

# River & Sound

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

Issue Fourteen 🌱 Spring 2014

## The Grange

In 2005, shortly after the incorporation of the Old Lyme Historical Society, it was decided to mount an exhibit of Old Lyme historic postcards from the collection of Jennifer Hillhouse. The logical site for the exhibit was Grange No. 162, located prominently on Lyme Street. The exhibit was such a success that we moved it over to the Sill House on the campus of the Lyme Academy College of Fine Arts. Tom Schellens designed some attractive display cases and we added an essay on early 20th century Old Lyme history.

The fledgling Historical Society remains grateful to both of these institutions for providing us with a welcoming venue. But it was the Grange that called to us as a wonderful site should Grange No. 162 ever decide to retire its charter. Some of us remember moseying about the small stage and finding the delightful two sided backdrop, and thinking what a unique bit of Old Lyme historical commerce it displayed.

The Society began a series of publications, the first ones being *Poverty Island* and *This Ancient Town*, with readings and a reception held in a Board member's house. The exhibit and reception for *The Hurricane of 1938* was held at the White Sands Beach Community Center where Tom Schellens designed a mini sound and light show to the delight of our visitors. The Florence Griswold Museum was our host when the Society launched *The Land Savers*; many of us remember watching the swallows dart about on an especially beautiful sunset that evening over the Lieutenant River. The Sound View Community Center graciously opened its doors to us for *Rum Runners, Governors, Beachcombers & Socialists*, our best-selling book to date.



Photo: James Meehan

Then, in 2011, we were welcomed back at the Grange holding a reception and accompanying exhibit for *The Charm of the Place*. The backdrop was lowered and visitors sipped their libations as they strolled about commenting on photographs, some seeing the backdrop for the first time.

Fast-forward to the fall of 2013. Co-Chair Tim Griswold reported at a Historical Society Board meeting that members of the

Grange had approached us to inquire if we would be interested in buying their building as they were actually going to retire their charter. Total silence greeted his announcement. It was similar to being told that you have almost won the lottery. After the initial euphoria wore down, an intense sustained discussion ensued. Foremost in all the Board members' minds was whether the Society could raise the necessary funds to purchase the building. The vote was not unanimous, but it was determined to go forward with a Capital Campaign with vigor and determination while keeping both eyes solidly on the prize. The Society signed documents to purchase the Grange on February 28, 2014.

Three factors made this possible: a one hundred percent financial commitment from the present Board of Directors and the enormous faith of a small group of donors who gave us a one-year low interest loan in order to secure the deal. The third is the most important, a significant number of donations from the community. The Capital Campaign committee is hard at work making calls, writing letters, sending brochures. As this is being written, we are more than halfway to our goal of \$225,000. This will enable the Society to pay off the loan, and build a much needed climate controlled archive as well as bringing a building built at the turn of the 20th century up to 2014 standards. Please help us to climb the ladder to success. After all, this is your town's Historical Society. In advance, please accept our thanks.

Alison C. Mitchell  
Chair, Publications Committee



Old Lyme Historical Society, Inc.

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

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*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

## *From the Co-chairs*

The past few months have been busy and exciting for the Old Lyme Historical Society. On November 8, we participated in the Harvest Home event at the Bushnell Farm in Old Saybrook, giving members a look at life in the 17th and 18th centuries. Shortly after that, we launched our second “Then & Now” Calendar at the Lyme Art Association with a festive evening. In December, we were asked to participate in “Light Up Old Lyme” for the holiday season. Society Board members in 19th century garb acted as guides for both walking and horse and wagon tours of Lyme Street.

Our final activity for the winter season was the third appearance of Vintage!, our annual antiques appraisal event, on March 9. For two years the event has grown. This year saw over 300 items brought in for our team of professional appraisers to evaluate. The event added almost \$1,800 to our scholarship fund. Thank you to everyone who participated, including the three members of the LOLHS History Club who served as guides and aides.

During the last six months we were working on our biggest project yet: the acquisition of a headquarters building for the Society. The long-lived Old Lyme Grange had decided to turn in their charter after almost 110 years of service to the community. They offered us the chance to buy their hall on Lyme Street. Ten weeks of furious fund-raising allowed us to purchase the building on February 28, thanks to generous donations by community members and businesses, by Society Board members and through four personal loans. Our fund-raising campaign will continue for several months so we may pay off the loans and raise additional funds to adapt the building to our needs, especially in the area of archival storage and office space. We have raised about \$125,000 out of our campaign goal of @225,000. If you have not yet contributed to the Capital Campaign, please consider doing so. This campaign and work on the building will keep us busy but we won't ignore our members. We are co-sponsoring “Light Up the Night” on April 8 which will commemorate the 200th anniversary of the burning of the ships in Essex Harbor by the British. Our task is to provide a bonfire at the edge of the Connecticut River on Ferry Road. The public is invited to attend and hear a narration of the events of 1814. (7:30 PM, weather permitting)

On Friday, April 25 at 6:00 PM at the Senior Center, we will host our annual John Pfeiffer Dinner Lecture. Dr. Pfeiffer, Old Lyme's Historian, will present another of his interesting talks about our past and a sumptuous dinner will be provided. Tickets will go on sale near the end of March at our office, at Webster Bank and on-line. The price in advance: members \$30, non-members \$35. On our website: \$35 members and nonmembers. A few tickets may be available at the door for \$40. Tickets cannot be reserved unless paid for.

The future looks to be a busy time for the Society. Stay tuned to local media for information about other events. And a hearty thank-you to all those who supported our fund-raising campaign or are considering doing so.

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

## The Third Time's Full of *Vintage!* Charm at Popular Appraisal Event

Excitement was in the air at the Old Lyme Historical Society's Third Annual *Vintage!* event on Sunday, March 9, 2014. Treasures from attics, mantelpieces and cellars all over the Shoreline area were packed up and carefully transported to the Old Lyme Town Hall for appraisal.

This year's panel of professional appraisers included Carol Brevard, Jeff Cooley, Nancy Hoffman, Norman Lagassie, Steven Lutar, and Curt Wendler. Together they evaluated and appraised over 300 items ranging from paintings and prints to antique dolls, tools, books, furniture, maps, jewelry and textiles.

Participants were able to purchase up to three appraisal tickets at \$5 each. Volunteers from the Society and the Lyme-Old Lyme High School History Club were on hand to provide guidance as to which appraiser would be most appropriate for each item brought in.

Each year, *Vintage!* has grown in popularity, and this was the largest and most successful *Vintage!* yet, having raised over \$1800 for the Old Lyme Historical Society's scholarship fund. A scholarship is awarded each year to a college-bound Old Lyme High School Senior who plans to major in history. Students living in Old Lyme, including those who attend schools elsewhere, are eligible to apply. To make a donation to the Scholarship Fund, send a check to OLHSI, P.O. Box 352, Old Lyme, CT, 06371.

Many thanks to all of the generous people who donated their time and talents to make this year's *Vintage!* such a resounding success!



Photos: Debra Joy

## Get All the Latest OLHSI News – Like us on Facebook!

The Old Lyme Historical Society now has an official Facebook page so users can keep up with all the latest OLHS news and events.

Maintained by Board Member Kristen Magnussen, the page is building up a steady following of dedicated history buffs. Each week, Magnussen posts a vintage Old Lyme photo or news clipping as a topic for commentary.

Users are invited to post their guesses as to where a particular spot was located, or comment upon the various news items from days gone by. Some popular items of interest have been Jane's Waffle House, Alice Rogers' Book Shop, the Sound View Train Station, and a 1964 movie casting call at the Old Lyme Inn.



Like Us On Facebook  
facebook.com/OldLymeHistoricalSociety

## Mark Your Calendar!

Annual Dinner & Lecture  
Friday, April 25, 2014  
6:00 p.m.  
Lyme's Senior Center  
26 Town Woods Road, Old Lyme

Dr. John Pfeiffer, Old Lyme's Historian, will present another of his interesting talks about our past and a sumptuous dinner will be provided.

Tickets are available in advance:  
members \$30, non-members \$35.  
(\$40 at the door)

RUM RUNNERS, GOVERNORS,  
BEACHCOMBERS & SOCIALISTS  
VIEWS OF THE BEACHES IN OLD LYME



BY JIM LAMPOS & MICHAELLE PEARSON

Old Lyme Historical Society

## Rum Runners, Governors, Beachcombers & Socialists

VIEWS OF THE BEACHES IN OLD LYME

BY JIM LAMPOS & MICHAELLE PEARSON

*Third Edition Now Available. \$25.00*

Available at the Old Lyme PGN Library, Florence Griswold Museum & oldlymehistoricalsociety.org

## New Archival Software Brings the Past into the Future

Wouldn't it be exciting to go online and search for items in the Old Lyme Historical Society's Archive? Read 19th century letters written in carefully crafted longhand that describe long ago voyages, local events, or firsthand accounts of the Civil War? Peruse legal documents which detail property transactions with boundary markers such as "the elm tree three lengths from the stone wall" and similar identifying marks?

For the past several years, the Society's Archive Committee, currently chaired by Mark Lander, has accessioned well over 5,000 artifacts painstakingly by hand on yellow legal pads.

In 2012, the Society received a donation from a supporter which allowed us to purchase Past Perfect Museum Software, a program which, when completed, will allow users to search our entire collection of historic letters, books, maps, photos and other ephemera. Ultimately, the software will allow people to search the database by key words, e.g., name (McCurdy) subject (1938 Hurricane), location (Lyme Street) or newspaper (Deep River New Era) to help people find the information contained within the archive.

The initial transition from handwritten pages to carefully designed fields of relevance as defined by Past Perfect is about halfway done. A data entry team consisting of Martha Hansen, Susan Morrison, Alison Mitchell and, our new and most welcome consultant, Sandy Downing, has been working hard to complete this initial phase. This is an ongoing endeavor, requiring a significant time commitment, as each item must be catalogued into the software, assigned a new number, and a detailed description, including its condition, location and donor, with keywords for cross-checking the item.



### Do you know where this Old Lyme site is?

If not, you'll find the answer in the Old Lyme Historical Society's 2014 Now & Then Calendar. A limited amount of calendars are still available for purchase at the Old Lyme PGN Library.

Eventually, the long term goal is to scan many of the items so they may be available on our web site. This will involve the purchase of additional components to the Past Perfect software. One step at a time, as our grandparents would say.

Right now, the Archive Committee is ready, able, and more than willing to help you empty your attics, basements and garages of items you think may help tell the story of the rich history of our town and its environs.

The Historical Society thanks those of you who have already given many wonderful artifacts to augment our collection. We are happy to come to your house and help you determine which of your treasures needs to be preserved for future generations in an acid-free environment.

Please call for home consultations at 860 434 0684 or Mark Lander, 860 388 3869, or Alison Mitchell, 860 434 3118.

## Join OLHSI in bringing Old Lyme's past to the present!

### 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, and the opportunity to buy them in advance
- 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.

### 2014 Membership

Become an OLHSI member or renew your membership today. 2014 OLHSI memberships run now through January 1, 2015

*Dues are fully tax-deductible.*

New member  Renewing member

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Student \$10  Individual \$20  Family \$35

Patron \$100  Business/Corporate \$100

Benefactor \$250  Lifetime \$500  Additional donation

Please make your check payable to the Old Lyme Historical Society, Inc.

You may also use PayPal, on our website. *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.