

THE CUPHEAG CORNER

VOLUME II, ISSUE 7

JULY 2020



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

MARK THE DATES:

- "I Now Pronounce You Lucy Stone", September 3rd, Stratford Library, 7pm
- William Samuel Johnson Day commemoration, Wednesday, October 7th, 9am, Town Hall
- Black Suffragettes, October 27th, 7pm, Town Hall.

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I NOW PRONOUNCE YOU LUCY STONE

Thursday, September 3rd, 7:30 pm, Stratford Library, 2203 Main Street

As part of Stratford's year long commemoration of the 1920 enactment of the Equal Suffrage Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, we have scheduled some wonderful events. The first of which will be held May 28th at Town Hall.

History At Play has garnered nationwide attention for their one-woman living history performances, chronicling the lives of legendary women who changed society. The fiery performance **I Now Pronounce You Lucy Stone** has received accolades from journalists, actors, and historians alike and was featured on the WGBH Forum, a series of lectures and performances selected by WGBH to be streamed online. Now, in honor of the 2020 centennial celebration for Women's Suffrage, Lucy Stone travels to Stratford, CT on **Thursday, September 3rd, 2020** to the Stratford Library (2203 Main Street, Stratford) to tell her incredible story at **7:30 pm** in a one-time only event sponsored by the

Stratford Historical Society and underwritten by the Mayor's Charitable Golf Tournament Fund. This 60-minute presentation is suitable for all ages. Followed by a Q&A session. Free and open to the public. For more information see www.townofstratford.com/19thamendment or call 203-378-0630.

In this presentation of **I Now Pronounce You Lucy Stone**, History At Play Founder and Artistic Director Judith Kalaora is Lucy Stone: The first woman from Massachusetts to earn a college degree, a fierce abolitionist, and women's rights activist. Challenging discrimination is not easy, but Lucy Stone is never one to take the easy road. Even Susan B. Anthony credited Lucy Stone for her involvement in the tumultuous women's rights movement. The fight for suffrage is ferocious, so come along for the ride!

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

The Washington Times, History At Play Founder and Artistic Director Judith Kalaora expressed the delight and difficulty in portraying one of the first women in the Abolitionist and Suffragist Movements, Lucy Stone. Jordan Rich, of WBZ Radio (The Jordan Rich Show), states, "She's a one-woman force of nature and inhabits these women...it takes people like Judith to bring these stories to life...these lost pieces of history."



Judith Kalaora as Lucy Stone.
Photo by Chris Cavalier
Photography

"Realists use an awareness of the past to inform the present and future."

Influenza: The Hundred-Year Hunt to Cure the 1918 Spanish Flu Pandemic, by Jeremy Brow

HISTORICAL SOCIETY HAPPENINGS

Despite the continued inconvenience of dealing with the COVID-19 virus, your Society is keeping busy on many fronts.

First of all, On July 30th at 7 pm we will be holding a virtual **General Membership Meeting** to review proposed changes to the Society's by-laws. You may join that meeting by computer at <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/145614837> or by phone at (224) 501-3412 with access code 145-614-837.

Secondly, we have rescheduled the "**I Now Pronounce You Lucy Stone**" presentation to September 3rd at 7:30pm. We had scheduled this presentation to be held at the Stratford Library, but that is seeming

highly unlikely at this point. We will most likely need to make this presentation "virtual" as well. We'll keep you updated as we know more.

Our Education Committee is busily working on a "virtual" presentation which can be given in lieu of Judson House tours. At this point, it appears it could be some time before we'll be able to conduct school programs on the Society's grounds.

On Wednesday, October 7th at 9am at Town Hall, we are planning our annual observation of **William Samuel Johnson's birthday**. We'll be making this commemoration a safe, socially distanced one.

On Tuesday, October 27th at 7 pm at Town Hall, Professor Gloria J. Browne-Marshall, J.D./M.A. is sched-

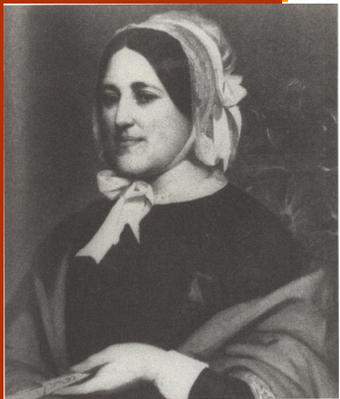
uled to make a presentation on America's black suffragettes. Dr. Browne-Marshall is the author of many books including "**The Voting Rights War: The NAACP and the Ongoing Struggle for Justice**", "**Race, Law, and American Society: 1607 to Present**", and "**The Constitution: An African-American Context**".

We have scheduled the "**Suffragettes in Corselettes**" program for Saturday, December 12th at 2pm. This presentation should be a fun way to end our year of commemorating the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage. The program is a "virtual" one, and we'll provide more details in the very near future.

A REGRETTABLE COINCIDENCE



Portrait of Lillie Devereux Blake in 1859 while she was living in Stratford.



Sarah Elizabeth Johnson (1798-1867), mother of Lillie Devereux Blake. From *Katherine Devereux Blake and Margaret Louise Wallace, Champion of Women* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1943).



WOMEN VOTE
Connecticut Suffrage Centennial

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

We've struggled for years, as a community, with keeping the memory of Dr. William Samuel Johnson alive for Stratford, our state, and our nation. As one of our truly great founding fathers, and our first Connecticut U.S. Senator, it's astounding that so little attention is paid to Dr. Johnson.

Earlier in June, Barbara Heimlich, a Stratford town resident, called to alert us to the proposed demolition of the house at 2019 Main Street. This house most recently had been known as the **Golden Rooster Consignment Shop** located across the street from Christ Church. Barbara explained that this home had been the one-time dwelling of Lillie Devereux Blake, a suffrage leader of national import.

We were taken aback that Ms. Blake appeared nowhere on our "radar screen," and we went right to work to learn more about her.

We began our Lillie Devereux Blake search with Google. We learned so much about this amazing woman including the fact that Lillie was the great granddaughter of William Samuel Johnson and had spent some of her growing up years living in the William Samuel Johnson home on the corner of Main Street and West Broad.

We discovered a biography of Lillie written by **Grace Farrell**, a professor at Butler University and Director at Writing on Ninigret Pond, Charlestown, Rhode Island.

Ms. Farrell's biography of Lillie Blake was published in 2010, and stated that the information in the biography about the time Lillie Blake spent in Stratford was largely the result of the time Ms. Farrell spent with Joyce Bradbury, librarian

and volunteer at the Stratford Historical Society!

We then did what we should have done before checking Google. We searched through our Society's newsletter archives. **Joyce Bradbury** was mentioned in several issues of our newsletter from September 1983 through November 2003. Joyce passed away in May of 2003.

Further study of our newsletter archives led us to a March 2003 profile of Lillie Devereux Blake; the research for the article was the work of Joyce Bradbury. We learned from our research that Joyce Bradbury had been the person who identified 2019 Main Street as Lillie Devereux Blake's mother's home and the home in which Lillie wrote her first novel, **Southwold**. Joyce had published an earlier profile of Lillie in the November 1998 newsletter.

That's a lesson learned! From now on, we begin our Stratford research in our Society's newsletter archives.

Sadly, despite Joyce's best efforts, Lillie Blake was lost to the memory of the current Stratford Historical Society officers. We went to work with Barbara Heimlich to ensure 2019 Main Street was preserved. As of this date, the developer of the property behind Lillie's former home on Main Street plans to preserve and "repurpose" Lillie's mother's former home.

We provide the following snippet from Joyce's 2003 profile of Lillie:

Footnotes from Farrell's book

read "Elm Cottage is mentioned in both Blake's unpublished autobiography and her daughter's biography, but the Stratford Historical Society had no record of an 'elm cottage.' Joyce Bradbury, however, found land records confirming that Mrs. Sarah Devereux owned property across the street from the Episcopal church. There is now more than one house across from the church, but oral history has it that in the house now known as the Golden Rooster Consignment Shop (previously called Christ Church House after the Episcopal church which bought it) a deed with Eli Whitney's name on it was found tucked away in the back of a closet. Land records show that in 1861, Eli Whitney, Jr., gave Mrs. Devereux a mortgage on property across from the church. Joyce Bradbury obtained a copy of the deed from the church records. Mrs. Devereux sold Elm Cottage to Mary and William Strong of Stratford on March 14, 1862. An 1867 map indicates the Strong house in the position of the Golden Rooster. From these two pieces of evidence supplied by Joyce Bradbury, it seems clear that the Golden Rooster is Elm Cottage."

In this year commemorating the ratification of the 19th amendment, we are SO grateful to **Barbara Heimlich** for alerting us to the life of Lillie Devereux Blake. What a sad coincidence that two lions of American democracy, Dr. Johnson, and his great granddaughter, Lillie Blake, have largely been lost to American history.



"Elm Cottage", 2019 Main Street, Stratford.



Grace Farrell author of *Lillie Devereux Blake: Retracing A Life Erased* from her Facebook page.



Barbara Heimlich, Stratford resident, alerted us to the proposed demolition of "Elm Cottage" from her Facebook page.

DATELINE STRATFORD JUNE-JULY 1955

The Bridgeport Post
June 8, 1955

STRATFORD OPENS BIDS ON POLICE BUILDING

Bids for construction of a new Stratford Police Court Building were opened last night in the Municipal building, and it was disclosed that the apparent low bidder was the Herman W. Johnson Construction company, of Stratford, which submitted a price of \$211,825...The new building will be located north of Fire headquarters on Main street, opposite the Municipal building.

The Bridgeport Post
June 9, 1955

PRIZES ARE GIVEN RANKING STUDENTS

The class dinner of the 1955 graduating class of Stratford High school last night in the Stratfield hotel was highlighted by the announcement of scholarships and student awards.

Helen Ferrarese, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Vincent Ferrarese, 49 Wiebe avenue, Stratford, was announced as the winner of the Bridgeport Rotary club \$300 scholarship. She will attend New Britain State Teachers college in September.

The Bridgeport Post
June 10, 1955

Fund-O-Rama Program Listed For Sterling Park June 17-18

The Sterling House Fund-O-Rama for the benefit of the Sterling House fund, will take place in the Community Center June 17 and 18 under the auspices of the Sterling House Council, Mrs. Mary Hardy, executive secretary has announced.

...There will be exhibitions by the Bridgeport Pipe band on Friday night and a special rifle shoot by the Stratford PAL junior rifle club both Friday and Saturday. The junior high school bands will present concerts both Friday

and Saturday evenings during the supper hours.

The Bridgeport Post
June 13, 1955

A Richly Deserved Tribute

Early this month when the General Assembly approved a bill to change the name of Nell's Island in the Housatonic river between Stratford and Milford to the "Charles E. (Shang) Wheeler Wild Life Area," the legislators paid a long overdue tribute to one of Connecticut's leading citizens and outstanding conservationists.

This action honored the memory of a man who throughout his life asked little for himself, spending most of his years doing something for others.

The change in the name of the island is most appropriate because Shang Wheeler spent most of his lifetime residing in Stratford and working in Milford. The Housatonic, the Sound and all the waterways along the coast of Connecticut were as familiar to him as his desk or his home.

The Bridgeport Post
June 18, 1955

LODGINGS AVAILABLE FOR BARD VISITORS

Christine Raguskus, director of accommodations for the American Shakespeare Festival, at Stratford, announced that more than 200 single and double rooms in Stratford homes have been registered at the accommodations office as available for overnight guests in Stratford itself, while in nearby Bridgeport and New Haven, with connecting bus service, there are more than 400 bedrooms to say nothing of rooms in nearby motels. These accommodations compare favorably with the other two Stratfords in England and Canada.

The Bridgeport Post
July 2, 1955

2 Seized As Armed Bandits As Police Surround Store

Stratford and Bridgeport police captured two armed bandits at 11:49 o'clock last night as they attempted to rob the Tip Top Market, 532 Success avenue, while a confederate held the proprietor, his wife and two children at revolver point in their home several blocks away. The third man is being sought.

...The proprietor, Charles Santini, 40, of 480 Bishop avenue, told police he received a telephone call about 10:30 p.m. in which a man made an obscene proposal, and he later theorized that the call was to determine whether or not he was home.

The Hartford Courant
July 17, 1955

'Toast' Pops Up From Stratford Sunday, Aug. 7

"Toast of the Town" audiences will get their first glimpse of the recently completed American Shakespeare Festival Theater and Academy at Stratford, Conn., when Ed Sullivan originates his program from there, Sunday, Aug. 7 (CBS Television, 8:00-9:00 p.m., EDT).

Sunday Herald
July 31, 1955

Cardinals Beat Baltimore

The Raybestos cardinals captured the third annual Charity Softball Bowl title last night by defeating the powerful Trenton Democratic Club of Baltimore, 2-0, at Memorial Field, Stratford, before a crowd of 2,100 fans.

...Johnny Spring was in great form as he set the Maryland team down with two scattered hits. Ernie Bertolini got the first with two down in the opening inning by beating out a bunt while Bucky Kimmett got a clean single in the last stanza for the other hit.



Watching councilman Arthur Hart, Stratford School Building Needs Committee chairman, break ground for Chapel St. School. L-R: Mrs. Paul Deegan, Putney PTA president and son, Paul; Mrs. George Tomlinson, former Putney PTA president; Richard Blake, public works director; Dexter B. Hill, representative of Home & building Finance Agency; Edwin Cox, school superintendent; Ernest Mortenson, Lyons & Mather architect; George Hickey, contractor; and Harry Flood, town manager. **Sunday Herald**, June 19, 1955.



The Raybestos Cardinals, boasting one of the strongest teams in the nation...The local team's roster includes: L-R: First row, Frank Kuchta, Billy Wojje, Ed Connolly, Jack McLeod, Bob Ormond, Phil Baroff, John Kalafus and Art Brauer. Back row. Asst. Coach Bill Griglock, Nick Santo, Howie Wieland, Ed Tickey, Tony Pagliuca, Junior Bieling, Coach Don Beers and scorer Vin Cullen. Missing from photo, Johnny Spring, George Adams, Billy Smith and Al Martin. **Sunday Herald**, July 24, 1955.

NOW SHOWING JUNE-JULY 1955



Stratford Theater c 1946

June 5th	Conquest of Space	Walter Brooke, Georgiann Johnson
June 12th	The Sea Chase	John Wayne, Lana Turner
June 19th	20,000 Leagues Under the Sea	Kirk Douglas, James Mason, Paul Lukas, Peter Lorre
June 26th	Marty	Ernest Borgnine, Betsy Blair
July 3rd	The Magnificent Matador	Maureen O'Hara, Anthony Quinn
July 10th	Battleground	Van Johnson, John Hodiak, George Murphy
July 17th	Davy Crockett	Fess Parker, Buddy Ebsen
July 24th	Far Horizons	Fred McMurray, Charlton Heston, Barbara Hale
July 31st	Strategic Air Command	James Stewart, June Allyson

SHAKESPEARE THEATRE OPENS



Opening night staging of *Julius Caesar*, July 12, 1955. Photo credit: Fred Fehl.



Opening night crowd in the lobby of the theatre. *Sunday Herald*, July 17, 1955.



Gene Tierney and her mother Belle Taylor Tierney enjoying opening night. *Sunday Herald*, July 17, 1955.



Raymond Massey as Brutus and Jack Palance as Cassius in "*Julius Caesar*." The *Hartford Courant*, July 10, 1955.

As we look back 65 years to the opening of the American Shakespeare Festival Theatre, it's so easy to want to beat our breast, writhe in anger at the Town and State, and, generally feel we somehow let ourselves, as taxpayers down, with the demise of the Shakespeare Theatre.

Realistically, the Theatre was never the brain child, nor passion, of the town and its taxpayers. It was the dream of one man, one non-resident man, Lawrence Langer. We should consider the Theatre's failure in the same light that we consider the failures of Raybestos, Contract Plating, and Avco Lycoming.

One man's dream ultimately became the tax and environmental burden of our town. Was the Theatre worth saving as a burden to Stratford taxpayers? Were Raybestos, Contract Plating, and Avco Lycoming worth saving for the same reason? Food for thought...

That said, July 12th, 1955 was an exciting time, indeed, in ye olde Stratford. The American Shakespeare Festival Theatre opened for its maiden performance that evening. Crowds flocked from all over just to see the theatre and thrill at its "million dollar grandeur."

Visitors for the Theatre's

opening including the Mayor of Stratford-on-Avon, Dudley Woodman, and Soviet newspaper *Pravda* columnist Yevgeny Litoshko. Cables were received from Winston Churchill, and other nobles, congratulating the founders of the Theatre on its opening.

The critics, on the other hand, weren't too kind to the opening play, "*Julius Caesar*". More on this later in our newsletter.

We have collected a number of newspaper articles that were published in 1955 related to the Theatre's opening. You may view these articles at <http://shakespeare.stratfordhistoricalsociety.info>.

Sunday Herald

July 10, 1955

Bard Theater Lists Roll of Honor

By ETHEL BECKWITH

The original cast included:

Lawrence Langner, Joseph Verner Reed, Lincoln Kirstein, Marlene Chatin, Helen Menken, Architect Edwin Howard, Engineer Walter Binger, Attys. David Goldstein, Ken Bradley and Bob Trovethan, The Herald, Dirk Grayson, D. James Morey, Ray O'Connor, Mrs. Forrest Davenport, Alice Orme Smith, Mrs. Oscar Peterson and Mrs. Edward Raguskus.

As Langner walked about the Shakespeare Theater yesterday,

he recounted the above cast and declared, "We couldn't have done it without them."

From five years of fighting, Langner was looking now at a million-dollar, -charming real theater—America's first shrine to the greatest writer who ever lived.

"How do you feel?" the reporter asked foolishly.

He had just shown the so far secret picture of the finished stage for "*Julius [sic] Caesar*." Roman citizens would fill the two-story boxes.

The steps of the capitol will extend out in a grand, "Cinerama" effect. The audience will feel it's plumb in the bosom of the great political play.

Instead of answering the question, Langner, father of this incredible non-profit institution, walked on silently. As if to bring himself back to earth, he remarked, "Did you know we have air-conditioning machines? The heating and cooling Calibans, as you call them, cost \$150,000."

Like a wonderstruck kid, Langner looked out on a sweet, countryish, tree-shadowed river. Small boats dotted the Housatonic as if they were posing for post-card pictures.

Langner, who is president of the Theater Guild and owner and founder of Westport Country Playhouse, then took the reporter downstairs to look once more at the stage, America's literary altar.



Leora Dana will portray Portia and Raymond Massey, Brutus, in "*Julius Caesar*," when the Shakespeare Theatre opens July 12, *The Hartford Courant*, July 3, 1955.



Lawrence Langner framed by a door of the Theatre, *Sunday Herald*, July 1, 1955.



Mayor of Stratford-on Avon, Dudley Ernest Woodman with his wife, on Fifth Avenue, before journeying to Shakespeare Theatre, *The Hartford Courant*, July 11, 1955.

STRATFORD'S ELMS UNDER ATTACK

Before Dutch Elm disease and the hurricane of 1938, Stratford's elms were under attack by "bugs." The photo to the right, from 1890, shows elms lining the east side of Main Street. Each elm tree is girdled, about 5 feet from the ground, with a band which was intended to keep the insect pests from reaching the trees' foliage. It's hard to imagine elms of this size lining Main Street. However, there are young elms growing, here and there, on Main Street between Stratford Cen-

ter and Stratford Avenue. Let's hope these young elms fare better than their forebears. Unfortunately, several have already succumbed.

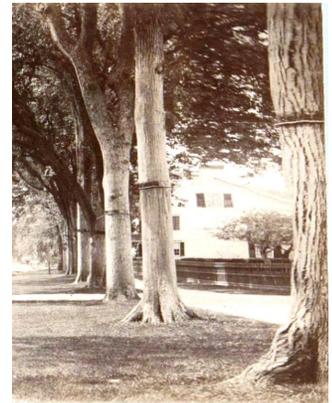
The Newtown Bee
June 7, 1895
STRATFORD'S ELMS ARE BEING RUINED

No plan tried so far, has proved successful in killing off the bugs from the elm trees. The chances are that our beautiful trees will soon be

stripped of leaves.

The Newtown Bee
June 21, 1895
STRATFORD'S ELMS BEING DESPOILED BY BUGS

The Village Improvement society met Tuesday evening. The principal matter discussed was finding of some remedy for the ravages of the elm tree beetle. Our beautiful trees are being rapidly devastated of all their foliage.



THEATRE OPENING SPARKS INTERNATIONAL INCIDENT

Shakespeare Theatre's opening was heralded with visitors from all over the world. One of the most unique visitors was Soviet *Pravda* reporter Yevgeny Litoshko. It took some fancy footwork from Connecticut's U.S. Congressman with the U. S. State Department to enable the visit. Stratford, suddenly, was cast into the public eye by being the scene of some unique theatrical diplomacy.

Sunday Herald
July 17, 1955

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

Reported on front pages of newspapers throughout the world, The Herald-created "Pravda incident" was closed yesterday with the State Dept. watching to see if Russia will relax restrictions on American reporters.

Meanwhile, The Herald's role in the episode was hailed yesterday as both a contribution toward improved international relations and as a "magnificent" effort on behalf of the Stratford Shakespeare Theater.

The *New York Times*, The *London Telegraph*, The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and other major newspapers coast to coast and abroad told on their front pages the running story of how the State Department relaxed a key policy at the instigation of *The Herald*.

It all started last week when The Herald cabled an invitation to *Pravda*, the official organ of the Russian Communist Party, inviting it to send a representative to cover the open-

ing of the Shakespeare Theater as a gesture of friendship.

The editors of *The Herald* were amazed to receive a return cable from *Pravda* Deputy Editor-in-Chief Zhukov, enthusiastically accepting the invitation.

But, Zhuvok pointed out, Connecticut was closed to Soviet citizens under a State Department administrative order.

This order, designating various parts of the country as off-limits to Russians, was issued in retaliation against restriction on Americans in Russia.

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

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

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

The State Dept. did consider the request on a "high level" with Sec. of State John Foster Dulles himself making the favorable decision.

Dulles said the *Pravda* correspondent would be allowed to visit Connecticut "on invitation of *The Bridgeport Herald*."

He stressed that it was hoped the Soviet government would see fit to treat Americans in Russia similarly.

Litoshko and his wife came to

Bridgeport Tuesday afternoon and went directly to the Shakespeare Theater where he was the "focus of interest."

Mr. and Mrs. Litoshko shared a box with Bishop Walter H. Gray of the Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut. There Litoshko held court as newspapermen passed in and out with their questions.

Earlier he had been barraged by photographers from the various newspapers and wire services.

Cong. Merino yesterday hailed the State Dept's easing of the ban on travel to Connecticut as a "wise decision" and as a "symbol of the better climate which we hope will continue up to and through the four power Summit [sic] meeting."

He added, "the Soviets will now be expected to show by concrete acts whether they will pursue the path of peace."

The entire incident was seen by many foreign observers as a move toward better relations between the U. S. and the Soviet.

It also was viewed as giving the State Dept. a weapon to obtain better treatment for American newsmen inside Russia.

Lawrence Langer, head of the American National Theater and founding genius of the Shakespearean Festival in "Stratford-on-Housatonic," hailed the episode as an indication of the universal appeal of the theater.

He congratulated *The Herald* for "a magnificent job of imaginative journalism" on behalf of the theater.

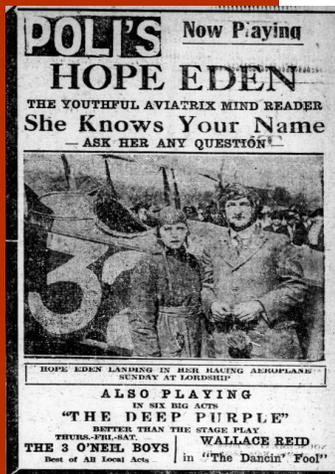


Mr. and Mrs. Yevgeny Litoshko between acts of Julius Caesar chat with Bishop Walter H. Gray, Suffragan bishop of Connecticut, with whom they shared a box at Shakespeare Theatre. *Sunday Herald*, July 17, 1955.



Mr. and Mrs. Yevgeny Litoshko arrive at Stratford train station. *Sunday Herald*, July 17, 1955.

BIG CROWD AT AIRPLANE RACE AT BEACH



Hope Eden shown after landing her aeroplane in Lordship. *The Bridgeport Evening Farmer*, July 28, 1920.

Since the beginning of aviation in America, Stratford has always been on the leading edge. Whether we're thinking of Gustave Whitehead, Corsair fighter planes, or helicopters, aviators have always been part of the "Stratford Story."

Bridgeport Evening Farmer June 28, 1920 **THOUSANDS GO TO BEACHES** **Much Interest In Aerial Race Yesterday Afternoon**

All roads led to the beaches yesterday afternoon when thousands of persons sought relief from the extreme heat and humidity of Bridgeport's first real summer Sunday. The 1920 bathing season was officially opened by record breaking crowds at Seaside park, Fairfield beach and other shore resorts within the immediate vicinity of

the city.

Despite the record attendance at the beaches yesterday not one accident was reported. As is usual with ideal weather conditions prevailing - the motor traffic was extra heavy. There were about 25 minor accidents reported to the police as a result of the heavy road traffic but none of the accidents resulted in any serious injuries to passengers and no bad smashes of vehicles were reported.

Fairfield beach and Seaside park were the meccas for the largest crowd although the aeroplane race, starting at Lordship, (between Miss Hope Eden, who appears at Poli's the first half of this week, and lieutenant Stewart Chadwick [sic], drew thousands of interested spectators to that place. Nose dives and other startling air stunts featured the race, in which Miss Eden was

returned the victor. It was the first air race that the majority of Bridgeporters had ever witnessed. Movie machine operators were on the job and took "close ups" of both of the racers and their crew.

Miss Eden was accompanied by Lieutenant Collins and Carroll Chadwick, brother of lieutenant Chadwick, accompanied his brother in the other machine. Judging by the reception accorded Miss Eden yesterday when she first landed at Lordship and upon her victory over Lieutenant Chadwick there will be record breaking crowds in attendance at Poli's this week to pass judgment on her mind reading powers. "If she can read the minds of her audience as well as she can fly," said one of the interested spectators, "then it's a sure bet I won't take 'Friend Wife' to see the show."

HEADLINE NEWS FROM 1870

The Hartford Courant August 1, 1870

The action of the legislature compelling the cities of Bridgeport and New Haven to build the bridge between Stratford and Milford over the Housatonic river, is earnestly denounced here. Our citizens are heavily taxed to keep up on our own bridges, of which we have a large number, and do not see the justice of being compelled to build bridges in other towns. The residents of Stratford transact business in this city, passing and repassing over bridges built and kept free to the traveling public by our citizens. This is all well enough. We want their vegetables, their grain and their produce; but if they prefer to carry their wares to Milford, in an opposite direction from us, we do not see the justice in compelling us to build a free bridge for their use. With the same show of reason the legislature might have compelled Hartford to build the bridges in Manchester and Vernon destroyed by the freshet last fall.

The Bridgeport Farmer June 22, 1870

A man was brought to the police station last evening, by two Milford or Stratford officers, bound with a rope in the most cruel and inhuman manner. The cords cut into his wrists until the flesh was painfully swollen and sore. His arms were also tightly bound at the elbows. The offense of which he had been guilty was stealing a watch in Stratford.

The Hartford Courant June 27, 1870 **FAIRFIELD COUNTY**

A wandering vagrant recently stopped at the house of John W. Beach, in Stratford, where he was supplied with food. In return for it he appropriated a gold watch and chain, and then started on. The property was soon missed, and the thief followed and arrested.

The Bridgeport Farmer July 10, 1870

The women who have come regularly and sat patiently through it all with an intense longing for the ballot on their anxious faces, have not been over

-charming in appearance. Sharp of features, shriveled of form, and as a general thing lanky of limb, and acid of countenance. They are of a class, that whenever they do get the ballot, I should be content to see taking foreign missions. They are that sort of females that poke their parasols at you and scornfully call you a 'm-a-a-n!' who go through the world wearing an injured expression, who want something continually and have a vague notion it is the ballot, or men's wages or property rights.

The Hartford Courant July 21, 1870 **FAIRFIELD COUNTY**

A severe storm of wind and rain visited portions of Fairfield county on Monday afternoon. In Trumbull a field of corn and another of oats, belonging to Charles Beach, were leveled to the ground; several apple and forest trees on his premises were prostrated, and his ox-cart was taken up bodily and carried a distance of some forty rods from the place where it was standing. A large pine tree, that had defied the power of the elements for

forty or fifty years, on the premises of Wolcott Beach, in the same neighborhood, was blown down; but beyond this no other serious mischief was done on his farm. In Stratford the gale was very severe; trees were blown over, and corn and oats were more or less injured.

The Hartford Courant July 21, 1870 **FAIRFIELD COUNTY**

Burglars entered the house of Mr. Stiles Beers, in Stratford, about three o'clock on Thursday morning, and drank a pan of milk and carried away a few spoons.

The Hartford Courant July 23, 1870 **FAIRFIELD COUNTY**

A tramp called at the house of a Mrs. Beardsley in Stratford on Thursday morning and asked for something to eat, which was given him. Soon after he was gone it was discovered that fifty dollars in greenbacks, where were in the pocket of a coat hanging in the hall, were missing.

SEWERS HOT POLITICAL TOPIC IN 1920

Stratford's sewers have been a hot political topic for 100 years. The town's sewer assessments continue to annoy taxpayers to this day. Interestingly enough, some political hot potatoes never grow cold.

Bridgeport Evening Farmer

July 30, 1920

STRATFORD WARM AN ASSESSMENT FOR NEW SEWER

The committee appointed by the last

town meeting in Stratford to investigate the disposition of the \$900,000 which the town has set aside for the building of sewers held a meeting last night which was attended by a large number of Stratford property owners who are incensed by what they claim is the exorbitant assessment placed on property which fronts on the streets through which the sewers are laid.

These property owners claim that they were given to understand when the sewers were contracted for that

the assessment would be \$1 a front foot, but that the bills they are receiving call for an assessment at the rate of over \$2 a front foot.

The hearing was adjourned until next Tuesday night.

The committee is composed of Judge Thomas Coughlin, chairman; Charles Clayton, C. Neilson, Frank E. Conine, Robert Brandt and Richard J. Stanton.

They are investigating the costs of the sewers and the contracts made during the past two years.



Sewers being built on Main Street in 1919. Photo from the Stratford Historical Society archives.

SNAKE HUNTING & PROHIBITION

A new book, "America's Snake: The Rise and Fall of the Timber Rattlesnake", was recently brought to my attention. I couldn't resist delving into the book as I wondered if a book on timber rattlesnakes would cover the topic of rattlesnake hunting. Sure enough, it did.

Chapter 8 states begins:

"The den of rattlesnakes . . . was found to be an ugly looking place. It is a hillside of tumbled boulders, covered with moss. Here and there a tree shoots up and spreads enough greenery to keep a dim and unreligious light upon the den. You don't see snakes at first glance, but they are there, hundreds of them, under the boulders, or with just the tips of their noses out in the sunshine. **New York Times**, South Kent, Connecticut, May 20, 1906"

Perhaps America's most famous rattlesnake hunter was Stratford's own Shang Wheeler. Before Shang was known for phenomenal decoy carving artistry, he was known from 1901-1919 for leading rattlesnake hunts to the Schaghticoke tribal reservation in Kent. These notorious hunts drew large crowds and were attended by several members of the press including reporters from **The New York Times**.

The hunts came to an abrupt end in 1919 and I'd always thought it was because Shang had just become bored with the hunts. Shang was 48 that year, had been bitten by rattlers more than once on these hunts, and, perhaps, the lightning reflexes required to grab a snake behind the head without being bitten

were beginning to fail Shang.

As it turns out, there was a rather more "liquid" explanation.

The Hartford Courant

June 12, 1927

Paleface Tribe on Rattlesnake Hunt

...With nineteen snakes captured, six alive, the hunters now descended to "Cogg's" wigwam where they initiated new members. For this honor the tenderfoot had to take hold of a live rattlesnake back of his bead and hold him while sagwaw was sprinkled on him and the oath administered.

...A few years later, after publicity like this, the news reel men and rotogravure photographers far outnumbered the snakes to be seen, even after an hour or two of diligent hunting. The only thing which seemed to hold out before the increasing numbers was the **sagwaw**.

So here was a clue. Sagwaw seemed to be key to the hunts. The **Courant** article cited above contained several references to sagwaw. It appeared that sagwaw, as much as anything, defined snake hunting. It also appeared sagwaw had some medicinal properties as well as some stupefying properties.

The Kickapoo Joy Juice Company began in New Haven in 1888. Its origin and product list make for some entertaining reading. While Al Capp is credited with coining the beverage "Kickapoo Joy Juice", he was born in New Haven several years after the company's formation. Clearly, he borrowed the beverage name from the Kickapoo Company. One of the Kickapoo Joy Juice Company's products was sagwaw.

Formulas Published by the Company Starting In 1907:

INDIAN SAGWA: Soda Bicarb, Gentian Root, Mandrake Root, Cubebs Rubarb Root, Senna Leaves, Aniseed Red Cinchona Bark, Yellow Dock Root Dandelion Root, Burdock Root, Sacred Bark, Licorice Root, Aloes, Alcohol Glycerine, and Water.

<https://www.bottlebooks.com/kickapoo.htm>

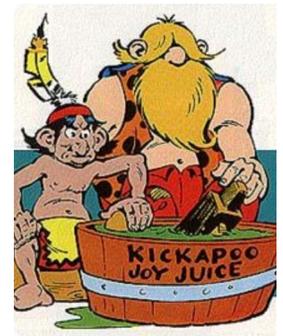
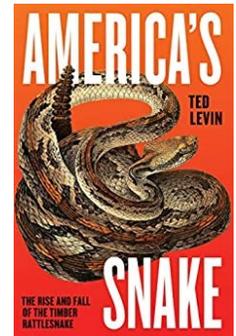
Sagwaw was known to be used by temperance people because they could receive a "jolt" from the beverage while not directly appearing to imbibe alcohol. Blood making and blood strengthening were some of sagwaw's noted medicinal benefits.

The 18th amendment was ratified by every state in the U. S., with the exception of Rhode Island and Connecticut, in 1919. The prohibition amendment was to go into effect January of 1920. It appears the rattlesnake hunts came to an end due to the unavailability of "sagwaw."

The 1927 **Courant** article noted a revival in interest in rattlesnake hunting in 1927 with these words:

Popularity and prohibition almost killed it. The mortar and pestle used for mixing the famous sagwaw, indispensable [sic] antidote always served before, during and after the hunt was buried with ceremony long years ago. Now the club starts a soberer but not a less dangerous career.

The complete 1927 **Courant** newspaper article is worth a read. You may find the article, in its entirety, <http://snake.stratfordhistoricalsociety.info>.



Lonesome Polecat and Hairless Joe syndicated by Al Capp 1934-1977.



Sagwa "medicine" bottle from <https://www.bottlebooks.com/kickapoo.htm>.

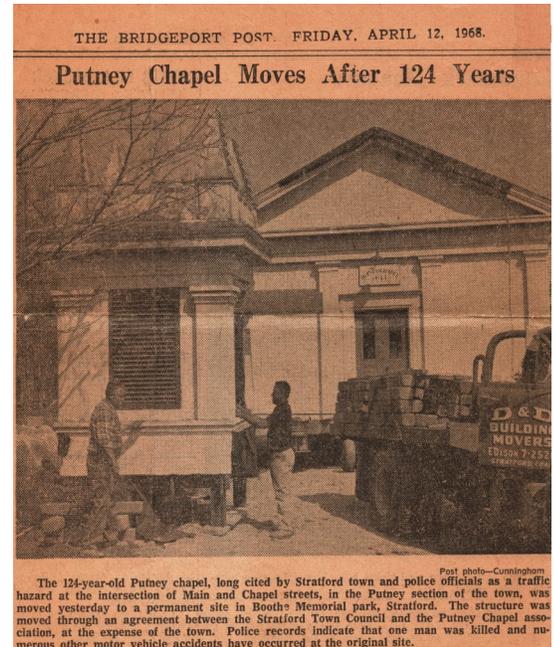
SCRAPBOOKED NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Sabra Burritt greeted us at a meeting of the Oronoque Village Garden Club in early March at the South Clubhouse Community Building of Oronoque Village. 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.

Most 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.

On the near right is a photo from *The Bridgeport Post*, September 9, 1961 showing the "golden rooster" being replaced on Christ Church after the steeple was hit by lightning the week before.

On the far right, Putney Chapel is disassembled before being removed from the middle of Chapel Street to be reassembled at its current location at Boothe Memorial Park on April 12, 1968.



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