

River & Sound

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

Issue 32 🍂 Autumn 2019

OLHSI Launches the 2020 *Then & Now* Community Calendar

The new 2020 *Then & Now* Old Lyme Community Calendar is here! The launch party on November 14th was a fun event. If you missed it, never fear: copies of the calendar are still available at local vendors and at OLHSI holiday book sales (Saturday, December 7th, 14th, and 21st; 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Halls Road Post Office).

The 2020 *Then & Now* Old Lyme Community Calendar is for sale at local venues including: The Bowerbird, The Chocolate Shell, Christiansen Hardware, the Florence Griswold Museum, All Pro Plaza, and the Book Cellar at the Old Lyme Phoebe Griffin Noyes Library.

Each month features views of the past and present of one business or location, with historical details. The calendar also notes the dates of community events scheduled for 2020.

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, and Nick Westbrook.

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



Connecticut River Bridge looking west, circa 1911. OLHSI Archives
Raymond E. Baldwin Bridge looking east, circa 1948. Cynthia Taylor Collection
Raymond E. Baldwin Bridge, 2019. Photograph by James Meehan

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



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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Back Row: John Pote, Nicholas Westbrook, Ross W. Higgins, Mark Lander, Jill Pilgrim, Mark Terwilliger, Mary Ellen Jewett, Cynthia Taylor, Michaëlle Pearson, Robert DiNapoli and James Meehan. *Middle Row:* Skip Beebe, Kevin Cole, Alison Mitchell, Sandra Joncus and Ted Freeman. *Front Row:* Dawn McCarthy, Edith Twining, Ann Marie Jewett, Katie Balocca and Elaine Stiles. Not Shown: Tim Griswold, Matthew LaConti, Todd Machnik and Andi Williams. (Photo by James Meehan)

From the Co-Chairs

Dear Members,

The crisp days of autumn are upon us, and our thoughts turn toward harvest festivals and winter celebrations. At the Old Lyme Historical Society, the autumn season ushers in Genealogy Month (marked with a beautiful exhibit at the Halls Road Post Office by Edie Twining) and the annual Calendar Launch Party held on November 14th. The Fundraising Committee will once again hold Book Sales at the Halls Road Post Office on December 7th, 14th, and 21st from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The 2019 Lecture and Event Series continued with a presentation on August 21st by UCONN student James Kolb, who led the OLHSI's Duck River Cemetery Mapping Project. James described the scope of his research and use of GIS mapping technology to pinpoint and track information about the burials at Duck River. He will continue working with the Society to make this information available for future researchers. Past OLFD Chief and longtime OLHSI Trustee Ellis Jewett gave a talk on September 26th detailing the rich history of the Old Lyme Fire Department. Both lectures were extremely interesting, and brought in capacity crowds. The OLFD also made a generous donation to the Society's Scholarship Fund in honor of Ellis' long-term commitment to both the OLHSI and OLFD. The Society has also received a generous Cable Advisory Council Grant from Comcast that will provide video recording equipment to support our lecture series and future events.

In other technology news: the Society's new website has launched at last! We hope you will visit OLHSI.org for information about upcoming events, projects, and volunteer opportunities. The online shop has also been completely redone, just in time for the Holiday gifting season! Ordering from the website is an easy way to send some Old Lyme cheer to out-of-town relatives and friends.

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Profile Janet York Littlefield



Standing: Alison Mitchell, Mark Lander, Jim Noyes.
Seated: Ellis Jewett, Janet Littlefield, Carol Noyes Winters.
(Photo by James Meehan, 2011)

Janet York Littlefield (née Speirs) was a founding member of the Old Lyme Historical Society. She passed away this summer at the age of 98, and is remembered with affection and admiration by those who knew her. She was a strong person with a quick mind, and did not suffer fools gladly. She spent her professional life in the service of women who had become entangled with the law. The women's correctional facility in Niantic where Janet worked for many years was renamed for her in 1998. She always called it "the Farm."

The late Jim Noyes first asked Janet to get involved with the Old Lyme Historical Society. In those early days the Society would meet at Alison Mitchell's house every Tuesday morning. Janet was one of those people who "knew everybody" in Old Lyme and the neighboring towns, and she had a good fund of local lore. One day, a group from the Society went to investigate the old McCurdy granite quarry on the land then owned by Susan Woody. Janet climbed down into the quarry (at the age of about 92) and, looking at the pink granite, suggested it might have been used for a particular church in Newport, RI. She was definitely a hands-on, take-charge kind of person.

Janet loved to sail, and kept her own boat for many years (one of them appropriately named *Defiant*). At the age of 95 she still felt spry enough to serve as first mate on her son Allan's boat on a transit to Florida.

Janet got her bachelor's degree at U Conn and planned to be a PE teacher, but when the US entered WWII she joined the WACs. She served as a Staff Sergeant in the motor pool in North Africa and Italy. The experience of leading and counseling women in the extreme circumstances of war sent her career in a new direction. When she returned home she earned a Master of Science degree from Boston University's School of Social Work, and was working full-time at the Farm by 1951.

In the 1960's Janet lived with her children at Haven House on the campus of the Farm. In those days Society Trustee Kevin Cole was in a rock band with Janet's son, Allan York. Janet arranged for the band to play for the inmates, and Kevin remembers being amazed at the reception they received. "It was like we were the Beatles!" Prison is a hard place, and many of the people there were in a hard place before that. Janet understood this, and set out to help.

Janet Littlefield was one of a kind, and we're glad to have known her.

Property Rights in Connecticut

In 1631 Robert Rich, Second Earl of Warwick, then president of the Council for New England, conveyed a large swath of what would become Connecticut to a group of Lords and gentlemen of the more radical wing of the growing opposition to King Charles I. The document became known as the Warwick Patent, the foundation of Saybrook Colony. It is not at all clear what the Earl's intentions were, beyond being of service to his friends and promoting their common religious/political and personal financial interests. It was one of several schemes of colonization Warwick pursued, and not all of them ended so well as this one.

John Winthrop, Jr. was enlisted as Governor of the new colony. The fort begun in the spring of 1636 was barely finished when the Pequot War engulfed it in a months-long siege. When the Pequot were utterly crushed, the English and their Native American allies both laid claim to Pequot lands by right of conquest—with variable success.

Meanwhile, conditions in England grew more violent and revolutionary. By 1644 most of the surviving patentees (Lord Saye and Sele, Lord Brook, Sir Arthur Haselrig, John Pym, and the rest) were hotly engaged in a life-or-death struggle for the future of England—and they appeared to be winning. If there had ever been any thought of Saybrook as a refuge, that was now gone. Unfortunately, so was any thought of making a fortune in beaver pelts as the Dutch had done. The beaver were trapped out in Connecticut, and the trade moved steadily inland, north and west. Saybrook would not be a gold mine for the Patentees.

Colonel George Fenwick was one of the few Patentees to actually go to Saybrook. He served there as governor, and as agent for some of the others. The Patentees were not a corporation; they were instead joint tenants. The only legal way the patent rights could transfer was to have all 16 Patentees (or their heirs) sign them over. In the confusion of civil war, that was highly unlikely to happen. Fenwick was on friendly terms with the leaders of the settlements at Hartford. They suggested a union of the two colonies and Fenwick agreed. He signed over to them the fort at Saybrook, on their promise that the river settlements would be treated equally with those around Hartford. For his part, Fenwick promised to take any chance he got to place the growing Connecticut settlements on a more firm legal footing. (Unsurprisingly, he got no such chance.) Fenwick left for England in 1645. The Hartford settlements told anyone who would listen that they had secured legal rights to Connecticut. Like most propaganda, it almost convinced their friends without fooling their enemies.

When Oliver Cromwell died in 1658 the Christian Commonwealth imposed by his New Model Army began to unravel. Their enemies were resurgent. Charles II was back on the throne by 1660. Somehow, John Winthrop, Jr. managed to secure a charter from the new King, but that is a story for another day.



(Photo by James Meehan)

Past OLFD Chief and longtime OLHSI Trustee Ellis Jewett presents *"A History of the Old Lyme Fire Department."* The Department also made a generous donation to the Society's Scholarship Fund. *Shown in photo:* Michaelle Pearson, OLFD Chief Stephen Super, Ellis Jewett, Bob DiNapoli.

From the Co-Chairs

(continued from page 2)

In October, the Society hosted a celebration to thank the donors and organizations that so generously supported the installation of the ADA Lift at 55 Lyme Street. This undertaking was several years in the making, and the celebration was well attended. The Annual Plant Sale was held on October 19th, changing location this year to partner with the Visiting Nurse Association's flu clinic at the Lymes' Senior Center at Town Woods Park.

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

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



A display of Genealogy records from the Society's archives at the Post Office on Halls Road. (Photo by Edie Twining)

Some Useful Internet Resources

Here are several useful sites for amateur history buffs that I use regularly:

Google Earth <<https://www.google.com/earth>> You will need to download this, but once you have it you will have access to satellite photos of just about any spot on Earth. If you have an address, a street name, or the geographic coordinates, you can locate almost any town, lake, street, building, etc. I have found this useful for locating where things used to be. Traces of old roads, fields, railroads, trolley lines etc. which could never be spotted from ground level will often be visible to a satellite. You can zoom in to find where the railroad tracks in Old Lyme deviated from the present right-of-way, or perhaps where US 1 and Rt. 156 once ran. You can also check out your own house. The images are sometimes a few years old, and you might spot a car you no longer own parked in the driveway, or maybe a tree you removed a few years ago. It's a fascinating site.

tylercystation.info <<http://www.tylercystation.info>> One of my favorite sites, this is an exhaustive site covering every train station which ever existed in Connecticut. You will find a brief description, the dates it was (is) extant and photos, if they exist. You will, however, need to know the exact names of the stations you are seeking. Over the years Old Lyme had several train stations but none of them were called "Old Lyme." They were known as Lyme Station (3 of them), Black Hall, Sound View, and South Lyme. Similarly, stations in Old Saybrook were known as Saybrook, Connecticut River Station, Saybrook Point, and Fenwick.

A link on the above site <[~/track-11-tcstraxmap.html](#)> will take you to **CTTRAXMAP**, for which Google Earth is required. When viewed in Google Earth, the CTTRAXMAP file shows in vivid color where all railroad and trolley tracks in Connecticut were (are) located. It's great fun to see where the trolley ran in Old Lyme (1913-1919) or in Old Saybrook (1910-1925).

connecticutbarns.org <<https://connecticutbarns.org>> This fairly new site, divided into geographic regions, shows every "significant" barn now standing in the state. There are more in Old Lyme than you might have suspected. This site does not include an invitation to visit the barns, but most of them are visible from the road.

Today in Connecticut History <<https://todayinhistory.com/>> This site shows a historic event which happened on today's date in our state. Some of them are of great consequence; others of little importance, but all are interesting, regardless. From this site you can subscribe to a daily email from the Historian's Office, sending you an event for each day. Perhaps these will lead you to other sites of historic interest.

Happy Hunting!
—Mark Lander

[Ed: For links and pointers to other sites and sources of historical interest, please see the Genealogy page under the Resources section of our website, at <https://www.olhsi.org/genealogy>]