



THE NEWSLETTER *of* THE LYME PUBLIC HALL

VOL. 16, NO. 1 SPRING 2017

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— 2017 —

THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED STATES' ENTRY INTO WORLD WAR I

The Lyme Local History Archives is seeking information about Lyme's World War I vets and life on the home front in 1918. If you have family memories to share or documents that you would allow the Archives to scan, please contact archivist Carolyn Bacdayan at lymepublichall@att.net

2017 PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Change is in the air. It's in the season, in Washington, and even here at the Lyme Public Hall Association. After five years, I will be stepping down as president, although I will remain on the Board of Directors. I am happy to say that Bill Denow will be assuming the mantle of president. Those of you who have met Bill know that his energy and enthusiasm are amazing, and he will bring those qualities to his leadership position. In addition, we welcome Judith and Bill Archer to the Board. If you have been to the Tag Sale or the Chowder Dinner recently, you have encountered their wonderful volunteer spirit. This newsletter also has a new look. We hope to continue to deliver interesting content about Lyme's culture and history.

As usual, we have a full slate of programs and events coming up at the Public Hall in 2017. Our main focus will be on the centenary of the United States' entry into World War I. Look for a display of materials from the Archives and local families relating to the Great War, and speakers who will address Connecticut's role in the conflict.

On a lighter note, we will have an Earth Day program on Connecticut birds and a "privy" discussion of local outhouses. In keeping with our ongoing focus on Lyme's historic cemeteries, Jim Beers will headline the Annual Meeting with a presentation on local carvers and headstone designs.

I would like to thank all of the people who made my time as president so enjoyable: current and past Board members, the Archives staff, volunteers, those of you who have donated items to the Archives and the Tag Sale and everyone who has partaken of the Hall's various activities. Lyme is a special place, due in large part to a community that remains actively connected to its land, culture and history. I look forward to seeing you at the Hall this coming year.

Leslie Lewis

NEWS *from the* LYME PUBLIC HALL

THEN & NOW

Among the treasures presently housed in the collection of the Lyme Local History Archives are original documents and minutes from the first “Public Hall Association.” Reviewing the minutes from the years 1916 and 1917 revealed some remarkable similarities with the present.

In 1916 the Board of Trustees took under consideration the replacement of the wood shingled roof on the north and south sides. The Trustees voted to receive estimates. A bid was accepted and the roof was replaced. As best as can be determined from treasurer records the Hall roof was replaced for \$63.68.

The present Board of Directors determined that during the last several winters there had been appreciable damage to the meeting room/kitchen roof and replacement was necessary. The work scope also included the removal of an inactive chimney on the east end of the building. Several bids were received and the low bid of \$6,089 was approved and replacement will take place in early spring.

During the July 2016 Board meeting, what started out as a suggestion to replace the well-worn kitchen floor has led to an evaluation of our present kitchen needs. It has since been determined that the present kitchen was installed by the Lyme Fire Department after they took over the Hall in the mid-1950s. In the last 10 years the annual November Chowder

Dinner has placed the biggest demands on the kitchen facilities. Since we shifted to our in-house recipe and cooking ten years ago we acquired two 60-quart chowder pots to assure a consistent result for the two chowders. To say the least, 60-quart pots are huge, and very cumbersome during cleanup. That led us to imagine a sink with dimensions that would accommodate a 60-quart pot. Local and internet searches did not find any production sinks that would meet our requirements. Our local search led us to a reputable Norwich kitchen fabricator who will fabricate a custom sink and build an accommodating replacement base cabinet and countertop. The upgraded cabinet, sink and new flooring will cost \$9,000 and is estimated to be complete in March 2017.

As we can see, the Public Hall, whether in 1917 or 2017, requires a great deal of attention.



Bill Denow, chowder meister and now President of Lyme Public Hall Association, at work.

WHO TO CONTACT

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Questions? Comments?

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

For the latest information on events,

Visit lymepublichall.org or join our e-mail list by sending a request to: info@lymepublichall.org

WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN

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. The membership year runs from May 1 to 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

Contributing \$50

Subscribing \$25

Sustaining \$100

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

Lyme Public Hall Association membership information will be mailed separately. Look for it in your mailbox in April.

TIPS FOR RESEARCHING YOUR CONNECTICUT FAMILY GENEALOGY



As part of the Lyme Public Hall's focus on "family treasures" in 2016, Old Lyme genealogist Monique Heller presented 'Beyond "Ancestry.com": Tools for Genealogical Research'. She discussed how you can expand your search for family history and genealogy to sources beyond familiar websites. Heller is a member of the Connecticut Professional Genealogists Council, Connecticut Society of Genealogists, and New England Historic Genealogical Society. Here are a few of the websites she suggested investigating. Some sites have fees.

Monique is available for professional help in tracing your family history, and she specializes in helping people of Italian heritage obtain dual Italian-American citizenship. She can be reached at moniqueheller@comcast.net.

Cemetery Records – Connecticut

Start with the "Charles R. Hale Collection of Connecticut Cemetery Inscriptions." This survey was completed as a WPA project in the 1930s. Go to Hale-collection.com for an alphabetical formulation of the original survey.

Other cemetery-related websites

genealogybank.com
findagrave.com
americanancestors.com
godfrey.org

City Directories

uscitydirectories.com
distantcousin.com/Directories

Church Records

familysearch.org

Immigration Records

libertyellisfoundation.org

stevemorse.org

nara.gov 1800–1959; Naturalization records, too

Vital Records

At the state library, the Barbour Collection is available which includes most Connecticut Vital Records to about 1850. Ancestry.com and American Ancestors.com provide different versions of this collection.

Connecticut vital records have been microfilmed by the Genealogical Society of Utah (including most records to about 1900.) They can be accessed at a Genealogical Society of Utah Family History Center. There are Family History Centers in Madison and Mystic Connecticut. Go to familysearch.org/locations/

OTHER USEFUL SITES:

Cyndi's List - US – Connecticut – Guide to Genealogical Resources on the Internet
cyndislist.com/us/ct

Connecticut Gen Web Project ctgenweb.org/

Family Search Wiki – Connecticut - Guide to Connecticut Online Records
familysearch.org/wiki/en/Connecticut

More online resources:

archives.com
findmypast.com
fultonhistory.com US & Canadian Newspapers
genealogy.com fee
ICONN.org CT State Library
rootsweb.com fee
usgenweb.com All 50 states

Lyme & WORLD WAR I

THE GRANGE: ON THE HOMEFRONT IN LYME

The minutes of Grange #147 meetings in the Lyme Local History Archives give some idea of what was happening on the homefront. Grange meetings normally included discussion topics and readings as well as songs. Topics discussed in 1917–1918 included “Are Peace and War Necessary for the Advancement of Civilization?”; “Would You Change the Name of Hamburg?”; “Should Flowers Be Neglected for War Gardens?” and “Is It Patriotic to Hold Fairs and Serve Dinner in War Times?” Readings by members ranged from Ora Harding presenting “Nine Things For Which the United States is Fighting” to Helen Daniels reading about “The English View of Yanks.”

One particularly information-packed meeting in August of 1918 included talks on the Battle of Chateau Thierry, saving life by making gas masks, white grubs, the sugar supply, questions and answers on the food supply and “Man’s Idea of Women’s Having the Vote.” Unfortunately, only the titles of these topics and talks were recorded in the Grange minutes.

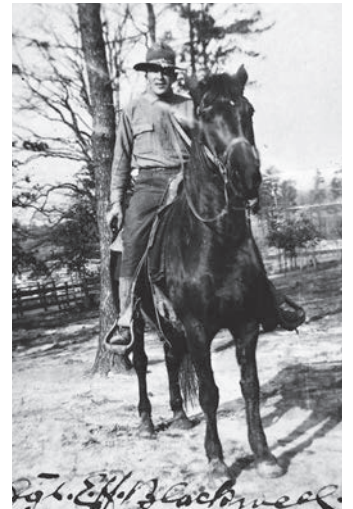
The food supply was a continuing topic of discussion. Voluntary food conservation was promoted by the federal government and the local grange was definitely on board. Americans were discouraged from consuming wheat, beef, pork, sugar and butter, so that they could be exported to Europe for the troops and allied nations. At one meeting the topic was “War Breads” and seventeen women members offered recipes presumably with very little white flour, which was considered the best and healthiest flour and so saved for the troops. Grange members also discussed growing potatoes, whether children should raise pigs, and canning methods. Learning to can foods was a popular way of supporting the war effort throughout the state of Connecticut. Local food production was encouraged by the federal government partly to save gas formerly used for long-haul food transportation. In 1917, the Grange voted to “extend the use of Grange grounds to select men for increasing the food supply.”

FOUR LYME SOLDIERS

Twenty-seven Lyme men and one woman are honored on Lyme’s WWI memorial. Here are the stories of four of them:

Elmer Blackwell (1895-1979)

Born in St. George, Austria, Blackwell was a horse dealer and farmer before enlisting in the Army in 1916 when the United States was at war with Mexico. He qualified as a stable sergeant in Farrier School at Ft. Riley Kansas, and worked for the Army Remount Service, which provided horses to U.S. Army units. He served in remount units in Oklahoma, Virginia and Indiana. He was furloughed in 1919. After the war he worked as an automobile dealer.



Theodore Schnirring (1898-19 __)

Theodore Schnirring lists his place of residence as Lyme, but seems to have been working as a hotel clerk in New York City before the war. After enlisting, he was assigned to the 619th Aero Squadron of the Army. He was one of twenty Lyme servicemen who returned a state-sponsored questionnaire about his war experiences. Nine



of these Lyme men were first generation Americans. Schnirring's father, Charles, was German. After the war. Ted Schnirring continued in aviation as an inspector of planes for the government.

Maurice Hall Peck (1896-1973)

A member of the Lyme Grange, Peck at age twenty-two participated in some of the most famous campaigns in 1918 including Oise-Aisne, Meuse-Argonne and actions in the Lorraine sector. His draft registration indicates that he was initially rejected because he was overweight, but he later entered service. As a member of the 306th regiment, he was at the front for more than 140 days. On his service questionnaire he commented "Have seen more than anyone could believe without seeing." He was an electrician before entering service and worked as an electrician at Groton Iron Works after the war.



Julian Griffin Ely (1894-1980)

Julian Ely, Lyme's best known doctor, had already started training at Harvard Medical School when he was drafted into the service in December, 1917. He stayed in service until April 1919, when he returned to the study of medicine. From August 1918 to April of 1919, he served in hospital centers at Commercy and Saint-Agnan, France. On a Connecticut Military Service Questionnaire, when asked about his overseas experience, he replied "Has made me more democratic, broader minded, more appreciative of a good home and more patriotic." He is buried in North Lyme Cemetery in Hamburg, CT.



Two Lyme Teenagers **IN WORLD WAR I**

In the summer of 1918, two Lyme teenage girls joined the war effort. Olive Stark (1900-2003) and her younger sister Jennie enlisted in the Women's Land Army of America in New York State. They spent the summer of 1918 working on fruit farms near Lake Ontario. Jennie Stark remembered having to work particularly hard because they had to pay both their travel and living expenses. They were paid one penny per pound for picking cherries for a canning factory. Instead of returning to Connecticut College in the fall, Olive Stark enlisted in the Naval Reserve.

When the United States entered the war, the Navy was short handed. The Naval Act of 1916 barred women from enlisting in the Navy but "all persons who may be capable of performing special useful service for coastal defense" could be considered for the Naval Reserve Force. The Secretary of the Navy, Josephus Daniels, used this vague language to support hiring women in largely administrative jobs. This freed up men to go to sea.



Olive Stark

Eighteen-year-old Olive Stark, who enlisted in September, 1918, on a whim, was assigned to clerical duties at the State Pier in New London as a Yeoman (f). She saw first hand that major cause of death in 1918 was not enemy fire, but the Spanish influenza. Later she remembered: "A person would be absent one day and the next day you heard he was dead. I roomed across town from the pier and it seemed I could never go to and fro without seeing a flag-draped coffin en route to the railroad station. And at the station, it seemed coffins were always stacked up waiting for a train." Olive met her future husband, Walter O'Sullivan, a naval officer from Philadelphia, while working for the Naval Reserve. She continued on the job through July of 1919.

LYME LOCAL HISTORY ARCHIVES NOTES

We were pleased to assist more than seventy individuals and local organizations in the past year, almost double the volume in 2015. While most were from Lyme/Old Lyme and towns in the Connecticut Estuary, there were also queries from out of state: California (2), Canada, D.C., Hawaii, Indiana, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Washington. We cooperated with colleagues at the Connecticut River Museum, East Lyme Historical Society, Florence Griswold Museum, Lyme Ambulance Assoc., Lyme Garden Club, Lyme Land Trust, Lyme Veterans Assoc., Mattatuck Museum (Waterbury), and First Congregational Church of Lyme. Inquiries were also referred by the Town Hall.

Significant and interesting donations continue to come to the Archives—historical Lyme family and personal papers, documents, photographs and organization records, all related to the town's history. There are now more than 7,000 items in our data base. The archivist is at hand to assist researchers with identification of relevant materials.

The Archives is also the beneficiary of research and special projects undertaken by the Archive staff, often inspired by material already in the Archives. Some examples of past research projects are: Lyme Historic Quilts and Textiles, Foodways of Lyme, Libraries in Lyme 1750-1950, Early Lyme Gravestones and Carvers, and Early Physicians in Lyme. A current project is underway documenting World War I Veterans, 1918-1919.

Some Recent Accessions

- ❖ *Thirty-three signed certifications (Sept. 1817) read: "I affirm my constant attendance and support to the Strict Congregational Church" on Grassy Hill. This congregation broke away from the established Congregational church in Hamburg in the mid-18th century.*
- ❖ *A related group of twenty-three signed certifications (Sept. 1817) state the individual's intention "to withdraw my connection with the First Society in ministerial matters and to join the Society called the Baptist Society." Such actions were symptomatic of the shifts in religious thought and affiliation in Lyme and the region, continuing after the "Great Awakening" in the early 18th century.*

- ❖ *Transcription of the Connecticut Utility Commission's hearing in 1921 on a complaint brought by twenty-six residents of Bill Hill and Hamburg against the Lyme Electric Company. The Lyme Electric Company proposed to charge each potential subscriber \$200 (\$2,500 in current value) to cover the construction cost of the extension of lines to North Lyme from Old Lyme. The arguments presented reflect both business and public interests in a period of modernization in a rural community.*

- ❖ *1839 petition to the Connecticut General Assembly, signed by Charles Smith and twenty-six other citizens of Waterford, to have a new town created to be called East Lyme. The petition cites travel and other difficulties for electors to attend public meetings in either Lyme or Waterford. At issue is that both Waterford and Lyme would have to cede the land.*

- ❖ *Three 19th and early 20th century account books of the Lyme Town treasurer, selectman, school board and cemetery committee. These books provide perspectives and interesting details on how the town government operated, managed schooling, provided poor relief, financed mortgages, and maintained its road and bridge infra-structure.*

— Carolyn Bacdayan, archivist

VISITORS ARE WELCOME TO THE ARCHIVES

Tuesdays 10-noon; Thursdays 2-4, and by appointment at 860.598.9760 or lymepublichall@att.net

Appreciation is extended to these volunteers who have given special assistance: With many thanks to Ann Brubaker, Jerry Ehlen, Gloria Ferri, Susan Fontanella, Deb Giaconia, Leslie Lewis, Claire Sauer, Roxie Waters, Zach Welch and Chris Zajac.

UPCOMING PROGRAMS 2017

Lyme Public Hall Association

April 1-23

Lyme Spring Clean-Sweep

Town-wide roadside cleanup in support of Earth Day. Free trash bags available at the Lyme Town Hall, Lyme Library, Jane's and Hadlyme stores.

Sunday, April 23, 2 p.m.

Wild Birds of Connecticut

New London Day columnist Robert Tougias.

Sunday, May 7, 2 p.m.

Privy Conversation: The History and Architecture of Outhouses in Southeastern Connecticut

Colchester's Georg Papp, owner of Bull Hill Workshop, outhouse builder and leading authority on the subject.

Thursday, June 8, 6 p.m.

Annual Meeting & Community Potluck Dinner

Featuring Jim Beers on carvings and carvers of historic Lyme gravestones.

Monday, July 3, Tuesday, July 4

Lyme Land Conservation Trust Anniversary Exhibit

An exhibit by Lyme Land Conservation Trust in honor of their 50th anniversary.

Saturday, August 5, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Annual Tag & Bake Sale

Donate items you no longer need and find treasures to take home at this annual fundraising event to support the Lyme Public Hall Association.

Sunday, September 24, 2 p.m..

She also Serves: Connecticut Women Doctors in World War I

Heather Munro Prescott, Professor of History, Central CT State University.

Sunday, October 1, 2 p.m.

The Great War in Black and White: Connecticut Newspaper Accounts of World War I

Christine Gauvreau, Project Coordinator, CT Digital Newspaper Project, CT State Library.

Saturday, October 21, 1-3 p.m.

Lyme Local History Archives Open House

A special event featuring World War I documents and photos recently shared by Lyme families, and Archives materials from 1917-1918. Archives is located at the Lyme Public Library.

Saturday, November 11, 5-7 p.m.

The Lyme Public Hall's Traditional Chowder Dinner

Enjoy homemade chowders, cole slaw and tasty desserts with your friends and neighbors to benefit the Lyme Public Hall Association. Charge.

All events are free unless indicated. They take place at the Lyme Public Hall if no other location is specified.

For details about this year's events go to lymepublichall.org



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.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2016-17

Leslie Lewis, President
Bill Denow, Vice-president
Bethany Clark, Secretary
Jerry Ehlen, Treasurer

Bill Archer	Richard Jones
Judith Archer	Lisa McCarthy
Jim Beers	Doris Rand
George House	Kathy Tisdale

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LYME AND WWI

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

Ashlawn Farm Coffee
Coffee's Country Market
Essex Savings Bank
Lyme Garden Club
Brett Enman
Joy Hanes
Lisa Reneson
Chris Zajac

And thanks to everyone who donated baked goods and volunteered time to LPH functions in 2016.



The United States entered the First World War on April 6, 1917.

The twenty-seven men and one woman who served in this war are honored on a plaque in front of the Lyme Congregational Church in Hamburg. During the next few years the Lyme Public Hall Association will be featuring programs and events highlighting Lyme in 1917-1918 and those who served.

The Lyme Local History Archives has initiated a two-year project to add information and materials about Lyme's soldiers and Lyme on the homefront to its collections. A number of Lyme residents have already allowed the Archives to scan photographs and documents saved by their families. Thanks go to the Blackwell, Cone, Ely, Plimpton, and Rosseau families who have recently shared memories and materials.



Lyme's WWI memorial dedicated in 1930.