

Lyme Public Hall Newsletter



The Lyme Public Hall Association, Inc.

Vol.1, No. 1

March 2002

President's Message

Over time, the make-up of our community changes. If not new faces, then familiar faces in different phases of their lives. Thus, it's not unusual to hear now and again the question: *What is the Lyme Public Hall?*

We hope this issue of the newsletter will provide some answers. The Hall was built in the 1880s, specifically to be a meeting place and social center for the community. Today the Lyme Public Hall Association is dedicated to the appreciation and preservation of the history of the Lyme community – including the preservation of the historical building located in the center of Hamburg on Route 156.

The Association is a member of the Connecticut League of History Organizations which provides a useful network of similar institutions. The past year was busy with exhibits, historical programs and social events. Our chowder dinner and pot luck suppers are becoming a tradition for meeting neighbors. We are pleased to be an integral part of Hamburg as well as of the town itself and appreciate your support.

Parker H. Lord
President

A History of the Lyme Public Hall Association

In the beginning . . .

Nineteen members enrolled at the first meeting of the Public Hall Association in 1886. Membership dues were 25 cents. It was a time when community focus was local – transportation was by horse and buggy if not by foot. The association's objective was to raise funds to erect a place for social and community events. Membership interest grew and money was raised through various dinners, entertainments, and ice cream parties.

Site selection for the hall proved to be more problematic than the fund raising had been. Captain James Bill paid \$200 for the land on which the hall now stands and offered it to the association for \$20. But Captain Bill had favored the South in the Civil War and his political opinions were not embraced by all. A power struggle ensued. An alternate site was proposed. Ultimately the location was put to a vote and both sides tried to stuff the ballot box by signing up new members – many of them out of towners. When the vote favored the present location, some of the opposition withdrew from the association. Nevertheless, construction began and the main building was completed and dedicated in 1887.

For many years thereafter, the Public Hall was a cultural and social hub in Lyme. Weekly dances were enjoyed by the young and old. Lectures and dinners were held.

Musical and theatrical productions were staged – using both local and outside talents. And the Hall hosted graduation exercises for all of the town's one room schools.

End of an era . . .

In 1952 the town, needing a place to house its fire equipment, signed a lease with the Association for use of the building. The hillside in front of the building was cut away and a basement dug out to provide garage space for fire trucks. Thus a major modification to the face of the building was made while creating Lyme's first firehouse.

By 1958, cars and radio had become commonplace and TV was gaining a foothold in most households; the community had the means of looking elsewhere for entertainment. Facing declining use of the building, extensive repairs, and a mortgage, the Public Hall Association voted to disband. The building was sold to the town for \$2766. The fire company continued to use the building until 1985 at which time it moved to the Safety Complex north of Tiffany Farm.

(Continued on page 3)

Today's Lyme Public Hall Association is an historical organization preserving the history of the town and its life-ways in addition to being a community center.

Twelfth Night Tour

On Sunday, January 6th, in celebration of Twelfth Night and as a benefit event for the Lyme Public Hall, Lyme residents **Tedi Cavicke** and **Joan Bloom** generously opened their homes and displayed their extensive collections of Provencal santons and Neapolitan presepi.

Traditionally made of clay, santons and presepi figurines are delightfully detailed and crafted figures that represent Provencal or Neapolitan town and village people: shepherds, milkmaids, tambourine players, fishermen, pie sellers, merchants, and others. Dating from the 18th century or earlier, the figurines are usually arranged in village scenes along with the classical Nativity figures of the creche.

Over eighty people participated in this unusual holiday tour. Our hostesses Tedi and Joan were on hand to make us feel welcome and to share some of the details associated with their collections. Post-holiday cheer in the form of mulled wine, cider, and other refreshments was served at the Public Hall. We extend heartfelt thanks to both Tedi and Joan for making this event possible.

The 2001 Program Year in Review

The Lyme Public Hall presents programs intended to foster both an interest in and appreciation of the history of Lyme, as well as to provide social opportunities for meeting our neighbors – something we all treasure as part of small town life. Additionally, programs are presented to raise money for support of the Hall. Ideas and suggestions from our members for future programs are always welcome.

In case you missed out—or just for the sake of remembering some good times—the following is a brief review of the 2001 program year.

Early in the year a series of three **Hands-on-History** sessions were held.

In the first session, **Warner Lord** read excerpts from the 1850's diary of his great grandmother **Elizabeth Alice Ely**, a former long-time resident of Brockway's Ferry Road. Some of Lyme's present day youngest and oldest citizens as well as the present day inhabitants of Elizabeth Alice Ely's home turned out to hear about day to day life in those very different times.

In the second session, **Parker Lord** was authentically attired in

homespun and buckskin to describe the experiences of colonial militiamen, as several Lyme men were, in the French and Indian Wars of the 1750's.

The third session **Discovery in the Archives**—was an opportunity to examine *first hand* some of the treasures in the Archives: shipping manifests, letters, photos, store ledgers and maps.

In June, at our **Annual Meeting** and community **Pot Luck Supper**, Lyme's former state representative **Clair Sauer** shared some of her most memorable experiences while serving in public office.

A celebration of **100 Years of the Hamburg Fair** was the theme of the Hall's annual Fourth of July exhibit and open house. To the recorded square dance calls of fair favorite, Dick Lee, a large crowd turned out to drink lemonade and enjoy the exhibit of documents, photos, news articles, farm equipment and memorabilia of the fair from its earliest days to present times. There was much reminiscing about the many years of this great local institution. More than one young face looked in wonderment at 1903 photos depicting hundreds of oxen lumbering down Hamburg Road and on the fair grounds.

August brought the Hall's **Tag Sale**—an annual event in which donated castoffs from one become bargains for another—while contributing to the upkeep of The Hall.

In October, about 80 residents turned out for **Koch vs. Koch**—a question and answer forum between Republican **Bill Koch** and Democrat **James Koch**, the



Visitors at the "100 Years of the Hamburg Fair" exhibit on July 4, 2001.



Parker Lord as a 1750's colonial militiaman.

town's two candidates for first selectman. Greg Stone, deputy editorial page editor at the New London Day, served as moderator.

Chains, Links & Perambulations would have been a fitting title for Parker Lord's October presentation on locating and recovering Lyme's physical bounds. In an evening talk and slide presentation, Parker explained the use of chains and links as old surveying instruments and the variety of boundary markers "hidden" in our surroundings. The following Saturday, a small group joined Parker for a *perambulation*, that is, an official inspection (of boundaries) on foot.

A hungry crowd made a success of November's *Chowder Supper*. Corn and clam chowders were the main course followed by home baked apple crisp and gingerbread. It was an evening of good food and pleasant company. Our most profitable dinner to date, proceeds covered the cost of the new stove recently installed in the Hall's kitchen.

from page 1

A new beginning . . .

As the fire company prepared to vacate in 1984, interest was generated in restoring the building and putting it to use again as a community center. Over 200 people signed petitions in favor of this effort and a group was formed which ultimately became the current Lyme Public Hall Association. The town agreed to lease the building—then assessed at \$80,000—on the condition that the association not receive or ask for town funding but instead rely on dues, donations and fund drives to support the venture. Largely through the volunteer efforts of the membership, the building was repaired and refurbished.

Today's Lyme Public Hall Association is an historical organization preserving the history of the town and its life-ways in addition to being a community center. Towards this end, a professionally managed historical archives operates from the lower level. The Association sponsors programs, lectures, and dinners several times a year. Additionally, the building is available as rental space for local community activities and private functions.

Membership Drive

Membership in the Lyme Public Hall Association is open to all residents of Lyme. It is through continued membership support that we are able to keep the Hall viable.

In December of 1999, the Board of Directors set a goal of 375 memberships. To date, we have 320 member households. Although short of our goal, we are pleased with your response and appreciate all dues submitted, as well as additional contributions made.

Annual dues—for the May 1-April 30 fiscal year—are as follows:

<i>Individual</i>	\$5.00
<i>Family</i>	10.00
<i>Subscribing</i>	25.00
<i>Contributing</i>	50.00
<i>Sustaining</i>	100.00

If you're not already a member, why not consider joining? Dues and contributions are tax deductible to the full extent allowed by law.

Watch for our annual membership mailing in April.

Mr. J. D. Sterling

YOUR COMPANY WITH LADIES, IS REQUESTED AT THE

•• CHRISTMAS BALL ••

to be given by *The Public Hall Association*:

IN THE PUBLIC HALL, HAMBURGH, CONN.

MONDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 26, 1898

Music by Daniels' Orchestra. R. S. Hall, Prompter.

Floor Managers: LAWRENCE RAYMOND, J. R. STERLING, C. M. PECK.

Admission, Gentlemen, 15 cts. Dancing Tickets, 50 cts., Admission include

REFRESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED.

This invitation is not transferable, and must be presented at the door.

If stormy, first fair evening.

Building Update

Jim Beers, a long time member of the Lyme Volunteer Fire Company, is a member of the Public Hall's Building Committee.

As a member of the Lyme Volunteer Fire Company since 1978, I'm very familiar with the Lyme Public Hall building. When the fire company left the hall in 1984, the building had deteriorated badly. The hall was considered a liability and many in the fire company, myself included, thought it should be sold or destroyed. I never like to admit that I'm wrong, but in this case I was wrong in a big way. Thanks to the efforts of many volunteers and benefactors, the hall has not only survived, but is beginning to flourish.

Dozens of people are responsible for the re-birth of the Lyme Public Hall. However, the one person who most stands out in my mind is the late Chuck Jewett. The building in its present physical condition is the fruit of his meticulous planning and labor—and that of many other volunteers. It is now up to the present and following generations to maintain and expand on this work.

About the time I joined the building committee five years ago, it was determined that a leak problem under the front porch was a priority to fix. The leaks have been 90% stopped, and now the stone work on the front face of the hall needs repointing to fully seal it against water penetration. This should stop all water leaks and allow for future plans for the basement area of the hall. The south face of the building and porch have been painted in the last year. Additionally, roofing repairs and lighting upgrades have been made.



The Hall decked out for Christmas.

As with any organization, we have maintenance and future projects to think about. Projects needing consideration:

- Main floor handicapped accessible restroom facilities
- New roof on back addition
- Remodel or replace existing garage door openings
- Finish off basement area with enclosed storage area/utility room
- Paint entire building
- Update/remodel existing kitchen
- Update and/or relocate heating plant

Your input and support on these or any other matters pertaining to the Public Hall are welcome and appreciated.

Farm Video Project

Several years ago, the Lyme Public Hall Association began a collaboration with Lyme-Old Lyme High School art teacher *Jackie Sullivan* and her Film & Video classes. The goal was to document on video, through interviews, old photos, and current scenes, some of Lyme's oldest farms as a means of preserving their character and place in the community for future generations.

The first video of this series—featuring the *Harding Farm* on Bill Hill Road, also known as *Ashlawn*—was completed last fall by Lyme-Old Lyme High School senior *Kevin Lynch*. Kevin received a Silver Key Award at the Connecticut Scholastic Art Awards for producing and directing this documentary. Fellow students *Garrett Okenka* and *Lindsay Martin* assisted in this project and also received Silver Key Awards.

The Harding Farm video is now part of the Archives' video and film collection and will most certainly be featured in a future program.

Ms. Sullivan sees this partnership as an opportunity for the school to give back to the community, while giving students valuable creative experience in motion picture making.

Tiffany Farms will be the subject of the next video. Students will begin work this spring.

Who to contact:

Membership: Diana Lord, 526-1436, banningwood@juno.com

Programs: Melodee Leonardo, 434-5715

Archives: Carolyn Bacdayan, 434-9292, bacdayan@aol.com

Rentals: Eleanor O'Connell, 434-7715

Bequests & Donations: Jack Leonardo, 434-5715

"Historic Images of Lyme": Carolyn Bacdayan, 434-9292

Newsletter: Sara Denow, 434-1929, denow@aol.com

Treasurer's Report

A frequent misconception is that the Lyme Public Hall is maintained by the town—not so! Although the building is town owned, the association leases the building and is responsible for its upkeep. There is NO funding from the town for either building and grounds maintenance or insurance and association activities.

Membership dues are the primary source of funding. With dues making up approximately fifty-five percent of annual income, the remainder is generated through benefit events, rental of the hall, sales of

Historic Images of Lyme note cards, and donations.

The Public Hall is recognized as a charitable and educational tax-exempt historical organization. Donations and bequests are tax deductible. We welcome your donations of cash, securities or a bequest intention.

I encourage all of our Lyme neighbors to continue in the tradition of supporting the efforts of the Hall—both financially and through participation in our social and educational programs.

Jack Leonardo
Treasurer

"Historic Images of Lyme" a Repeat Success

Since 1995, the Lyme Public Hall has produced five different sets of *Historic Images of Lyme* note cards. Based on old photographs, paintings, and engravings depicting historical Lyme, the cards have been popular in the community. Two sets featuring Thomas Nason wood engravings were particularly suited for winter holiday greetings.

The cards are an integral part of the Hall's mission to generate

appreciation and awareness of Lyme's history. Most of the cards are printed with a brief historical comment on the back.

Thank you for your purchases. To date we have earned more than \$6000 with the cards.

Current card series are available through the Hall (434-9292) and Reynold's Store, Hamburg. A new series is planned for Fall 2002. Content suggestions are welcome.

LYME PUBLIC HALL ASSOCIATION, INC.

Receptions
Meetings
Lectures
Reunions

249 Hamburg Road
P.O. Box 1056
Lyme, CT 06371
Phone: 860/434-7715
or
860/434-6115

FOR RENT

FOR FULL OR PARTIAL
DAYS AT REASONABLE

Small, charming historic building in the Hamburg section of Lyme with views of Hamburg Cove. The Lyme Public Hall seats 65 for dinner or 140 for lectures. All or a portion of the building may be rented.

Upcoming Events

Saturday, April 27

Kickoff spring cleaning with the town wide *Clean Sweep* sponsored by the Public Hall. Join in by policing your property frontage—and a bit more—for roadside litter. Trash bags will be available at Reynold's store and Hadlyme Country store in the preceding week. Leave filled bags at the closest intersection for town pickup on Monday, April 29.



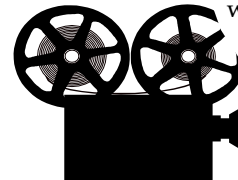
A Saturday in May

In the works . . . a *walking tour* of historic homes in the Hadlyme area. Watch for details.



Thursday, June 13

Join us for our *Annual Meeting & Pot Luck Supper*. As a special treat we'll be viewing *Cooper* family vintage home movies of the Lyme area. From sailing on the cove, to the Hamburg Fair, come see how Lyme used to be.



Thursday, July 4

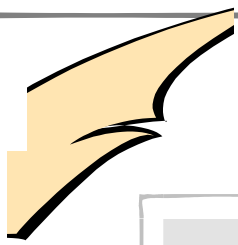
Don't miss the Public Hall exhibit following the 4th of July parade: *Something special about our town!*



Thanks, Angie

We thank Angie Falstrom, one of Lyme's *present day* fine artists, for her rendering of the Lyme Public Hall featured in our masthead. New business stationery also features Angie's design.

Notes from the Archives



Archives Thriving

Housed in comfortable quarters in the lower level of the Lyme Public Hall, the archives of Lyme town history have been open four and one half years since its dedication in November 1997. The Archives have a substantial – and growing – collection of materials reflecting life in Lyme from the early 1700's through the 20th century. While statistics cannot adequately reflect the substance and diversity of the materials available, they do give a picture of the level of support for and activity at the archives.

- 176 accessions consisting of single items to multiple cartons of materials
- 83 donors of materials
- 19 research requests in 2000-2001



Improved Record Keeping

With thanks to *Essex Savings Bank* and *Computer Sciences Corporation*, a computerized database that facilitates record management and research is now in use in the Archives. Database software was purchased with funds received from the Essex Savings Bank 2001 Community Investment Program. Two computers previously used at Electric Boat, were donated by Computer Sciences Corporation. Board member Sara Denow assisted in computer and software setups.

Think Twice Before You Toss!

Please think of the Archives before you decide to dispose of materials which have a connection with Lyme. Often even a single item is useful and of interest in combination with other materials already in the archives. Donations may be a single item or even unorganized boxes of materials.

Volunteers


Volunteers have contributed over 300 hours in the past year helping to clean and sort new accessions, photocopy, label and file, transcribe oral history tapes and develop exhibits. They are essential to our project. Thanks to the following:

Carolyn Bacdayan
Charlotte Barringer
Suzie Brown
Templeton Brown
David Brubaker
Mary Catherwood
Sara Denow
Ethel Feltham
Shirley Furgeson
Doris Jewett
Parker Lord
Eleanor O'Connell
Elizabeth Putnam
Hilde Reichenbach
Hannah Schillawski
Patricia Stark
Colleen Wetsel

Wish List

The Archives has a starter endowment from the bequest of Esmond Sterling which at this time generates less than \$400 a year. The balance of the Archives' \$1000 annual budget must come from contributions. Items needed in the coming year include:

- Archival steel shelving unit (\$250)
- Photographic storage supplies (\$200)
- Acid-free document folders and storage boxes (\$180)
- Toner cartridge for printer/copier (\$189)
- Flat file for maps, large photos, prints
- Table top portable slide and negative viewer
- Audio cassette transcription machine (\$225)
- Scanner for digital preservation of photographic images (\$100)
- CD-RW drive (\$100)



The Archives are open by appointment. For information about using the Archives, making a financial contribution, donating materials or volunteering, please contact Carolyn Bacdayan, Archivist (860) 434-9292.

What's in the Archives?

The archives house materials relating to Lyme's history, families, commerce, shipping, trades, agriculture, civic and religious organizations in all historical periods. These materials are diverse and include correspondence, diaries, ledgers, contracts, billings, manifests, maps, photographs, newspaper clippings, original manuscripts, memoirs, videotapes, oral histories, church and organizational records. The Archives' inventory includes:

- * **The Elizabeth Plimpton Collection:** A variety of local historical documents, photos, letters, ephemera, and clippings compiled over many years by Elizabeth while serving as Town Historian.
- * **The Elizabeth Putnam Collection:** An unusual and valuable collection of hundreds of newspaper clippings relating to Lyme's people, events, and issues covering the entire 20th century collected by Elizabeth – now 86 – and her mother.
- * **The Chamberlain Ferry Collection:** Mr. Ferry's strong personal and civic commitment to the conservation of Lord's Meadow and the Connecticut River estuary, and his interest in the history of the Ely family and Ely's Ferry area are well represented in this collection of correspondence, notes, photos and books.
- * **The Grassy Hill Church Collection:** Church and Sunday School record books, printed materials, and unpublished works about the Grassy Hill Ecclesiastical Society (1834-1939) and the Grassy Hill Church.
- * **The Ely Collection:** A wide variety of materials relating to Lyme's beloved Dr. Julian G. Ely, his family and community life in Lyme in the first half of the 20th century.
- * **The Sylvia Daniels Harding Collection:** A diverse collection of materials that touch on the Harding, Daniels, Pierce, and Brockway families; as well as Jared Daniels' fur and shad fishing trade, and Sylvia's community and artistic interests.
- * **The Bill Beebe Collection:** The papers of Bill Beebe, a former town clerk of many years who was well known for his genealogical knowledge of local families.

Board of Directors

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Eleanor O'Connell
Francis Rand
Arthur Reichenbach
Hannah Schillawski
Wendolyn Hill Sutton

Thanks to the following for the generous loan of the artifacts, tools, displays, photos and live oxen that added excitement to our "100 Years of Hamburg Fair" exhibit last July.

Ethel Feltham
John Giacomina
Jean Lee
Marita Rand
Arthur Reichenbach
Jack Tiffany
John Tisdale
Kathy and John Watson
The Pony Pull, Oxen Pull,
Horse Pull and
Hamburg Fair
Associations

For planning purposes, the Board would like your thoughts regarding the Hall. Please answer one or more of the following and mail to: **Feedback, The Lyme Public Hall, P. O. Box 1056, Lyme, CT 06371.**
Or e-mail comments to: **lymephall@aol.com** Name and phone optional.

Name _____ Phone _____

I enjoyed _____

I like / do not like _____

I would like to see _____

I can help with _____



Connecticut History in Song

Mike Kachuba

Friday ~ March 22

7:30 p.m.

Lyme Public Hall

Ages 10 to 110 ~ A fun evening for all

Tickets at the door

Members \$3 ~ Non-members \$5

Refreshments served



Join us as folk musician Mike Kachuba presents a musical history of Connecticut from the 17th century to the present. Using hammered dulcimer, guitar, and concertina – as well as his keen sense of humor – Kachuba, named Connecticut's Troubadour in 1996, performs his story telling songs of people and events from the past.

Votes bring Dollars

We hope that you remembered the Lyme Public Hall when casting your ballots in the *Essex Savings Bank's 2002 Community Investment Program*. Ballots were cast by bank customers between February 1 and March 15 at bank offices. The balloting determines the distribution of the bank's allotted \$157,000 community investment funds among participating non-profits.

The Hall was pleased to receive a total of 43 votes – \$414.00 – in *last year's* program. Database software for use in the Archives was purchased with the award.

*Thanks to Computer Sciences Corporation for their donation
of computers to the Archives*



THE LYME PUBLIC HALL

Historical Organization and Archives

249 Hamburg Road

P.O. Box 1056

Lyme, CT 06371

Non-Profit
Organization
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