

River & Sound

OLHSI.org

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

Issue 35 🍂 December 2020

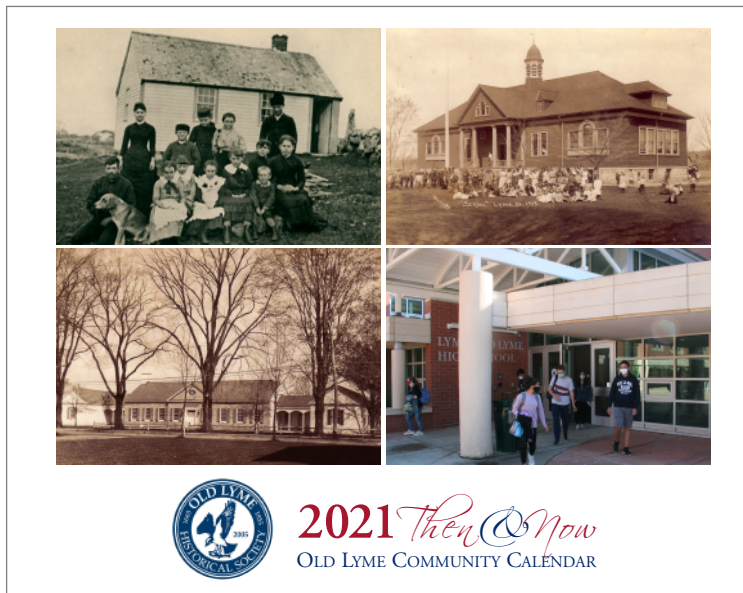
OLHSI Launches the 2021 *Then & Now* Community Calendar

Say goodbye to 2020. The new 2021 *Then & Now* Old Lyme Community Calendar is here! This year's Calendar launch was an outdoor drive-through walk-up event held in the front yard of the Old Lyme Historical Society at 55 Lyme Street. If you missed it, never fear: copies of the calendar are still available at local vendors and at OLHSI holiday book sales outside the Halls Road Post Office on Saturday, December 5th, 12th, and 19th from 9 till 12 (weather permitting).

The Old Lyme Historical Society's *Then & Now* Community Calendar is available for sale at local venues including: the Forence Griswold Museum, the Chocolate Shell, The Bowerbird, as well as the Society Shop website at OLHSI.org.

The calendar makes a great gift for friends and family who spend part of the year away from Old Lyme, a reminder of this, their other home. Calendars are still \$12 each, and proceeds support the Old Lyme Historical Society.

We extend a special "thank you" to the OLHSI Calendar development team: James Meehan, Alison Mitchell, Michaelle Pearson, John Pote, Mark Lander, Nick Westbrook and Mark Terwilliger.



Black Hall School, District 8, circa 1898. OLHSI Archives.

Center School, Lyme Street, circa 1913. OLHSI Archives.

Center School Lyme Street, circa 1935. OLHSI Archives.

Lyme-Old Lyme High School, 2020. Courtesy Lyme-Old Lyme Schools.

OLHSI would like to thank this year's sponsors for their participation: the Town of Old Lyme, the Old Lyme Phoebe Griffin Noyes Library, Coldwell Banker, The Village Shops, the Old Lyme Historic District Commission, the Old Lyme Marina, the Ladies Benevolent Society of the First Congregational Church of Old Lyme, the Lyme Art Association, the Old Lyme Historical Society, the Florence Griswold Museum, Essex Savings Bank, and The Bowerbird.

We thank our sponsors and vendors for their support of the Society and the Old Lyme community. We hope you will support them, too!

Have a happy and healthy holiday season and the very best of 2021.



Old Lyme Historical Society, Inc.

55 Lyme Street, P.O. Box 352, Old Lyme, CT 06371

OLHSI.org



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

Editor: Mark Terwilliger
Designer: James Meehan

Editorial Contributors:
Alison Mitchell,
Michaëlle Pearson, John Pote

Photography:
James Meehan

Mailing & Distribution:
Cynthia Taylor, Nicholas Westbrook

Old Lyme Historical Society, Inc.
55 Lyme Street, P. O. Box 352
Old Lyme, CT 06371
Telephone: 860-434-0684
Email: info@oldlymehistorical.org
OLHSI.org



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From the Co-Chairs

Dear Members,

Although it may seem that much has remained the same since the summer issue of *River & Sound*, quite a bit has actually changed behind the scenes at the Old Lyme Historical Society, thanks to the dedication, resourcefulness, and resilience of our volunteers and Board of Trustees.

You may recall that the OLHSI headquarters was locked down in March, due to COVID 19 protocols. After months of careful planning and consideration, the Society began the process of allowing Archive staff into the building in mid-October. The Tuesday Morning Work Crew will also be able to continue their building projects, albeit on Mondays, due to the necessities of social distancing. Sincere thanks to Alison Mitchell and Skip Beebe for ensuring that these efforts were undertaken in a safe and prudent manner. Unfortunately, these activities must be limited to a restricted number of volunteers and time slots in each case, so public access is not yet possible given the small size of the building. That being said, it is with a sense of hope and looking toward the future that OLHSI continues with these two invaluable aspects of our mission.

Other programs and events were met with the need to adapt. Our well-attended lecture series had to be presented virtually rather than inside the building. Thanks to our Programs and Events Committee, under the excellent leadership of Katie Balocca and Ann Marie Jewett, we were able to host three very successful virtual presentations. July 30 was Tad Fallon's informative "Caring for Antique Furniture"; then on September 30, in conjunction with the 50th Anniversary of the Duck River Garden Club, Shaun Roche discussed the history and importance of the local Salt Marshes. The third presentation featured Jim Lamos and Michaëlle Pearson discussing topics from their new book, "Hidden History of Old Lyme, Lyme & East Lyme" which is available for purchase through the Society's website @ OLHSI.org and also at the annual Holiday Book Sales at the Old Lyme Post Office.

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Photograph by James Meehan

Sandra Downing – 2020 Recipient of the James Brewster Noyes Award

A number of years ago a Historical Society board member met Sandra Downing at Saint Ann’s Episcopal Church *Nearly New* consignment shop. Sandy was helping the shop untangle their computer program. A conversation ensued in which it was revealed that Sandy and her partner, Ted Freeman, lived down the road in a house that Ted built almost entirely by himself. “Aha,” murmured the Board member, and continued with the clothes sorting task at hand.

At the time, Sandy was doing some other volunteer work, and it was apparent that this was a woman, who having retired from Southern New England Telephone (SNET), felt that she had the responsibility to give back to the community. “Perfect volunteer for the Historical Society”, the OLHSI member thought. Indeed, that is what Sandy has been since 2012. Sandy wrestled the Society’s *Past Perfect* software package into submission turning it into an essential tool for the Archives. At first, the work was done at a volunteer’s house, and then when the Society purchased the Grange at 55 Lyme Street, the Archives holdings were moved to a state of the art space in the basement of the building.

Sandy not only organized the materials, she did it while the reading room was being constructed and the working conditions were very far from ideal, wearing mittens in the long winter. She also trained two volunteers in the sometimes cranky *Past Perfect* as well as supervised high school volunteers always with patience and good humor. One of the high school volunteers commented that she planned to pursue a career in historic preservation because of her. She also co-produced the very first exhibit at 55 Lyme Street “*A Glimpse at Early Education in Lyme.*” To say that Sandy Downing has contributed to the establishment of the Historical Society as a well respected Old Lyme institution is an understatement. She can remain satisfied that the Society’s Archives will stand the test of time. All the volunteers involved with the Archives let out a collective cheer on hearing of her recognition as Volunteer of the Year. Hooray for Sandy, our captain and good friend.

–Alison C. Mitchell

The James Brewster Noyes Award honors a Society member who goes “above and beyond” in time and effort to support the Old Lyme Historical Society.

From the Co-Chairs

(Continued from page 2)

The annual Fall Plant Sale, which supports the OLHSI Scholarship Fund, took place on October 10th with the very generous support of Judges Farm. This year proved to be one of our best efforts yet to raise funds for this worthy award.

Due to pandemic restrictions, there was some trepidation as to whether the Society could offer its highly-anticipated annual *Then & Now* Community Calendar for 2021. However, through the intrepid leadership of Jim Meehan and his willingness to seek alternative methods of production required by the present circumstances, the calendar is here! With a supporting staff of committed Board volunteers and the steadfast support of our sponsors, we are pleased to proudly offer it for sale again this year.

The Society recently received a generous grant from The Edward and Mary Lord Foundation Special Funds for Arts and Culture to assist with small capital improvements to our facility and help with operating support during the time of COVID-19. Being an all-volunteer organization, this was indeed welcome news and a positive comment on the efforts of all involved with the Society.

The OLHSI would like to officially welcome Marie McKeon as a member of the Board of Trustees. Marie has been a valued volunteer and supporter of the Society for some time, and has agreed to serve on the Board and continue as a Co-Chair of our newly re-formed Oral History Committee, along with Elaine Stiles.

As always, the Society welcomes new members, volunteers, and ideas that help us in continuing to fulfill our mission. For more information about future events, please follow us on Facebook, Twitter, LymeLine and our website.

We wish you, and your loved ones, a happy and healthy Holiday season!

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

Local Leaders in Human Rights

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution, guaranteeing women the same voting rights as men. It was a great victory that took over four generations to achieve. Today, it is accepted as a “given;” but it was a vital early step on the long road to expanding the notion of “equality” to encompass each member of the human race, in all our diverse and distinct individual characters.

Two key players in the end-game of the *woman suffrage* (votes for women) movement lived here at the mouth of the Connecticut River. Katharine Martha Hepburn, *née* Houghton (mother of the film star) lived in Hartford, but summered on Fenwick Point in Old Saybrook. Katharine Ludington was born in New York, but came to live in Old Lyme where her family had roots. Each was a classic example of the sort of woman who led the suffrage movement to its ultimate victory in 1920. Each would continue to lead the fight for women’s rights (and human rights) in the 20th century.

Both were latecomers to woman suffrage, both were educated women from the upper middle class, but neither was a stranger to the struggle for personal independence.

Hepburn must have had some contact with the women’s movement early on, because in 1909 she hosted Emmeline Pankhurst—leader of the more radical women’s movement in Britain—on her American tour. Pankhurst seems to have made a great impression on Hepburn, who, by 1910 became the Director of a revitalized Connecticut Women’s Suffrage Association (CWSA). Under Hepburn’s leadership the CWSA took an increasingly active stance, and by 1917 boasted some 32,000 members—over 100 times its membership in 1871. Hepburn was increasingly sympathetic to the more radically activist factions of the women’s movement, and eventually stepped down as leader of the CWSA to join the National Woman’s Party, led by Alice Paul.

The “split” was over tactics, not goals. The more radical groups favored direct action such as marches and picketing (then radical measures), while the more conservative groups worked their personal connections with political leaders. The two approaches doubled the pressure on opponents of woman suffrage.

Katharine Ludington had only joined the CWSA in 1914, but when Hepburn stepped down in 1917, Ludington was elected to lead. She mounted a vigorous campaign in Connecticut, first to secure the passage of the 19th Amendment through Congress, then to gain its ratification by her state. It was an uphill struggle. The Republican Party dominated state politics. The majority of rank-and-file Republicans (unlike Democrats) favored woman suffrage, but the party bosses were leery of any change in the electorate that might upset their established control. Despite calls from local and even national party leaders, Connecticut party-boss J. Henry Roraback successfully stifled any chance for an open vote on the matter until after the amendment was already ratified.

Katharine Ludington was disappointed but not dismayed. A year before ratification, she saw success would come. She took a leading role in establishing the League of Women Voters—an organization dedicated to making electoral contests more open and free, typically by publishing an even-handed forum in which supporters of candidates and ballot

measures could make their case to all voters in each district. In the earliest days, women in particular were in need of such information, but all voters have long relied on the League’s publications and sponsored debates to form a reasoned judgment of issues and candidates. Ludington went on to campaign strongly for the establishment of a United Nations Organization in the aftermath of WWII.

Woman Suffrage was a single-issue struggle, though it touched on so many aspects of life. When that fight was won, the organizations disbanded. In 1923, Katharine Hepburn teamed up with an old friend, Margaret Sanger, to found the Connecticut branch of the American Birth Control League, which would become Planned Parenthood. Leaders of the Connecticut branch would be party to the Supreme Court case [*Griswold v. Connecticut* (1965)] that declared laws against sharing contraceptive information to be unlawful invasions of privacy.

The struggle for human rights never ends. Old Lyme and Old Saybrook are proud to have been home to two major leaders of that struggle in the early 20th century.

—Mark Terwilliger



Katharine Martha Hepburn
(1878-1951)
Photo: Wikimedia Commons



Katharine Ludington
(1869-1953)
Photo: OLPNG Library Collection



"Home at Last – Old Lyme Historical Society"
Watercolor by James Meehan, 2015

**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 OLHSI
by becoming
a member today.***

2021 Membership

Date _____

New member Renewing member

Name _____

Address _____

Town _____

State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Individual \$25 Family \$50

Patron or Business \$100

Benefactor \$250

Sustaining Member \$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.
P.O. Box 352, Old Lyme, CT 06371