

River & Sound

OLHSI.org

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

Issue 37 🍷 Summer 2021

New Lights and New Land

A religious revival in the 1730s altered power structures in Connecticut, and paved the way for her leading role in the American Revolution.

The founding ideal of Connecticut was the Congregation, an assembly of "Visible Saints" who had experienced God's Grace, indicating they were among "the Elect of God"—those predestined for salvation.

In secular matters, it was expected each town would elect its most prominent (and Godly) men to lead the people in a stable government supporting the Congregational "Established Order" at the Town and Colony level. That these men were among the most prosperous in the community was no coincidence, for success in material affairs was often (though not always) a sign of God's Grace.

The Town Meeting periodically parceled out Town lands to "admitted inhabitants," assuring each family had enough to live. Prominent men received larger shares, as was considered their due.

The mix of deference and democracy worked well in the early decades when Congregations were made up of self-selected religious exiles from England, all trying to establish a Godly way of life in the wilderness. Rich and poor shared a precarious material existence. Shared beliefs and shared hardship bound them together.

Those born and raised in America were in awe of the first settlers. This may explain why so few of the new generation claimed a clear sign of God's Grace. Without that experience, they could not join the Congregation, and their children (grand-children of the settlers) could not be baptized.

By the 1660s many (later, most) Congregations adopted a "Half-way Covenant," allowing the ordinarily devout to join the Congregation "half-way," reserving only votes on matters of doctrine and church affairs to the full members. This kept most folk within the "watch and ward" of the Congregation, but also diluted the Congregation's moral authority.

The Saybrook Platform (1708) established, for the first time, regional consociations of ministers with authority to intervene in disputes within and among local Congregations. This further strengthened the hand of each minister, at the expense of his Congregation. Both measures were controversial, but only a few Congregations split over them.

By 1690, the Puritan Colonies had been forced to tolerate other Protestant sects, and a few churches (mostly Anglican or Baptist) were established. A far greater challenge to Congregational unity and dominance was rapid population growth and the land-hunger and rampant economic expansion that came with it.

Towns along the Connecticut River and shoreline had distributed most of their Town lands by 1710. New lands were available east of the Connecticut River in the areas seized "by right of conquest" from the Pequot. Title to these lands became a major controversy in the General Assembly, pitting the established West against the rapidly-growing East. The spectacle of "leading men" squabbling over personal financial advantage eroded confidence in the Established Order, and opened an East/West split.

Between 1700 and 1730 Connecticut's population grew by 350%. Growth was fastest in the eastern lands, fueled by immigration from Massachusetts. Of 25 new towns, only 5 were in the west, while 20 were in the east. The east doubled its share of the colony's total taxable property.

Commerce, following population, also grew faster in the east. Colonial wars (through purchases by letters of credit) helped to grow trade. Cheap paper money (mainly from Rhode Island) also helped fuel the growth of commerce (and inflation) in the East. Established merchants from Western Connecticut railed against the reliance on "worthless" paper money, but the farmers and small traders of the East considered it essential to their trade. Debt grew fastest of all. Court actions for debt in Connecticut increased 20-fold by the mid-18th century.

All of these changes bred strife. Growing communal tensions and departures from established ways caused deep spiritual uneasiness. Community feeling faded, to be replaced by ambition, competition, and attendant hard feelings. The inner sense of personal salvation that had motivated and justified the first generation of settlers was missing in their descendants. One observer claimed barely one in five churchgoers had had a sign that they were saved. They feared for their souls. Many would find relief in the Great Awakening.

The Great Awakening of the 1730s and 1740s was among the most extensive religious revivals in British history. There is no space here to recount its whole course, but it re-made Connecticut in waves of emotionally-charged revivals in which many hundreds, then thousands, discovered they were saved.

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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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From the Chairman

Dear Members,

It has been a very active time here at the Old Lyme Historical Society and it promises to be even more so as we move ahead. Having successfully learned to navigate the virtual world both for our lecture/presentation series this past spring and to continue our Trustee's interactions, we feel confident the Society's work may be accessed in a variety of formats. Thanks to the leadership of Katie Balocca, Ann Marie Jewett and the rest of the Programs and Events Committee (Ross W. Higgins, Dawn McCarthy, Michaelle Pearson, Jill Pilgrim, Elaine Stiles, Mark Terwilliger, and Edie Twining), we were able to present four well attended virtual lectures with Q&A from the general public. Through this committee and assistance from the rest of our volunteer Board of Trustees, we continued with our active community involvement with such events as the Unplugged Weekend through the Lymes' Youth Service Bureau with a scavenger hunt for families; participation in the Old Lyme Memorial Day parade and remembrance; and a musical toy crafts setup for International Make Music Day, to name just a few. Our efforts also continue to move forward to recognize Katherine Ludington in the Connecticut Woman's Hall of Fame for her contributions and leadership in Women's Suffrage and the League of Women Voters and our recent additional partnership in the Old Lyme Witness Stones Project (see page 4).

The volunteers in our Archives, under the leadership of Alison Mitchell, continue to busily accession materials and answer inquiries on Monday and Thursday (10:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m.). A special note of gratitude to those working away at this very important task: Nancy Beebe, Lilo Hess, Mary Jo Nosal, and Mary Ellen Jewett. Of course the work never really stops for our Tuesday Morning Work Crew (Skip Beebe, Kevin Cole, Ted Freeman, Ellis Jewett, and Stephen Joncus) as they continue with renovations and planning for the area adjacent to the Archives that will serve to enhance the utility and access for visitors. We anticipate having to complete a much needed painting of the exterior of our building this summer/fall.

We would like to thank the work and dedication of Board members Marie McKeon and Andi Hoyt Williams who are stepping down from their time on the Board. We also look forward to working with a very broadly talented group of new Trustees, listed below, who are sure to assist us in the months and years ahead.

Mary Dangremond: Throughout Mary's thirty-five years in Old Lyme she has given of her time and talent to a wide variety of local organizations (PGN-OL Library; Florence Griswold Museum, etc.) as well as being on the boards of prominent southeast Connecticut organizations (Child & Family Agency of SECT; Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut).

Stephen Joncus: Steve is a retired architect whose work has involved old buildings throughout his sixty year practice. Among other notable projects, he worked on the original design for Old Lyme High School. He is an essential member of our Tuesday Morning Work Crew, and he joins his wife, Sandra, on the Board.

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New Lights

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At first, the surge in full church membership was applauded, despite the misgivings of some about pandering to emotionalism. Very soon, the status of being among “the Elect” led some new converts to attack the authenticity of the conversion experience of established members of the church. At that, the split between followers of the “New Light” and followers of the “Old Light” became a pitched battle for dominance.

At first, the General Assembly and the local consociations were firmly in the hands of the Old Lights, and they banned itinerant preaching and censured New Light ministers and Congregations. The New Lights found fertile ground among the striving easterners, and began to be a majority in many areas. The New Lights abandoned the Half-way Covenant, took over some consociations, and forced out Old Light supporters. They soon controlled the General Assembly, but the Governor and his Assistants (the 12-member upper house) were still Old Lights. Congregations split across the colony, but the New Lights were clearly gaining ground. By the 1750s religious and economic interests had so entwined that the New Lights were both a sect and a party. Indeed, the Old Lights were, too; and thus Congregationalism was reduced from THE CHURCH to two rival sects along the Protestant spectrum. The New Lights, with the backing of the fastest-growing segment of the colony, finally gained the Governorship and a majority among the Assistants in the 1750s.

The Great Awakening in Connecticut was not just a religious revival, but a changing of the guard. Elites (and the whole population) were split between those who were *satisfied* and sought *order* (the Old Lights), and those who were *dissatisfied* and wanted *change* (the New Lights). The religious split followed the geographic patterns set by secular interests, with New Lights dominant in the fast-growing East and the Old Lights dominant in the West.

More importantly, the revival and its aftermath helped to reinforce and give weight and credibility to each faction. Disputes over money and material advantage were worldly, and inherently suspect. Spiritual things were real and everlasting. The Truth (with a capital “T”) was the ultimate moral high ground, and both sides tried mightily to seize it. By the late 1750s, the New Lights had seized political power, and at least a modicum of the moral high ground.

When agitation against British taxation began in the 1760s, the New Lights slipped easily into the role of “Sons of Liberty.” Dissatisfied with the status quo and seeking *both* material advantage and moral justification, they were ready to give their all for a new world. (Although, characteristically, they would claim to be defending the “established order” of Connecticut.) The great Patriots of Connecticut in the American Revolution were of the New Light party.

The Old Lights (with their veneration of Order) tended to be Tories. Some were active supporters of the Crown, some had joined the Church of England; but many more sought to bide their time and weather the storms of civil war.

The winning side, per usual, wrote the history; which is recounted here.

—Mark Terwilliger

From the Chairman

(Continued from page 2)

Steve MacAusland: Steve, being “born into the Episcopal Church”, is very actively involved in regional and national leadership positions with the church. Through these and other activities, his video productions include indigenous peoples and environmental and faith based subjects. He is married to Rev. Anita Schell of Saint Ann’s Parish in Old Lyme.

Jill Todd: Jill moved to Old Lyme in 2005 with her husband Russ after leaving the world of Investment Banking. She is involved in several entrepreneurial pursuits and enjoys time at her home on Lyme Street raising chickens, beekeeping, and sailing with her husband.

As always the Society welcomes volunteers, new members, ideas, and collaborations. We look to a year of fulfilling the important mission of the OLHSI. Please check us out at OLHSI.org and on Facebook.

John Pote, *Chairman*
Old Lyme Historical Society



Photograph by Sigrid Kun

PINE Award of Merit

The Print Industry of New England (PINE) announced on May 5th that Essex Printing and the Old Lyme Historical Society (OLHSI) have received an award in PINE’s New England Regional Awards of Excellence competition. Judged anonymously on its own merit in a category with similar printed pieces, the 2021 PINE Award of Merit was presented to Essex Printing and OLHSI for the society’s 2021 *Then & Now Calendar*. Shown accepting the award are Essex Printing’s President, William McMinn and calendar designer, James Meehan of James Meehan Art & Design.



Photograph by James Meehan

Skip Bebee – 2021 Recipient of the James Brewster Noyes Award

This year at the Board of Trustee Annual meeting the James Brewster Noyes award for Volunteer of the Year was presented with great pleasure, respect and gratitude, to Arthur “Skip” Beebe.

Skip has been integral and active with Tuesday Morning Work Crew since he became a member of the Board of Trustees. He has been recognized with that team of individuals (mentioned previously in this newsletter) on the state level and as Old Lyme’s 2019 Citizens of the Year. This year, we specifically recognize Skip for his dedication in working with Board members and others to make sure that our building was surviving the lockdown. He was instrumental in seeking workable solutions to have the Archives back in operation for volunteers and for re-starting the work of the TMWC.

Facility related issues are indeed important, but in his eight years on the Board, Skip’s unselfish concern for the mission of the Society has always been in the forefront of any conversation. Skip draws upon a wealth of knowledge from his career in the building construction field and his volunteer experience within the local community providing leadership in the Old Lyme Fire Department and the Hamburg Fair. He is a true ambassador for the Old Lyme Historical Society.

—John Pote

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.



Photograph by James Meehan

Old Lyme Witness Stone Project

Between 1670 and 1820 more than two hundred Africans, African-Americans, and Native Americans labored as slaves in the historic town of Lyme (today: Lyme, Old Lyme, East Lyme, and parts of Salem).

This spring, fourteen of these early inhabitants of Lyme were honored with Witness Stones—commemorative plaques—installed along Lyme Street; many sited at or near the place where each person lived and worked their life in slavery. A new marker and annotated map at the Phoebe Griffin Noyes (PGN) Library provides an introduction to the Witness Stones in Old Lyme.

The completion of the Witness Stones’ installation was celebrated at the PGN Library on Friday, June 4, 2021. Among the highlights of the ceremony were the reading by Lyme-Old Lyme (LOL) Middle School students of their poems and essays, recitations by noted Connecticut poets, song, music, and comments by local notables. LOL seventh-graders also contributed illustrations to the day’s program of events. A large crowd was in attendance, OLHSI among them.

Many community groups and institutions have supported the Witness Stones Project. As a historical society, we are grateful for that. Carolyn Wakeman (of the Florence Griswold Museum) deserves particular mention as a leader in the effort to bring these aspects of our town’s history to light. The supporting organizations are listed on the Witness Stones Project website www.witnessstonesoldlyme.org, where you can also find more details about the individuals memorialized by this project.

Here are a few of the people whose lives, ensnared in slavery, helped to build Old Lyme:

Name, Witness Stone location; date [event]; (Enslaved by)

- Cato**, 4 Lyme St.; 1724-1734; (Jonathan Parsons)
- Lewis Lewia**, 4 Lyme St.; 1779-1852; (Col. Marshfield Parsons)
- Humphrey**, 4 Lyme St.; [freed, 1778]; (John McCurdy)
- Caesar**, 4 Lyme St.; 1762-1784+ [escaped]; (John McCurdy)
- Jack Howard**, 5 Lyme St.; 1795-1810+?; (Samuel. Mather Jr., James Mather)
- Jenny Freeman**, 32 Lyme St.; 1748-1832; (Noyes family)
- Luce**, 70 Lyme St.; 1741 [baptism as adult]; (David Deming)
- Crusa**, 96 Lyme St.; 1778-1824+ [freed, 1817]; (Noyes family)
- Nancy Freeman**, 100 Lyme St.; 1771-1853 [freed, pre-1812]; (Noyes family)
- Temperance**, 100 Lyme St.; 1708?-1735+; (Peck and Lord families)
- Jane**, 100 Lyme St.; 1726-1729+? [sold at age 3]; (Benjamin Reed)
- Pompey Freeman**, 106 Lyme St.; 1776-1822? [escaped, 1816?]; (Noyes family)
- Samuel Freeman**, 106 Lyme St.; ca. 1795-1850+ [freed, 1820]; (Noyes family)
- Arabella**, 110 Lyme St.; ca. 1680-1733+; (Noyes, Pickett, Mather, and Parsons families)



Photograph 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!

**Old Lyme's
Town Band
& Ice Cream Social**

Sunday, August 15th
2:00 – 4:00pm
Old Lyme Town Green
(Lyme St. & McCurdy Rd.)
See the OLHSI web site for these
and other upcoming events

*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

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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
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