

Lyme Public Hall Newsletter



The Lyme Public Hall Association, Inc.

Vol.4, No. 1

Spring 2005

Independence Day Exhibit

HOMEGROWN EXPRESSIONS

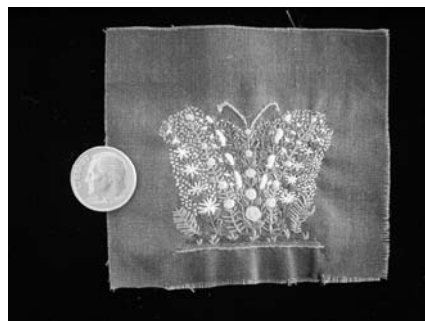
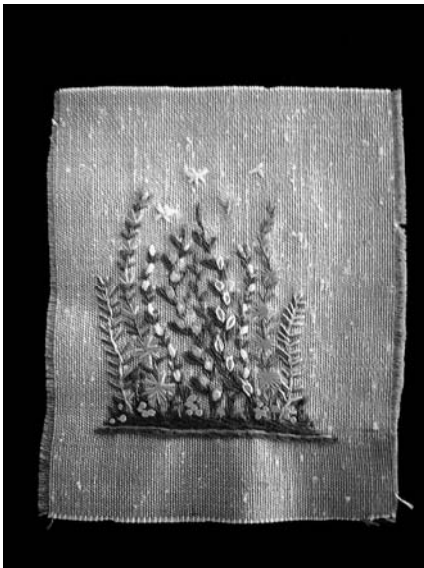
In an especially well attended exhibit held over the 2004 July 4th weekend, the Lyme Public Hall showcased the creative expressions of several Lyme residents – both historical and contemporary.

The centerpiece of the exhibit was the unique, intricately embroidered “needle paintings” by the late *Sylvia Daniels Harding*, a native of Lyme. She interpreted the flowers and landscapes of Lyme that she loved with incredibly minute silken stitches. Magnifying glasses were clearly the order of the day as enthralled visitors studied the details and continuously expressed amazement.

Iconographic, folk art hooked rugs, by the late *Jennie Stark*, always a local favorite, were prominently displayed on the stage. The walls were alive with the widely diverse paintings, photography and drawings of current Lyme residents *Doad Reynolds Jewett*, *Joan Bloom*, *Art* and *Hilde Reichenbach*, and *Virginia Clark*. Charmingly vintage-looking were handcrafted dolls by present day *Polly Murray*. Oil paintings and handicrafts by Harriet Warner of 19th century Brockway’s Ferry provided a delightful reminder of the talent and styles of the homemakers of the late 1800s. Especially enchanting was the 1929 Grassy Hill School project of talented 8th grader *Rose Kachuba*—charming watercolors of her observations of the wildlife and flora of Beaver Brook Road in the spring.

But wait, there were even more examples of how our Lyme neighbors expressed themselves—by letter, in diaries, friendship books, compositions and memoirs. The ever growing collection of the Public Hall Archives yielded intriguing 19th and 20th century samples of all of these.

This exhibit, as with others presented by the Hall, benefited immensely from the willingness of our friends and supporters to share their treasures to help us tell the story of Lyme.



President's Message

It's hard to believe that the Lyme Public Hall Association will soon be celebrating **twenty** years of activity! And harder still, to realize that some of the people involved with the Hall today were in the original group of townspeople who, in 1985, first organized to save the building from being sold by the town. **Eleanor O'Connell** is still on the Board and continues to be active. My wife, **Diana**, after a hiatus of some years, is once again a board member. If it weren't for health reasons, **Elizabeth Putnam** would still be on the Board. She was so instrumental in preserving the Hall and continues to regard it with affection.

Maybe they're not on the Board, but we are fortunate in the number of people who donate their time and expertise, such as **Jim, Gerry and Howard Beers, Bob Tisdale, Gary Adams and Mike Flynn**. Keeping the building maintained is not glamorous, but it certainly is necessary and these folks have been invaluable in doing just that.

Art Reichenbach's article about barns reminds me that Lyme is lucky to have some of these buildings still standing and in use, like the Pleasant Valley Schoolhouse. Like many of Lyme's residents, they're practical and long-lived.

Finally, my thanks to the Lyme Garden Club for its generous donation and to all of you who serve the Public Hall in one way or another.

Parker H. Lord
President



Garden Club VP, **Jan Anderson** presenting landscaping \$\$ to **Parker Lord**.

Embarking on a program of civic beautification, the **Lyme Garden Club** is distributing the proceeds of their very successful 2004 garden tour, "**June on Joshuatown**." to select Lyme organizations for landscaping purposes. The Lyme Public Hall is pleased to have been chosen as one of the several recipients to benefit from the club's generosity.

Accompanied by Garden Club president **Bobbi Pedrick**, Garden Club vice-president **Jan Anderson** referred to the Public Hall, at its location in Hamburg center, as the "epitome of Lyme," when she presented a generous check to the Public Hall board of directors at their March meeting.

The gift will be used for much needed landscaping improvements at the front of our 19th century building.

Watch for progress!

Paint—fresh paint? Do we smell paint? You bet! It's been a few years—almost twenty—since the main hall and meeting room had fresh coats. Painter **Russell Fogg** and his crew showed up in December to do the job. In short order, the walls, ceiling and trim were wearing bright new coats of *cream* and *Wedgwood blue*—and looking all the better for it!



Wendy Hill and Angie Falstrom making drapery adjustments.

With the Hall's main room taking on the appearance of a home economics sewing class, on Saturday, February 26, a group of volunteer stitchers joined forces. Following the directions of **Angie Falstrom, Wendy Hill and Mabel Matschulat**, they cut, pinned, stitched, and pressed their way to new lined draperies for the meeting room's three windows. The group will reconvene in the near future to begin transforming yards and yards of blue toile fabric into window treatments for the eight windows of the main hall.

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

Individual — \$5 Family — \$10 Subscribing — \$25 Contributing — \$50 Sustaining — \$100

Additional donations of cash, appreciated securities, or future bequests are also welcome. Thank you for your continued support.



Craftsmen **Russell Fogg, Gerry Beers, Howard Beers, and Jim Beers** looking on.

October last, amidst a chorus of laughter and cheers, board member **Eleanor O'Connell** cut the ribbon and made the symbolic **First Flush**—thus officially opening our new main level handicapped accessible restroom!

Honorees at our celebratory dedication were the craftsmen whose hard work made this lovely convenience a reality. Honorees included: **Pete Adams, Gerry Beers, Howard Beers, Jim Beers, John Feeney, Russell Fogg, Tuck McCoy, and Robert Tisdale**. Also honored was **Diana Lord** for her role in selection of materials and colors used in the project.



Eleanor O'Connell performing the ribbon cutting honors.

Tucked away in the Hall's lower level, a new oil tank has recently been installed. It replaces the old underground tank and eliminates a potential environmental hazard. In and of itself, a new tank is not so amazing. But coupled with all the other changes to the building since 1985—when the present day Public Hall Association organized—it's one more sign of our success in our mission to *save the building*. It's also a sign that we plan to continue in our mission in the coming years.

With that said, we can only wonder what the next twenty years will bring for the Public Hall—a new kitchen, improvements to the lower level to enable increased use of that space or expansion of the archives? Only time will tell. Come along with us and see!



L-R: **Wendy Hill, Hilde Reichenbach, Angie Falstrom, Janice Livingston** — Decked out in stripes, and ready to serve at last November's Chowder Dinner — a pleasant community gathering.

Happy Anniversary Lyme Public Hall Association 20 Years

Last winter's program, "The Winter Craft of Ice Cutting" at Squam Lake, NH, by **Arthur Howe** stirred childhood memories of ice cutting operations here in Lyme. An excerpt from **Doad Jewett's** memoir "Things Remembered" describes the action in this 1920s photo of young **Caroline Lee (Plummer)** watching the ice cutting operation on Grassy Hill Pond.



"The men would gather with their ice cutting tools early one morning and start to mark off the ice in squares. There was a special tool for that. It cut a groove to show where the ice should be cut later. The cutting was done with a hand saw with a cross handle on one end ... It was not only hard work, it was dangerous work. After a few cakes had been removed, the men were working around open water and wet ice is very slippery. There was always danger of falling in. Not only was the water frigid, most of the men couldn't swim. They had iron cleats strapped to the bottom of their boots which was a help ... Every home had an ice box ... used only in warm weather. Putting ice in it was a chore ... The best thing kept in the ice box was homemade root beer. Mother used to make it frequently and put it up in quart glass jars. That was our summer drink."

From the Archivist

So many interesting and useful materials – photographs, maps, memoirs, letters, ephemera and documents about Lyme life and families – continue to flow into the Archives. It is very encouraging that our donor list now contains 110 individuals who appreciate the history of our town and have recognized the merit of donating materials to the Public Hall Archives for preservation. The promise of continuing growth in what is already a solid historical collection is exciting for us.

The Archives are housed in a climate controlled room which is also used for materials processing and study. All items are cared for according to professional archival standards. In this way, material from our attics and files that might otherwise deteriorate, be forgotten or unfortunately discarded can be appropriately stored, preserved and made accessible as historical resources for everyone.

During the past year, we were very pleased that information and many photographs from the Archives were used in the Cultural Landscape Report that documents the Eight Mile River watershed as a unique and valuable cultural New England resource, in its bid for protection status under the Wild and Scenic Rivers federal designation. Other research requests have made good use of the Archives' map, genealogical, photographic and newspaper collections.

It takes many hands and hours to clean, repair, sort, organize, label, inventory, summarize, scan and enter materials into the database. Our Archives volunteers have willingly shared their time to take on a wide variety of tasks. Thanks to **Suzie Brown, David Brubaker, Mary Catherwood, Ginny Clark, Toni Condron, Sara Denow, Morgan Ely, Wendy Hill, Doad Jewett, Hilde Reichenbach, Lori Warner Spiers, and Andrea Wing** who have all helped during the past year.

The Archives is a special resource, a door, even a window, into Lyme's past. Analyze an old store ledger, map or folder of news clippings or pick a subject that interests you. I'll help you find materials to suit your purpose or satisfy your curiosity.

I'll be happy to hear from you if you would like to visit the Archives to do research, help as a volunteer, or discuss a possible donation of materials.

Carolyn Bacdayan, Archivist
434-9292



This finely detailed cast medal was recently donated to the Archives. It was awarded by the Connecticut State Agricultural Society— probably in the late 1800s—to Lyme sheep farmer Kansas Nebraska Bill for exceptional merino sheep. Its inscription reads “**K. N. Bill ~ Lime, Conn. ~ Merino Sheep**”

Mission: To collect, document, preserve and make accessible the historical heritage of Lyme.

The Archives depends on donations of items of historical significance to Lyme, cash, supplies and equipment as well as the help of our many volunteers. Before disposing of materials with a connection to Lyme, please think of the Archives.

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



Can you identify this object positioned on the shore of Hamburg Cove in this vintage 1940s photo? Find out more about it from Dot Goss, *The Shad Lady*. See page 8.

Check in your family's old trunks and storage spaces for items of interest that tell us something about Lyme. If items are donated, a deed of gift will be provided which may be useful for tax purposes. Or, if you prefer to keep the originals, we can scan the items. Either way expands the Archives' history telling collections.

Recent donations include:

- ◆ Original full page newspaper ad for H. L. Reynolds store from its days as an IGA store
- ◆ 19th century family photographs: Henry Huntley, Lyman Harding, Stephen Sterling, Harriet Warner
- ◆ Original "License to make *BOOTS AND BOOTEES*", issued to David Lay by the New London Commissioner of Revenue, 5th district, 1815
- ◆ Hand colored 1850 and 1868 atlas maps of Lyme with householder names
- ◆ "Autobiography of a Connecticut Country Girl", an unpublished manuscript by Mary Comstock Raymond, born in 1863, about growing up in Lyme at Raymond Farms on Hamburg Road
- ◆ World War II Lyme Minuteman Civil Defense map
- ◆ Epitaphs of East Haddam cemeteries collected for Raymond-Bill genealogical research
- ◆ Brass teacher's hand bell used in the Brockway/ Joshuatown one-room school, late 19th and early 20th centuries

Can you help us with . . . ?

We're especially looking for the following to round out or fill gaps in existing collections.

- ◆ Lyme Town Reports for the years of 1888, 1890, 1891, 1895-97, 1899, 1902, 1904, and 1909
- ◆ A photograph of Hamburg Post Office counter and grill inside H.L. Reynolds Store
- ◆ Newsletters of associations and organizations in Lyme which are no longer active
- ◆ Business papers and ledgers from former stores, industries and businesses in Lyme
- ◆ Old family photos

What can a volunteer do in the Archives? Here's a sample of tasks that are waiting for willing hands. Each offers an opportunity for an *up close and personal* look at some interesting pieces of Lyme's past! Guidance is provided for all tasks.

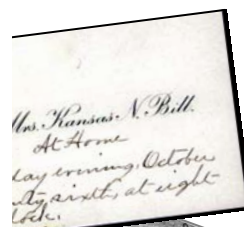
- ◆ Repairing documents
- ◆ Transcribing oral history interviews
- ◆ Cleaning books and papers for boxing or filing
- ◆ Inventorying and summarizing subject folders
- ◆ Transcribing handwritten diaries, letters and memoirs

Help! We've overloaded and outgrown our secondhand computers. New equipment is badly needed. A fund for the purchase of a new computer has been established. Won't you consider contributing?

Keeping in Touch

July 4, 2005 Weekend Exhibit

Wherever people were—at home in Lyme or far away—they wanted to *keep in touch*. In days gone by, *keeping in touch* meant letters, postcards, and greetings delivered by mail—even within town. It meant calling cards or printed invitations for tea or "at home" afternoons. And by the early 20th century in Lyme, *keeping in touch* may also have meant the telephone switchboard and party line.



This in-the-works exhibit will include examples of all of these earlier means of *keeping in touch* drawn from the resources of the Lyme Public Hall Archives. Among them are stories of love, family, discovery, wartime, separation, and friendship.

Do you have a collection or samples of pre-1950s communications you would like to share for the exhibit? Contact Carolyn Bacdayan, 434-9292.

Why Are Barns Red?

By Art Reichenbach

It ain't necessarily so . . . at least in Lyme and along the shoreline. Here we find yellow barns, gray barns, unpainted barns and a few other assorted colors. The earliest local barns were left in a natural state, or unpainted. Because most farmers were merely eking out a living from the inhospitable land, the luxury of paint was found only inside the best houses. In fact, old houses, if painted at all, were oftentimes given a coat of white lead pigment mixed with binder on the street side only.

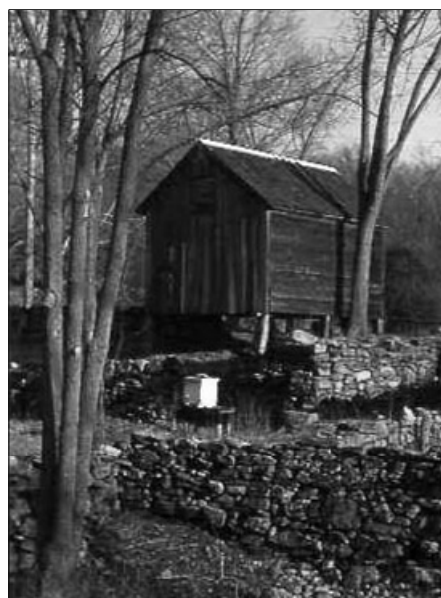
By the 18th century some farmers began to use a wood preservative to protect their outbuildings. If color was added, it was hand-mixed from pigments and linseed or mineral oil, because commercially-mixed paints were unknown. This method continued until the end of the Civil War, when greater prosperity and invention of synthetic pigments for paint were introduced. Up until that time, red iron oxide as a pigment had been mixed with skimmed milk and/or lime, which created a paint of sorts. This mixture produced a standard and inexpensive color. Red thus became a color of choice for barns. Blue (cobalt) and green (terre verte) pigments were prohibitively expensive. Yellow (cadmium) was peculiar to the shoreline because this color had been used in interiors and trim on ships, many of which were built in the region. Once the inexpensive red established a foothold, red became synonymous with barns. Settlers who moved westward after the Civil War took with them the practical idea of using red for their outbuildings.

The size of a farmer's barn was indicative of his wealth. Even if his house remained unpainted, a large red barn stood out among his neighbors' as a status symbol. Other outbuildings were rarely painted; hen houses, pig sties, sheep lean-tos and outhouses did not have the status of barns. By the late Victorian period, a painted house became common, while barns now took on architectural importance with window frames and trim boards painted white to enhance the plain red board siding.

This writer, having grown up in Connecticut's tobacco valley, recalls the painting of tobacco sheds with a mixture of one gallon red barn paint to two gallons of linseed oil. This thinned the red color to almost a stain, while the linseed oil acted as a preservative for the loose boards of the sheds and prevented warping. Should the linseed oil in this paint mixture thicken in cool weather, it could be thinned with turpentine. More cost-conscious farmers used kerosene as a thinner, which may have been cheaper, but contributed to a spectacular fire if the tobacco shed burned. These thinned red paints aged handsomely to a brown/red and can still be seen on the few remaining tobacco sheds and on some of the barns in the valley. Its patina could never be duplicated.

Continued on page 7

How many of these Lyme barns do you recognize?



Top to bottom: Czikowsky's barn on Joshuatown Road — still standing. ✧✧ Beebe Corner, Beaver Brook and Gungy Road — only foundation remains. ✧✧ Carlson barn at corner of Bill Hill and Burr Road — still standing.

Save these Dates

For more info or to assist with these or future events, call Wendy Hill, 434-2961

Earth Day Weekend, April 23-24

Spring Clean-Sweep

Town-wide roadside clean-up. Free trash bags available at H.L. Reynold's (Jane's) store and Hadlyme Country Store. On Monday, Town of Lyme picks up bags left on side of road.

Sunday, April 24, 2 p.m.

The Shad Lady, Dot Goss

See details on page 8.

Sunday, May 1, 2 p.m.

A Walk into Lyme's Past—Hartman Park

See details on page 8.

Thursday, June 9, 6 p.m.

Annual Meeting & Potluck Dinner

Program to be announced.

Saturday, June 18, 5:30—8:30 p.m.

River Cruise

A late afternoon Connecticut River cruise from Hamburg Cove onboard the *RiverQuest* excursion boat. Light snacks provided. Bring your own beverage.

Independence Day Weekend

July 2-4, time to be announced

Exhibit: Keeping in Touch

See details on page 5.

Saturday, August 6, time to be announced

Tag & Bake Sale

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

Sunday, October 23, 2 p.m.

Jim Beers, Civil War Enthusiast

Jim will share his enthusiasm and considerable knowledge of Civil War uniforms, weapons, organization, tactics, battles, and leaders. He will give a history of the evolution of military tactics and qualities of the leaders on both sides—including two local men.

Admission free.

Having a special event?

- a reception, exhibit, program, party, or even a tag sale? The Lyme Public Hall can accommodate a variety of activities and may be just the place to host your occasion.

Rent all or part of the building. The assembly room seats 140 for lectures, or, with the tables set up, 65 for dinner. For smaller groups, there is the meeting room.

Renting the basement for a tag sale - with 2 garage doors facing the street - is a real bargain.

For fees and availability, please call Eleanor O'Connell at 434-7715.

BARNs Continued from page 6

Experience and education have aided farmers in learning that the color of the outside of a building can help control temperature inside. In northern areas, you now see more new livestock shelters sporting darker colors, e.g., green, blue or brown, but with red still dominating the palette. Modern steel structures on farms now sport pre-painted panels of green, gray, off-white, blue and beige. This aluminum or steel sheathing for barn construction heralds a new but considerably less romantic concept of a New England barn. But if you drive the highways and byways of our area, chances are you will still see the silent remains of red barns, now faded to brown or gray patina, that add to the by-gone charm of southern New England.

If you're not already on our email list and would like to receive notice and reminders of upcoming Public Hall events, send us a note at: lymepublichall@adelphia.net

Who to contact:

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

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

Rentals: Eleanor O'Connell, 434-7715

Newsletter: Sara Denow, 434-1929, sdenow@adelphia.net

Bequests & Donations: Jack Leonardo, 434-5715, lymack@aol.com

Historical Images of Lyme: Carolyn Bacdayan, 434-9292



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*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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**The Shad Lady
 Dot Goss**

Sunday, April 24, 2005 2 p.m.

Shad fishing, long a part of Connecticut River Valley life, is an industry much reduced from former times.

Dot Goss, from a multi-generation Sterling City family with a long tradition of shad fishing, will present a history of shad fishing in the Connecticut River. Her presentation will include the documentary *A Passion for Shad*, tools of the trade, and photos spanning 150 years of shad fishing by her family.

An expert in the technique of preparing the shad fillet so that all the nearly 1300 bones are removed, she will demonstrate the art of shad boning.

At the Hall. Admission free. Refreshments – *not* shad.



**A Walk into Lyme's Past
 Hartman Park History**

Sunday, May 1, 2005 2 p.m.

Join us for a May Day walk in Hartman Park guided by Wendy Hill.

Hartman Park, a beautiful 325 acre woods, was donated to the town of Lyme by *John and Kelly Hartman* in 1988. Earliest colonial records of the area date from the late 1600s. The area once supported a settlement of subsistence farmers consisting of blacks, Native Americans and whites. There is still evidence of the once thriving community. We will hike the Heritage Trail and view the remnants of this earlier life in Lyme, including the mysterious "three chimneys".

Meet at the park main entrance on Gungy Road in Lyme at 2 p.m. Wear walking shoes. No reservation necessary. Rain cancels.

