

Lyme Public Hall Newsletter



The Lyme Public Hall Association, Inc.

Vol. 15, No. 1 Spring 2016

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

What do you think of when you hear the phrase “family treasure”? Grandmother’s candlesticks? A photo of an ancestor in a Civil War uniform? The memory of a special town event or family gathering? At the Lyme Public Hall Association and Local History Archives, we are devoted to Lyme’s family treasures, both tangible and intangible.

This year our programming will focus on events and things that are dear to us. Plans are in the works to screen what we lovingly call Lyme’s home movie, featuring town events in 1975 and 1976. Many old friends appear, and it is great fun trying to identify all those young faces.

In September we’ve planned an afternoon where we can all share family treasures and their stories. And in October the Lyme Local History Archives will showcase treasures donated by Lyme families at a special Open House. One recent donation is an account book from the coastal schooner L. Daniels that traded along the Connecticut River and Long Island Sound from Hartford to New York. It was handed down through the Huey family in Brockway’s Ferry. The Archives allows us to preserve valued documents like this one for future generations.

As always, I want to thank the many people who support the Lyme Public Hall Association through the generous donation of their time. We try to make events like the Tag Sale and the Chowder Dinner look effortless, (Who said “Never let them see you sweat.”?), but they take a lot of work and we are a small Board of Directors. Thanks also to our members, who help keep

13.27	Sept 20	2200 Bushels Corn 6.Ce	132.00
82		2460 Do - Oats 5/4	155.50
00		74 Cedar Boards Home	2.00
50		2 On Tobacco to Hartford	50
00			\$269.80
00			57.92
40			\$212.08
72			
14.27	Oct 5	2593 Bushels Wheat 6.Ce	145.58
7		1700 Bushels Corn - 6	102.00
0		100 Do - to to Egen	6.00
0			\$251.58
0			48.57
2			\$203.01
7			
15.27	Oct 16	2557 Bushels Wheat 6.Ce	141.42
7		1798 Do - Corn 6	107.58
9			\$249.00
0		Present by Mr Daniels	5.70
0			255.00
0			79.06
6			\$175.94

A page from the account book of the Schooner L. Daniels, showing the income from three of its trips in 1865. The book is a recent gift to the Lyme Local History Archives and one of its treasures.

us going with their dues. You are our family treasures!

We hope to see all of you at our programs and community events this year. Though the Archives are comfortably ensconced in their new digs in the Library, the Hall will continue to be a place where our residents can gather to enjoy each others’ company, and learn a bit about Lyme’s history. Who knows? Maybe you will even find a new treasure to pass on to future generations.

Leslie Lewis

Still in Town After Hundreds of Years

Would it surprise you to know that there are descendants in Lyme today, from families who settled here in the 17th century? The Lyme Local History Archives has begun creating a record of these living descendants who are linked to Lyme of more than 350 years ago. Our first “photo shoot” was held in conjunction with the exhibit “Lyme in the 1600s” in July 2015. To accompany their photos, participants filled out a simple form identifying the name of their original Lyme ancestor, connections with other early Lyme families, as well as the names of the individuals included in the photograph.

Linda Winzer, the Lyme town clerk and her father, William Hawthorne (pictured) were among those who had their pictures taken in July. They are descendants of Wolston Brockway (1638-1717) and his wife Hannah Briggs (1642-1687). The Brockways were among the first English settlers in the early 1660s settling near the Duck River in what is now Old Lyme. Their son, William, moved to the northern end of town and started the Brockway ferry in 1724. William was the third of their eleven children and several town residents can trace their roots back to this one large family.

If you live in the town of Lyme, and are descended from one of the earliest families, the Lyme Local History Archives would like to take your picture. Lists of 17th



Descendants of an early Lyme settler, William Hawthorne and his daughter Linda Winzer, clerk for the Town of Lyme.

century Lyme settlers appear on the Lyme Public Hall website (lymepublichall.org). Look for “The Families of East Saybrook 1665-1700” under recent posts in the Local History Archives section. If you would like to participate in this project, along with other members of your family, come to the Open House of the Lyme Local History Archives on Saturday, October 1, 2016 from 1-3 pm to have your photo taken for the Archives collection. The Archives is now located in the Lyme Public Library.

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Questions? Comments? Email the Lyme Public Hall Association at info@lymepublichall.org

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: info@lymepublichall.org

Treasures From The Archives

The Lyme Local History Archives holds a number of memoirs, diaries, letters and account books by Lyme residents for the period 1850 to 1950. Four examples of these holdings are briefly described here. Some common themes emerge: the importance of identity with place and family, self-reliance, a strong work ethic, and community involvement.



Elizabeth Alice Ely Lord (1836-1926) was the eldest of 10 children in the John Griswold Ely family, living at Brockway Ferry. She maintained her diary for 17 years starting at age 18, recording her home life and youthful activities—the teas, quilting parties, “balls”, visiting lecturers and players, and church meetings. She was a member and secretary of the Joshuatown Union Society (1858-63) whose purpose was “*acquiring and diffusing knowledge, and to avoid in every form sectarianism and bigotry.*”



John Randall Sterling (1841-1884) grew up on Bill Hill and married Lizzie Bill of Ashlawn Farm. He was the freight clerk on the SS “City of Hartford” at a time of burgeoning trade and steamship transport in the 1860s on the Connecticut River. Traveling between Hartford and New York, he wrote to “*My Darling Little Wife*”, often daily. He longs to be home, worries about his family’s welfare, and reacts to the stresses of the big city and his work. Two account books show his enterprise in supplying Lyme residents with new fashion “necessities”.



Harold Clark (1897-1957) attended the Joshuatown-Brockway one-room school. In 1917 he was drafted into the U. S. Army and went to Army camp in Georgia and combat service in France. The Archives holds two letters that he wrote to his teacher and friend Hester Warner. He comments on different cultures, social classes, and races of people as he negotiates his way in the world beyond Lyme. But, he is very clear: “*I am very lonesome for my Dear Home in the Conn Hills and the Dear Old river . . . I want to live and die there beside the beautifulst (sic) river on earth.*”



Joseph A. Caples (1873-1954) the youngest of eight children in an African American family lived his entire life on the family homestead on Gungy Road. The Archives holds nine of his diaries, spanning 1915-1936, and a 1949 memoir, all written in his meticulous script. He graduated from the one-room North Grassy Hill School, was the Grassy Hill Church treasurer and a district school committee member. He hunted, farmed and took special pride in shearing sheep for sixty farmers in ten towns over a period of fifty years. His diary entries communicate how hard the times were, but also his devotion to family, self-reliance, and many associations around the town.

In our fast changing world, the personal, written records by these Lyme writers provide perspectives on Lyme’s social history.

Wood, the First Resource

This article is an abbreviated version of Dr. John Pfeiffer's recent talk at the Lyme Public Hall. Dr. Pfeiffer is the Old Lyme town historian and chair of the Historic District Commission of Old Lyme.

The course of civilized human history has been closely tied to wood. Over the last 10,000 years, entire civilizations have prospered and correspondingly slipped into decay because of our need for forest products and the corresponding changes that it induced. Such changes have had both natural as well as human causes.

Currently, there is a heightened level of concern internationally to preserves forests. Such discussion and approaches to resource preservation are not new. Nearly 6000 years ago, people of Mesopotamia were concerning themselves with the need to protect forest products. While a story was probably told and retold for centuries it was formally written as the "The Epic of Gilgamesh" and recorded around 3500 BCE. The story is about two heroes and friends who go into a forest to steal cedar trees. The cedar forest is guarded by Humbaba, a huge and terrifying monster, the servant of the god Enlil. Gilgamesh and Enkidu travel a great distance from their home to get wood for the gate of the city of Uruk. Clearly, the story while focusing upon the journey of the epic heroes, how comrades are always there for one another, is also a story where there are restrictions on the cutting of trees. Tablets 4 and 5 focus on how the forest is the Gods' domain and not for humans. Obviously before 3500 BCE there are social controls upon forest resources that attempt to limit and restrict use.

Wood was key as civilizations developed around the Mediterranean Sea. For example, the Minoan economy with its vast trading networks depended on wood not only as an exported commodity but also as the basic construction material for all ships and coastal buildings. Just prior to 1500 BCE the island of Crete was impacted by a devastating earthquake, volcanic eruption, and ensuing tidal wave. The damage may well have been significant with the island sustaining destruction of its fleet, and most coastal installations. Since all of these were based on local forest products and the lumber

preserves were already stressed from centuries of exportation, it is unlikely that the Minoan economy was able to recover and the collapse of Minoan culture was seen within 50 years of the volcanic eruption.

A huge strain was placed upon the forest reserves of wood during the ensuing classical Greek and Roman times. Construction of various kinds of buildings, the need for fuel, as well as the production of massive ships and navies and their continuous destruction during war, devastated Mediterranean forests. As population increased across the Empire, Rome had to go farther and farther away from its own territories to secure forest resources. Much of Rome's expansion and conquest was directed towards securing forest products and agricultural land

When Europe woke up from its isolation of the Middle Ages, wood was again key. For the first time in many centuries Europeans saw and learned about the outside world. Trade and commerce were a direct result of this expanded view of the world. The Italian States especially Venice quickly locked down supremacy of trade throughout southern and western Europe. Shipyards were very adept at producing many high quality ships and for a considerable time Venice was the most important maritime power in Europe. As in times before, local forest resources were overcut and timber shortages clearly restricted further development of Venetian commerce. Portugal, Spain, and North Sea coasts had local wood and thus northern European interests started up where the Venetians left off. Not only were efforts of the western countries oriented towards commerce, but with it, also went discovery. Discovery meant new resources, new commercial opportunities, expanded markets, and greater profits.

By the end of the 16th century the decline of Spanish power and the local availability of wood allowed England, France, and Holland to build large fleets to take advantage of the world seas. In their struggle for trading and colonial dominance, these countries experienced shortages of wood half a century later. The situation became dire and these competing countries turned to their American colonies for wood supplies. This is where our story in Lyme begins.

The 16th century explorer, Giovanni da Verrazzano, one of the earliest Europeans to view southern New England, noted agricultural fields along the shore and inland massive forests with an unobstructed understory. Natives had utilized the forest resources for tens of thousands of years, moving their villages every 8 to 10 years as nearby firewood dwindled. They predominantly harvested the natural trimming and ground litter of the climax growth. One of the first 17th century settlers, Roger Williams, encountered Natives who asked “Why have you come here?” and then answered the question by offering something from their own experience—“For want of wood?”. How right they were!

The American colonies were the result of a European commercial revolution and seen as a tremendous source of profit. The monarchy invested, hoping to enrich their treasuries and increase their power. English investors funded exploration, discovery and settlement in the hopes of generating large revenues. Investors formed companies and employed a broad spectrum of workers to do their colonial bidding. For the lower classes of England, signing up for settlement in America offered opportunity but also significant risk: Of those who settled in the New World, half would not survive the first year. The benefactors of their toils were ultimately the investors who required a portion of what the settlers produced as well as produce from town or common lands. In 1623, the Plymouth settlement sent back its first product to England on the ship “Fortune”. It was a cargo of “board and plank”.

Colonists, from the very onset, were adamant regarding their exclusive right to forest resources. Colonial records, of the various colonies across what would become Connecticut, demonstrate a consistent pattern of forest resource regulation. One of the first acts of the Connecticut Colony in 1640 read: “It is ordered that no tumber shall be felled fro without the bounds of these plantations w/out lycence”. In 1650 under the Connecticut Codes forest harvesting and selling was further restricted and monopolized by the English: “The General Court orders that no person should buy of the Indians any timber, candlewood, or trees”.

The one overwhelming fact is that there was a very serious lumbering operation in Connecticut and in our town. As soon as one settlement or company attained

rights there was a concerted effort to cement that right, leading to various regulations. In 1667 Lyme records this ruling: “It was voted and consented that no man shall cut down timber for pigstyes or any other timber for to make sayle of w/in one and ½ mile of the towne.” The impact of these operations can be seen in the ensuing 1683 entry from the Lyme records: “There are several persons carrying away great quantities of timbor, stand rayles, and rift without any liberty of this towne whereby all sorts of timber grows scarce. This towne appoints four men to prosecute to full efect of law any person that shall proceed to fell timbor and transport.”

The significance of the above document is that wood is becoming scarce! After only 16 years of being a town, Lyme’s forests are overharvested! Lyme granted lumbering rights to quite a few lumbering and sawing operations after the town’s formation. On the Lieutenant River, Thomas Terry was granted a sawmill in 1677. In the same year Joseph Peck, Edward DeWolf, and Richard Lord were granted a sawmill on Eight Mile River. The ensuing year Richard Ely got approval for a sawmill on Falls River. In 1688 Edward DeWolf was granted a sawmill on small brook that flows into what is now Rogers Lake. In 1693 Joseph Selden, Andrew Warner, and Samuel Church received permission for a sawmill on Roaring Brook in what is now Hadlyme. These operations were all licensed by the town, located on watercourses, and situated near upland forest resources.

The wood from colonial Lyme served a multitude of functions. The tree trunks went to the mill to be sawn in to board and planks. Such materials were exported to England as well as the West Indies where valuable cargo was sent back to our ports. Many of the merchants in Lyme were involved in the export of wood and the marketing of the returning imports. As a result they maintained warehouses along the Lieutenant River and other navigable waters. Lumber was also used locally and sawn in the same facilities. In fact, as part of the right to license, sawmill operators had to supply the town and its townspeople with building materials and almost on an “at cost” basis. Their revenue came from export not from local demand!

Local demand for fire wood was huge as it heated houses and cooked food. An average house in the course

of a year would consume from 20 to 40 cords of wood. Most often this fuel came from the tops of the trees cut for lumber. Often it was referred to as “tier” wood. (The knottier wood, where branches intersected the trunk and limbs and made for poor lumber.) Candlewood was also important. It burned brightly and quickly.

A constant demand was also placed on local forest resources by farming activity. Rails were erected into fences enclosing pastures. An average farmstead swallowed up thousands of rails. More wood was dedicated to this need than for fuel. Rail fence lines were placed on top of the stone walls that we see in our town even to this day.

Wood also was employed in colonial preindustrial activity. Smelting of iron, metal smithing, pottery manufacture, brickmaking to name a few, required charcoal. This was produced in a kiln that regulated the amount of oxygen. Kilns or “coal pits” dotted colonial and later federal period Lyme. Charcoal production was a significant activity and placed a considerable demand upon forest resources in Lyme.

Early on, shipbuilding was going on in Lyme and required wood. Certainly by the very first years of the 1700s ships were being built from lumber cut in our forests in Lyme. Many of the sawmills and lumber operations had associated shipyards. The Ely sawmill on Falls Brook was acquired by Daniel Sterling and not only shipped out board and plank, but made kits for houses and ships to be packaged up, exported, and built elsewhere. This activity evolved into building ships in the nearby cove.

It is no wonder that by the early 1830s, when John Warner Barber put together a sketch of our town in his Connecticut Historical Collections, it was described as treeless. Not only was Lyme suffering from over exploitation of its forests but the agricultural activity that replaced forests, practiced poor crop, livestock, and soil management. Making a living from the local environment was no longer possible. People moved away as the environmental foundation withered. Population dropped from its high point of 4000 in the first decade of the 1800s. It was not until the 1960s that the population once again achieved that number.

In many ways the story matches the pattern established all over the world. Forests and the wood

they produce are the key to human existence. A managed forest resource maintains a civilization—a mismanaged forest leads to civilization’s demise.

Unlike many of the regions of the world, Lyme’s environment was capable of recovery. The downturn of population relaxed the focus on the land and forests. Climate did the rest. There was regrowth of the forest. Vegetation reoccupied eroded farmsteads and soil conditions improved. Today, here in Lyme, the forests and the habitat that they produce are as rich as they have been in many hundreds of years.

There are lessons to be learned from this. The lessons are old, but no less timely. What Humbaba once maintained, still requires our watchful eye, our management, protection if necessary, and moreover the recognition that without it, we will not survive.



A coastal trading schooner docked at Hamburg Cove circa 1900 to load Lyme wood products.



This view from Candlewood Ledge toward Hamburg Cove circa 1920 shows almost treeless Lyme hills.

Lyme Local History Archives

The first full year of operation of the Archives in its new facility in the Lyme Public Library was very productive. Patron requests and visits were steady, and response was very positive to the convenient access, comfortable study area, the useful collection materials and the research help available.

The geographic draw of patrons in 2015 was: Lyme 35, Old Lyme 7, other CT towns 10, and out-of-state 6. In addition, the exhibits, displays and programs organized by the Archives, featuring archived materials, were attended by more than 225 participants:

- **Archives Open House** and display, May 5.
- *Lyme in the 1600s* a major exhibit , July 3-5 at the Lyme Public Hall. Portions of this exhibit were displayed in the Lyme Town Hall and Lyme Library throughout August.
- *Lyme Life: 1850-1950* slide presentation/readings, October 24. Sponsored by the Friends of the Lyme Library

The Archives also assisted several local organizations in a variety of ways: Lyme Land Conservation Trust, Old Lyme Historical Society, Lyme Consolidated School, and the Lyme Public Library.

The range and depth of the collection continued to grow. Twenty-five donations (each comprising one to more than one hundred items) from individuals and from Archives initiated research were entered into the collection. Some examples:

- Research and display records for the July 2015 exhibit, “Lyme in the 1600s”, about Lyme’s early settlers, settlements, landmarks, town organization, Native American-Colonial relations, and the material culture of the Colonial homestead.
- 100 high resolution photographs and research documenting 18th century gravestones in the Bill Hill, Lord, Pleasant View, Brockway and Joshuatown cemeteries. (These were added to the more than



Last July's exhibit , Lyme in the 1600s, was one project of the Lyme Local History Archives.

200 photographs and research for the Ely, Selden and Marvin cemeteries entered into the collection in 2014.)

- An account journal for the coastal schooner “L. Daniels” (1865-1868) was added to our collection of other ship journals of ships owned, captained and/or invested in by Lyme residents: Sloop “Intent”, and schooners “Argo”, “Sterling”, “Black Hawk” and “New World”.
- Two ca. 1900 photographs: the Italianate style home of Dr. Josiah Griffin Ely (d. 1935) with wide panorama of Mt. Archer; and the 1795 Federal style home of Frederick Fosdick anchoring the corner of Hamburg and Beaver Brook Roads.
- Copy of architectural drawings done in 1933 of the 18th century house built by Col. Samuel Selden in Hadlyme. Originals were produced as part of the Historic American Buildings Survey of the Work Projects Administration.

The Archives benefited greatly in 2015 from the contribution of time and talent of these individuals: Carolyn Bacdayan, Ann Brubaker, Chuck Celone, Bill Denow, Jerry Ehlen, Susan Fontanella, Carol Jones, Emily Lewis, Leslie Lewis, Jacob Marchesi, Rhonda Marchesi, Roxanne Walters, and Chris Zajac. Appreciation is also extended to the Board of the Lyme Public Hall Association, Inc.



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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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Lyme's own "Home Movie" to be featured at the 2016 Annual Meeting

The LPHA has been editing a series of films of Lyme events taken in 1975 and 1976 and putting them into a DVD format. Zach Welch, a senior at the Lyme Old Lyme High School, is helping with the editing and doing video interviews with Lyme residents about our town in the 1970s. Zach received recognition from LOLHS as a "Student Standout" this past fall for his video about the importance of reading. The edited 1970s films and Zach's interviews will be shown on June 9th at the LPHA annual meeting.



Zach Welch

Special thanks to the following for supporting the Lyme Public Hall through grants or donations of goods, and services:

- Asblawn Farm Coffee*
- Coffee's Country Market*
- Essex Savings Bank*
- Lyme Garden Club*
- Brett Enman*
- Dana Evans*
- Joy Hanes*
- Lisa Reneson*
- Chris Zajac*

And thanks to everyone who donated baked goods and volunteered time to LPH functions in 2015.

