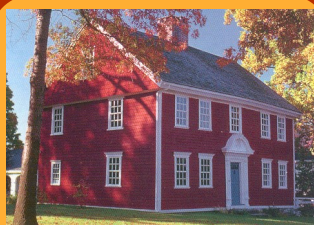


THE CUPHEAG CORNER

VOLUME 11, ISSUE 6

MAY 2020



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

MARK THE DATES:

- May's General Membership Meeting: Sunday, May 31st at 2:00 pm ONLINE via gotomeeting
- "I Now Pronounce You Lucy Stone", September 3rd, Stratford Library, 7pm
- William Samuel Johnson Day commemoration, Wednesday, October 7th, 9am, Town Hall

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- 1955 Youtube Video 2
- 1934 Aerial Photos 2
- Dateline Stratford Apr-May 1955 3
- Witch Web-site 4
- Woodbury's Founding 4
- Mac's Harbor Marker 5
- American Day 1920 5
- Washington Bridge 1845 6
- Bunnell Museum Re-opens 7
- Influenza and Suffrage 8
- Books of Note 8
- Boothe Park 1969 9

MAY'S GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Sunday, May 31st, 2:00 pm, via Video Teleconference at
<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/352157133>

Stratford Historical Society Presents:

Naming a Town Forest

In Lew Knapp's monumental tome, *In Pursuit of Paradise*, he wrote, "...They bought a couple hundred acres, then brought in a state forester to mark the diseased trees to cut; the land and trees remaining with thousands of new evergreens set out by the unemployed, became Roosevelt Forest. Don Sammis would never say which Roosevelt it was named for". But, is this really the case?

David Wright has spent a number of hours walking Roosevelt Forest and leading walks through the Forest for Chapel School, Friends of Remington Woods, Friends of Roosevelt Forest, Stratford Recreation Department, the Great Stratford Bird Festival, Roosevelt Forest Day, and National Trails Day.

Over the years, many mysteries



David Wright at Roosevelt Forest, September 2012

about the Forest have been uncovered and answers to those mysteries have been sought. How

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

old is the Forest? Are the trees in Roosevelt Forest those the original settlers saw there? Why are there remnants of a rock quarry in Roosevelt Forest? Why is there a police gun firing range in Roosevelt Forest? Is Roosevelt Forest haunted? Are only residents of Stratford allowed into the Forest? For whom, or what, was Roosevelt Forest named?

These, and other questions, will be examined in a lively presentation of **Naming a Town Forest**. Please join us May 31st in a first ever "virtual" Historical Society online presentation. To join this presentation by PC point your PC's web browser to <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/352157133>. You may also listen, but not view the slide show, by calling 1(646)749-3112 and entering access code 352-157-133.

"What experience and history teach is this: that people and governments have never learned anything from history."
Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, German philosopher (1770-1831).

HISTORICAL SOCIETY HAPPENINGS

During these times of COVID-19 isolation, we're keeping all our plans tentative. The Society will remain closed to the public, and for school tours, for the foreseeable future. We may be able to hold a "virtual" program of some type for **Connecticut Open House Day**. We're still formulating our ideas. We're hopeful that by September we'll be able to hold our program, "**I Now Pronounce You Lucy Stone**," at Stratford Library.

We're also keeping busy with items you may enjoy from the comfort of your own home quarantine. As time permits, we're adding to

our podcasts at <http://crier.stratfordhistoricalsociety.info>. We're also posting daily at <https://www.facebook.com/stratford400> articles from the local newspapers detailing the 1918 Spanish flu epidemic. It's compelling just how much was similar in 1918 to what we're experiencing today.

We'd like to hear from you, too. For posterity's sake, we think there's much to document about what we're experiencing in our daily lives due to COVID, and its isolating impact on our community. We are in the process of constructing a survey which we'll share with you just as soon as

possible. In the meantime, don't hesitate to share your thoughts, experiences, and/or journal entries pertaining to your COVID impacted existence. Share your experiences with us at newsletters@stratfordhistoricalsociety.info.

This virus has shut so many resources down that assembling a quality newsletter has become much more challenging. Should you have any items of an historical nature that you wouldn't mind sharing with us, please let us know that, too, by e-mailing newsletters@stratfordhistoricalsociety.info.

Stay Well!

VIDEO BY FRED VIGEANT 1955



Katherine Hepburn exiting the Shakespeare Theatre in 1955 from Fred Vigeant's Youtube video.



American Festival Shakespeare Theatre c 1965 from the TV series "America" on Youtube.

One "positive" of the COVID lockdown is that you find time for things you may have otherwise overlooked. In searching through the internet, we located a video of Stratford from 1955 posted on Youtube in December 2016. The video was uploaded by Fred Vigeant, a Stratford resident. You may find the video on Youtube at <https://youtu.be/DG2URle3hPs>.

While the video is from an old 8mm home-type movie camera and, therefore, a bit "jerky," the scenery in the video is just priceless. There are scenes from Main Street Stratford, the old fire house (now EMS), the newly built police building (new in 1955), Shakespeare Theatre, Barnum Parade, and the Housatonic River. There is also footage of some of the actors who appeared in plays at the Shakespeare Theatre such as Katherine Hepburn.

The news article about the pistol cap factory (shown here to the right) was also highlighted in the Vigeant video. The video shows the fire department fighting a fire somewhere in Stratford (off Ferry Boulevard?).

We also found a fun mid-1960s video of Connecticut at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=31Kmd8cuuw&feature=youtu.be>. The video contains footage of Hartford, Elizabeth Park Rose Garden, Farmington, Sharon, Washington, Lime Rock Park, New Haven, Yale University, New London, Essex, Stonington, Mystic Seaport, and, Gillette Castle. The Shakespeare Theatre is shown at about 11:30 minutes into the video.

The Bridgeport Telegram May 22, 1955

\$75,000 Flash Fire Destroys Stratford Pistol Cap Factory
SMOKE IS VISIBLE IN 3-MILE RADIUS; 2 FIREMENT HURT
Woman Worker Burned While Attempting to Telephone Alarm

HUNDREDS AT SCENE
Police Forced to Re-Route Traffic for Two-Hour Period
A flash fire which ignited thousands of toy pistol caps gutted the Jatina Manufacturing company building on Stratford avenue, Stratford, yesterday, causing damage estimated at \$75,000 to \$100,000 and sending up huge clouds of smoke visible for miles. Two firemen were injured and another was overcome by smoke. Chief Theodore Lockwood was

partially overcome and a woman worker was burned.

Hundreds Throng Area

Hundreds of persons thronged the area. Smoke and flames were visible in a three-mile radius. Traffic was re-routed from Stratford avenue and adjacent side streets more than two hours.

Mrs. Alice Uhlig, forelady of the company, received singed eyebrows and hair when she delayed leaving the building to telephone the alarm. No one was injured seriously.

...Although no addresses were available, police listed other employees [sic] who escaped without injury as: Betty Moore, Terry Klesky, Barbara Shea, Sheila Mendulick, Marian Conboy, Georgiana Mila, Ann Szabo, Mae Dudde and Grace Andrews.



Former Town Manager, Harry Flood, fighting the pistol cap factory fire. Photo from **The Bridgeport Telegram**, May 22, 1955.

1934 AERIAL PHOTOS



This 1934 aerial photo shows Stratford High School at the left center, and the Town Hall green on North Parade before the current Town Hall was built (in 1937).

Along the same lines as the foregoing article on Fred Vigeant's video, the Waterfront Harbor Management Commission members recently made us aware of a 1934 aerial survey of Connecticut. The survey is interactive and allows you to compare aerial images of 1934 to the exact same aerial location today. You may view the side-by-side maps of then and now at http://magic.lib.uconn.edu/mash_up/1934.html.

Another link to this 1934 aerial photo collection allows you to zoom in on any area of Stratford. It's really intriguing to view Stratford Center, Main Street, and the beach in 1934. Of special interest is the area surrounding today's Roosevelt Forest. Roosevelt Forest be-

came the town forest in 1934 when the land which comprises the Forest, today, was purchased by Town Manager Donald Sammis. In the 1934 aerial survey photos, all that can be seen of the forest property is open space with precious few trees. You may look through all the 1934 aerial photos of Stratford at <http://cslib.cdmhost.com/digital/collection/p4005coll10/search/searchterm/stratford>. In this same collection, you may view aerial photos of Stratford from 1965.

The town's Engineering Department has digitized aerial photos of Stratford from 1928, 1945, 1952, 1959, and 1968. These photos are not yet available online.



1934 aerial photo of the Roosevelt Forest/Beaver Dam area. Beaver Dam is visible on the left of the photo. The lake at Roosevelt Forest had not been built in 1934.

DATELINE STRATFORD APRIL-MAY 1955

The Hartford Courant

April 9, 1955

Medical Society Plans Assembly in Stratford

STRATFORD, April 8 (Special)

—Eight of the specialist sections of the Connecticut State Medical Society are planning special clinical programs, a feature of the Society's 163rd Annual Meeting and Scientific Assembly, April 26 to 28 at Stratford High School in Stratford.

The Hartford Courant

April 12, 1955

Stratford School Fire Brings Investigation

STRATFORD, April 12 Flames which Fire Chief Theodore Lockwood said might be of incendiary origin did \$2,000 damage to three classrooms at David Wooster Junior High School here yesterday.

Lockwood said that he had asked the State Fire Marshal's Office to aid in an investigation started by Sgt. John Havery Jr. of the police department's youth bureau.

The flames were said to have broken out simultaneously in two art classrooms on the south side of the building and in a science classroom on the north side.

Classes went on as usual in other rooms of the school today.

The Bridgeport Telegram

April 15, 1955

Shakespeare Theater Purchases Land for Use as Traffic Outlet

The American Shakespeare Theater and Academy has purchased property at 823 Stratford avenue, Stratford to provide a traffic outlet for its summer theater patrons to the main highway, Richard Grayson, executive coordinator for the theater group has announced. Mr. Grayson said that negotiations were completed yesterday with Josephine Burns, for her property fronting 105 feet on Stratford avenue and running back 120 feet to the Shake-

speare property.

Although no purchase price was announced, it was learned that the cost was approximately \$20,000. It is planned to begin immediate construction of a two lane exit highway from the theated [sic] grounds to Stratford avenue at the intersection of Ferry Boulevard.

The roadway, to be surfaced, paved and oiled will be used only for exit purposes, Mr. Grayson said, and purchase of the land and building was completed when traffic authorities indicated that such a highway would be needed to adequately handle the theater traffic without creating a hazard on lower Stratford avenue, Elm street and adjacent highways.

The 19-room building now on the property will be used for administrative offices, Mr. Grayson said, and the road will be constructed to the west of the house.

The Hartford Courant

April 17, 1955

OUTDOORS

By Cliff Knight

The Bob Axley Memorial Skeet Shoot will be today at Lordship in Stratford under sponsorship of the Housatonic Gun Club. The tournament is made possible through the generosity of Axley's widow, Mrs. Kathleen C. Axley, who has donated sterling trophies to the winners of the five individual classes in which the shooters will participate. These are in addition to the regular purses that will be made up by the shooters themselves.

...John T. Brainard says shooting will commence at 10 a.m. and given a good day there should be an entry list of better than 100. This will make for some fat purses in the various classes and at the same time will assure that any winner will have to shoot well above his or her average in order to best the others in the class. Each class shoots only for its own class purse.

The Bridgeport Telegram

May 16, 1955

EVENT ATTRACTS 500 SPECTATORS

Stage, Movie Stars Attend 'Raising of Rooftree' in Stratford

By Frederick E. Phelan

The American Shakespeare Festival Theater in Stratford opened to its first audience yesterday—more than 500 persons—for a special production "The Raising of the Rooftree."

In the starring role was a six-foot length of tree cut from the top of a century old pine on the site with Mrs. Lewis W. Douglas, wife of the former Ambassador to Great Britain, in the supporting role raising the pine branch to the roof top of the structure to indicate that the steel work has been completed.

First Play July 12

The audience was seated in the main floor auditorium of the theater on folding chairs and the cast and dignitaries were assembled on the stage where they heard Lawrence Langner of Westport, president of the American Shakespeare Festival Theater and Academy, say that the first presentation of a Shakespeare play will take place in the building on July 12.

The Hartford Courant

May 25, 1955

Raybestos Team Wins

Howie Weiland pitched a no-hit game for the Raybestos Cardinals of Stratford Tuesday evening for a 5 to 0 win over the Burnside Dovalettes at Burnside School field.

A crowd of nearly 1,200 persons, the largest number of the season at Burnside, watched the Stratford pitcher hurl his fourth no-hitter of the season.

Bill Beverly, Dovalettes pitcher, allowed four hits, two of which were homers.

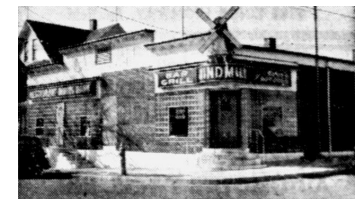
The Burnside team will play; the Hartford Cardinals tonight at 6:30 at Burnside School field. Dennis McCarthy will pitch.



Backstage at the Polka Dot Playhouse are June Vodola, Tweetie Wier, Sally Powell, Jean DeRoucher, Marge Memoli, Jean Doring, Eula Cowperthwaite, David Reed. **Bridgeport Telegram**, April 14, 1955.



Firemen from Lordship Company 3 lay cornerstone: Fred Marino, Joseph Miko, John Bloom, Fred Kuhn, Ted Heyse, contractor Kenneth Frederickson. **Sunday Herald**, April 3, 1955.



Windmill Restaurant. **Sunday Herald**, April 3, 1955.

NOW SHOWING APRIL-MAY 1955



Stratford Theater c 1946

April 3rd

Captain Lightfoot

Rock Hudson, Barbara Rush, Jeff Morrow

April 10th

Country Girl

Bing Crosby, Grace Kelly, William Holden

April 17th

New York Confidential

Broderick Crawford, Marilyn Maxwell, J. Carrol Naish

May 20th

The Essential Sea

Alexis Smith, Dean Jagger

May 27th

Strange Lady in Town

Greer Garson, Dana Andrews

WITCH WEBSITE AND GOODY BASSETT



Home page of Jake and Margaux's website, *Echoes of the Witch*, at <https://echoesofthewitch.com/>

Last May, we had the privilege of meeting Margaux Crump and Jake Eshelman. They were referred to us by Beth Caruso. As you may recall, Beth Caruso spoke to our Society in November of 2018. Beth Caruso heads up the efforts of towns and citizens working to clear accused witches of their towns from the mid-1600's of witchcraft charges; women such as Goody Bassett.

Jake and Margaux visited many towns around the country where witches were accused, tried, and executed. Their journeys brought them to Stratford where we were able to share a tour of the original Stratford settlement, and the presumed location of Goody Bassett's execution at



Margaux Crump



Jake Eshelman

West Broad Street and Linden Avenue. Jake and Margaux are working on a book documenting their research and findings. They've also created a website,

<https://echoesofthewitch.com/>, from which you may follow their progress should you be so inclined.

CELEBRATING WOODBURY'S FOUNDING

The earliest recorded dispute in Stratford between polarized factions occurred in 1667 when the founding Puritans of the town separated into two congregations. The two congregations were separated by divergent beliefs on salvation and baptism. The smaller of the two groups departed Stratford in 1670 to settle what is today Woodbury, CT. In 1870, a celebration was held in Woodbury commemorating the settling of Woodbury by the dissident Stratford Puritans. The celebration was attended by at least one Stratford minister.

Hartford Daily Courant
May 9, 1870

Bi-centennial Celebration OF THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH IN WOODBURY.

...The chief interest of the morning of course centered in the sermon by the pastor, the Rev. Gurdon Noyes. This was a historical statement of the founding of the church and its subsequent history. The sermon was founded

upon Psalm 77-5, "I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times." To many in this age, there is little enchantment in the distant past, the present is so full duty and enjoyment and the future is so might with hope, that they readily forget "the days of old, the years of ancient times." It is as we trace our connection with departed worthies and realize our indebtedness to them for present privileges and blessings that we are incited to emulate their virtues and fitly labor for posterity and heaven. To-day the church completes a history of 200 years. After a review of some political and other changes during that time he spoke of the early discussion in the church on the half-way covenant system. The division in the old church at Stratford, from which the Woodbury church sprung, was such that twenty-one of the male members separated themselves from the church, being in favor of the half-way covenant system, called the Rev. Zephaniah Walker of Long Island, to be their pastor; the privilege of erecting a plantation at Pomeroy was granted them by the court in May 1672, and early

the next spring twenty-five migrated to this place. Mr. Walker divided his ministrations between this flock and that at Stratford until June 1678 when he moved here.

...On the platform were seated the chairman of the exercises, the Rev. H. Winslow of Willimantic, and the pastor of the old mother church at Stratford, the Rev. W. K. Hall; of the Southbury Church, a daughter of the Woodbury Church, in 1731; of the Bethlehem Church, an offspring of 1739; Roxbury, a child of 1743; South Britain, 1766; Judea, 1741; Woodbury second, 1816.

The audience was such as would delight the heart of a New Englander to show to an inhabitant of any other part of the world as a specimen of what a New England audience is. These old Litchfield hills do turn out some noble specimens of the intelligent Yankee farmer. I was proud of them myself. After the usual introductory exercises the speeches followed, none over fifteen minutes in length, unless it might be the reverend gentleman from Judea who had "but one word more" about three times.



First Congregational Church of Woodbury built in 1818. Photo from the church's website.

MAC'S HARBOR MARKER DEDICATION

Prior to this marker being installed at Mac's Harbor, there were no "blue markers" in the towns of Connecticut. This one was the first.

The Stratford Times

May 7, 1970

Dedicate historical plaque here Sunday

The site of the first landing of the founders of the Town of Stratford, Mac's Harbor, will be the scene Sunday of dedication ceremonies.

To be dedicated will be a plaque marking the spot at the end of South Avenue where the first settlers, apparently led by Rev. Adam Blakeman, disembarked in 1639.

The ceremonies will begin at 2 p.m. The plaque has been supplied by the Connecticut Historical Commission and the Town has had it erected.

The demarcation was chiefly attained through the efforts of the Stratford Historical Society and its monument committee headed up by Lewis G. Knapp.

As part of the program Sunday, the president of the Historical Society, Donald Fowler, will welcome the group.

The invocation will be by Rev. Raymond Wooster of the First Congregational Church of which Rev. Blakeman was the first minister.

The story of the arrival, apparently

from Massachusetts, will be presented by Howard Wilcoxson, former Town Clerk, and author of "The History of Stratford."

Colonel Eric Hatch, chairman of the Connecticut Historical Commission, will make the formal presentation of the plaque which will be accepted for the Town by Council Chairman David W. Burns.

Weather permitting, following the ceremony, a guided walking tour through the historical streets to Judson House will be held.

Everyone in the community is invited to attend.



The Historical Marker denoting traditional site of the land(ing) of the first settlers who came to Stratford was unveiled Sunday at Mac's Harbor. **The Stratford News**, May 14, 1970.

"AMERICAN DAY" MAY 1920

The Bridgeport Time

May 3, 1920

STRATFORD'S CELEBRATION MOST FITTING TRIBUTE

(Special to The Times.)

Stratford, May 2—Undaunted by the threatening weather of Saturday morning Mayor Abraham Wellington and the other members of the American Day committee carried out their program which they had worked several weeks to arrange as planned and the celebration proved to be a most fitting tribute for the cause of Americanism for which it was intended. Anarchists, Bolsheviks, or Reds, if any there be in Stratford who witnessed the parade and exercises at Academy Hill, must have fully realized their cause was a hopeless one as the thousands of school children and groups marched down Main street to the monument waving American flags, apparently being thrilled with delight of having the opportunity [sic] of turning what had been reported was to be a Red day into a great Red, White and Blue Day. Then, too, at the monument, the Rev. John Cotter of Hartford, worn from the hardships of the recent World War in which he took an active part overseas for several months dealt the death blow to Bolshevism in his wonderful address of the afternoon.

So eager were the children to show the true American spirit which

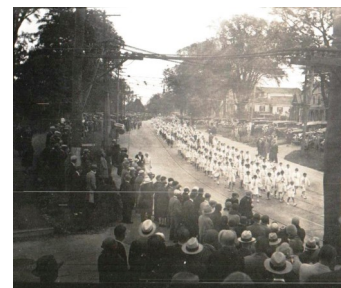
they possess they began gathering at the various schools long before the scheduled time and many assembled at their schools as early as 9 o'clock in the morning only to wait until long after dinner before the word for advancing to their positions in line was heard. Never before in the history of Stratford has [sic] the pupils of the Stratford schools showed such a blaze of patriotism as they did on Saturday and never before in the history of Stratford has such a large number of the pupils of Stratford turned out in celebration of any event as they did on Saturday in celebrating American Day. Not only did [sic] they turn out in large numbers but from the appearance and the very actions of the pupils they clearly demonstrated that deep down in their bosoms there beat a heart of loyalty, true to the principles of the country in which they live and loyal to old Stratford and home. Every school in town was represented in line by nearly 100 per cent of its enrolment. Floats of various patriotic makeups were intermingled with the different grades, placards were displayed by every class denouncing any action other than progress of a true American nature, placards begging for more schools whereby the half-time pupils who are striving to get an education in half the ordinary time might be treated as their parents were and placards of loyalty and home were conspicuous in every

group.

...Fraternal, social, and civic organizations also played their part in the big parade, some of which entered floats while others had large delegations of their members in line. Housatonic grange with its handsome decorated float and three pretty young ladies costumed in a costume of goddess of the harvest, each bearing a quantity of last fall's harvest made a most impressive picture.

...The parade, which formed at Paradise Green, started about 2:30, headed by the entire force of the Stratford police department with Chief William Nichols in charge followed by Grand Marshal William H. Hart and staff with the following organizations following in order: G. A. R. Veterans, Wheeler & Wilson band, Co. F. Captain George W. Spal, commanding, American Legion, Woman's Auxiliary of American Legion, Red Cross Nursing Activities committee, Boy Scouts, Camp Fire Girls, Okenuck tribe of Red Men, Stratford club, Housatonic grange, Stratford Delphian society, Argus club, Evening Star Rebekah lodge, Board of Education, Stratford Drum corps and the various schools. Arriving at Academy Hill where the remainder of the program was carried out the thousands of enthusiastic celebrators took part in one of the finest programs yet given in town.

The monument had been decorat-



Stratford town parade c 1920. Photo from the Society's photo archives.

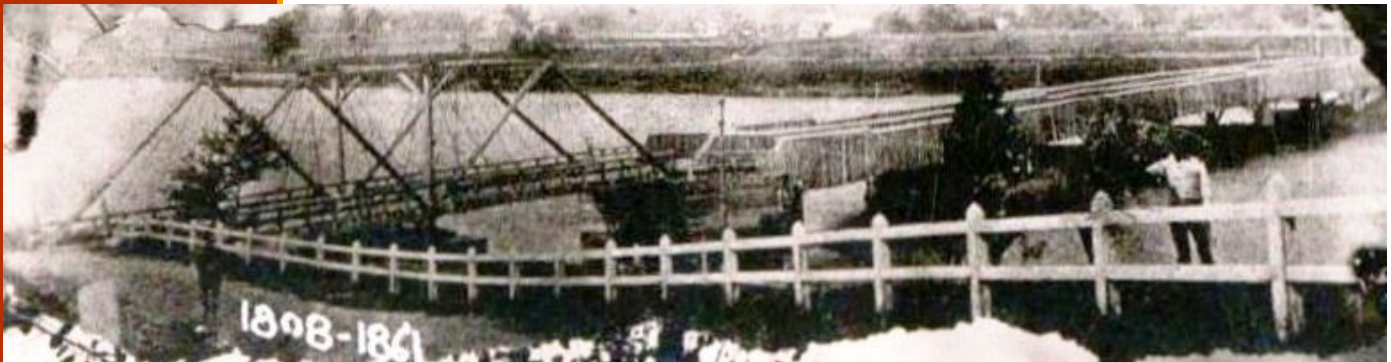
ed as never before for the occasion and during the exercises over which Mayor Abraham Wellington presided airplanes [sic] circled over the heads of the crowd apparently assisting the celebration of American Day. The program opened with an invocation by Rev. Andrew F. Chamberlain of the Methodist church, which was followed by community singing led by P. F. Bowe, accompanied by the Wheeler & Wilson band. James Scofield of the Nichols avenue school, made a big hit when he sang "In the Garden." Mrs. A. McNamara sang "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean," being followed by a most inspiring address by the Rev. John Cotter of Hartford, who left a deep and lasting impression on the minds of all who heard him...

WASHINGTON BRIDGE HISTORY 1845

The Washington Bridge we all know today, which carries Post Road traffic over the Housatonic River between Stratford and Milford, was, for its first 120 years, almost always in the news. The bridge we see today has served travelers since 1921. However, the current bridge had four predecessors each, in turn, being gratefully replaced by a succeeding bridge due to the dilapidated nature of the bridge then in place. Since we will be celebrating the 100th anniversary of the today's Washington bridge next year, we thought it might be interesting to review the history of the bridge from the perspective of those dis-

tween the towns of Milford and Stratford.— That in 1803 or 1804 it was swept away. In 1807 they granted a lottery to aid in rebuilding it, from which \$12,000, was realized. In 1808, the Company asked for a further modification of their charter; and it was then enacted that they might build their bridge anew in a less expensive manner than the act of 1807 required, and the bridge was so built, costing about \$30,000. By the terms of the charter, when the tolls had reimbursed all expenses and 12 per cent interest, the Legislature might take such order as they thought proper. The Company showed that so far from being reimbursed, the cost and interest,

was approved by Commissioners. In 1806, it was swept away—in 1807 a lottery was granted, and it was ordered to be rebuilt according to the original charter with the proviso that nothing therein contained should be construed to impair the rights and privileges of persons navigating the river. Several objections existed to this petition, chiefly of a legal nature. In this incorporation the State was one party, and the Washington Bridge company the other, and on certain conditions certain privileges were granted. [Mr. M. here referred to a part of the Speech of Governor Baldwin concerning the older corporations.] He claimed that it was unconstitutional to take away the



Washington Bridge
1808—1861

curring its second replacement back in 1845.

Hartford Daily Courant

May 31, 1845

REPORTED FOR THE
COURANT.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

Friday, May 30—Forenoon

Connecticut Legislature.

MAY SESSION, 1845.

...The Committee on Roads and Bridges, reported on petition of John J. Howe and others vs. Washington Bridge Co., in favor of the same, with a resolution declaring that the draw in that Bridge was insufficient, and directing the Company to make a new and larger one, so as to accommodate all vessels, to be commenced and completed under the direction of Commissioners to be appointed by the General Assembly.

Mr. Smith, the Chairman, stated that in 1802 the Legislature granted a charter to erect a bridge over the Housatonic, be-

less the tolls, now amounted to \$139,000.

They claimed that the Legislature had no right to interfere—that vessels had not been detained in passing the draw, but under peculiar circumstances. It was claimed that the piers were not built according to the charter. — The Commissioners had ordered the Company to make certain alterations which they had done. It was claimed further, that all vessels which could pass through the outer channel, could pass through the present draw.

Mr. Morris, said that this was one of the ancient incorporations, made without reserving the right of repeal. That before the incorporation of this company a ferry existed, to remedy which evil, this charter was granted.

The company had to purchase the rights of individuals and of the town of Stratford—the Draw was to be 32 feet. On the strength of this charter the company went forward and built a bridge, which

rights of the company, and referred to the opinion given by Judge Church, in the case of the Hartford Bridge company vs. the town of East Hartford, as a case precisely in point. The petitioners proposed to have the draw widened at an expense of \$2000, and thus add that amount to the expenses of the company, when no right existed to alter the charter. The faith of the State was pledged, and the company had a right to depend upon it. The wants of the community did not require this alteration. The water on the outer bar was from two and a half to three and a half feet, and vessels which can now pass over that, can pass through the draw. It was claimed that the draw should be 40 feet wide, for steamboats; but a steamboat, such as was proposed, could not pass the bar at low water, and would be nothing but a freight boat—proper vessels were well accommodated now...

CATHARINE BUNNELL MITCHELL MUSEUM REOPENS

From time to time we are very fortunate to receive items which families can no longer retain, and/or desire to retain. Recently, during a presentation at the Oronoque Country Club, Sabra Burritt shared with us a collection of newspaper articles which her mother had collected. In examining the articles, we found a few about our Historical Society which were extremely relevant. We have displayed a **Bridgeport Sunday Post** article, below, from September 26, 1976. You may download a full-sized copy of this article from our newsletter website's homepage.

BRIDGEPORT SUNDAY POST, SEPTEMBER 26, 1976 D-3

Stratford Historical Society Reopens Catharine Bunnell Mitchell Museum




THE DESIGNERS AND THE PRESIDENT — Einar M. Larson, left, who created and designed the exhibits in the Catharine Bunnell Mitchell museum, discusses a cartridge pouch from the Revolutionary war with George Bowditch, who drew up the plans for remodeling the museum and Jack Wardman, president of the Stratford Historical society. Mr. Wardman and Mr. Bowditch, who is chief curator of the Margaret Strong museum in Rochester, N.Y., and consultant on many aspects of the renovation in Stratford, both spoke during the program which reopened the museum. Mr. Larson drew the picture of Judson house and the museum annex, which is at the left.

MUSEUM REOPENS — In ceremonies on Sept. 12 the Catharine Bunnell Mitchell museum, adjacent to the Capt. David Judson house on Academy hill in Stratford, was reopened. It was originally dedicated on Nov. 8, 1959 as the result of a bequest of \$25,000 in the will of Mrs. Catharine Bunnell Mitchell for the collection. However during the 1960s the decision was made to bring the basic interior layout, exhibits and lighting up to date, a task which took six years of painstaking work while the museum remained closed. In the photo at right, Mrs. Donald Fowler, center and Mrs. Vincent Chapman, right, co-chairmen with Einar M. Larson of the exhibits committee, show Mrs. Larson some of the items in the display equipment. The portrait of George Washington, which hangs in the museum and is shown at the top of the page has an original letter written by the president mounted beneath it.



PART OF THE CHINA COLLECTION — Mrs. John W. Richardson, right, charter and life member of the Stratford Historical society and Mrs. Alan Barrows of the museum's exhibits committee, listen as Franz Goldbach, also of that committee, discusses a piece of the rare Chinese export porcelain displayed in the museum.



Sunday Post photos
by
Wayne Ratzenberger

THE CHURCH KEPT THE RECORDS — Stratford Town Manager Bern Ewert, left, stands in the exhibit which tells of Stratford being settled in 1639 by Adam Blakeman and his company of 13 families and how the records were kept by the church. With him are Donald Fowler, center and Elden Dustin of the exhibits committee. Unlike other New England communities of those days it was not necessary to be a member of the church to participate in governing Stratford.



INDIAN EXHIBIT — Franz Goldbach and Einar Larson look at a large clam shell in the Indian exhibit. Since this variety is no longer found in local waters it has become a part of this area's history. The exhibit deals with the Indians of the Stratford area, the Pootatuck, Quheag and Pequonnock.



SAMPLING THE PUNCH — Mrs. William Morrison, right, pours a glass of punch for Bonnie Smith, center left, chairman of the hospitality committee, to sample before the program in Christ Episcopal church, Stratford, which officially reopened the museum. With them are Mrs. John Andrews, left and Mrs. F. Paul Kurmay, who also served on the hospitality committee.

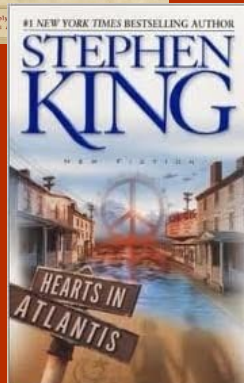
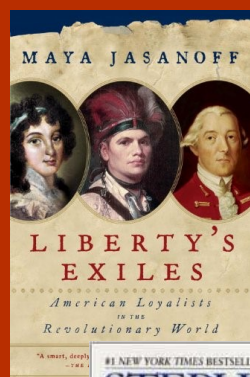




The official website for Connecticut's celebration of the Suffrage Centennial is <https://votesforwomenct.com>.



Florence Lewis (from the February 26, 1951 *New York Herald Tribune*).



INFLUENZA AND WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

Much has been written, of late, including articles in *The New York Times*, of the nearly devastating effect the 1918 flu epidemic had on the nation's Women's suffrage movement. Frequently overlooked are the opportunities the flu presented to women in the latter part of 1918-1920.

It has been said in several studies that in areas that had the fewest numbers of flu infected residents, during 1918, two factors could be identified as contributing to the lower infection rates: strong leadership, and the availability of competent nurses. In many areas, the strong leadership was often provided by female health authorities and nurses. Residents in those areas led by strong women leaders and nurses not only recognized the contributions of these women, but, also, began to change the perception of women in America.

A 2018 Texas A&M magazine article entitled "**How The Devastating 1918 Flu Pandemic Helped Advance US Women's Rights**," concluded with the following paragraph, "*The 1918 influenza pandemic was devastating. But the massive human tragedy had one silver*

lining; it helped elevate women in American society socially and financially, providing them more freedom, independence and a louder voice in the political arena."

As *The New York Times*, *National Public Radio*, *National Geographic*, and several other publications have noted, the 1918 flu did lay low many of the leaders of the Suffrage movement. For a time, a leadership gap existed in the movement as adjustments were made to compensate for those women incapacitated by the 1918 flu. However, leadership was coming from outside the movement in the care of the sick, and the sickened communities, by competent women leaders. Women, such as Stratford's own Florence Lewis, were widely praised and respected for their roles in combating the epidemic. As the flu began to abate, women's changed role in America helped move the 19th amendment towards adoption in 1920.

The aforementioned Texas A&M article continued with the following.

"Increased participation in the workforce allowed many women to obtain social and financial

independence. Leadership positions within the workforce could now be occupied by women, especially in the garment industry, but also in the military and police forces. The U.S. even got its first woman governor, when Nellie Taylor Ross took her oath of office, in 1923, in Wyoming. An increased ability to make decisions in their personal and professional lives empowered many women and started to elevate their standing.

With the war over and increased female participation in the labor force, politicians could not ignore the critical role that women played in American society. Even President Wilson began to argue in 1918 that women were part of the American war effort and economy more broadly, and as such, should be afforded the right to vote.

Outside of work, women also became more involved in community decision-making. Women's changing social role increased support for women's rights. In 1919, the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs was founded. The organization focused on eliminating sex discrimination in the workforce, making sure women got equal pay and creating a comprehensive equal rights amendment."

BOOKS OF NOTE

During this time of COVID isolation, it's an opportune time to examine some of the books you may borrow, virtually, from the Stratford Library through their "Libby" online book service.

Noted horror author, Stephen King, spent a portion of his grammar school years living with his mother in the Town of Stratford. In one of Stephen King's earliest works, he deploys Stratford as the backdrop for his novel "**Hearts in Atlantis**".

In this early Stephen King novel, he renames many Stratford streets and place names. For instance, in his book, Stratford is called "Harwich". Stephen retains the names West Broad Street and Sterling House as the identities of these real life places.

Other actual places, though

renamed, are easily identified through Stephen's recollections such as Barnum Avenue and Main Street. "**Hearts in Atlantis**" is an interesting read and provides a bit of surrealism to a boyhood spent in Stratford.

"**Liberty's Exiles**" you should read simply because its such a "game changer" in terms of how you'll think of the Tories stranded in America during the Revolutionary War. Author Maya Jasanoff states in this enlightening read, "*60,000 Loyalists fled New York when Washington entered - about 1 in 40 members of the American population...Historians estimate that between 20-33% of Americans remained loyal to the king.*"

Not in all my years studying American history was I ever enticed to consider the position the law-abiding citizens of

our country were in who wished only to remain loyal to their king. I always thought of the Tories, more or less, as traitors to America. From their standpoint, they viewed the "Patriots" as traitors to the King. The Tories have been villainized in American history, yet, most were anything but villainous. They were simply law-abiding citizens coming down on the wrong side of the Revolution.

This book will help you see the Tories in a whole new light. They were frequently beaten, and, in some cases murdered, for doing nothing more than remaining loyal to Britain. Stratford's own William Samuel Johnson was, at times, thought of as a traitor to the cause of Freedom.

BOOTHE MEMORIAL PARK OPENS FOR 1969 SEASON

From time to time we are very fortunate to receive items which families can no longer retain, and/or desire to retain. Recently, during a presentation at the Oronoque Country Club, Sabra Burritt shared with us a collection of newspaper articles which her mother had collected. In examining the articles, we found a few about our town which were extremely relevant. We have displayed a **Bridgeport Sunday Post** article, below, from September 26, 1976. You may download a full-sized copy of this article from our newsletter website's homepage.

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, MAY 4, 1969

Connecticut Park Shows A Collection of Oddities



By KAREN DOBKIN and ALAN JON FORTNEY

STRATFORD, Conn.—"David Boothe," says Joseph Melnik, caretaker of Boothe Memorial Park, "had a saying that 'oddity attracts curiosity.'" But, according to Mr. Melnik, the park's strange array of 12 buildings attracts not only the curious, but also picnickers and parents looking to occupy their summer-free children.

Boothe Park, with its 123-year-old homestead, has another asset: It is near enough to Stratford's Shakespeare Theater to allow visitors to spend a pleasant afternoon in the park before driving over to the theater for an evening's entertainment.

A false but persistent local legend about the park's odd assortment of buildings is based on stories of a feud. Supposedly, David Boothe and his younger brother Stephen had developed hard feelings in 1922 over David's marriage to a 23-year-old Vassar woman. Stephen decided, in a huff, to build another residence and leave the newlyweds out of his life.

"Feud" Continued

The marriage did not last long, but the feud between the wealthy brothers went on. David, for spite, erected one outrageous building on his part of the property and Stephen replied in kind. Before the "battle of the buildings" was finished in the late 1930's, a dozen curious edifices were clustered about the original old residential area of the estate.

And the two brothers, so the legend goes, continued to live apart, glowering at each other from opposite ends of their architectural "battlefield" until their deaths in the late 1940's.

Mr. Melnik, a close friend of the Boothes for many years, knows how the buildings really came to be erected. He recounts that Stephen decided it would be "more fitting" for David and his bride to live in the old family homestead, so he constructed the second house. When the marriage dissolved, the two brothers decided to live together in the new house.

Every night, David would cross the lawn to the old homestead and light the lights to protect the house from burglars. Everyone in town continued to think that there was a feud afoot, and David did not want to dissuade them: It was as good as insurance against trespassers, and it also perpetuated his image as a curiosity.

Unusual Memorial

The reason the other buildings were constructed was that David wanted to leave an unusual memorial, since his family had been on the estate since 1653. Stephen concurred with the plans for the memorial. It is part of the oddity that so many townspeople still believe, and tell the story, that the structures were the result of a "feud" between these strange brothers.

The brothers were indeed eccentric. Mr. Melnik likes to tell of the time they invited a Reverend Anderson to dinner in honor of the clergyman's birthday. During the meal, the men talked of a cake Stephen had baked for their guest.

When it came time to cut the birthday cake, the clergyman took knife in hand

THE REDWOOD BUILDING—in center of "battlefield."

THE CLOCK TOWER—The building is now a museum.

BLACKSMITH SHOP—it has 44 corners and three spires.



Photographs by KAREN DOBKIN

and began to cut; he bore down on the knife, but he could not cut through. Not wishing to embarrass his hosts, he kept trying.

Finally, David asked, "Are you insulting my brother's baking?" With that, David took the knife and cut through with extreme ease.

The brothers had conceived an elaborate practical joke: The birthday cake was only half pastry. The half the Reverend Anderson was trying to cut was a wooden block that had been elegantly frosted to resemble the other half.

David Boothe was a religious man, but had little use for churches. To honor his mother, he built a memorial of a religious nature—three wooden crosses (sometimes inhabited by squirrels) in the shade of a Judas tree, which is a living "crown of thorns" over the crosses.

Outdoor Church

Right next to this "Calvary" is an outdoor church with a granite pulpit. The nave of the "church" is a sunken grassy rectangle. The walls are pine trees, the roof is the sky.

For many years, David Boothe sponsored Easter sunrise services there, and Mr. Melnik continues the practice to this day. This is usually the unofficial opening of the park's buildings.

digence with which he equipped his shop. Close to Stephen's house, David built a bell tower in 1937. "This tower," Mr. Melnik says, is "neither round nor square, nor up nor down." Mr. Melnik utters these words automatically, as though he has said them millions of times. The wooden structure looks as if it had been built with no plan in mind.

In its shadow is a small shelter for trolley passengers. It was erected in 1908 along the trolley line that ran near the Housatonic River, at the base of the estate. When the line was replaced by a rural highway, David Boothe hauled the shelter up the hill and put it in his front yard.

Half Norwegian, Half Chinese

In the center of the "battlefield" is a structure that looks like a Norwegian stovkirke crossed with a Chinese pagoda. This is called the Redwood Building, but it is commonly known as the "Basket House" because David once had it filled to capacity with baskets made by local Indians.

He constructed the house as a symbol of the Depression. He used red cedar logs to symbolize the fact that "everything was in the red," and laid each board flat, not vertically, to symbolize "that everyone was flat broke."

When David died in 1949, at the age of 81, he was without heirs and willed his entire estate to the town of Stratford.

The grounds include the dozen buildings and 47 acres. The money he left in his will cannot be used for anything except maintaining the land as a park. The three full-time gardeners mow about 25 acres during the summer months, according to Mr. Melnik.

There are picnic tables and small fireplaces scattered about the park. Mr. Melnik plants and cares for a huge flower garden and a rose garden. But most of the land is merely tree-full and peaceful. The whole idea of the park was to leave it green and pleasant for the people of Stratford to use.

No Guided Tours

There are no guided tours, no brochures about the place and there is no admission charge. The park is never closed, but the buildings become dark and cold in winter; as a result, the collections, in order to preserve them, are kept locked until spring. However, if anyone comes by "and they want to see the buildings, we open them up and let them go around," says Mr. Melnik.

Boothe Park is easy to get to from the Merritt Parkway. It is less than a mile south of Exit 538. At the bottom of the eastbound exit ramp, a sign indicates the way to the park.

SCRAPBOOKED NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

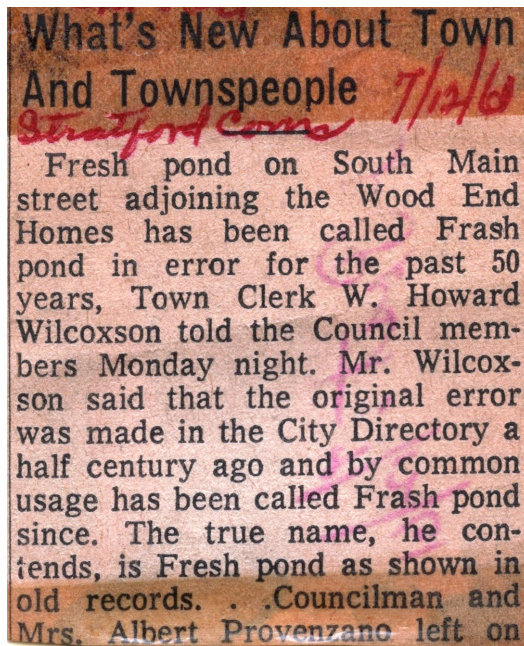
Sabra Burritt greeted us at a meeting of the Oronoque Village Garden Club in early March. She kindly shared with us a collection of newspaper articles which her mother had collected. There were so

many items of interest in Sabra's collection, that we wanted to share some of those newspaper articles with you in our newsletter. We'll place copies of these articles on our newsletter website's

homepage so that you may download copies for yourself should you choose to do so. Many of Sabra's collected newspaper articles were in very good shape after many years of having been stored away. Consequently, our scans of these newspaper articles produced very clear, very beautiful copies. You may find these newspaper articles at

www.stratfordhistoricalsociety.info.

A note accompanying the article to the right states: 1750 First Masonic Lodge. Col. David Wooster of Stratford Connecticut.



Stratford Historical Society

967 Academy Hill Rd

P.O. Box 382

Stratford, CT 06615

Phone: (203) 378-0630

Fax: (203) 378-2562

E-mail: judsonhousestfd@aol.com

newsletters@stratfordhistoricalsociety.info

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

www.stratfordhistoricalsociety.org