943



The Bridgeport Herald
July 24, 1898

SHE RIDES MAN'S WHEEL A Graceful Stratford Girl Who Sits Side Fashion

Very few girls are able to ride gracefully upon a wheel that is intended exclusively for men. That inconvealcnt cross-bar on a level with the saddle is a bar to fair feminine riders; that is unless they clothe themselves in the unsightly "bloomers." There are not many girls who care to disfigure themselves in that manner. Then again, for a young woman to ride a man's style of wheel, while dressed in regulation skirts, she is liable to cause a shock to the modesty of every old maid in the community who observes her. But there is one young woman in Stratford who is an adept in managing a masculine bicycle. She rides it gracefully and modestly, and without resorting to a clumsy exposure of shapely limbs and black hosiery. This Stratford girl rides her sweetheart's wheel in the same fashion that she would ride a horse—sitting on the side of the saddle, her right limb drawn up, and all the pedaling is done with her left foot.

In honor of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Sikorsky Aircraft Corporation, the Sikorsky Archives in Stratford has published **The Sikorsky Aircraft Centennial 1923-2023: A Tribute by the Igor I. Sikorsky Historical Archives**. This 200 page volume is filled with photos of Sikorsky aircraft, patents, memorabilia, and Igor Sikorsky's biography,

The volume contains the last letter written by Igor Sikorsky, and the recollections of Igor Sikorsky over his lifetime.

Recently we came across an issue of *Life* magazine from June 1943. The Sikorsky helicopter was just becoming well-known, and the *Life* story is worth the read. Should you be

interested in reading this article, you may download it from our newsletter home page.

Hartford Courant

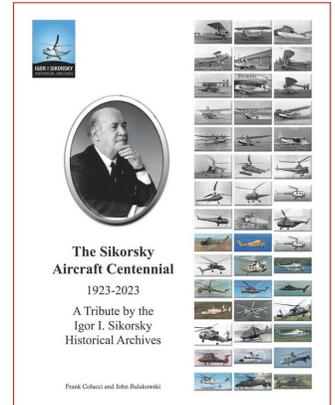
June 7, 1973

City to Name Airport In Honor of Sikorsky

BRIDGEPORT Bridgeport Municipal Airport will be named the Igor I. Sikorsky Memorial Airport at ceremonies June 24, Mayor Nicholas A. Panuzio has announced.

Sikorsky, the builder of the first practical helicopter, died Oct. 27 at the age of 83. He flew his first helicopter at the Bridgeport airport, which is located in the town of Stratford.

A native of Russia, Sikorsky also built the Flying Clipper which



opened air routes to South America.

The ceremonies will be part of the Barnum Festival air show, sponsored [sic] this year by Sikorsky Aircraft.

THE INVASION OF BRIDGEPORT "SPOONERS"

It seems that whenever Stratford experienced problems with young people, the problems were ascribed to Bridgeport youth coming to Stratford to cause problems. This trend continued from about 1893 until about 1955 when Stratford realized that at least some of its youth problems were attributable to Stratford youth. If nothing else, these **Bridgeport Telegram** articles are a delight to read. As a side note, you may not have known that Stratford was once widely recognized as growing wonderful peaches.

The Bridgeport Telegram June 13, 1923

Stratford Declares War on Petters and Spooners

STRATFORD, June 12.—(Special to the Telegram) No more will ardent swains and coy young damsels be permitted to sit in darkened automobiles on Stratford's country roads and whisper sweet nothings in each other's ears between munches of radishes, onions, or other garden truck purloined from adjoining farms or nearby orchards. Councilman Herbert Sniffen's strenuous protest against the automobile spooning parties, and his demand that an "anti-parking" ordinance be enacted to put a stop to spooning 'neath Stratford's moon, was conveyed today to Chief of Police William Nichols

by Town Manager R. H. Hunter, and assurances were given by the chief that a real effort will be made to dampen the ardor of the automobile lovers and save Stratford's truck gardens.

Sniffen's Protest

Councilman Sniffen, commenting upon the automobile parking and "sparking" situation in town states that "there are plenty of nights when a police officer could go down to the South End and make half a dozen arrests of motorists parked along South Main street and the other nearby roads with all lights out."

He said the automobile petting parties come to Stratford from Bridgeport, and are becoming bolder all the while.

"They don't even make an effort any more to get out of their machines at the approach of a stranger, and appear to be following around the mechanism of the car or the tail light, as they used to do. They only get out of the car when they want to visit a nearby vegetable patch. Some of them were in my garden the other night. What stuff they didn't carry away they trampled on."

"Why should Stratford be the goat for Bridgeport spooners? Why should Stratford market gardeners raise crops for the benefit of Bridgeport people who want fresh vegetables without the labor of raising them?"

...Councilman John J. Albright

bewailed the fact that the visits of Bridgeport "peaches" of the flapper variety are proving the ruination of Stratford's own peach crops.

The Bridgeport Telegram June 16, 1923

Cops to Patrol Stratford to Get "Spooners"

Motorcycle Brigade Is Active as Result of Sniffen's Protest.

STRATFORD, June 15 (Special to the Telegram.) - A nightly motorcycle patrol has been inaugurated on streets and sideroads in the outskirts of the town by Chief of Police William Nichols and motorcycle police, as a direct result of Councilman Herbert Sniffen's demand at Monday night's meeting of the council that steps be taken to put a stop to the practice of romantic motorists parking and "sparking," with lights out on Stratford's highways.

...News that a strict motorcycle patrol is now in effect has apparently reached the ears of Bridgeport motorists. Where a score of parked automobiles could be found on Stratford's country roads two weeks ago, the motorcycle police have found no parked cars at the usual trysting places during the past two nights. It is planned to maintain the motorcycle patrol during the coming summer to put a stop to "petting parties" on the highroads and by-roads and incidentally prevent raids on Stratford market gardens and orchards.

SHAKESPEARE THEATRE (ASFT) PHOTOS 1958



Opening Night. Governor Ribicoff and his party view *Hamlet*.



Opening Night. Fritz Weaver as Hamlet and Inga Swenson as Ophelia.



Opening Night. Timex Sundial on the face of the Theatre.

The Hartford Courant recently ran an article on Shakespeare plays occurring throughout Connecticut this Summer. These comments from the *Courant* really hit home hard.

The Hartford Courant
July 9, 1958

The Bard is back on stage

...Outdoor Shakespeare has been a staple of summer theatergoing in Connecticut for decades. From the 1950s into the 1990s, the place to beat was the American Shakespeare Festival in Stratford, founded by John Houseman with casts that might include the likes of Katharine Hepburn or Christopher Plummer. The theater succumbed to financial difficulties over 30 years ago. There have been many attempts to revive the festival, but now it would also have to be completely rebuilt, as the building (a facsimile of the Globe Theatre of Shakespeare's London) was destroyed by arsonists in 2019.

While Stratford's fortunes were waning, an outdoor Shakespeare movement took hold in the 1980s and '90s, fueled by arts grants and a demand for summer cultural activities.

As discussion in town is now focused on the Mayor's recent proposal for a "black box" theatre on the Shakespeare grounds, we thought it might be of interest to share photos from the Summer of 1958 when the ASF Theatre was being followed and enjoyed by people throughout Connecticut and the northeast.

The photos on this page were all taken from *The Stratford News*, June—August 1958.

You may view all the photos from this collection on our newsletter website's home page.



Opening Night. Visitor's map of Stratford.



Opening Night. Lobby of the Theatre.



Opening Night. Richard Waring as Fairy King Oberon and June Havoc as Titania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.



Esther Vodola
Photo from *The Bridgeport Telegram*, June 4, 1948.

While Stratford's Puritan settlers at rest behind the Library in the Congregational Burying Grounds must have been rolling over in the graves, Stratford brought its first woman to the podium of the Congregational Church in 1948. Stratford was one of the first town's in Connecticut to promote equal suffrage for women. And, Stratford's women have achieved many firsts over the years. It's no surprise, therefore, that Stratford brought a female minister to its 309th year congregational gathering.

The Bridgeport Telegram
June 4, 1948

Rev. Esther Vodola Home Church Guest

The Rev. G. Esther Vodola, the first woman to be ordained from the First Congregational church of Stratford which now is in its 309th year, will be the guest

preacher in the First church Sunday at the 11 am service, the Rev. F. Stanley Sellick, pastor, said yesterday.

The Rev. Miss Vodola, a native of Stratford, is the daughter of Mrs. Anne Vodola, Essex place, Stratford.

She was graduated from Stratford high school and was active in church work as a Sunday school superintendent and church clerk at the Jube Memorial Congregational church, Newark, N. J., while she was employed as secretary to Commander Lee of the Moore and McCormick Steamship Lines in New York. She resigned from that position and came to her home and took up secretarial work in this vicinity.

She became an active teacher in the Sunday school of her home church, and to help prepare herself for teaching, she attended a Teachers' conference at Winnepesaukee, N. H. There she decided to go into the Christian

ministry. She entered Berean college where she made a fine record, graduating in 1945 with a B.A. degree. While an undergraduate she spent her summers doing vacation school work in Illinois. She entered Union Theological seminary in September, 1945. During the summers of 1946 and 1947 she was an assistant in preaching and vacation school work to the Rev. Robert C. Whitehead in a larger parish of five churches in Maine. The Rev. Whitehead was the Rev. Mr. Sellick's predecessor in the Stratford church.

The Rev. Miss Vodola was ordained at Union Seminary, April 29, 1948, her pastor, the Rev. Mr. Sellick, participating in the ceremony. She was graduated with a Bachelor of Divinity degree from Union on May 18. Next September she will start in a position as director of children's activities at the First Presbyterian church, Englewood, N. J.

L. A. STEVENS GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY

Mrs. Stevens provides some insights into her and her mother's views of femininity and marriage from 100 years ago. It's interesting to look back on a time when parents worried about the wildness of their roaring 20's children and grandchildren. Due caution was urged lest their children become one of those "spooners" described on page 6 of this issue.

The Bridgeport Telegram
July 17, 1923
Mr and Mrs Stevens Will Celebrate Golden Wedding

STRATFORD, July 16.—(Special to The Telegram).—"The chief trouble I believe with married life today in that couples are not suitably mated," said Mrs. L. A. Stevens, who has kept her own mate in happiness and contentment for fifty years. They will both celebrate their golden wedding anniversary tonight at their home, 1588 West Broad street. The conjugal life of Mr. and Mrs. Stevens has been singularly happy, due she says, to forbearance

of each other.

She has an old-fashioned prescription for married life. "It's simply this," she says, "bear with one another." Keen as a whip lash Mrs. Stevens even reverts to epigram when she describes what she believes to be the trouble with present-day married life which results in so much unhappiness and airing of differences in divorce courts.

"It's the same in marriage as in religion," she said. "People who marry think they are converted when they are only convicted, and convicted they stand, each seeking to dissolve the ties which have convicted them".

"The modern marriage is unhappy because people are not properly mated. Young women fall in love all too frequently with the prospects of the material possessions of their husbands-to-be. They marry under the impulse of the moment, and have not character enough to abide by the bad bargains, if they have made them. Chiefly they will not bear with the faults of one another, and overlook many things which married couples should

overlook. If one truly loves another one can pardon him many faults. Divorce, I believe is a little too easy to get nowadays, which is an added incentive to married unhappiness".

"Then women have too many temptations outside of the home, now. They are not content to bring up their children in the manner in which I and my mother did. They get along too fast. The old simple life, is gone, I suppose, and women are cultivating their individualities. But they are too conscious of these same individualities, I fear. They are not willing enough to merge them with those of their mates.

"The flatter [sic "flapper"]? No, I don't like her at all. I like modesty not primness, but the old-fashioned modesty, which one never seems to find nowadays. The modern flapper isn't modest, but perhaps I should not criticize her, for I know nothing about her, except what I have read. I have a granddaughter in her teens, but she is no flapper. My son would not permit it."



Mr. and Mrs. L. A. Stevens.
Photo from *The Bridgeport Telegram*, July 17, 1923

OUR LADY OF MT. CARMEL CELEBRATION

Stratford's largest, and most memorable annual celebration was the feast of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in the Avon Park District.

The Bridgeport Telegram
July 17, 1923

Stratford Catholics Celebrate Lady of Mt. Carmel's Day

Italian Roman Catholics of Stratford made more than casual note yesterday of the feast day of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel particularly venerated by countrymen in their

sunny Italy. To transplant as nearly as possible the atmosphere, the religious background, the fascinating coloring and gay pageant of their native land the Stratford people collected every bit of gay color, every flaunting banner, every brilliant flag at their command, and gaily parading through the streets laid first their greetings at the foot of the statue of Our Lady in St. Thomas church.

Having completed the religious observance, the day, in consonance with amusing events, such as baseball, volley ball, dancing and the

inevitable fireworks, without which any celebration of its kind is impossible. The festive board, too, was loaded down with goodies from the old and the new land of their adoption. Mrs. Angelo Stavola was the leading spirit of the celebration as in years past.

To the right are Juliana Verrelli and Angela Silvestro, who were Flower Girls in the Procession at St. Thomas' Church, Stratford.



GIFT TO ST. JAMES PARISH

The Bridgeport Telegram
June 2, 1948
Msgr. Anderson Realizes Dream In Monstrance Created by Raphael

Dreams do come true!

The strokes of an artist's brush which created an image some 440 years ago and the dream of a young Catholic priest 35 years ago that someday he would recreate what the artist had set down on fresco and have it for his very own became a reality this week when a hand wrought solid silver Monstrance, believed to be the only one of its kind in the world, was unveiled

in St. James church, Stratford.

...The story moves from Rome to Stratford and the time is 1946 when a parishioner approached Monsignor Anderson and presented him with a sizable sum of money with the suggestion that he do for the church.

"Almost at one," related Dr. Anderson, "I saw before me that fresco and on the altar the Monstrance. I remembered my promise. I went to Boston and consulted with an outstanding artist and silversmith. Together we planned and studied. We consulted reproductions of Raphael's masterpieces in books of

the Boston library. Drawings and designs were completed and then two weeks ago, after 800 hours of work, by hand, the silversmith notified me that my dream had become a reality.

...Exhibited for several days in Boston when the work was completed the Monstrance gained much attention from the clergy. Monsignor Anderson has received requests to exhibit the work of art in New York, Chicago, Cleveland and other cities but he told his parishioners "now that I have it I just don't want to let it out of my hands or sight."



HISTORICAL SOCIETY HIGHLIGHTS FROM 75 YEARS AGO



The Bridgeport Telegram, June 2, 1948

As SENIOR C.A.R. officials gathered at Judson House, the Stratford Historical society headquarters Wednesday, Jean Fothergill, state junior president, pours for (l. to r.) Mrs. John W. Richardson, Sr., state president; Mrs. Carl L. Hartshorn, cradle roll and grandmothers' committee chairman; and Mrs. D. Stuart Pope, first vice president. At right: Admiring a yarn-reel in the Historical society's collection of spinning apparatus are (l. to r.): Mrs. Gaylor Carrothers, and Mrs. Wallace Kames, state promoters; and Mrs. Josephine E. Marvin, grandmothers' committee.



The Bridgeport Telegram, June 25, 1948

Members of the Stratford Historical society met yesterday afternoon in Judson house. Among those attending (l. to r.) Mrs. John Walker, president; Mrs. David Pierce, curator at Burroughs Memorial Library; and, Mrs. Frank Sammis, curator of the society.

WITCH EXONERATION BILL PASSES

We have worked for years on making the reality of Goody Bassett's hanging recognized and reacted to throughout the State. We endeavored, this year, to accomplish three objectives: 1) bring Goody Bassett's story to life with as much detail as we could find; 2) work with the Town Council to pass a resolution exonerating Goody Bassett of the charges of witchcraft for which she was hanged; and, 3) create a town memorial for Goody Bassett.

We accomplished our first objective and continue to work with Mayor Hoydick on completing the third. While the Town Council did not act on our proposed resolution, the State House and Senate did exonerate all accused Connecticut witches. Mayor Hoydick did, however, issue a Proclamation commemorating Goody Bassett.

Here is a copy of the State's resolution.

House Joint Resolution No 34 Resolution Concerning Certain Witchcraft Convictions in Colonial Connecticut

Resolved by this Assembly:

WHEREAS, the courts in the early colonies of Connecticut and New Haven indicted at least thirty-four women and men for the alleged crime of witchcraft and convicted twelve of them, executing eleven, and it is now accepted by the historical profession and society as a whole that all the accused were innocent of such charges, and

WHEREAS, legal procedures differed at the time and many practices of the court would no longer meet modern standards of proof, so that the miscarriage of justice was facilitated by such procedures, and

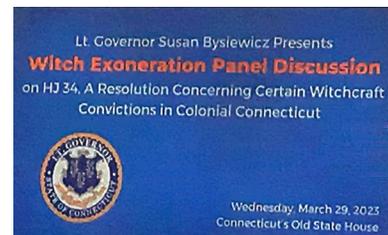
WHEREAS, the status of women was radically different than it is today, and misogyny played a large part in the trials and in denying defendants their rights and dignity,

WHEREAS, community strife and panic combined with overwhelming fear and superstition led to these accusations of alleged witchcraft and the subse-

quent suffering of those accused.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that all of the formally convicted, and executed are exonerated of all alleged crimes relating to the charges of witchcraft. The legislature proclaims the innocence of the following convicted and executed people: Alice Young in 1647, Mary Johnson in 1648, Joan Carrington in 1651, John Carrington in 1651, **Goodwife Bassett** in 1651, Goodwife Knapp in 1653, Lydia Gilbert in 1654, Mary Sanford in 1662, Nathaniel Greensmith in 1663, Rebecca Greensmith in 1663, and Mary Barnes in 1663; and one Elizabeth Seager convicted and reprieved in 1665.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that those who were indicted, forced to flee, banished or even acquitted continued to live with their reputations destroyed and their family names tarnished, will have their reputations restored and no longer have disgrace attached to their names, now, being in good standing in Connecticut. The following indicted who were not convicted but still suffered greatly after indictments were: ...**Hugh Crosia** in 1692,...



We participated in Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz's panel discussion, **Witch Exoneration Panel Discussion**, at the Old Connecticut State House in March.

Below are the members of the panel (l to r): Senator Saud Anwar, Beth Caruso, Susan Bysiewicz, State Rep. Jane Garibay, Katherine Hermes (historian), and Catherine Carmon (student).



the
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celebrate the history of the
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