



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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River & Sound
NEWSLETTER

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From the
Co-Chairs

Dear Members,

Summer is in full swing, and OLHSI has been abuzz with activity. The Annual Meeting was held on June 10th at 55 Lyme Street. We reviewed some highlights of the year, thanked our departing trustees, and welcomed our new board members. The general membership was asked to vote on adding the word "promote" to the OLHSI mission statement. The change was approved.

The James Brewster Noyes Award was presented to James Meehan for his many years of service to the OLHSI. He received a print by Old Lyme artist and former trustee Catherine Christiano. The Carol Noyes Winters Scholarship award was given to Aoife Hufford and Alexander Williams, two college-bound Lyme-Old Lyme High School seniors who plan to major in history. The Society raises money for these scholarships through donations and events such as the annual lecture series.

The Lecture and Event Series has hosted some very interesting speakers in the past few months. On May 16th, Steve Cryan presented a slide show on *Transportation of a Bygone Era*. On June 17th, Historian and SAR Connecticut President Damien Cregeau gave a fascinating talk entitled *Spies, Lies and Alibis*, which centered on Revolutionary War-era spies. The Society also featured two musical performances by Ramblin' Dan Stevens: *A History of the Blues* on March 16th and A program of patriotic songs with the Music Now Foundation on July 5th.

The Duck River Cemetery Project is moving along with the help of several volunteer sessions. The first "DRC Hunt" group of 18 people met at the cemetery on July 13, and set the standard of dedicated work toward completing this very important project for the Old Lyme community. Special thanks to everyone involved.

The Society is also planning to restart our Oral History Project this year. The goal is to collect the stories of Old Lyme residents from all walks of life. If you know anyone who may have some interesting tales to tell, please let us know so we can add them to our list of potential interviewees.

Although we certainly treasure our old letters, books, and manuscripts here at the Society, we are also moving full speed ahead into the 21st Century. Our new website will launch soon, and we continue to update and post regularly on Facebook and Twitter.

New members and volunteers are always welcome. Please let us know your interests and how you would like to be involved. Stay cool!



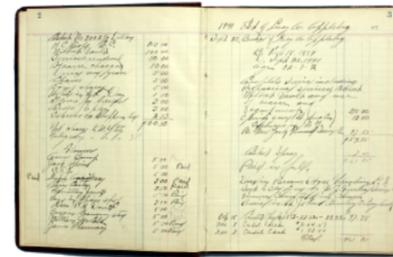
On Monday, June 10, 2019 the Old Lyme Historical Society held its 14th Annual Meeting, where the society welcomed five new trustees to the Board: Dawn McCarthy, Mark Lander, Elaine Stiles, Mary Ellen Jewett and Ross Higgins. (Photograph by James Meehan)

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



From the Archives

The Archives volunteers are currently accessioning 18 handwritten ledgers of the Carleton Jewett Funeral Home (1895-1947) donated to us by his grandson, Ellis Jewett. At first glance, the ledgers seemed a matter-of-fact record of name, date, expense, and internment. On closer review, we realized that this was another way to explore Old Lyme history. Some interesting facts emerge from this review as follows. Many of the original settlers (circa 1650s) remained in East Saybrook, then renamed Lyme (as Old Lyme was called at that time). Their descendants appear in the Jewett records e.g. Beckwith, Ely, Griswold, Marvin, Peck, Way, to name a few who made their living in this small town. There are other families who lived and prospered, and buried their own, who reoccur in the listings, among them, Appleby, Beebe, Champlain, Mather, Reynolds, Tiffany, Tinker, and Tooker. There are descendants of these families still living in the area. The frequent appearance of "stillborn" after the name reflects on childbirth practices in the early 1900s, and the lack of maternity hospital care. Burial ceremonies note a tiny pine box, a total charge of \$10.00, and frequently included one red rose. There is also a preponderance of wives being buried before their husbands whereas in modern times it is the reverse. **Editor Note:** I wonder what the poor dears did without the wife to keep the home fires burning.



As the years went by, funeral expenses increased as families bought handsome and sturdy lined coffins, and sprays of flowers were purchased to adorn the coffin. More church services were held and more people were transported from other places to be buried in their home town. There are notes to go to train station to pick up a casket. There is a dip in the type of casket purchased at the height of the Great Depression when more pine caskets were ordered, presumably as a cost saving. Mr. Jewett placed gratis obituary notices in the New London Day and other papers, a practice no longer available as the funeral home gradually turned into a thriving industry. What emerges from the ledger entries is that Carleton Jewett did everything he could to ease the pain of his friends and neighbors grieving the loss of their loved ones.

— Alison Mitchell

Photographs by James Meehan



Photographs by James Meehan

Carol Noyes Winters Scholarship

At this year's 14th Annual Meeting on June 10th Kevin Cole, Chairman of the OLHSI Scholarship & Youth Outreach Committee, presented the 2019 *Carol Noyes Winters Scholarship Award*, given to an outstanding Lyme/Old Lyme student intending to study history in college. This year, there were two recipients: Aoife Hufford (shown in photograph with parents Eleanor and Walter Hufford) and Alexander Williams (shown with parents Beatriz and Sydney Williams). Congratulations to you both!

Upcoming Lecture Events

Wednesday, August 21, 2019
@7:00 p.m.

James Kolb presents
*Duck River Cemetery:
How Gravestones Can Tell Us Our History*

Thursday, September 26, 2019
@7:00 p.m.

Ellis Jewett presents
History of Old Lyme Fire Department

Old Lyme Historical Society, 55 Lyme St.
Suggested Donation at the door \$8 – 2 for \$15

Support the
Old Lyme Historical Society
by becoming a member today.
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My check for \$_____ is enclosed.

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

Are you interested in volunteering with the Old Lyme Historical Society?
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 projects
- 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.
P.O. Box 352, Old Lyme, CT 06371



It was a beautiful spring day for the 2019 Old Lyme Memorial Day parade where OLHSI was proud to participate with many other civic groups in the parade and service at Duck River Cemetery.

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!

River & Sound

Old Lyme High School in the Mid-1950s



Center School, Lyme Street, circa 1935.
OLHSI Archives



Old Lyme High School (now the Middle School) opened its doors in December 1957.
Photograph by James Meehan

The school known today as Center School was built in the mid-1930s as a grades 1-8 elementary school known as the Old Lyme School. A few years later a high school wing was added with the first class graduating in 1941. (Previously, Old Lyme high school students went to school in New London.) By the mid-1950s, the school was feeling an enrollment crunch and plans were drawn up for a new high school (today's middle school). The Old Lyme School continued to serve grades 1-12 (no kindergarten yet—no room) until December of 1957 when the new high school opened.

As we visit the “old high school,” keep in mind that right and left refer to the school as seen from the street. On the right were the elementary grades 1-6 as 7 and 8 were now part of the high school. The lower grades were located in general purpose classrooms while grades 7-12 had four special purpose rooms and several general rooms. There was one administrator for the system. The roles of superintendent, grade school principal, and high school principal were all filled by one person in 1954-55: George Hay.

The gym served both schools. PE classes met there and high school basketball games, both boys' and girls', were held there until the new school opened. Spectators sat in bleachers on the stage or in folding chairs on the sidelines, watching where they put their feet. As an auditorium, chairs were brought out from under the stage. As a cafeteria, the chairs were lined up beside tables that folded down from the walls. Food service was handled in the corridor off the right rear corner of the gym. High school students living nearby could go home for lunch; others, with parental permission, could go to the Chatterbox Restaurant across from the OL-PGN Library. Off the left front corner of the gym was the Home Economics room,

offering courses in foods and sewing. Three regular classrooms lined the left wing of the building and a full industrial arts shop (woods, metals, drafting, auto mechanics) was located where the cafeteria is today—with a classroom carved out of one corner of the shop. In the back wing were a science lab, a typing room, and a few more classrooms. Band and chorus met in the gym.

The school offered, right from the beginning, six sports: field hockey, basketball, and softball for girls; soccer, basketball, and baseball for the boys. All or most of them, depending on the year, were coached by Roger Grover, PE teacher and later the first principal of the new high school. Girls' sports offerings were rare in those days, with the Shoreline Conference being one of only a few in the state to support them.

As Old Lyme had not yet regionalized with Lyme, high school students from our neighbor to the north attended OLHS on a tuition basis, paid by the Town of Lyme. School transportation was handled by eight town-owned school buses, operated, garaged and maintained by either Bob Speirs at White Sands Beach or Walter Dean from Sill Lane. Lyme students arrived on a Lyme bus.

Does anyone remember these faculty members: Janet Hall, Philip Ramsdell, Elyse Traylor, Fred Chappelle, Karl Korzan, Melvin Merken, Trevor Rae, Ruth Prest, Ed Fanning, Mim Sanford, Margaret Heron, Ruth Swan, and Roger Grover? These thirteen people taught all the students in grades 7-12: 90 in grades 7 and 8, and 115 in grades 9-12.

There were 17 graduating seniors—a far cry from today's 115!

— Mark Lander

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Old Lyme Historical Society
“The history of Old Lyme – the people of Old Lyme”

Issue 31 ☘ Summer 2019

Duck River Cemetery Mapping Project



Duck River cemetery has been the main public burial ground in Old Lyme since the 1680s. Its monuments preserve a valuable record of the history of the individuals, families, and community at large that made Old Lyme what it is today. The inscriptions, decorations, materials used, and even the relative locations of individual stones can tell us something about the history of the town, its people, and their times.

For three days in mid-July, volunteers collected detailed data on each stone in two large sections of the cemetery to help create a Geographic Information System (GIS) database of Duck River cemetery. They worked under the direction of James Kolb, who began this project in early 2018. James is a senior at U Conn with a major in History and a double minor in Geography and GIS.

Even stones do not last forever. It is important to collect the information from older monuments while the inscriptions are still legible, but the GIS database allows us to do much more. GIS places all the information about each marker in a geospatial context. When complete, the database will allow users to search for a name and find the exact location, or search for the names that appear near a particular location.

The database can show how the cemetery developed over time, or where monuments of a particular type or style are located. It will certainly be helpful to genealogists. It can also show trends in vital statistics, reflecting times of major change such as baby booms or epidemics. Best of all, it can present all of this information in a visual way, creating custom maps on-the-fly.

The last major survey of the Duck River cemetery was done by the WPA in the mid-1930s, when only the oldest parts of the cemetery were catalogued. The current effort gives us a chance to correct a few errors and omissions in that survey and collect data from the more recent past. James Kolb will present a lecture on the results of this project at the Old Lyme Historical Society in August. We hope you will attend.

Mark your calendar!

Wednesday, August 21, 2019 @7:00 p.m.

James Kolb *presents*

Duck River Cemetery:

How Gravestones Can Tell Us Our History

Old Lyme Historical Society, 55 Lyme Street.

Suggested Donation at the door \$8 – 2 for \$15



Photographs by James Meehan