

Lyme Public Hall Newsletter



The Lyme Public Hall Association, Inc.

Vol. 10, No. 1 Spring 2011

President's Letter

What a winter! Spring will be a welcome sight and so will our upcoming year at the Lyme Public Hall. There will be many new programs, free to the public, and of course our old standards like our chowder dinner.

Our active roster of programs and the upkeep of the Hall itself depend on our hard working board members. One of the duties of board members is to generate programs and exhibits that are free to the public. This past year the chairman of the Program Committee, Leslie Lewis, organized an afternoon talk on year round gardening and a geology cruise on the Connecticut River. The chairman of our Archives Committee, Mary Juillet-Paonessa, created a unique display of local quilts for our annual July 4th weekend exhibit. Also Tina West, our rental coordinator, put together a panel discussion on building "green".

All of our board members helped with these programs and all of the other events including the Chowder Dinner and our Tag and Bake Sale. Our board members lead busy lives, but they choose to be involved with the board because of their commitment to promoting and preserving Lyme's history and our sense of community. The board, along with the many members who volunteer to help us with our events and the community are key in the success of the Lyme Public Hall.

We are delighted to welcome four new board members: Barbara Carlson, Roger Dill, Debbie Mazer and Kathy Tisdale. This summer, three members will rotate off the board and we are actively looking for new board members. If you are interested in being considered or have a candidate in mind, please contact me at bloodst@sbcglobal.net

I look forward to seeing you at the Hall this year.

Jerry Ehlen, *President*

Todd Ellison and Friends, The Best of Times

"There were broad smiles on the faces of everyone in attendance after the wonderful evening of Broadway music presented by Todd Ellison and friends on October 4th, 2010 at Valley Regional High School in Deep River, CT. The refrain from the closing song lingered in the air, "And make this moment last because the best of times is now, is now, is now . . ."



Todd Ellison

Lyme, CT and Manhattan, NY resident Todd Ellison, currently musical director and keyboard player for the award-winning musical *La Cage Aux Folles*, presented the concert to benefit three of his favorite causes. He chose the Lyme Public Hall Association to be a recipient as a gift to his community and to honor the late Elizabeth Putnam, who was instrumental in the formation of the LPHA in 1984. Todd has a special

connection to Elizabeth Putnam who was his beloved first grade teacher in Essex, and a family friend. Three years ago, he bought the house in Lyme that Elizabeth had lived in for most of her life.

Todd was a welcoming and gracious host as he dazzled on the piano. He introduced and accompanied a delightful selection of Broadway performers at his alma mater, Valley Regional High School. Fellow District 4 alums, Peter Lockyer (*Les Miserables*, *Phantom of the Opera*) and Ryan Driscoll (*42nd Street*) joined Todd as well as Jonathan Freeman who is the voice of Jafar in the movie *Aladdin*, Mary Testa (*Xanadu*) and Dominique Plaisant (*The Wild Party*).

Please join us in thanking Todd for providing us with superb entertainment and for his generous donation to the Hall from the proceeds of the concert.

Paul Robertson, Selden Island Preservationist

Lyme lost a generous and gentle friend in preservation on November 27, 2010. Paul Robertson, 57, passed away unexpectedly at home. He co-led the LPHA sponsored exploration of Selden Island with historian and conservationist David Wordell in May 2010. A landscape designer with a degree from RISD, he was passionate about the history and protection of Selden Island. Inspired by the research of David Wordell, creator of the multimedia DVD "The Quarries of Selden Island", he had been volunteering his time to reclaim the trails that David created in the 1980s. He had just completed the white trail, a path that traverses north to south on the island. This path will be named in his honor.

If you are interested in having a pdf file of the Selden Island trailmap created by Paul Roberson, email hillwendy@sbcglobal.net.



Paul Robertson leading last year's tour of Selden Island

About Selden Island

Cut off from the mainland during the devastating flood of 1854, Selden Island has been the largest island in the state of Connecticut for almost 160 years. Named after Joseph Selden, its third owner, the property was in the hands of the Selden family from 1696 to 1868. In 1889 a partnership bought the property to quarry the island's gneiss for paving stones.

The Avalonian rock found in the Selden quarry was more than fourteen times denser than rock available elsewhere in Connecticut and so ideal for paving the streets of New York City. (See more about Avalonia on page 3). Today Selden Island is a Connecticut state park accessible only by water.

Who to Contact:

Local History Archives: Carolyn Bacdayan, 860-434-9292, acbacdayan@sbcglobal.net

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

For the latest information on events, check www.lymepublichall.org

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

Geology of the Lower Connecticut River Valley (*The RiverQuest Trip Revisited*)

Ralph Lewis, former state geologist, recalls the highlights of our summer cruise.

Our *RiverQuest* tour started just south of the East Haddam Bridge and proceeded northwestward, upriver. As we passed under the bridge we examined the glacial terraces on the west side of the river and got our first look at some bedrock outcrops on the east bank. From that point, until we turned back downriver between Middletown and Cobalt, we noted the North-South trending bedrock ridges that form the flanks of the river valley, and the fact that the glacial terraces along our route had gotten progressively higher in elevation.

After our turn downriver at Cobalt, we followed a southeasterly course through the 600 million-year-old metamorphic rocks of the Eastern Uplands. These rocks were metamorphosed and squeezed into an overall North-South alignment about 300 million years ago, as sediments on the floor of the Iapetus Ocean and an ancient continent called Avalonia were caught in the collision between the ancestral North American and African continents. This continental “fender bender” completed the assembly of the supercontinent of Pangaea, created the Appalachian Mountains, and added Avalonian rocks as permanent residents of southeastern Connecticut.

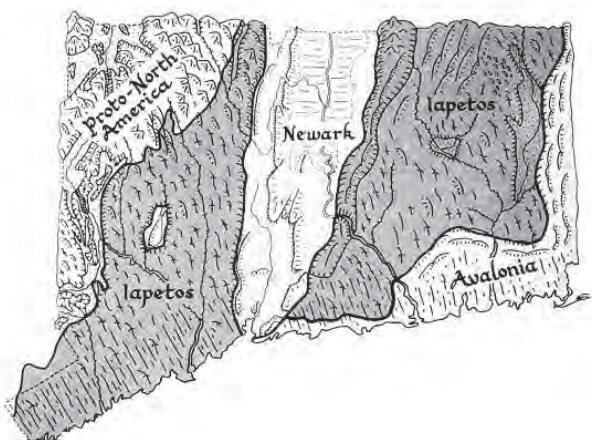
Between Cobalt and the ferry crossing at Gillette’s Castle, we followed the river through the metamorphosed remains of the Iapetus Ocean. The Bolton Range was an island arc like today’s Japan and the bedrock down to Whalebone Cove was once ocean-bottom sediment. The Honey Hill



“Boudinage”, white sausage-like rocks, created during the formation of Pangaea, the super-continent.

Fault intersects the river at Whalebone cove. This is a major terrane boundary between rocks with an Iapetus Ocean affinity (to the north) and rocks of the Avalonian terrane (to the south). The photo shows a feature called boudinage in the bedrock near Joshua Rock. These white “sausage-like” features were created as the Avalonian rocks were heated and folded during the formation of Pangaea.

In the last 4000 years, extensive salt and brackish-water marshes have developed from Essex south and the mouth of the river valley has become an estuary. Upstream, ecologically rare, freshwater tidal marshes fringe the river and tidal effects reach as far north as Hartford. Because tidal flux and long-shore currents produce shifting sandbars where the river meets the Sound, historically the area was not friendly to deep-draft ships. Consequently, the Connecticut River is one of the few major rivers in the United States without a port city at its mouth. To this day, development along the lower valley remains relatively sparse. This was particularly evident to me near the end of our trip as we turned northward to head home and we enjoyed a beautiful sunset and some nice wine in a sublime setting.



Map showing the course of the Connecticut River in the Central Valley and across the Eastern Uplands. At Middletown the river jogs east through the remains of the Iapetus Ocean and through rocks from an ancient continent called Avalonia.

For more information about Connecticut geology see Ralph Lewis’s photo essay at www.wesleyan.edu/ctgeology/CtLandscapes/CTlandscapes.html

Threads of Lyme: Quilts and Household Treasures of the 1800s

In keeping with a now twelve year tradition, the Lyme Public Hall once again invited Fourth of July visitors to view another historical aspect of an earlier Lyme. What we know about the past has typically been told from a man's perspective. *Threads of Lyme: Quilts and Household Treasures of the 1800's* explored the social history of the nineteenth century American female through textiles, the universal medium of female expression in the nineteenth century and before. This Fourth of July exhibit begins the discussion of women's role in the social history and development of Lyme. Divided into six vignettes each with a specific theme, twenty four quilts and ephemera were lent for the exhibit by Carolyn Bacdayan, Barbara Bennett and David Sutton, Rosemarie Fox, Wendy Hill Sutton and Rich Sutton, Leslie Lewis, and the Tisdale family.

The needlework of Annie Warner Sterling, a well-known professional dressmaker from the Sterling City area of Lyme, became the subject of three vignettes on men's clothing, children's clothing, and her dressmaking business. Generally, in many museum collections there are far fewer men's clothing represented in comparison to the plethora of women and children's garments. It was therefore, exciting to show Stephen P. Sterling's shirt with its detachable collar and ties. In the private collection from which these items came, there were two identical shirts but only one collar. The shirt



Hanging in the foreground, a sampling of Sadie Sterling's clothes. Center back is the Star of Bethlehem quilt. To the left is a Drunkard's Path quilt and to the right, a Streak of Lightning quilt. A log cabin quilt is folded on the chair.



On the wooden table stands a jug and pot embellished with pieces of old dishes by Hester Warner. The Flower pot quilt, attributed to Ida Laplace Harding, hangs in the background.

would have been worn as an everyday work shirt and the collar attached when a more formal occasion arose. Presumably, a tie would be worn in tandem with the collared shirt.

In addition to dressmaking, Sterling and her sisters-in-law, Sarah E. Sterling and Mary Elizabeth Sterling, worked on quilts and other sewing projects which have been passed down in the family. Examples of those quilts hung in the display. Abundant hand-quilting covers the red and green star quilt while artfully arranged velvets, taffetas, and satins embellish a crazy quilt popular in the latter years of the century. Annie Warner Sterling's daughter, Sadie, benefited from her mother's expertise. A collection of her clothing dating from the last quarter of the nineteenth century was exhibited along with the quilts. The long infant gowns, two-piece outfits, and dresses exhibit the attention to details which made Sterling a sought-after seamstress.

Harriet Laplace Warner of Brockway's Ferry and her daughters, Dora, Hester, and Musa, were prolific quilt-makers. According to the late Elizabeth Huey Putnam, a granddaughter of Harriet, the assembly of each quilt was a "family affair." Harriet cut and stitched fabric patches together forming many of the familiar designs hung in

the exhibit; Star of Bethlehem, Streak of Lightning, Delectable Mountains, and Barn Raising Log Cabin. The girls then stitched together the patchwork tops with batting and a back to form a quilt.

Many of the quilt patterns on display are attributed to the popular culture of the time. Patterns were printed in women's magazines such as Godey's Ladies Magazine, The Delineator, and newspapers. Some of these publications still exist in the old Warner homestead. Local dry goods stores stocked a good selection of fabrics from which women stitched their family clothes, quilts and household textiles. The Postage Stamp quilt, attributed to Morgianna Brockway, contains blocks made up of sixty-four, one inch squares which appear to be fabric swatches from a textile manufacturing company. It can be speculated that Morgianna acquired the samples from a local store wanting to get rid of them when new fabrics were introduced to the market.

The Joshuatown Union Sewing Society Journal, the topic of an earlier library exhibit, became the focus of another vignette. Years before a library existed in town the sewing society was formed to raise funds to purchase books for its members to read. Men were invited to join perhaps because women were not allowed to hold the office of treasurer or handle money without a man watching over the account. Meeting location rotated among member homes and a dinner was held for the women and men members at the end of the working day. Luckily, the Archives own

the journal and photographs of many of the houses at which meetings were held.

Women's social clubs frequently raised money by raffling off quilts. In keeping with the theme of ladies societies, the exhibit showed a sampler quilt which was made by the Hadlyme Ladies Society and won in a raffle by Robert Huey, grandfather of the current owner. More research is needed to examine the reason why the quilt was raffled off and where those funds were donated.

A delightful quilt stitched in the Flower Pot pattern came in early in the process of assembling the quilts. Attributed to Ida Laplace Harding, the solid-colored, fabric flower pot blocks were hand-pieced and assembled on the diagonal. Quick stitches brought seams together where threads had broken and we were all treated to seeing this quilt come to life again.

Following up on the theme of social history, the upcoming Fourth of July exhibit will explore a topic near and dear to all of our hearts—food. Everyone in town is encouraged to look at their collection of nineteenth-century family cookbooks, recollections of favorite recipes handed down, and ephemera from Lyme family kitchens of the past. Do you have a kitchen tool, cooking utensil, or special dishes that tell another interesting story about Lyme? Help us make history come alive. Contact Mary Juliet-Paonessa at 860-434-3858 if you have something to share.



This Delectable Mountains quilt is attributed to Harriet Laplace Warner and her daughters Dora, Hester, and Musa.



Jerry Ehlen and Mary Juliet-Paonessa installing the quilt exhibit "Threads of Lyme"

Archives Update

The past year for the Archives was very busy and productive. An assessment of the Archives' compliance with archival best practices for the preservation of historic materials was completed by Rebecca Thatcher, a professional archivist from Yale. This important and valuable service, which usually costs several thousand dollars, was provided at no cost to Lyme Public Hall. The funding came from the Connecticut State Library which received a grant from the National Historic Publications and Records Commission to support the professional development of small historical archives and museums in Connecticut.

The assessment report commended the Archives' professional operation and collection management and stated that it is "an example to other small historical associations and societies" of what could be done in similar circumstances. The report's recommendations emphasized long-range planning for the Archives' facility and sustainability.

The Archives' long-range plan calls for collaboration with other institutions to make the collection's content and consulting services more widely known and accessible to the community. In December 2010, the Lyme Public Hall and Archives hosted a paper and book preservation workshop for archivists from small archives and libraries from around the state.

Examples of outreach activities include exhibits at the Lyme Public Library which showcased materials from the Archives: 1) art cards of circa 1900, the "Golden Age of Postcards"; 2) activities of "The Joshuatown Union Sewing Society" and lending library (1858-1863); 3) the fine sewing of Lyme "Needle Woman", Annie Warner Sterling, for her daughter Sadie 1870; and 4) "Lyme's Service in the Civil War". The contribution of historical information and photos for the Town of Lyme website and Annual Report continues. The Archives Committee is also participating in the planning for the Town Center project.

In 2010, the Archives had seventy-seven research requests and preservation consultations, an increase from the year before. Four oral histories were added to the existing forty, representing personal stories and the history of Hadlyme, Hamburg, Joshuatown and Grassy Hill sections of town. Appreciation is extended to Essex Savings Bank's Community Investment Program for funds which allowed us to purchase equipment for the transcription of oral histories.

Assisting in the Archives

The archivist and other volunteers contributed almost a thousand hours in 2010 in a variety of tasks for the Archives. Betsy Buch continued to assist in a wide variety of ways. Others helped with transcription and editing of oral history interviews were Diana Boehning, Carolyn Hosley, Roxanne Walters and Faye Richardson. Diana Lord transcribed letters, Bill Denow did research for an exhibit, and Mike Furgueson labeled audio tapes. The Archives Committee has provided much appreciated support and assistance: Mary Paonessa, Ann Brubaker and Sara Denow. There are many ways to help, from a few hours to many, at home or at the Archives, depending on the project. One works under the direction of the archivist, with training, if needed, for the task.

Building the Collection

The Archives continues to collect material relevant to the history of Lyme (46 accessions were added in 2010). The present Collection is comprised mainly of nineteenth and early to mid-twentieth century items but materials from all periods before and after are also sought. A single item thought to be insignificant could hold an important piece of information when viewed in the context of other items already collected by the Archives. A temporary loan to the Archives for copies to be made is another way to help ensure that town history is preserved for future generations. If you have items such as photographs, diaries, letters, drawings, posters, manuscripts or books, we would be pleased to talk with you about them.

Local History Archives

249 Hamburg Road, Lyme

Hours: Tuesday 10-noon and by appointment

Appointments, questions, donations or volunteering

Contact Carolyn Bacdayan, Archivist (860) 434-9292

Upcoming Programs

Earth Day Weekend, April 23 and 24

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 20, 7 p.m.

Restoring Cedar Hill (Selden) Cemetery

Parker Lord reports on a three year project to restore Cedar Hill Cemetery in Lyme as well as what was learned about the people buried there.

Saturday, May 21, 12 noon-3 p.m.

Self-guided Visit to Cedar Hill (Selden) Cemetery

A self-guided tour of the Cedar Hill (Selden) Cemetery will allow you to view the work that has been done at your own pace. Parker and volunteers involved in the restoration project will be on hand to answer questions. Directions on the LPHA website.

Thursday, June 9, 6 p.m.

Annual Meeting & Community Potluck Dinner

Lyme Historical Sites Survey: A Report by Dr. James Sexton

Bring a main course, salad or dessert to share for the potluck dinner. Beverages, plates and utensils will be provided. The event is open to the public.

Sunday, June 19, 2 p.m.

Civil War Sesquicentennial Presentation

The 150th anniversary of the Civil War (1861-1865) begins in 2011. Lyme resident Jim Beers will share his extensive knowledge of this era in this special presentation.

July 4th weekend

Exhibit: Basic Ingredients: Kitchens of Lyme.

Learn about 19th and early 20th century foodways in our area. Free and open to the public. See LPHA website for hours and detail.

Saturday, August 6, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

Annual Tag & Bake Sale

A bargain hunter's delight ! Set aside your donations for this fundraiser benefiting the Public Hall: furniture, tools, small appliances, housewares, toys, decorative and gift items.

Saturday, September 17, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Quilting Workshop and Bed Turning

Learn how to make an applique block or start work on a pieced lap quilt inspired by a Wheel of Fortune pattern worked by Harriet LaPlace Warner. For more information including workshop fees and quilt kits go to www.lymepublichall.org. Lunch and Bed Turning available as a single package.

Saturday, September 24 (raindate September 25), 2 p.m.

Hartman Park Walking Tour.

Colonial era building sites dot this scenic woodland park. The settlement history of this unique Lyme neighborhood will be the focus of a guided walk by Wendolyn Hill. To reserve a place email hillwendy@sbcglobal.net or call 860-434-2961.

Sunday, October 9, 2-3:30 p.m.

Childhood Memories: Stories Behind What We Choose to Save

Last year's sharing session was such a treat we are repeating it with a new twist. Share the story behind a unique, interesting photograph, toy, or book recalling childhood activities or memories. For information, call Carolyn Bacdayan, 860-434-9292 or see www.lymepublichall.org

Saturday, October 22 (raindate Oct. 23), 3:30-6:30 p.m.

Fall Foliage Cruise: Ecology of the Connecticut River Valley

Join Judy Preston, ecologist and founder/director of the Tidewater Institute on a sunset cruise aboard 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 of the Lyme Public Hall, \$45 for non-members. Proceeds support the Hall's programs. Email Leslie at llewis81051@gmail.com to reserve a place on this trip.

Saturday, November 12, 5-7 p.m.

Lyme Public Hall's Traditional Chowder Dinner

Join your neighbors for this delicious Hall tradition, featuring homemade corn chowder, clam chowder, cole slaw, breads, and apple crisp. Adults \$12. and children under age 12, \$8.

For more information visit:

www.lymepublichall.org

Walking Tours

Walking tours of Lyme's historic neighborhoods have become a popular feature of the Lyme Public Hall yearly programs. This past year Wendolyn Hill led a tour of the Hamburg Bridge District which is on the National Register of Historic Places. Home owners in the area joined Wendy to talk about the history of their properties. Now a largely residential area on the banks of the Eight Mile River, it was one of the earliest settlements in Lyme; a community of stores, workshops, and homes that supported shipping and shipbuilding. Although the houses and commercial wharves have been altered throughout the years, the historic character of the neighborhood has been beautifully preserved. This year's tours feature the Heritage Trail at Hartman Park and a tour of Cedar Hill Cemetery. Wendolyn Hill will discuss the remarkable human history of the area that is now Hartman Park. Although the land has been undeveloped for almost 100 years, there is still evidence of a community of subsistence farmers consisting of blacks, Native Americans and whites. As we hike the Heritage Trail, we will visit the remnants of an earlier life in Lyme, including the mysterious "Three Chimneys". Parker Lord will give a Friday evening talk about restoration work in Lyme's Cedar Hill Cemetery followed by a Saturday self-guided tour of that site. See page 7 for more information.



Josh Patterson shares his knowledge of the Hamburg Bridge Historic District while tour leader, Wendy Hill checks her notes.



THE LYME PUBLIC HALL
Historical Organization and Archives
249 Hamburg Road
P.O. Box 1056
Lyme, CT 06371

The Lyme 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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