

# Lyme Public Hall Newsletter



*The Lyme Public Hall Association, Inc.*

*Vol. 8, No. 1 Spring 2009*

## ACCOMPLISHING OUR MISSION

Along with appreciation of Lyme's history, culture, and community, the preservation and use of our historic 112 year old building is fundamental to the mission of the Lyme Public Hall Association. In this past year the association's board of directors oversaw three large ticket building maintenance/improvement items that had been under consideration for some time—as well as numerous smaller repairs and improvements.

First to be accomplished was the replacement of the furnace. The reliability of the existing 1950s vintage unit had become increasingly dubious. Further, in light of skyrocketing oil prices, the time was right for replacing the old 'monster' with a modern unit with a less voracious fuel appetite. In May, Wilcox Fuel of Westbrook made speedy work of removing the old and installing the new. This makes the Hall more comfortable for our activities—also more appealing as a rental venue for community and private events.

In September, DiNardo Painting of Lebanon arrived to give the Hall a much needed thorough exterior paint job. In a flurry of activity the crew stripped off peeling layers of old paint. The building stood in charming bare wood nudity for a few days, then received fresh primer and two top coats of pristine traditional New England white. On the heels of the paint job, local stonemason Marc Evankow and

his team set to work repairing and improving the building's lower façade. The masons' task was much like a giant three dimensional jigsaw puzzle. After disassembling the existing structure—and replacing failing internal structural steel—they successfully fit it back together again. In the process, they added conduit for future lighting and a wider capstone on the porch wall that's intended to help protect the just accomplished repairs.

When the stonework was back in place in better than before condition, board member George House applied a finishing touch. With a nod to the building's former life as Lyme's fire station, the old firehouse doorbell was salvaged and reinstalled. It's now wired to ring in the Hall's Local History Archives announcing the arrival of visitors.

Efforts like these and its recent landscaping have helped the Lyme Public Hall retain its charm—making it worthy of its place in center Hamburg where its contribution to the historic character of the community makes it an asset to the town. Along with the boards of directors past and present, the membership of the association can be proud of their role in this stewardship. For although the town owns the building, the care and keeping—and the funding that makes it possible—comes solely from the membership in the way of dues, donations and fund raisers. Thank you all for your support!



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## Carolyn Bacdayan Honored

On June 12, 2008 Carolyn Bacdayan was honored as the first recipient of the "Hiram P. Maxim II Lyme's Heritage Preservation Award". The Town of Lyme and the Lyme Public Hall Association created the award to commemorate Hiram P. Maxim II, the Lyme town historian from 1995 to 2008, in appreciation for his commitment to preserving Lyme's cultural heritage.



Lyme First Selectman Ralph Eno presented the award to Carolyn Bacdayan at the Lyme Public Hall during a celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Local History Archives at the Lyme Public Hall. Carolyn was instrumental in the creation and development of the archives and has been the volunteer archivist since its inception. The tribute recog-

nizes Carolyn's extraordinary dedication and commitment to preserving and promoting appreciation of the history of Lyme.

In presenting the award, Ralph Eno explained that Lyme is a forward-looking town because of the attention it pays to the past. He said, "In order to devise a meaningful plan for the future, you must have a good understanding of where you came from. Hiram thought preservation and appreciation of cultural heritage was a useful tool for making sure you steer the town in the right direction. Carolyn Bacdayan's work in the archives is a graphic embodiment of the principle that it is vitally important to the identity of the town to preserve its heritage for future generations."

### ***Having a Special Event?***

The Lyme Public Hall can accommodate a variety of activities.

#### ***Rent all or part of the building.***

The main hall seats 100 for lectures, or, with the tables set up, 65 for dinner. The small meeting room suits up to 15 people.

Rent the basement for a tag sale.

***For rental fees and availability,  
please call 860 434-2635***

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### **Who to contact:**

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Membership in the Lyme Public Hall Association is open to anyone with an interest in the Lyme community. The Association receives no town funding and is supported through tax deductible membership fees, donations, and fund raisers. We invite you to join. The membership year runs from May 1-April 30. Select the support level that works best for you. Make checks payable to Lyme Public Hall Association, Inc and remit to P.O. Box 1056, Lyme, CT 06371.

Supporting - \$15

Subscribing - \$25

Contributing - \$50

Sustaining - \$100

Additional donations of cash, appreciated securities, or future bequests are also welcome. Thank you for your continued support. To join our e-mail list for notice of upcoming Lyme Public Hall events, send a request to: [lymepublichall@comcast.net](mailto:lymepublichall@comcast.net)

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## Lyme Cemeteries

*Last June selectman and Lyme history enthusiast Parker Lord gave a talk at the Public Hall on Lyme's cemeteries. This article is a followup.*

My interest in Lyme's cemeteries began in the fall of 1995 when a group of us joined Hiram Maxim at Lord Cemetery on Route 156 to clean up debris that had accumulated over the years. It got me thinking about how many other old cemeteries there were in town. I am, of course, very familiar with the Joshuatown and the Ely Burying Ground Cemeteries as that is where my ancestors and family can be found. Elizabeth Putnam was instrumental in getting me involved with the Joshuatown site to keep it cleaned and raked every year. The Brockway Cemetery was another I knew of as it is situated behind where I used to live on Brockway's Ferry. But the others? There wasn't much information at the Town Hall so I took it upon myself to investigate. To my surprise, I found that there are 26 cemeteries throughout our 33 square miles, some obscure like the the sole Indian Cemetery off Beaverbrook Road to the largest, the North Lyme Cemetery with around 897 graves.

In my investigation I noticed how neglected some of the cemeteries were. It made me start thinking about what the people of Lyme could do to bring them back to their former glory. I approached the Lyme Cemetery Commission with a request for help and was pleased with the assistance some of the commission members extended to me. Up until then, their main concern had been the normal care and maintenance of the Eight Mile River Cemetery.

Over the past year the Commission has been addressing much needed work in our other cemeteries. Trees pose a problem in that their root systems may upset headstones and their dying limbs may do further damage. Major tree work has been done in three cemeteries and will include three more as the limited budget will allow. Three successful work parties removed branches, small trees, and brush from the Cedar Hill, Pleasant View, and Grassy Hill cemeteries. Allen Petri repaired and replaced the iron railings between granite stone posts that enclose the Grassy Hill Cemetery.

The cleaning and clearing of the cemeteries was not the only work completed. For many years, Eleanor O'Connell placed American flags on the graves of our town veterans. Jim Beers continues this labor of respect and thanks. Jim and Tom Davies have done extensive research and have increased the number of eligible veterans honored with flags.



*Cove Cemetery*

Another one of my goals was to update the Hale Report. Conducted in 1934 this survey catalogued all Connecticut cemeteries. This fall Lyme Public Hall Association members working in the North Lyme Cemetery updated the report listing names from 1934 to the present. To date all the headstones from Lyme's 26 cemeteries have been recorded and the updated Hale Report will be available at the Town Hall, Library, and Local History Archives at Lyme Public Hall. Special thanks go to Ellen O'Herlihy, an out-of-town visitor who first came to the Local History Archives to search for the gravestone of her ancestor, John Mack. She subsequently offered to convert the information in the original Hale report to a searchable, computerized database which is now part of the archives.

With so much accomplished, we are far from finished. Volunteers are needed who will become stewards of some of the cemeteries. Two willing volunteers have already begun watching over their neighborhood cemeteries and anyone wishing to become a "Cemetery Steward" may contact me at 860-526-1436 or Tom Davies at 860-526-9868. My thanks go to the many wonderful volunteers who have already helped with this project.

*Parker Lord.*



*North Lyme Cemetery*

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## Some 2008 Acquisitions to the Archives

Materials associated with the work of the late Hiram P. Maxim as Lyme Town Historian, 1995-2008. They include his files on the documentation of the ownership history of over seventy-five historic homes in Lyme, correspondence, photographs, and preservation reference works. They also include his research and project papers on Lyme's colonial era cemeteries. The acquisition is not only a very useful resource but it also reflects Hiram's initiative and contribution to historic preservation in Lyme. *Gift of Hiram P. Maxim II*



*Deacon Richard Ely House, c. 1685, Ely's Ferry Road, Lyme, the earliest house among those researched by Hiram P. Maxim.*

*Hamburg and Its People*, digitized copy of a film made by Hiram Maxim's grandfather, H. P. Maxim, in 1926. Lyme Public Hall audiences will now be able to enjoy this vintage, 16 mm, black and white, silent film again. *Gift of Hiram P. Maxim II*



Photographs of the home that Alberta and Homer Pfeiffer reconstructed in colonial period style from a collapsing farm house on Mitchell Hill Road, Lyme in the 1930's. Alberta was a woman architect, rare in the early 20th century, who left a significant architectural legacy in more than 250 projects, most of them in the area. She also left her mark on mental health advocacy in the region, service on various town commissions and organizing the well-known Hadlyme Craft Show. Homer was also an architect, a well known artist, silversmith and fine wood worker. The photographs are a welcome addition to the Archives' existing holdings about these talented individuals. *Gift of Dorrit Castle*

Handwritten memoir and diaries of Joseph A. Caples (1873-1954), a farmer and lifelong resident of Gungy Road, Lyme. He was a descendant of Cuff Condol, a Native American slave, emancipated in 1790 who appears in the Lyme census of the same year. Caples attended

the Grassy Hill School, was an active member and treasurer of the Grassy Hill Church, and counted more than 60 farms on both sides of the river for which he sheared sheep. Personal papers such as these are very valuable sources for local economic and social history. *Gift of Jean Dill.*



Mounted sign on Maude Gates' car.

Maude Gates (1889-1994), a lifelong resident of Hadlyme, is still remembered for her 25 years as mail carrier on the RFD route for Hadlyme, North Plain and Hamburg 1927-1953. Rural Free Delivery was introduced nationally in 1902 and benefited the lives of people in rural areas like Lyme. Some small artifacts that have significance to Lyme and Hadlyme history are collected by the Archives. *Gift of Donald Buck.*



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## The Local History Archives at Ten Years

The Local History Archives marked its 10th anniversary in summer 2008 with a program of tribute to its many volunteers and an exhibit of “Treasures” that had been donated and collected over the past ten years. The Archives’ Collection continues to grow. In 2008 there were thirty-seven acquisitions. The memoirs, diaries, letters, maps, photographs, clippings, one room school work, schooner manifests, business ledgers and much more fill the shelves. The more than five thousand items from more than one hundred fifty donors have been organized, inventoried in a searchable data base, and preserved in proper archival storage materials.

Donations and visits to the Archives tell us that there is a growing awareness of the importance of preserving documents, personal papers, and other evidence of Lyme’s history. Individuals, Lyme organizations, area museums and archives, students, the media and the Town of Lyme have all used the Archives. This year, Reynolds Garage and Marine found



*Medals, fair prize ribbons, and one-room school awards on display in July*

considerable material for a publication and upcoming exhibits at the Lyme Public Hall and Connecticut River Museum in honor of their 150th anniversary. The Public Hall also uses the Archives for its own programs, exhibits, and historical image cards.

More than 1000 hours of work were contributed to the archives by volunteers in 2008. A few examples: almost weekly help was given by Betsy Buch, Mary Catherwood and Doad Jewett, especially helpful with larger acquisitions that may take several sessions, or even months to complete processing. Diana Boehning continued skillfully transcribing interviews with Lyme residents from cassette tapes; Claire Sauer transcribed some 19th century business contracts and a memoir into typed copy; Ann Brubaker worked with a small collection of 19th c. daguerreotypes and tintypes for exhibit; Marta Cone proofed some transcriptions; Bar-



*Vintage Lyme photographs in the “Treasures from the Archives” exhibit*

bara Gustafson updated labels on a collection of house photographs with dates from Hiram Maxim’s house research. Carolyn Bacdayan is responsible for the management and operation of the archives.

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### *Share a few hours, a skill or interest with the Archives!*

- Create table-top exhibits using materials from the Archives’ Collection
- Transcribe to typed copy: letters and documents in old script
- Explore a topic for a news article, school report or one’s own curiosity
- Loan us photos, postcards, letters and documents to make scanned copies to add to the Collection

The public is welcome to the Archives. Public hours are Tuesdays 10-noon and by appointment.

For inquiries about using the Collection, exploring potential research topics, donating material or volunteer opportunities, please contact Carolyn Bacdayan at (860) 434-9292.

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## Preserving Textile Treasures

In October the Public Hall sponsored a workshop on paper and fabric preservation led by Carolyn Bacdayan, archivist for the Local History Archives, Susan Jerome, collections manager, University of Rhode Island Textiles Department and Mary Juillet-Paonessa, textile conservator. The following care and storage strategies were suggested at the workshop.

Choosing what to keep is the first step in organizing a collection. People save things for many reasons; some objects have historic significance while others possess sentimental value. Keeping a record which includes a detailed description of the object, the provenance (where it came from), age, and location of the piece in the house is critical. Digital images prove valuable for future condition assessment and insurance purposes.

Controlling the environment plays a critical role in preserving the longevity of any textile. Light, temperature, water, mold, pests, dust, and soils (resulting from food or chemicals) are all sources of possible deterioration. Ultra-violet rays from natural daylight and fluorescent light bulbs cause fabric dyes to fade, fibers to become brittle, and whites to turn yellow. Rotating textiles on display in your home every four months allows them to “rest” in storage the remainder of the year and extends the lifetime of collection pieces.

### Tips for Cleaning Textiles:

**Vacuuming:** Lay a clean window screen over the textile and vacuum gently. The screening protects fabrics from being pulled into the vacuum attachment and possibly ripping them.

**Washing textiles before storage:** Read the instructions on the detergent bottle! Use a product that contains both anionic and nonanionic surfactants and does not contain optical brighteners which change the character of older fabrics. Follow the recommended temperature setting for best results.



*Susan Jerome and a workshop participant*

The ideal climate for textiles ranges between 65-70 degrees and 50-55% relative humidity. Unfinished attics subject to temperature extremes and damp basements make poor storage choices. Temperatures above 70 degrees break down protein fibers rapidly while high humidity provides an ideal place for insects and mold to thrive.

Natural fibers (such as cottons, linens, and wool) are vulnerable when stored dirty. Pests, such as moths and carpet beetles, feed on food spills, fabric softener, and starch. Dust particles cut into fibers as they expand and contract with the humidity. Regular vacuuming with a low-power vacuum extends the life of the textile. Soiled items need to be evaluated for washing or dry cleaning before they are stored and when in doubt, consult a professional.

While many companies sell acid free products for storage there are less expensive ways to store textiles. Interior closets in your home usually maintain the most constant conditions ideal for hanging garments. Padded hangers minimize strain on garments that are not damaged or weak (such as garments with narrow straps, beads on net, or bias-cut knit fabrics. Those garments are best stored flat. Muslin garment covers provide protection from light and dust.

Cedar chests and plastic boxes, both popular for storage, need a word of caution. Unsealed wood provides an acidic environment harmful to cotton and linen fabrics. Yellow or brown marks on fabrics are signs of acid damage from direct contact with wooden chests, drawers, or bare shelves. Inexpensive plastic products made from PVC (including dry cleaner bags) are chemically unstable, trap moisture and allow light in.

Evaluating and storing valuable textiles may seem like an overwhelming task. It can be accomplished by taking one small step at a time. A little effort can add years to the life of your collectible. Want to know more? Mary Juillet-Paonessa recommends a paperback published by the Costume Society of America : *Your Vintage Keepsake: A CSA Guide to Storage and Display* by Margaret T. Ordonez.

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## Upcoming programs

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**Sunday, March 22, 2 p.m.**

***Panel: Options for the Preservation and Restoration of Historic Buildings***

(see details, page 8)

**Sunday, April 19, 2 p.m.**

***“17 Miles: Old Saybrook, the Birthplace of the Connecticut River Valley”***

Bob Czepiel, former trustee of the Old Saybrook Historical Society, will screen the documentary he produced which begins in 1635 with the settlement of the English colony of Saybrook, which included present day Lyme.

**Earth Day Weekend, April 25 and 26**

***Lyme Spring Clean-Sweep***

Annual town-wide roadside clean-up. Free trash bags are available at H.L.Reynold's (Jane's) Store and the Hadlyme Country Store. Town of Lyme will pick up bags left on side of road.

**Sunday, May 17, 2 p.m.**

***F.R.E.S.H. New London: Transforming our Food System***

Emily and Arthur Lerner will share perspectives about the power of our individual food choices and present information on the work of F.R.E.S.H (Food: Resources, Education, Security, Health) New London, an organization that actively promotes vibrant local food systems. Also appearing will be teen participants in the F.R.E.S.H. Youth Program.

**Sunday, May 24, 2 p.m.**

***Organic Vegetable Gardening, Sterling Heights Farm***

As a follow-up to the May 17th program, Albert and Carolyn Bacdayan will host a tour and conversation in their organic home vegetable garden on Sterling Hill Road, Lyme. Reservations required. 434-9292

**Thursday June 11, 6 p.m.**

***Annual Meeting & Potluck Dinner***

***Amos Congdon, Woodsman-a Personification of Historic Lyme.***

Tony Donovan, who spent time working with and photographing Amos Congdon at his sawmill in Lyme in the early 1970s, will present a talk with slides of his beautiful pictures. Community Potluck Dinner begins at 6:00 PM followed by the meeting and the program. Bring a main course, salad or desert to share for the potluck dinner. Beverages, plates and utensils will be provided. The event is open to the public.

**July 3, 1-4 p.m., July 4, 9 a.m. to 1p.m.,**

**July 5, 1-4 p.m.**

***An Exhibit at the Lyme Public Hall***

An exhibit organized by Reynolds Garage and Marine, Inc. celebrating the achievement of 150-years as a family-owned business in Lyme. Free and open to the public. The family-published pictorial history will be available for sale and signing. Book proceeds benefit the Lyme Public Hall.

**Saturday, August 1, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.**

***Annual Tag & Bake Sale***

A bargain hunter's delight! Set aside your donations for this fundraiser: furniture, tools, small appliances, house wares, linen, toys, decorative, and gift items.

**TBA-September or October**

***Bill Hill Historic Neighborhood Walking Tour***

The history of the charming Bill Hill Road area of Lyme will be the focus of a guided walk by Lyme Public Hall board members Wendolyn Hill and Ann Brubaker.

**Friday, September 25, 7 p.m.**

***Return to the River***

Parker Lord, Lyme Selectman, and history buff, will share adventures and photographs from his 410 mile canoe journey down the Connecticut River.

**Saturday, October 24, 3:45 p.m. to 6 p.m.**

***Selden Island Circumnavigation Cruise***

Experience the wonders of autumn on a sunset cruise aboard the RiverQuest. Wine, soft drinks, and specially prepared hors d'oeuvres will be provided. The price is \$40 for members of the Lyme Public Hall, \$45 for nonmembers. Proceeds support the Lyme Public Hall's programs. Call Marilyn Wilkins at 434-1211 to reserve a space on this trip.

**Early November TBA**

***National Archives Week***

The Local History Archives at the Lyme Public Hall will join other archives in recognizing of the importance of preserving original historical documents and papers, including those from our own community. For info call 434-9292

**Saturday, November 14, 5-7 p.m.**

***The Lyme Public Hall's Traditional Chowder Dinner***

Join us for this delicious Hall tradition, featuring homemade corn chowder, clam chowder, cole slaw, breads, and apple crisp.

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## Options for the Preservation and Restoration of Historic Buildings

*Sunday, March 22, 2009 at 2:00 p.m.*

To encourage continued protection of our cultural resources, the Lyme Public Hall will host a panel of three well respected voices on the preservation, restoration, and renovation of historic buildings.

**David Wordell**, historian and conservationist, is the producer of “The Quarries of Selden Neck”, an award winning documentary. He and his wife spent 20 years restoring their 1784 historic Colonial farm in Salem, CT, with particular attention to historic detail. He is a founder and first president of the Salem Historical Society.

**G. Roger Clements**, historical architect, has worked in the architectural design field for over 20 years. He specializes in a practical approach to maintaining the historic, aesthetic integrity of antique buildings without sacrificing 21st century comfort and in adapting 21st century structures so that they preserve the nature of the neighborhood.

**Richard Prowell**, chairman of the Hadlyme Ferry Historic District Commission will represent the commission’s mission of fostering preservation, restoration and renovation to maintain the rural historic character of the area. State and federal historic designations and funding available will be discussed.



*William Brockway house on Brockway’s Ferry Road, built circa 1745.*

*The Lyme Public Hall Association congratulates Reynolds Garage and Marine, Inc. on its 150th anniversary with special thanks for their support of this year’s newsletter.*



**THE LYME PUBLIC HALL**  
*Historical Organization and Archives*  
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P.O. Box 1056  
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*The Public Hall Association is dedicated to the appreciation of Lyme’s history, culture, and community through the preservation and use of the historic hall, its archives, and historical programs.*

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**POSTAL  
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