

River & Sound

OLHSI.org

Old Lyme Historical Society
"The history of Old Lyme – the people of Old Lyme"

Issue 30 🌱 Spring 2019

Expanded Walking Tour of Lyme Street



1 McCurdy Road



First Congregational Church

Last fall the Society released a new self-guided walking tour of the buildings on Lyme Street from its beginning at McCurdy Road to the John Sill house on the campus of the Old Lyme Academy College of Art. This spring we have expanded the tour to include the notable buildings north of I-95, from the Lyme Art Association and the Florence Griswold House to the former Peck Tavern at One Sill Lane (just beyond the Historic District). From McCurdy Road to the old Peck Tavern is a distance of 1.3 miles. At a leisurely pace, the round-trip walk should take less than an hour and a half. The buildings north of I-95 are covered in a separate sheet, making it convenient to break the tour into two nearly equal ~ 45 minute segments.

More than 35 structures of historic interest are covered in the illustrated brochure. The buildings represent a mix of vernacular and formal architectural styles from the 17th century through the early 20th. The history of their various uses and owners reflects the ever-changing character of the town and region. Produced as a try-fold, full-color brochure on heavy stock, with drawings by Edie Twining and text by the Society, the tour is available for free at local merchants and at 55 Lyme Street.



1 Sill Lane, Peck Tavern

Old Lyme Historical Society, Inc.
55 Lyme Street, P.O. Box 352, Old Lyme, CT 06371
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Carol Noyes Winters Scholarship

In 2009 the Old Lyme Historical Society was pleased to establish a scholarship to be awarded each school year to a local high school senior. This scholarship was renamed the *Carol Noyes Winters Scholarship* in 2017.

In keeping with the mission statement of the Old Lyme Historical Society, the Carol Noyes Winters Award recognizes accomplishments and interest in history both in and out of the classroom. It is a merit scholarship available to any applicant who is a resident of Old Lyme or Lyme, intending to pursue a college major in history. An applicant is eligible if s/he attends Lyme-Old Lyme High School (or is a resident of Old Lyme or Lyme attending high school elsewhere) and will graduate during the current year.

Presently applications are only available from the Lyme-Old Lyme High School Guidance Office. The completed application must be submitted to the guidance office no later than April 15th.

— Kevin Cole

Upcoming Events

Memorial Day Parade
May 27, 2019

The International
Make Music Festival
Friday, June 21, 2019

*Featuring free music up and down
Lyme Street on the summer solstice.
The Historical Society is proud
to co-sponsor this event,
and will be among the venues
to open their doors
for this world-wide musical
celebration of the arrival of summer.*



The mission of the Old Lyme Historical Society, Incorporated, is to collect, preserve, interpret and promote the rich history of Old Lyme, Connecticut and its environs for the benefit of residents and visitors.

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Photograph by James Meehan

From the Co-Chairs

Dear Members,

A central part of OLHSI's mission is making the history of Old Lyme available and accessible to the public. To this end, the Society hosts open houses, events and lectures at 55 Lyme Street, and curates a series of mini-exhibits at the Post Office, Library, and Town Hall. Now, we are pleased to announce that the handicap lift project has been completed, allowing everyone to access both floors of our building. The

Society is grateful to the Town of Old Lyme and our many private donors for financial assistance with the lift project. A celebration honoring those who have supported this effort is planned for later this year.

The annual *Then & Now Calendar* launch event was held in November. The calendar remains a popular item, which helps fund many OLHSI projects. In December, the Lyme-Old Lyme High School Select Singers caroled at 55 Lyme Street during the Historic House Tour.

January and February have been months of quiet planning and maintenance of the building and collections. Looking toward the future, fundraising chair Bob DiNapoli has planned a new lecture series. The first event was a combination lecture and concert: "*Blues 101*" with Dan Stevens to benefit the Music Now Foundation and OLHSI. The Society received a grant from Comcast to help purchase video and projection equipment for the lecture series.

Edie Twining has designed a new, full-color Lyme Street walking tour brochure. Pick up your free copy at 55 Lyme Street, Phoebe Griffin Noyes Library, Florence Griswold Museum, Bee & Thistle Inn, The Chocolate Shell, Cooley Gallery, or Old Lyme Inn.

Any college-bound high school senior who resides in Lyme or Old Lyme and plans to major in history is encouraged to apply for the OLHSI Carol Noyes Winters Scholarship. The deadline is April 15th. Donations to the Scholarship Fund are always welcome.

The Society is in the process of revising our membership list, so we can make it easier for our members to know when it's time to renew. New members and volunteers are very welcome. Please let us know your interests and how you would like to be involved. Happy Spring!

*Michaëlle Pearson & John Pote
Co-Chairs, Old Lyme Historical Society, Inc.*

Annual Meeting Notice

The Annual Meeting of the OLHSI will be held on Monday, June 10, 2019. A proposed change to the ByLaws to include the bold underlined word in our Mission Statement will be subject to a vote of all members of the OLHSI present at that time.

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New Survey of Historic Buildings in Old Lyme

Last year Old Lyme won a grant from the US Department of the Interior (administered by the CT Department of Economic and Community Development, State Historic Preservation Office) to make a new survey of buildings of historical interest in the town. Heritage Consultants, LLC of Newington, CT was awarded the contract and is now in the final stages of production. The finished report should be presented this spring, and will include a hard copy and an electronic version. Heritage Consultants has worked with the town's *ad hoc* Historic Survey Commission, the Historical Society, the Florence Griswold Museum, the PGN Library, and other state and local resources to compile the survey.

The first such formal survey to touch on Old Lyme was the state-wide WPA Architectural Survey of 1935-1942 which described nearly 80 structures in Old Lyme built before 1850. In 1970, partially as a hedge against further highway encroachments, the town formally established the Old Lyme Historic District, which extends roughly 100 yards on either side of Lyme Street from its beginning near the Congregational Church, north to the Boston Post Road and the small town green at the intersection with Sill Lane. The documents supporting the creation of the district are, in effect, another survey of the structures along that stretch of road. Petitions for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places also mark several buildings in Old Lyme as being of historic significance (in the eye of the petitioner at the very least...). The new survey is tasked with cataloguing pre-1920 structures located beyond the historic district that are not already the subject of a National Register petition. The final survey will include some 200 structures concentrated along the I-95 corridor.

The entry for each particular structure in the survey includes a photograph (typically taken from the street), a brief description of the building and surroundings, a more detailed architectural description of the building, notes on its historical and architectural significance, and a list of sources used to create the entry. The descriptions of construction details are probably of most interest to students of architecture. Those with a general interest in the history of Old Lyme will be most drawn to the historical notes. Although not every building has such details, many of the surveyed properties include information on who built the house, who lived there, when, who they were related to, what trade they followed, and so forth. These details come primarily from nineteenth century census records, but also from vital statistics (births, deaths, marriages, ...), a few detailed nineteenth century maps of the town, pre-Civil War pension records, etc. The survey team pulled this information together in a matter of a few months, which is no mean accomplishment. The sources used for a particular address are listed in each entry, but some sources appear to be missing in the early draft that we have seen. Also, with no prior knowledge of the town and its history, the survey team did fall into some errors. When these faults are corrected, the report should make a very useful addition to the historical record of Old Lyme.

The hard copy is expected to be available for use at Memorial Town Hall this spring. At this writing the town is considering its options for making a PDF version available online as well. Although only a survey, the report should make a good starting place for further researches by those interested in a particular house or family.

March is Women's History Month - Katharine Ludington



Did you know that Old Lyme was home to noted suffragist Katharine Ludington? She was born in New York in 1869, and spent summers in Old Lyme. She studied at Miss Porter's and

the Art Students League in New York, becoming an accomplished portrait artist, but after her brother's tragic death in 1914 she put down her paintbrush and took up the causes of women's suffrage and world peace.

Katharine was elected president of the Connecticut Women's Suffrage League in 1918, and after ratification, planned a strategy to educate the new voters in the mechanics of leadership. Her ideas were realized in 1921 as the League of Women Voters, and she served on its national board and as New England director for two decades, but suffrage was not her only cause. In 1928, Katharine negotiated with the National Broadcasting Company to establish the reporting standards known as the Fairness Doctrine and Equal Time Rule—hallmarks of American journalism until they were repealed in the 1980s, ushering in our current age of partisan media.

Katharine continued her social activism and political engagement throughout her long life, advocating for social justice, world peace and the formation of the United Nations. Her later years were spent in Old Lyme, where she served as president of the Phoebe Griffin Noyes Library, which had been donated by her parents and named for her grandmother. Katharine's influence upon Old Lyme was considerable, and her good works still resonate in our national culture.

Learn more about Katherine Ludington in
Remarkable Women of Old Lyme
by Jim Lampos & Michelle Pearson
(Arcadia, 2015)
Photo: OLPGN Library Collection

From the Archives ...

The Historical Society archives contain objects as well as papers. This article describes one of the most interesting of our recent additions.

The late Diana Atwood Johnson was well known for her generosity to Old Lyme and to Southeast Connecticut more broadly. Among her many gifts was the bequest of a lovely grandfather clock to the Old Lyme Historical Society. Made by Lyme silversmith Seth Pratt in the late 18th century, the clock also came with detailed notes on its several owners.

Seth Pratt (1741-1802) was a silversmith born and raised in Saybrook. His younger brother Phineas was also a silversmith and their father Azariah was a blacksmith, like his grandfather before him. There is some indication that Seth was working at his trade in Lyme in the 1760s until about 1772. He served in the Revolution in 1776 and may have moved from Saybrook to Lyme by 1790. He died in Lyme in 1802.

Fine metalworking, castings, and engraving of all kinds were typically done by silver and goldsmiths. Strictly speaking, the *clock* was just the mechanical works. The case was typically made by a cabinetmaker, and the whole arrangement was called a *clock and case*. With prices that started at two or three times the annual wages of an ordinary laborer, a tall case clock was definitely a luxury item in the late 18th century. Like a fine sideboard or a matched set of wing-backed chairs, a tall case clock marked the owner as a person of substance. In the early nineteenth century less expensive models, often with mass-produced wooden mechanisms, began to bring clocks within reach of less wealthy buyers.

Curiously, the term *grandfather clock* was unknown until after the publication in 1876 of the hit tune “*My Grandfather’s Clock*” by Middletown songwriter Henry Clay Worth. Such clocks had been known as a *clock and case* or a *tall case clock*. As new designs proliferated in the nineteenth century allowing smaller clocks that hung on

the wall or sat on a mantle or side table, the old-fashioned tall case clocks were often referred to as *hall clocks*. At six, seven, and sometimes as much a nine feet tall, the front hall with its staircase was often the only place in the house with enough head room to fit such a tall piece of furniture.

Kirtland H. Crump, a local expert in antique tall case clocks, helped the Society with the delicate business of moving the clock safely and getting it set up in working order in its new home. Crump said the works and lower case are 18th century but the decorative pagoda-style upper case and the pendulum and weights are from the 19th century. Such “marriages” are common among surviving grandfather clocks, as by the late 19th century they were often valued more as furniture than as time-keepers. The

works of the clock are brass, steel, and iron. The face of the dial is silvered brass. The lower case is mahogany, and the clock stands about 7 1/2 feet tall.

The clock was originally owned by “Captain” John Mitchell (1735-1811) of Chester. It passed to his daughter Ann (or Anne) who married Richard Lord in 1790. Their daughter Sarah Ann married Judge Charles Johnson McCurdy. They had only one child, Evelyn, who married Edward Elbridge Salisbury. The Salisburys published several volumes on the genealogy of local families. They had no children, but they effectively adopted a young graduate student named George Grant McCurdy, whom they considered to be Evelyn’s third cousin once removed. He moved in with the Salisburys in 1894 when he finished his graduate work at Harvard, and continued in Old Lyme until his own death in 1947. When Diana Atwood Johnson bought the clock “at a McCurdy estate sale,” she took it home to the house on Tantummeheag Rd. that had belonged to Richard Lord and his new bride in 1790.

If you have treasures great or small that should be shared with future generations in Old Lyme, please remember the Historical Society as a way to help make that happen.



Photographs by James Meehan



Photographs by James Meehan

**Join us in our mission
to collect, preserve,
interpret and promote
the rich history
of Old Lyme.**

Become a member today.

Member benefits go beyond discounts and a subscription to our newsletter. We encourage members to take an active role in the work of collecting, preserving, and sharing the history of Old Lyme. Get involved in a particular area of interest, one that engages your skills and piques your curiosity. We welcome new faces, and are always looking for help in a variety of areas, including research, oral histories, lectures, publications, exhibits, and more.

Do you have a story about local Old Lyme history? Let us help you share it with others. Do you have old documents or objects that ought to be preserved for future generations? Talk with our archivists to explore ways to do that.

Use the attached form to join as a new member, renew your membership, or make an additional donation. Whatever your area of interest in Old Lyme history, we'd love to hear from you!

*Support the
Old Lyme Historical Society
by becoming a member today.*
2019 Membership

Date _____
 New member Renewing member
Name _____
Address _____
Town _____ State _____ Zip _____
Email _____
Phone _____

Student \$10 Individual \$20 Family \$35
 Patron \$100 Benefactor \$250
 Business / Corporate \$100 Lifetime \$500
 Additional donation

Please make your check payable to Old Lyme Historical Society, Inc.

My check for \$_____ is enclosed.

Dues are fully tax-deductible. Thank you for your support!

Are you interested in volunteering with the OLHSI?
If so, what areas are of interest to you?

The OLHSI is a non-profit corporation incorporated in the State of Connecticut. It is a registered charity with the state Department of Consumer Protection and is recognized by the IRS for 501(c)3 status.

Benefits of OLHSI membership

- A subscription to the *River & Sound* newsletter
- Your own copy of Lyme Street walking tour
- Advance notice of and discounted rates for selected events
- A 10% discount on our books
- Training in historical research techniques, and opportunities to be involved with our oral history project
- The realization that your tax deductible contribution is supporting a vital cultural resource



Please mail your membership form & payment to
Old Lyme Historical Society, Inc.
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