

# River & Sound

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

Issue 20 🍂 December 2015

## 2016 *Now & Then* Community Calendar



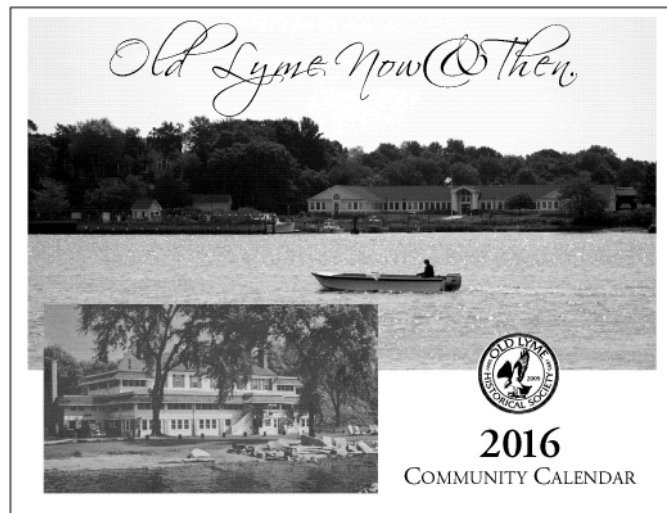
Photos: James Meehan

The launch of the 2016 *Old Lyme Now & Then Community Calendar* took place on Saturday, November 7th, 2015 from 3-6 p.m. at the Cooley Gallery, located at 25 Lyme Street. The many sponsors and other attendees enjoyed a convivial reception in the cozy downstairs gallery, with delicious seasonal refreshments provided by the Historical Society.

As guests viewed the gallery's "Local Color" art exhibit, the Society's treasurer, Carol Winters, presided graciously over the sales table. Timothy Griswold and Mark Lander, Co-Chairs of the Society, made brief speeches thanking Alison Mitchell, Michaelle Pearson, Ned Farman and James Meehan for producing the calendar; the Cooley Gallery for hosting the launch event, and the sponsors for their support.

The 2016 Calendar is the fourth successive edition produced by the Society. This year's sponsors were the Town of Old Lyme, The

Chocolate Shell, The Phoebe Griffin Noyes Library, the Old Lyme Inn & The Side Door, The Bowerbird, the Old Lyme Town Band, Sound View Beach Association, Black Hall Outfitters, Lyme Art Association, The Florence Griswold Museum, The Cooley Gallery and Christ The King Church.



The 2016 Calendar is available for purchase at the Old Lyme Historical Society (55 Lyme Street) on Saturday afternoons in December; after selected Masses at Christ the King Church, at the Bowerbird, the Florence Griswold Museum, Laysville

Hardware and online at [OLHSI.org](http://OLHSI.org). It would be a lovely gift for a history buff or anyone with an interest in Old Lyme "Now & Then".



### Old Lyme Historical Society, Inc.

55 Lyme Street, Old Lyme, Connecticut

Mailing Address: P. O. Box 352, Old Lyme, CT 06371

[OLHSI.org](http://OLHSI.org)



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

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Photo: James Meehan

### OLHSI 2015-2016 Board of Trustees

*Shown from left to right:* Mark Lander, Adela Wilmerding, Jane Cable, Jennifer Hillhouse, Kevin Cole, Ned Farman, Leslie Markowicz, Martha Hansen, Sheila Wertheimer, Tim Griswold, Michaelle Pearson, Ted Freeman, Alison Mitchell, Stephen Moore, Dolores Green, Ellis Jewett, Skip Beebe and Bob DiNapoli. Not shown are Roger Breunig, Isaiah Griffith, Julia Griswold, James Noyes, Dyanne Rafal, Carol Winters and Karen Winters.



Photos: James Meehan

### From the Co-Chairs

Our most exciting news from this past summer is the progress being made on renovations to 55 Lyme St. Our “Tuesday morning work crew” members (Ellis Jewett, Skip Beebe, Kevin Cole and Ted Freeman) have completely framed a new archive storage room in the lower level which will house the Society’s archives, currently stored at the Town Hall.

Sheetrock and insulation have been installed, and electrical work continues apace as does relocating the heating ductwork. The crew also oversaw the installation of new front doors and, despite a few contractor setbacks, the doors are now fully functional and weather-stripped. The next few months will see the completion of the room and installation of a climate control system. We hope to move the archives in early 2016.

Preliminary plans have been drawn up for a new handicap-accessible entrance at the rear of the building and the renovation of the rest of the lower level as a reading room/work area.

During the summer, we took part in the Town’s Midsummer Festival by hosting an open house and we sponsored a concert by the Old Lyme Town Band. This fall, we held a fundraiser dinner at Filomena’s, a second highly-successful plant sale and the launch of our 2016 “Now and Then” Calendar.

Upcoming events include a holiday open house, Saturday publications sales at our building and the Old Lyme Marketplace and a talk/book signing by Old Lyme author Wick Griswold.

We do not presently have office hours, but if you see signs of life at 55 Lyme Street or if the flags are flying on the porch, please stop in and see what’s happening in the building. We’re excited about it and enjoy sharing with friends.

*Timothy Griswold & Mark Lander*  
*Chairs, Board of Trustees, Old Lyme Historical Society, Inc.*

## The Peckham Family Letters

In 2008, the Old Lyme Historical Society received a packet of six letters concerning the Isaac Peckham family from Judy Parr, a descendant of the Peckhams who lives in Pennsylvania. Ms. Parr found the letters in her attic tucked in a family bible, and contacted the Historical Society to see if we would like to have them. As was common in that era, the letters were all written on small pieces of paper, and in many cases, in almost indecipherable writing. A friend of the Society transcribed the letters, and Jane Spangler, then a Historical Society volunteer, spent many hours piecing together the story of this local family, who were deeply impacted by the Civil War.

To set the scene: Abraham Lincoln was elected President in 1860 in a contentious campaign with four candidates running for office. Lincoln won with only 40% of the vote (but with 180 of the 303 electoral votes). On April 15, President Lincoln, having declared in his inaugural address that he would use force to retain possession of federal property, asked for 75,000 volunteers for three months service to retake the forts seized by the Confederacy. Among those who rallied to this call were three young men from Old Lyme, who, one week later, enlisted on April 22, 1861. These young men were Samuel R. Chadwick, Elisha P. Chipman, and George Henry Peckham. All three were mustered into the 2nd Connecticut Volunteer Infantry of the Union Army on May 7, 1861. George Peckham's younger brother, 16 year old Robert Bruce Peckham initially joined the 4th Connecticut Volunteer Infantry in May 1861. The regiment was re-organized in Washington, D.C. into the 1st Connecticut Heavy Artillery which was mustered in January, 1862. In a foretelling of events, Robert's enlistment period was for three years, not three months. He was stationed at Fort Blenker, Alexandria, Virginia near Washington, D.C.. Both George and Robert served their full terms without mishap. George Peckham honorably discharged August, 1861, Robert Peckham honorably discharged August, 1864.

The Society has letters to Robert from his mother, Frances Maria Brown Peckham, his sister, Mary Elizabeth Peckham, and his sister-in-law, Kate Peckham. The letter dated February 4, 1863 from "Sister Kate" about her husband Jamie is especially poignant.. She writes:

*"Dear Brother Robert, I received the dispatch you sent all safe and your father and mine watched the cars day and night until Saturday afternoon when poor Jamie's ( James Wallace Peckham) body arrived. They then took it to the conference house and it was left until Monday at 11*

*o'clock when the funeral was attended in the Congregational Church by Mr. Brainerd. I had the bell tolled for him... I feel so much better to have his grave with us. I can visit it often and know when I die I shall be buried by his side. I want to pay the bill for it (his transport from the battlefield) all myself... I have ascertained it will be \$44 besides the telegram (88 cents). I have it in bank now and will take it out and send it to you, or leave it in the bank to draw interest until you come home."*

Another excerpt reads, "The winter is most gone, and I am anxious to have the boats get to running, so I can get around and see about getting some gravestones for Jamie." In a letter dated July 12, 1863 to her son Robert, Frances Marie Peckham writes:

*"Ever dear Robert, It is with much pleasure that I receive your ever welcome letters - so pleased to hear of your continued health and safety - while so many are called to mourn the sickness and death of their friends. ... They have commenced to draft in Connecticut. They say they are going to draft here next week. Oh dear, may God help the right. Robert, did you know that more than 100,000 working men have been taken for the war, and that a new draft upon the industrial strength of the nation is at hand. And what are we to do for laborers God only knows."* The letter continues: "Willie ( Robert's 13 year old brother) says tell Robert my lamb is dead but my steer grows nicely and I want him to come home and see it...)"

These letters show how the Peckhams were dealing with the universal consequences of wartime. When the archive is open, you will be able to read all these letters to learn more.

The "Tuesday morning work crew" has been toiling away each week at 55 Lyme Street on construction of a state-of-the-art Archives room. The very good news is that they are near completion. None too soon, as Archive Committee members' fingers are twitching to begin the transfer of accessioned materials into the especially designed lower level space. We continue to receive materials which are being recorded on our PastPerfect software . Among them is a first edition of a book published in 1836, written by John Warner Barber, a distinguished historian of his day. It is a volume of Connecticut Historical Collections, that promises to be a "General collection of interesting facts, traditions, biographical sketches, anecdotes, &c". The section dealing with Lyme certainly lives up to its title.

Alison C. Mitchell  
Archives Committee

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### 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
- Priority status to obtain genealogical research material at the PGN Library
- 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

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*You may also use PayPal, on our website. Dues are fully tax-deductible. Thanks for your generosity!*

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

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.

**Join or renew your membership online at [OLHSI.org](http://OLHSI.org)**



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