

Lyme Public Hall Newsletter



The Lyme Public Hall Association, Inc.

Vol. 9, No. 1 Spring 2010

President's Letter

Over the past three years a number of improvements have been made in the Lyme Public Hall building: a new furnace, new exterior paint, and repairs to the stonework on building's front. A flourishing new garden has added to the charm of our 1880s building. Wendolyn Hill's leadership as the president of the board has been key to everything that has been accomplished. We owe a debt of thanks to her for her nine years on the board, three of them as president. Thanks also go to current and former building committee members who worked on these projects: Sara Denow, Bill Boehning, George House and Mabel Matschulat.

The Lyme Public Hall has become a gathering place in town where newcomers and long-time residents can meet and enjoy a shared sense of community. The Hall's talks, walks, river cruises and exhibits highlight the history and unique character of the town of Lyme. Our Local History Archives preserves documents, photographs, and publications that are assets to researchers and residents alike.

Collaboration with other local organizations is important as you will see in our update on F.R.E.S.H. and our upcoming program with the Lyme Compact. Advocacy for and understanding of Lyme's farming heritage and education about historic preservation are also important as we put together our annual programs.

The pictures on this page and the next feature some of the programs and events of the past year as always emphasizing collaboration and community. Thanks go to our members who make the Hall's programs possible. Membership dues are our largest single source of financial support.

Hope to see you at the Hall this year!!

Jerry Ehlen, *president*



Lyme residents were treated to an evening of jazz in July thanks to Deane Beebe and her husband, Joe Fitzgerald. The quintet included in addition to Joe, on bass, Dominique Eade, vocals; Kenny Wessel, guitar; Alan Chase, saxophone and George Schuller, drums.



Janis Livingston and Bill Denow, chowder chefs extraordinaires, take a brief break during the annual chowder dinner.



Antique postcard greetings from the Archives were recently exhibited at the Lyme Public Library.

More than 1,500 people attended programs organized by the Lyme Public Hall in 2009—history buffs, tag sale devotees, jazz lovers, and chowder fans (to name only a few). Last summer *Live Jazz in Lyme* brought some of the finest contemporary jazz musicians in New York City and Boston to Lyme. Concert organizer Deane Beebe and her husband Joe Fitzgerald, the concert’s artistic director have long standing connections to Lyme and for years had dreamed of bringing jazz to the Public Hall. The Public Hall has a tradition of musical and theatrical performances but this was a first for jazz.

The annual Chowder Dinner continues to be our most popular event. Thanks go to Janis Livingston, our clam chowder chef and Bill Denow, our corn chowder specialist. Janis and Bill both insist that their chowders be made from scratch and it is a real labor of love on their parts.

Exhibits at the Lyme Public Library were a new feature this year. In an effort to increase community awareness of the Local History Archives and its scope, the Archives Committee, under the direction of Carolyn Bacdayan, agreed to install four exhibits a year at the library. The first exhibit last July featured pages from a nature observation journal by Rose Machuba, a student at the Grassy Hill School. Written in the late 1920s, her watercolors and description of plants reveal what school assignments were like for a schoolchild before television and computers.

National Archives Month in October was the perfect time to display examples of the Archives’ holdings. The exhibit not only demonstrated the wide variety of local history documents housed at the Lyme Public Hall but also the importance of preserving historical materials. The first exhibit in 2010 showcased colorful examples from the “Golden Age of Postcards”. This May you can look forward to a display featuring research about the Joshuatown Union Sewing Society. Thanks go to Theresa R. Conley, Library Director, for her enthusiastic support of this project.

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Questions? Comments? Email the Lyme Public Hall Association at lymepublichall@att.net

For the latest information on events, check <http://lymepublichall.blogspot.com>

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@att.net

F.R.E.S.H. Update

Last May the Lyme Public Hall hosted a presentation by F.R.E.S.H. (Food, Resources, Education, Security, Health) New London. Started by Arthur and Emily Lerner, FRESH is part of a national movement to rebuild the food system by transforming the way we currently grow, access and eat food. Since FRESH is celebrating its fifth anniversary we asked the Lerner's to tell us more about this initiative and how it relates to Lyme and our agricultural heritage.

LPH: You emphasized in your presentation that “community food security” is a growing concern in our region? This isn't yet a term that is widely understood.

Arthur: There is a national movement, FRESH is a local example, which takes a comprehensive food system approach to addressing a range of crucial issues: public health, social justice, stewardship, hunger, local economic development, youth opportunities and ecological education, to name some of the big ones. Food security refers to the ability of a populace to obtain healthy, culturally appropriate food reliably. FRESH's work is focused on developing and promoting locally based, highly collaborative, dynamic and practical agricultural (seed to plate/sale) projects in order to address these issues.

LPH: Emily, you have a long connection with Lyme and know the town well. Agriculture and personal connections to the land have been an important part of this community. What could folks in Lyme be doing to help transform our current food system?

Emily: I developed my sense of stewardship in Lyme, where I spent much of my childhood in the woods. Part of caring for our natural resources has to include a sustainable food system. Every choice we make as consumers has impacts on our own health, the health of the environment and on market forces. Ask where your food comes from and how was it raised. Shop at the local farmers' markets, farm stands and CSAs. Ask local grocery stores and restaurants to carry more CT-raised products. Grow backyard, community and school gardens, teach our children where food comes from, and preserve some of the food we grow.

LPH: You've accomplished so much in the first five years. What does the future hold for FRESH?

Emily: FRESH will continue to work with New London teens, mentoring them in becoming engaged citizens and employing them as food system ambassadors. We hope to grow the current FRESH farm into a regional educational site for sustainable farming methods. We are working with a coalition to build a commercial kitchen, to be used in part as the homebase for a new FRESH Culinary Program. Support for the expansion of community gardens in the region will continue so there will be a place for everyone who wants to grow a garden. We will increase our educational programs, supporting the growth of school gardens in New London and throughout southeastern Connecticut. The goal is to have all school children in New London (and beyond) grow up with an understanding of where food comes from, the natural cycles that support agriculture, and a sense of wonder and awe of the natural world of which we're all a part.

Please visit us at www.freshnewlondon.org to learn more about our programs, join our mailing list, donate or get involved.



The Mobile Market brings produce grown by FRESH to urban New London residents. In the future this program will expand through direct sales, pre-orders with New London agencies and partnerships with neighborhood corner stores.

The Archives Grows One Piece At A Time And So Do The Stories



Since the first materials about Lyme were collected for the Archives, it happens again and again— a new donation will add to a “story” that is already being built from earlier accessions. The Strong and Sisson Store (after 1905 W. M. Sisson and Son’s Store) is a good example. Families from the north part of Lyme and the E. Haddam area called North Plain used this post office and well stocked store on Baker Lane from 1879 to 1964.



Each of these photographs was donated to the Archives by a different donor at a different time. This “life-cycle” collage is added to by more photos, news clippings, invoices, post marked cards and letters, Lyme Grange documents, diaries and oral histories in the Archives.

Top: *Sisson farm and store from a news clipping c.1900.* Left: *Sisson farm by Winifred Webster, c.1968.* Right: *Post card of store and post office showing Gilbert Strong and William Sisson c.1905.* Bottom: *End of the road –Former Sisson’s Store and North Plain P.O. c.1972, by James Zaccaro.*



Archives Update

The past year at the Local History Archives has been productive and satisfying. Thirty more accessions of archival materials were received. Sixty individuals made information requests from or research visits to the archives. A booklet, *“Introduction to the Collections, Papers and Records”* at the Archives, was prepared for public information. Short and medium range development plans, a disaster plan and oral history program guidelines were updated. The archivist and a few volunteer assistants have taken advantage of workshops in the region on digitization, oral history and outreach strategies.

More than 1,000 volunteer hours in 2009 were at the heart of the work done. In the process, the volunteer assistants were introduced to the Archives’ interesting resources through a variety of tasks. Special thanks go to Diane Ahlberg, Betsy Buch, Diana Boehning, Mary Catherwood, Sara Denow, Mike Furgueson, Gary Jenkins, Doad Jewett, Ellen O’Herlihy, and Tina Strasberg. An Archives Committee assists the archivist, Carolyn Bacdayan, as well: Mary Paonessa and Ann Brubaker of the LPH Board, and community representative Sara Denow.

The Local History Archives was fortunate to be selected as one of sixty small museums and archives in Connecticut to receive a free General Preservation Survey in Spring 2010. This on-site assessment and the recommendations to follow are made possible through a grant to the Connecticut State Library from the National Historic Publications and Records Commission.

With thanks to our supporters:

Thanks to a grant from the Directors’ Fund of **Essex Savings Bank** forty interviews recorded on magnetic tape by LPH volunteers over the last twenty years have been backed up for preservation and safe keeping. These oral interviews represent all sections of Lyme and cover the 20th century, 100 years of recollected community and personal history.

The Hall was very pleased to host events—an exhibit, opening reception and book signing—celebrating the 150th Anniversary of **Reynolds’ Garage and Marine, Inc.** in Lyme. Photographs and other materials from the Archives were used for the exhibit and “Big Enough to Serve You, Small Enough to Know You”, a beautiful pictorial history. The Reynolds have generously donated

all the proceeds from sales of the book to the Lyme Public Hall. Copies are still available at H. L. Reynolds Store, Hamburg or from Connie Donkin, LPHA historical books and cards coordinator, 860-434-2862.

Could you help with . . . ?

- interviewing for the Oral History Project
- transcribing oral history tapes to text
- converting video tape to CD
- transcribing, editing and indexing hand-written letters, documents, old clippings
- repairing book bindings

The Local History Archives is located at 249 Hamburg Road, Lyme. Hours: Tuesday 10-noon and by appointment. For appointments, questions about the collections, donation of materials or volunteering, contact Carolyn Bacdayan (860)434-9292 or lymepublichall@att.net.

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 seats up to 15 people.

Rent the basement for a tag sale.

***For rental fees and availability,
please call 860-434-1873***

Preserving Historic Structures in Lyme: What to do?

Lyme has been able to maintain its rural charm while many towns in Connecticut have fallen prey to sprawl. Most owners of historic houses, even while adapting their houses to modern living, recognize and embrace their responsibility of stewardship to preserve the character of their homes as part of a larger community and as a legacy for the generations to come. What measures can Lyme take to protect the fragile and beloved historic structures and vulnerable cultural landscapes that may fall victim to destruction without consideration for what could be saved?

Currently in Lyme there are no zoning regulations to protect our historic structures except those in a local historic district. Would the answer be to enact more regulations? For example, some towns have regulations that require some kind of review and/or waiting period before the owner of a significant historical structure is granted a permit for demolition or major alteration.

Lyme has two neighborhoods that are listed with the National Register of Historic Places which provides minimal protection: Hadlyme Ferry Historic District (6 buildings and the ferry slip) and Hamburg Bridge Historic District (210 acres, 23 buildings, 2 structures). The Hadlyme Ferry Historic District neighborhood has voted to form the only local historic district in Lyme. A district commission is appointed by the town selectmen to review alterations to the exterior of existing buildings and plans for new structures that are in the public view from the road. Route 156 is protected by State Scenic Highway designation that shields it from modifications that would detract from its rural quality. The Scenic Road Advisory Committee of the CT DOT determines if proposed projects are appropriate.

In an effort to encourage the preservation of our oldest houses, the late town historian, Hiram Maxim, researched the records of over 70 houses that were built before 1855 and provided plaques for owners to proudly display the date of origin. The town of Lyme has embarked on a more exhaustive study of the historic structures in town made possible by a grant from the Connecticut Commission on the Arts and Tourism. This is a step toward preservation by identifying the most significant historical structures in Lyme. The next question is what to do to protect these treasures.

As part of this dialogue, the Lyme Public Hall Association annual meeting will feature Todd Levine,

Preservation Officer from 2006-2009, and current director of the Connecticut Barns Statewide Survey of the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation (see page 7). In addition to talking about barns and their preservation, he will address some of the choices available to help preserve historic properties and landscapes that we cherish while at the same time considering the property rights of individual owners.



Hamburg Bridge Historic District in an earlier era.



Built for Samuel Brooks in 1760, this house in the Hadlyme Ferry Historic District remained in the same family for 157 years.

Upcoming Programs

Sunday, March 21, 2 p.m.

Under Our Skin

A Documentary about Lyme Disease.

Stories of patients and physicians dealing with Lyme disease and their battles with the health care system and medical establishment. Runs 104 min. Seating limited.

April TBA

Building Green Panel

Co-sponsored with the Lyme Compact, a private nonprofit group in Lyme dedicated to building affordable housing, the program will focus on options for building or renovating houses that are energy efficient and environmentally friendly.

Earth Day Weekend, April 24 and 25

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.

Friday, May 7, 7 p.m.

The Quarries of Selden Island

with commentary by producer David Wordell.

David Wordell, historian and conservationist, will present his award-winning documentary on the history of Selden Island.

Saturday, May 29, 9:30-12:30 a.m.

(raindate May 30)

RiverQuest Cruise to Selden Island with a guided walk by Paul Robertson and David Wordell. We will be dropped off at the northern end of Selden Island and walk about 1.5 miles to the south for pick up. The hike will take us to the highest point on the island, and pass through ruins of the Josiah Lord farm and remnants of the quarry. This is a moderately strenuous walk. We will depart at 9:30 a.m. from Eagle Landing Park, Haddam CT on the *RiverQuest* excursion boat. The price is \$30 for members of the Lyme Public Hall, \$40 for non-members. Coffee, tea and water are included. Email Leslie at llewis81051@gmail.com to reserve a place on this trip. (more info page 8)

Thursday June 10, 6 p.m.

Annual Meeting & Community Potluck Dinner. CT Trust for Historic Preservation Presentation. Todd Levine, Architectural Historian and Director of the Connecticut Barns statewide survey will give an overview of historic barns in our area and address issues concerning individual options and community tools for preservation. 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.

Saturday, July 3rd, Sun. July 4th, Mon. July 5th

Threads of Lyme: Household Treasures from the 1800s.

This exhibit is free and open to the public. See LPHA blog for hours and details.

Saturday, August 7, 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.

Sunday, September 12, 2 p.m.

Putting Your Garden to Bed for the Winter

Jennifer Benner, former associate editor for *Fine Gardening* magazine and co-author of a new book "The Non-Stop Garden" will tell us how to prepare our gardens for their long winter's nap. Copies of her book will be available for sale and signing.

Saturday, October 2 (raindate October 3), 2 p.m.

Hamburg Bridge Historic District Walking Tour

The history of the Old Hamburg Road-Joshuatown Road area of Lyme will be the focus of a guided walk by Wendolyn Hill. Call 860-434-2961 to reserve a space and for parking info.

Sunday, October 10, 2-3:30 p.m.

Stories Behind What and Why We Choose to Save

Share the story behind a unique, interesting object, document, photograph or letter saved in your family over the years. For information, call Carolyn Bacdayan, 860-434-9292

Saturday, October 23, 3:30-6:30 p.m.

(raindate Oct. 24)

Fall Foliage Cruise: Geology of the Connecticut River Valley.

Join Ralph Lewis, former state geologist, on a sunset cruise on the *RiverQuest*, a stable, 54-foot excursion boat with excellent viewing, enclosed cabin, and restroom. We depart from Eagle Landing Park, Haddam at 3:30pm. Wine and specially prepared hors d'oeuvres will be provided. The price is \$40 for members, \$45 for non-members. Proceeds support the Hall's programs. For reservations email Leslie at llewis81051@gmail.com.

Saturday, November 13, 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. Proceeds support the Hall's programs.

The Connecticut River Rocks – Celebrate Geology in 2010

“The granite found at Lord’s Island (Selden Island)... is claimed to be the finest grained and the richest in color of any granite so far discovered.” —The New Era Newspaper 1891

The beautiful rocky hills of Lyme have always played an important role in the lives of the people who have made it home. Rock quarrying was a valuable industry in historic Lyme. There were several quarries within easy reach of the CT River. Join us when historian David Wordell screens his award-winning documentary “The Quarries of Selden Island” on Friday, May 7th at 7 p.m. Wordell researched the history of Connecticut’s largest island from its earliest Indian inhabitants to the quarrying of paving blocks for the streets of New York City. Then visit many of the actual sites in the documentary on Saturday, May 29 (rain date May 30), 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. during a guided hike on Selden Island with David Wordell and Paul Robertson. Landscape architect Paul Robertson has been carrying out his own research on the island and working to reclaim and re-mark the trail system that David Wordell created during the 1980s.

On Saturday, October 23 (rain date Oct. 24), 3:30-6:30 p.m., cruise with geologist Ralph Lewis during a sunset foliage voyage on the excursion boat *RiverQuest*. Ralph Lewis, former state geologist, will point out geological highpoints along the Connecticut River and explain the forces that created the remarkable rocks that make up Lyme’s landscape.

For more information, see “Upcoming Programs” on page 7.



Joshua Rock and the Connecticut River



THE LYME PUBLIC HALL
Historical Organization and Archives
249 Hamburg Road
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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