

## The Glorious Rehearsal

Charles II granted a generous Royal Charter to the Puritan colony of Connecticut in 1662, but soon changed his tune. From 1664 to 1689 New England faced a rising tide of imperial centralization and royal control. It was a dress rehearsal for the causes of the American Revolution. Just before matters slipped beyond recovery, the pressure was suddenly relieved by events in England. In what was later styled “the Glorious Revolution,” the Catholic James II, (Charles’ younger brother and successor) was forcibly replaced by James’ Protestant daughter Mary and her husband William of Orange.

James was a dedicated absolutist. Where exile had taught Charles to deal creatively with limits, James was impatient of all opposition and despised half-measures. “He who is not with me is against me” was his creed. He admired their first cousin, Louis XIV, and tried to follow his example. This, combined with his Catholic faith (in a country more than 98% Protestant), made him increasingly unwelcome in England. In the colonies, his determination to raise Crown revenues and end local autonomy made him doubly obnoxious.

By the leading theory of the day, colonies existed to support the accumulation of gold and silver in the home country by supplying it with raw materials and buying its manufactured goods. A series of Navigation Acts were passed to force commerce into this scheme, saying (roughly) no trade with other nations except through the home country. In addition, all trade must go in English (or colonial) ships with English (or colonial) officers and crews. Customs duties were to be collected on imports (and some exports) and bonds posted on outbound cargoes to ensure compliance with these laws. The duties were royal revenue.

When enforced, these laws cut the market for American products by two thirds (no more trade with the Dutch, French, and Spanish West Indies, Europe, the Mediterranean, etc.) and substantially raised the cost of all imported goods, often sending them out of reach. Consequently, they were universally ignored, evaded, even undermined or contradicted by colonial laws. All the colonies depended on trade, farmers and traders alike. The Navigation Acts were a constant source of friction.

When England took the New Netherlands from the Dutch in 1664, Charles granted it to his brother James, Duke of York. The territory included everything between the Connecticut River and the Delaware River, along with all of Long Island and most of the other islands off New England. The Dutch recaptured New York, but gave it back again in a treaty of 1674. New patents confirmed James’ holdings.

In 1674 James sold what would become Delaware and New Jersey to pay some debts, and sent Edmund Andros (soon to be Sir Edmund Andros) to be governor of New York. In his instructions, James told Andros explicitly to suppress representative assemblies, as they were a troublesome affront to proper government. As governor of New York, Andros attempted to enforce the new boundary with Connecticut, sailing to Saybrook with a troop of soldiers. The local militia turned out in force and refused to acknowledge his claims. Wisely, Andros left without resorting to bloodshed. He had made his point. This was a clear signal to Connecticut that centralizing authority would be—for the first time—a major factor in their lives.

The Charter made Connecticut Colony a corporation: able to own and convey land, to sue and be sued, etc. In English law no corporation could create or control another. The towns in Connecticut and throughout New England had operated as corporations created by the colony, owning land in common, and periodically distributing it to inhabitants by vote of the town meeting. Strictly speaking, none of this had been legal.

(Continued on page 4)

## From the Chairman

“*Much has changed.*” That was the introduction in our Summer 2020 River & Sound newsletter. We can say the same today, but in a much more hopeful way. The time to fully reopen our facilities appears imminent. As that same newsletter issue had mentioned, we did “adjust and move ahead” through virtual meetings, lectures, and presentations. The solid, unflinching, and creative hard work by our volunteers allowed us to continue sharing our work to promote the history of Old Lyme and its environs.

The December 2020 River & Sound newsletter reminded our members and the community of our success in continuing with our popular programs and events, sometimes in an adaptive format, but nonetheless well attended. Added to that, the continued support of the business community and other organizations in Old Lyme for our Then & Now 2021 Community Calendar was successful beyond our expectations. We sold every calendar that was available. Our three day Holiday Book Sale outside the post office was also the most productive we have ever had. We are appreciative beyond words for this show of support in these difficult times for everyone.

There is no substitute the direct interaction among people when it comes to fulfilling our mission and meeting the expectations of our historical society. However, until we get to that point, we will continue to “adjust and move ahead” with your support and faith in what we do. As you read this issue of River & Sound please note that each of the features is representative of what we continue strive for in accomplishing our mission.

As always, the Society welcomes new members, volunteers, ideas, and collaboration with other community organizations. Information about future events can be found on Facebook, Twitter, LymeLine and OLHSI.org. Stay healthy. We look forward to seeing you in person soon.

John Pote  
Chairman, Old Lyme Historical Society



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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WANTED

The Old Lyme Historical Society Archives Committee Needs You

To clean out your drawers, attic, closets, basement, garage, and whatever other cubby holes you may have. You will be surprised at the treasures you will find that help to record the rich history of our beloved Old Lyme.

We ask that you turn over this memorabilia to us so that they may be safely preserved and enjoyed by the general public for years to come.

What's in it for you? A spanking clean house and the knowledge that you have done your part to assist the Historical Society to fulfill its mission to collect and preserve Old Lyme's cultural, economic, social, and architectural past.



The Archives volunteers are thrilled to finally be back at work organizing, annotating, and accessioning materials donated to the Historical Society. During the time we have all spent waiting out the COVID 19 pandemic, the Archives Committee has been sending out messages to our friends and neighbors urging them to put this time to good use, and gather up photographs, letters, annual reports of organizations in which you, the general public, have a vested interest, project reports you have participated in, milestones in issues which have affected the community at large or your neighborhood in particular. Perhaps, you have been involved in education issues that have impacted your children's learning that you have position papers on, or newspaper articles which outline the parameters of the shoreline railroad issue.

ed your children's learning that you have position papers on, or newspaper articles which outline the parameters of the shoreline railroad issue.

The Historical Society Archive is your memory bank, and it is only as valuable as such with your contributions. If you have a manila file marked save for reference, The Historical Society may be interested. Of course, it may turn out to be Aunt Sadie's potato salad recipe, in which case, we recommend that you move it over to your recipes file, and serve it up as soon as it is safe to have a family picnic. The Archive currently has over fifty-two subject categories. Each of these categories has literally hundreds of entries. Some examples include education, Old Lyme institutions and associations, politics, buildings, Town of Old Lyme and its annual reports, obituaries, oral histories, and our newest category, COVID-19 and Old Lyme. The montage depicted above that Jim Meehan has put together reflects a diversity of objects. Overseen by the Archives' mascot is our 1930s three foot high Steiff rabbit donated by the late Mary Janvrin. She also donated a number of other children's toys including the popular two completely furnished dollhouses which reside on the main floor of the Society. Other items include a Sill family hand-painted plate part of a complete dinner set circa 1795, WW II ration books, leather family bible circa 1825, glass bottles found off Ben Franklin Road, photo of Connecticut river ferry, circa 1902.

Please call us at (860) 434-0864 or info@oldlymehistorical.org with your found treasures. We promise to take good care of them, and if you suffer from remorse at giving them up, come see them any Thursday from 10:30-2 pm.

OLHSI Archives Committee: Alison C. Mitchell, Chair, Nancy Beebe, Paula Bingham, Lilo Hess, Mary Ellen Jewett, Karen McDonald and Mary Jo Nosel

## OLHSI Spring Lecture Series



### In History's Wake: The Last Trap Fishermen of Rhode Island

*Presented by Markham Starr*

This slideshow covers the last of the 4 floating trap fishing companies in Rhode Island. This fishery, going back over 150 years, once dominated the coastline, but was quickly abandoned with the advent of the modern trawler. The presentation follows the four companies as they build and fish their unique floating traps (over 1500' long).

Join us for a Zoom event

**Wednesday, March 31, 2021 @7p.m.**



### Down on the Farm: The Last Dairy Farms of North Stonington

*Presented by Markham Starr*

At the end of WWII, there were over 4000 dairy farms in Connecticut. Currently, there are less than 100 farms still making milk commercially. This talk follows the operation of four, family-owned, dairy farms throughout the course of a year. The earliest farm, dating back to 1791, is now in its eighth generation, while the youngest two are over 100 years old. The talk covers what it takes to get a gallon of milk onto the store's shelves and the particular challenges today's dairy farms face in Connecticut.

Join us for a Zoom event

**Wednesday, April 14, 2021 @7p.m.**



### Ceremonial Stonework: The Enduring Native American Presence on the Land

*Presented by Markham Starr*

This slideshow takes the audience on an extended walk through the woods to see the ceremonial stonework left behind by the indigenous population that occupied New England for 12,000 years. Native Americans built nearly two dozen distinct types of structures in our area, ranging from cairns to stone serpent effigies, and these spiritual offerings remain standing in now long abandoned woods. While Native American stonework is widely recognized out west and to the south, New England's stonework remains obscure, having blended back into the woods.

Join us for a Zoom event

**Wednesday, April 28, 2021 @7p.m.**

### Katharine Ludington - Artist & Suffragist

*Presented by Jim Lampos & Michaelle Pearson*

Join us for a Zoom event

**Tuesday, May 18, 2021 @7p.m.**



For log in info, email us at [info@oldlymehistorical.org](mailto:info@oldlymehistorical.org)



Photograph by James Meehan

### *Merv Roberts*

(1922-2020)

There are few people that you meet in your lifetime that you can truly label as one of a kind. However, Mervin Roberts was one of them. Sadly, I only knew Merv for a short time as I did not spend the last fifty or more years living in Old Lyme. My introduction to Merv was in Church where I happened to sit next to him. During the peace offering he introduced himself to me and asked if I was new in town. I laughed and said that actually I was a native of Old Lyme. He chuckled and said that I had him beat. We continued our conversation over coffee hour. I was sorry to have it end. I could imagine him weaving his unique particular brand of thoughtful fairy dust over the entire population of Old Lyme during those years when he was chaplain for the Fire Department. A position it is purported he earned initially because he was the only member of the Department who owned a black suit. Then when he assumed the position, no one could imagine that anyone else could ever fill his shoes. He didn't just perform services for fallen fellow firemen, he performed them for members of the family, he comforted firemen or their loved ones who were going through a tough patch due to family illness, tragedy, or death. He also delivered homilies at the annual Memorial Day Parade at Duck River cemetery. In a service close to The Historical Society, he married Skip and Nancy Beebe, the anniversary of which happened to fall on the day Merv died. Skip mentioned recently that one of Merv's most endearing qualities was his insistence on researching an issue under discussion and returning with a complete explanation as to the logic of his position. He valued knowledge, and always wanted to expand on it whether it be salmon mating habits in Maine, or as Tim Griswold pointed out in his comments upon hearing of Merv's death, would any toxic ingredients be used in the building of the new railroad bridge. Merv Roberts may have been small in stature, but he was certainly large in personality. We will miss his presence at so many events in Old Lyme. Rest In Peace good friend, from your many, many admirers.

—Alison C. Mitchell

## The Glorious Rehearsal *(Continued from page 1)*

Two or three generations had passed since the first distribution. In most towns much land remained. The periodic distributions had been handled in such a way as to make sure that all families had a voice in the matter, that no family was without a means of support, and that they could look forward to their sons sharing a portion in the future. Shared control of wealth in land had been a major factor in maintaining the peace and solidarity of the towns.

The General Court could not handle the clerical details of distributing all the remaining land, much less manage the political and social upheavals it might cause. It issued to each town a declaration that the undistributed lands therein were now transferred to “the proprietors” of the town, naming only a few leading individuals by example. Each town would have to manage the details for itself.

On May 25, 1685 the remaining lands in Lyme were distributed to “Mr Matthew Griswold Senr, Mr Moses Noyes, Mr William Measure, Mr William Ely, Leuit Abraham Brunson, Serjt Thomas Lee, and John Lay Junr and the Rest of the Said present proprietors” of the town. At the town meeting on June 25, the named men were asked to choose the rest of the proprietors. Just as today, few things happened quickly or completely in a town meeting. Consideration of who was or was not a “proprietor” (or to what degree) continued for years. In fact, the last distribution of land in Lyme did not happen until 1702. Like many towns, they hoped they were too small and remote to attract official notice. By luck, their hopes were fulfilled.

Charles II died suddenly in February of 1685 and his brother James became James II. He immediately set about consolidating all the northern colonies into a single Dominion of New England. A first step was to remove their existing charters. Massachusetts was first to go, then Plymouth and Rhode Island. All were subsumed into the new Dominion.

When their charter was demanded, Connecticut remonstrated and stalled and sent letters to the King and the Board of Trade. The Dominion Governor, Edmund Andros, travelled from Boston to Hartford with a large retinue to personally collect Connecticut’s Charter, Great Seal, etc. Legend has it the Charter was mysteriously stolen from the State House right under the noses of the assembled crowd. If so, it made no difference to Andros or the King. The colony was subsumed into the Dominion, and Andros proceeded on his way, appointing or confirming local officers throughout the former colony of Connecticut.

When they knew their charter would be lost, the General Court of Massachusetts changed all revenue-generating measures to expire at the end of the year. When the ax fell and the General Court adjourned (rather than dissolve itself), what had been Massachusetts had no source of income.

The Dominion was forced to institute new revenue measures. This they did by order of the Governor. There was no assembly. The town of Ipswich refused to pay the new taxes on the grounds that Magna Carta prohibited taxation without representation. Andros had the leaders arrested and brought to trial. Charles Bowen paints the scene: “When the defendants asserted their rights under the Magna Carta, [Dominion Council member Joseph] Dudley told them ‘You must not think that the laws of England follow you to the ends of the earth, or whither you go.’ Addressing their leader, the town’s minister, he said, ‘Mr. Wise, you have no more privileges left you than not to be sold for slaves.’” Note that the word is “privileges,” not “rights.” All rights were apparently left behind in England.

A colonist was but a hair’s breadth above a slave, and that distinction only a privilege. Andros saw town meetings as the nexus of opposition to his rule. Heeding James’ advice, he declared each town would hold only one town meeting per year and banned all others. To the colonists, this made ordinary maintenance of roads and bridges and dozens of other collective projects effectively illegal.

In England most tenants paid annual *quit rents* to the crown of about half a penny per acre. The royal and proprietary colonies had some version of this, but New England’s founding documents made no provision for quit rents, and they had never been paid. Andros declared the previous land transactions illegal, and their patents (deeds) now void. If people wished to retain their land, they must seek a new patent that would include the obligation to pay quit rents to the Crown. Quit rents due from previous years would also need to be paid. Many leading families had multiple properties. To delay the process, they sued in court to protect each one of them in turn. Some particularly choice properties were seized and given to prominent supporters of the Dominion. An attack on the ownership of land struck at the heart of New England’s farming society.

Many wealthy merchants had hoped the Dominion might moderate the influence of the clergy in New England and allow for a slightly more regular and secular approach to matters of trade. What they got instead was a vigorous and to-the-letter enforcement of the Navigation Acts. A trade slump and depression ensued. Merchant support for the Dominion ebbed away. Only those few insiders who stood to profit personally from Andros’ rule were left to support him.

On November 5, 1688 William of Orange landed in England with a Dutch army of 14,000. James commanded an army of 30,000, but a major part of it defected to William. James was captured, then allowed to escape to France. His opponents claimed his flight proved he had abdicated.

Massachusetts agents in London immediately notified the anti-Andros faction of the changes, and urged the Board of Trade to delay official notification to Andros. On April 18, 1689 Boston filled with militia companies. Andros and several of his councilors and military officers were arrested, effectively ending the Dominion. The former governments were quickly reestablished, with new elections returning most of the pre-Dominion officeholders.

Massachusetts was issued a new charter in 1691, combining Massachusetts Bay, Plymouth, and the offshore islands formerly given to New York. The new charter called for a royally appointed governor and council, but the General Assembly was retained. Religious toleration for Protestants was made law. This was the beginning of the end for the full Puritan hegemony in New England. Connecticut resumed under its old Charter, which was reconfirmed in 1695 by William III, thanks in part to the efforts of Fitz John Winthrop (son of John Winthrop Jr.).

Conflict with the Navigation Acts remained. William and his successors were more concerned with foreign affairs, and the old pattern of benign neglect returned. Not until final victory over France in the struggle for North America in 1763 did Britain again try to impose uniform rule on her American colonies. Again the colonies were outraged, but times had changed. They were ten times more populous, wealthy, and strong than they had been in 1689. More important, they were ready to make common cause, north and south. This gave them a fighting chance, and they took it.

—Mark Terwilliger



**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!

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My check for \$\_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed.

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Are you interested  
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*The OLHSI is a non-profit corporation incorporated in the  
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