



THE NEWSLETTER *of* LYME PUBLIC HALL & LOCAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

SPRING 2020

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— 2020 —

LYME GARDEN CLUB AT 90

Saturday, July 4, 9 am-1pm
Sunday, July 5, 12-3 pm
At the Lyme Public Hall

Explore the club's colorful history. In addition to the visual displays upstairs in the Hall, there will be a sale of plants and other LGC specialties outside. Workshops will be part of the Sunday program. Details to follow.

2020 PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As a result of oppressive heat during the summer and fall of 2018, the first order of business for 2019 was installation of central air conditioning at the Lyme Public Hall. This lessened reluctance to hold events at the Hall during summer's heat and cleared the way for well-received programs.

In early June, we had an original musical, written and performed by local talent. While no one in recent memory could recall the performance of a drama or musical production at the Hall, we think this is the type of entertainment the founders had in mind at the Hall's conception back in 1887! Musical entertainments continued with the big band sounds of the George Manstan Band in late June, then the Eight Mile River Band at August's Pie and Ice Cream Social.

Memoir writing was the focus of a successful June workshop with former New York Times editor Joan Motyka. Rolf Wolfswinkel's presentation on Germany after WWI drew a full house and he will offer new insights in 2020. The Fourth of July Exhibit "Disappearing Lyme" drew a large crowd to our newly air-conditioned hall. The Annual Tag Sale and Chowder Dinner also were successful. A new dinner offering was a vegetarian chowder, which likely will be repeated in 2020. At December's second annual Holiday Wreath Making Workshop, attendees created customized holiday decorations. A late addition to the Lyme social calendar was a highly successful New Year's Day Reception—an afternoon of music, refreshments and socializing.

I'd like to mention the importance of volunteers to our activities and programs. From picking up roadside trash during the April cleanup to helping at the Archives, volunteers' time and effort make these activities possible and successful. Our volunteers deserve a big thank-you from the Board of Directors and members!

Lastly, the Local History Archives has experienced another extraordinary year of inquiries from near and far. Archivist Carolyn Bacdayan and dedicated volunteers have done a wonderful job keeping the information flowing. As previously mentioned, Carolyn will be stepping down this year following 25 years of laudable service to the Archives. Her role as volunteer archivist will transition to a paid position. The Board, with Carolyn's assistance, is undertaking the search for her replacement.

Bill Denow

WHEN CATTLE ROAMED LYME ROADS

by Bill Denow

This article is a continuation of my research on Lyme's early roads covering 1837-1888, when storms and roaming livestock and the earliest thoughts of snow plowing drew local attention. Previous articles published in the 2018 and 2019 Newsletters can be found at lymepublichall.org. The source material is the official Town Meeting Minutes.

In the spring of 1837, a committee was formed to "remove encroachment of highways and nuisances" on public roads, likely prompted by severe winter storm debris from trees and rocks emerging from frost heave. The work was financed by a road tax of 3 cents per dollar of assessed property value, with citizens allowed to provide labor in lieu of road taxes at 10 cents per hour. A large portion of Lyme's road maintenance burden disappeared when East Lyme became a separate town in May 1839.

Roads and bridges continued to figure in Town decisions. In 1842, a request was made to discontinue the old highway over Meetinghouse Hill in the North Society (Hamburg Church). This road ran on a diagonal line between Sterling City and Hamburg Road at the Joshuatown intersection. In April 1846, a road was requested from Hamburg Bridge to Mt. Archer, along the west side of the Eightmile River, effectively bypassing the Hamburg Turnpike tollhouse; the Turnpike Company successfully fought it. Also in 1846, Abner Ely requested a road from his property on the north shore of Hamburg Cove to Joshuatown Road. (Note: This is the first occurrence of this road name.) The Selectmen did not see the public need for this road; Abner, it seems, was just trying to have a driveway installed.

In the spring of 1851, the Selectmen approved proposals to construct a railroad bridge over the Lieutenant River, rebuild the Great Bridge over the Lieutenant River and reconstruct the Hamburg Bridge.

A persistent complaint for many years was the running of cattle and swine on highways. At the time fencing was used to keep animals *out* of crop fields; animals were allowed free range to forage. By 1856, citizens had enough, and cattle were restricted from highways. But that was easier said than done: At the October 1858 meeting, restrictions of cattle on Town roads were suspended, allowing cattle free range again.

During the 1850s and early 1860s turnpikes fell into decline and the Selectmen assumed responsibility for their maintenance. Turnpike sections were added to the Road

District map but this new responsibility does not seem to have had any financial impact on the Town.

Up until 1865, very little involvement was seen by the State, but in October 1865, the Town was directed to erect directional Guide Boards. Since there was no further discussion in the minutes about this, it must have been a simple and inexpensive project.

The 1860s also saw more involvement from the Town regarding road agents and their training, frequency of road inspections (three per year), contractor documentation of hours worked and expectations that assigned roadways would be kept in good repair.

In the 1870s discussion was begun—and ended—to discontinue the highway over Brush Hill. A causeway was built over Selden Creek to Selden Neck with public/private funding. The landowner at Selden Neck was then, by contract, required to provide 10 years of causeway maintenance.

By the 1880s Selectmen voted to discontinue maintenance on a number of roads, including Brush Hill and the east end of Keeney Road. Also in the period, evidence of mechanized equipment appeared with a steam ferry operational in 1884 from Chester to Hadlyme, and there was discussion about buying a Champion Road Machine, a road grader.

The Blizzard of 1888, March 11–14, not only dropped 40 inches of snow on Lyme but had a lasting impact on road maintenance. The lack of brush cutting along the roadsides caused formation of deep drifts over road surfaces that restricted travel for days. At the October 1888 meeting, instructions were given to cut and remove all roadside brush and tree branches obstructing the right of way of any public highway and to open all highways obstructed by snow blockage, which later came to be known as snow plowing. ❖



Heavy snowfall, Bill Hill Road at Ashlawn Farm. This vintage image from the Archives is an example of dry glass plate photography.

PASSIONATELY PRESERVING LYME'S HISTORY

by Joan Motyka

When Carolyn Bacdayan and her husband Albert moved to Lyme in 1993 after retiring from the University of Kentucky in Lexington, Carolyn—and everyone seems to call her that—was eager to learn more about their 1740s house on Sterling Hill and their new community.

Sterlings had lived in it since it was built, and she remembered it from visits in her childhood, coming from New Haven. Her mother, who had a passion for history and was a Sterling, had lived in it most recently.

Yet, as Carolyn sought more information, what she was looking for eluded her: a repository for the memorabilia, documents, photographs and family histories that would tell her more about Lyme's storied past. In the course of her search, she was told a haunting story about an elderly resident who had died and whose children came in from out of state to settle the estate. They rented a dumpster and filled it—with, Carolyn feared, just the sort of irreplaceable family and local history memorabilia she had hoped to learn from.

"We ought to have an Archives," she told the board of the Lyme Public Hall Association, which she had joined.

And in her quiet but passionate, determined and methodical way, she set out to build it. Within two years she was collaborating with other board members to lay the groundwork for what would become the Lyme Local History Archives. From that initial proposal to the Hall's board 25 years ago to "memorialize the history of Lyme," she and a cadre of volunteers have built a depository for an irreplaceable collection of documents and oral histories, photographs and journals, maps and organizational records that trace Lyme's long and rich history, and preserves it for the future.

Now Carolyn is preparing to retire from her volunteer archivist position, leaving behind a remarkable legacy.

"Carolyn is irreplaceable," said Bill Denow, president of the Lyme Public Hall and Local History Archives. "Our Archives is second to none. What we have is basically Carolyn's soul in the Archives."

Starting out in the basement of the Lyme Public Hall, the Archives is now located at the Lyme Public Library in a bright and functionally specific space easily accessible to the public for research and visits. Scores of acid-free and specially-sized boxes line the shelves, filled with Lyme history carefully collected over 25 years.

According to Carolyn, there have been almost 300 donors of the archival materials, recorded with the material they gifted. Many of the earliest ones were elderly residents

who had "saved, collected, created, or inherited significant amounts of materials from long lines of their Lyme ancestors." Some also helped over several years with the work required for preservation and inventorying. Carolyn was also alert to other Lyme history-related research work or collections within the community and successfully encouraged consideration of posthumous donations to the Archives for preservation and research accessibility.

Indeed, by 2010 the Connecticut League of Historical Organizations had presented an Award of Merit to Carolyn and the Lyme Public Hall for development of the Archives.

And there is so much more.

That focus on expanding the public's knowledge and appreciation of family and home has always been important to Carolyn. People call to make an appointment or drop in when the Archives is open on half-days Tuesdays and



Carolyn Bacdayan at the Archives with Lyme Public Hall & Local History Archives board members George Fowler and George House, far right.

Thursdays. They look for information about houses they've just bought or relatives long gone. Callers from as far as California and as near as Hamburg Road seek information on grave sites, ancestors and land use history, people and properties. Authors look for information that will enrich their own work. Regional historical societies and museums have borrowed items for exhibits. Visitors turn up with dusty artifacts or crumbling letters. "Is this something good for the Archives?" they ask. Volunteers assist Carolyn in receiving, assessing and processing donated materials.

Indeed, volunteers have supported the Archives since its earliest days, when Carolyn and a team set out to learn how to create an archive by first studying what other towns did and seeking out mentors. A Lyme resident and former staff archivist at Yale mentored Carolyn at the startup on professional aspects of archives management,

Continued on page 6

VOTES FOR WOMEN: THE LYME STORY

By Ann Brubaker

On August 18, 1920 the 19th amendment to the Constitution was ratified giving men and women equal voting rights in the United States. To celebrate the 100th anniversary of this event the Lyme Local History Archives launched a research project to explore the part Lyme women played in that historic effort.

In 1893, a Connecticut state law was passed allowing women voting rights for the first time but those rights were limited. Women could vote only for “school officers or for any educational purpose” and severe penalties were threatened if women knowingly voted on other issues at any school, town or district meeting: Any erring woman voter could be charged with a misdemeanor and punished by a \$50 fine (some \$1,400 in 2020 dollars) or 30 days’ imprisonment. The gender distinctions did not stop there: All ballots of women permitted to vote under this law were to be placed in a separate box marked “For Women’s Ballots.” In 1909, the law was amended to allow women to vote also for “directors of public libraries.”

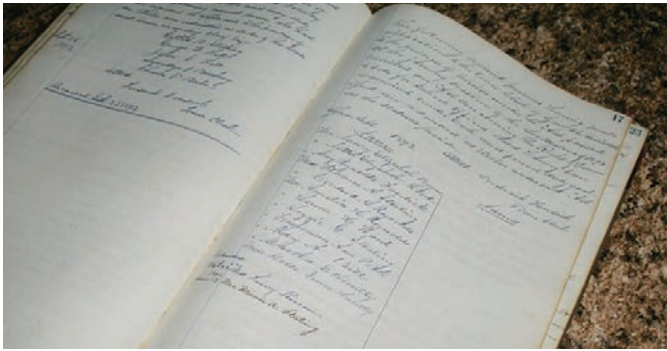


Lizzie Bill Sterling (1847-1933), the eldest daughter of James A. Bill of Bill Hill, was among the first to enroll when the state allowed limited voting rights for women in 1893. She was then 46 years old.

Signing on with relatives happened whichever side of the suffrage movement you favored. Sometime after 1912, Lizzie G. Sterling’s daughter-in-law, Minnie Marvin Sterling, joined the active anti-suffrage group in Old Lyme with her sister-in-law Eunice Marvin. That group also included Florence Griswold.

Between 1893 and 1897 only five more women were added to the Lyme electors list, including, in 1897, Hattie Florence Reynolds, Aurelia’s daughter-in-law, and three of Hattie’s sisters: Hester Warner, Maybelle Reynolds and Musa Warner. For 18 years, from 1897-1915, no additional women’s names appear in the official voter record. Then in 1915, as suffragist activity picked up across the state, 13 new names were added, drawing the attention of *The Day* newspaper, which published a special notice under “Hamburg” headlined “More Women Than Men,” claiming that 20 women had come forward to be made eligible for voting for school committee members and library directors compared to only 13 men. Their count included a few women who had previously registered along with the new women electors. The paper attributed this turnout to the work of the “Woman Suffrage League of Lyme,” more accurately called the Equal Franchise League (E.F.L.) of Hamburg. The E.F.L. was a state-by-state organization which had chapters in many Connecticut towns working to promote the welfare of women and to secure state and national voting rights. The Lyme group was most active between 1915-1920.

The minutes of Lyme Grange #147, now in the Lyme Local History Archives, provide further evidence of local activism. Then as now the national Grange was a fraternal organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for



Page 17 from the official Lyme Record of Electors lists the first Lyme women admitted as voters in 1893.

The *Lyme Record of Electors* (1879-1940), now in the Lyme Local History Archives, lists all the residents declared eligible voters in any given year. In 1893 12 Lyme women applied for limited voting rights under the new law. Aurelia Hayden Reynolds and her daughter, Cordera, were listed and Lizzie G. Sterling, the daughter of James A. Bill of Bill Hill, signed up with her sisters-in-law, Florence Amelia Sterling and Mary A. Bill, beginning a tradition: Mothers and daughters, sisters and in-laws signed up together. Other Lyme family names such as Peck, Lord and Huntley also appear on that first list.-



Hattie Florence Warner Reynolds (1858-1933), back row center, and her younger sisters Hester, Maybelle and Musa were the only Lyme women who signed up to vote in 1897. The five sisters are shown here with their mother, Harriet Warner. Only sister Dora, on the far left, never registered.

rural communities. Suffragist Hattie Florence Reynolds spoke to fellow Grange members in 1918 on “*Man’s Idea of Women’s Having the Vote*” and in 1919 on “*Female Workers Undervalued.*” After the vote was achieved in 1920, Grange minutes hint at a special relationship between the local E.F.L. and the Grange: for the record, Hattie Florence Reynolds thanked the Grange for hosting Equal Franchise League meetings and donated the booth that the League had been using to the Grange. Hattie’s husband, Hayden Lord Reynolds, was owner of H. L. Reynolds Co. in Hamburg and one of Lyme’s most prosperous citizens.

In 1920, after the 19th amendment became law, 60 Lyme women were newly admitted as electors and 23 women who had registered previously were automatically moved from limited suffrage to “constituted electors.” In the 1916 federal election there were 160 Lyme votes for presidential candidates. In 1920, the first time women could vote for president, the number jumped to 221. ❖



Cyclists Mary Raymond Fosdick, Delle Huntley and her sister, Nellie Sawyer, in front of the Lyme Grange c. 1900. Delle Huntley was one of the first women to register in 1893 when she was just 21. Mary Fosdick on left, was mentioned as a new elector in 1915 in *The Day* newspaper. The Lyme Grange hosted meetings of the Hamburg Equal Franchise League during that era.



Dazie Holman Crook hosted the 1916 suffrage fete. She is in front row, farthest right. Her relative, Martha E. Huntley, farthest left, registered to vote with her daughter, Delle, in 1893.

LAWN FETES AND WHIST

Well before 1920 pro-suffrage meetings were being held in town and not only at the Grange. One event was sponsored by the Equal Franchise League of Hamburg and hosted by Dazie Holman Crook at her summer home, Red Gables, on Cove Road in July 1916. An active suffragist, she was among the eight Lyme delegates to the E.F.L. state conference in 1917. In a letter now in the Lyme Local History Archives, my grandmother, Gertrude Hosford of Bill Hill, reports on that rally:

Last evening we all went to a suffrage lawn fete up at Mrs. Crook’s. it is a wonderful location upon that hill & they have built a sleeping porch & big porch downstairs & screened them in—it is attractive or at least could be made so but oh so stuffy inside little tiny rooms & low ceilings you feel they are going to drop onto you. I enjoyed the evening. Miss Ludington is chairman of New London County had a nice talk with her—she spoke & Miss Selden who is doing the organizing in this county, a young girl spoke. It was really quite remarkable the number of people there & the number of suffragists there were in this little hamlet.

Katharine Ludington of Old Lyme, a leader in the women’s suffrage movement locally, became president of the Connecticut Woman Suffrage Association in 1918, and in 1921 was one the founders of the League of Women Voters.

The local Equal Franchise League continued to sponsor events including dances and a series of citizenship lectures held at the Lyme Public Hall. In 1919 it sponsored weekly Wednesday evening whist games in private homes and the Public Hall, with winners faithfully reported each week in the *Deep River New Era* newspaper.

—Ann Brubaker

document collecting, processing and proper facilities. Another mentor who provided “enormous help,” was Warner Lord, Parker Lord’s older brother and an archivist at the time in Madison, helping her think about collection organization, databases and equipment. Other volunteers were recruited or stepped up to help fill out Carolyn’s agenda for a properly operational archive. These included local contractors who finished enclosing the room in the basement that would control humidity; folks with trucks or vans to move donated equipment, volunteers who did interviews about personal Lyme histories, transcribed the tapes, clipped and sorted newspaper articles, planned and curated displays, scanned photos.

“There were so many willing hands,” Carolyn said.

And there still are.

Said Ann Brubaker, a longtime volunteer: “Carolyn’s love for Lyme’s history is infectious. Her enthusiasm and support have made working in the Archives a joy.”

But now the challenge is for the board of the Lyme Public Hall & Local History Archives to find an archivist to take over the world Carolyn created. The position will be paid and part-time, and the search has begun, with Carolyn’s assistance.

In the meantime, Carolyn continues building the collection that she will turn over later this year. Her passionate pursuit over many years has deeply enriched both the Archives and the town. But it has left its mark on Carolyn, too.

“It’s been a real and deep pleasure,” she said. ❖

LAST YEAR AT THE ARCHIVES

In 2019, the Lyme Local History Archives drew queries and visitors from near and far. Of the 72 research requests by email, visit or phone, 41 came from Lyme and six from Old Lyme. There were nine requests from elsewhere in Connecticut, ranging from Fairfield to New London, and 16 from other states. Those included California (2), Massachusetts (3), Michigan (2), Minnesota (2), New Hampshire (2), New York (4) and Virginia (1).

These requests represent the first contact and do not include multiple visits for continued work.

People and organizations turned to the Archives in 2019 for information on a wide range of topics. Researchers asked about land survey historical boundaries, grave sites, gravestones and epitaphs. Property owners and Realtors sought to date houses and understand neighborhood history. Others sought information on local churches, including Grassy Hill Church. There were also queries about Lyme’s settlement, historical events and governance, and about specific persons, families, professions and occupations.

The broad clientele of the Archives, and the information sought, show how important its materials are locally and also for researchers whose needs and topics vary widely. ❖

WHO TO CONTACT

Local History Archives: Carolyn Bacdayan, 860-598-9760, lymepublichall1887@gmail.com

Programs: Bill Denow, 860-574-4143

Rentals: Kathy Tisdale, 860-575-0541

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Questions? Comments? Email Lyme Public Hall & Local History Archives at info@lymepublichall.org.

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

WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN

Membership in Lyme Public Hall & Local History Archives is open to anyone with an interest in the Lyme community. The organization receives no town funding and is supported through tax-deductible membership fees, donations and fund raisers. 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 & Local History Archives, Inc., and remit to P.O. Box 1056, Lyme, CT 06371.

Supporting \$15

Sustaining \$100

Subscribing \$25

Benefactor \$200

Contributing \$50

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 events, send a request to: info@lymepublichall.org.

Lyme Public Hall & Local History Archives, Inc.,
membership information will be mailed separately.
Look for it in your mailbox in April.

UPCOMING PROGRAMS 2020

Lyme Public Hall & Local History Archives, Inc.

April 1-22

Lyme Spring Clean-Sweep

Town-wide roadside clean-up. Free trash bags at Hadlyme Country Store, Lyme Library and Town Hall.

April 19, 2 pm

Triumph of the Will

The controversial Leni Riefenstahl film of the 1934 Nazi party Rally at Nuremberg presented as Part 3 of the lecture series on Germany 1919-1949 by Professor Rolf Wolfswinkel (NYU). Comments and discussion to follow.

May 21, 7 pm

***Joseph Caples, the Descendant of a
North American Slave on Gungy Road***

George Willauer will discuss this Lyme resident whose diaries, in the Archives, offer unique historical perspectives.

June 1, 8 and 15, 6- 8 pm

Writing Your Story

This three-session class in memoir writing, for novices and experienced writers, will help you explore the stories only you can tell through writing prompts, readings and homework assignments. The instructor, Joan Motyka, is a former editor and writing coach at The New York Times. \$30 Lyme Public Hall members, \$50 non-members.

June 11, 6 pm

Annual Meeting & Community Potluck Dinner

State Geologist Emeritus Ralph Lewis presents Lyme Geology: The LiDAR Maps. View Lyme's past and present features using advanced mapping techniques.

July 4, 9 am-1 pm and July 5, noon-3 pm

Lyme Garden Club at 90

Visual displays exploring the club's colorful history, with a sale of plants and other LGC specialties outside. Workshops will be part of the July 5 program.

August 2, 6-8 pm

Pie and Ice Cream Social

Join us for an old fashioned pie and ice cream social with fun and music by the Eight Mile River Band. \$5/person.

September 19, 9 am-1 pm

Annual Tag and Bake Sale

Donate items you no longer need or find treasures to take home at our annual fundraising event.

October 3, 1-3 pm

***Votes for Women: A Pop-Up Exhibit at the
Lyme Public Library***

This Archives exhibit follows the women's suffrage movement and suffragists in Lyme (1893-1920).

October 18, 2 pm

"Stunde Null" (Zero Hour)

Professor Rolf Wolfswinkel presents the fourth and final lecture on Germany's defeat in 1945 and the postwar foreign occupation. Comments and discussion to follow.

November 7, 5-8 pm

Chowder Dinner

Enjoy homemade chowders, coleslaw and baked goods with your friends and neighbors to benefit the Lyme Public Hall & Local History Archives. Adults \$15, children ages 7-12 \$10, 6 and under free.

December 5, 1 pm

Holiday Wreath Making

Get ready for the holidays with the Lyme Public Hall and the Lyme Garden Club. Materials and greens will be provided; bring your own trimmings to customize your creation. Pre-registration required. No charge to attend.

All events are free and open to the public, and take place at the Lyme Public Hall, 249 Hamburg Road, Lyme CT, unless otherwise noted. For more information, go to lymepublichall.org.

Lyme Public Hall



& Local History Archives, Inc.

249 Hamburg Road, P.O. Box 1056
Lyme, CT 06371
lymepublichall.org

Lyme Public Hall & Local History Archives, Inc.
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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Special thanks to the following for their help
and support of Lyme Public Hall & Local
History Archives, Inc., in 2019:

Jim Beers
Gerry Beers
Ann Brubaker
Roger Dill
Brett Enman
Dana Evans
Angie Falstrom
Leslie Lewis
Lisa Reneson

Essex Savings Bank
Lyme Garden Club
Friends of the Lyme Public Library

*And thanks to everyone who donated
baked goods and volunteered time to help
support our functions in 2019.*

POSTAL PATRON



Photo by Penny Selle

IN MEMORIAM

Jane Rowland DeWolf (1931-2019) was the proprietor of the H. L. Reynolds Co. store and a vital part of the life of Hamburg center. Ephraim O. Reynolds, her great grandfather, established a carriage and wagon manufacturing enterprise in 1858 at the site and later a general store. Jane owned and operated the store for the past 66 years. She was reliably present, offered help and directions, reminded us of upcoming community events and loved showing her doll house fittings, historical photos and antiques. We will miss her and extend our deep condolences to her daughters, Diana Carfi and Cynthia Blevin.

—Carolyn Bacdayan