

River & Sound

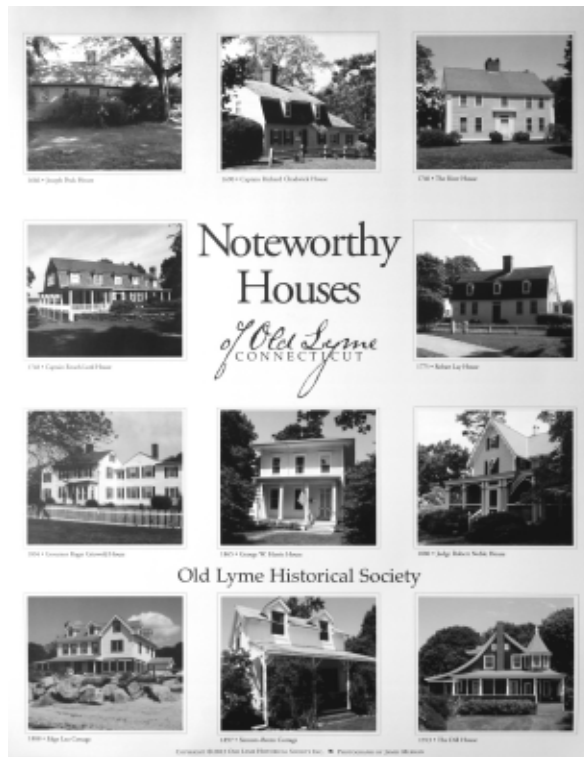
Old Lyme Historical Society
"The history of Old Lyme – the people of Old Lyme"

Issue Thirteen 🍂 Autumn 2013

Noteworthy Houses of Old Lyme

The idea to do a poster as this year's Historical Society publication came not from a long-term plan of proposed projects discussed at seemingly endless publication committee meetings. Nor did it come as a request from a member of the Society Board of Trustees. Truth be told, the poster idea came while standing in a friend's kitchen holding a glass of wine and gazing at her handsome poster of Dublin doors. It was one of those "Aha!" moments that come about when you least expect it. First, the thought was to do a poster of historic gardens. (Yes, we may still do one).

However, as Jim Meehan, our talented, affable photographer and designer, and I drove around town on a scouting expedition, it became clear that a poster featuring notable houses in our fair town was a "no-brainer", as there are countless handsome Old Lyme properties to provide us with enough material for not one, but many posters. Thus, the idea for a poster of noteworthy houses quickly morphed into a plan. We were off and running! From my work at the Smithsonian, I stole the idea of a "teaching poster", wherein a poster was used as a teaching aid to tell the story of African Americans in aviation. We decided to incorporate a "history lite" booklet to complement the 2013 Noteworthy Houses of Old Lyme poster. Information about the style of the selected houses which range from circa 1666 to 1913 is included. In addition, a snippet of information about historical events which occurred around the time that each house was built has been added to spark the reader's interest in local history.



This, of course, is what the Society is all about. As our mission statement reads, the Society aims to "collect, preserve, and interpret the rich history" of Old Lyme for its residents and its visitors..

The only difficult part of the project was choosing which houses to include. It was similar to being told by a grandparent that you may select one toy, and one toy only, at The Bowerbird or Toys R Us teeming with hundreds of selections. It is a temporarily paralyzing experience. Old Lyme is blessed with many historically interesting houses, and many fascinating stories associated with them. We were impressed by the current home owners, who view their role as caregivers of a piece of local history. How lucky we all are that they are helping to preserve the beauty of our town, and its many lovingly cared-for historic properties. We are most grateful to the eleven property owners who allowed us to photograph their houses.

We ask that if you know where these properties are located, that you also respect their privacy. The Society hopes that you will enjoy hanging your poster in a favorite nook in your apartment, beach house, office, den, or kitchen. Or, as one friend of mine did, sending it off to college with her daughter as a reminder of whence she came. If this poster sells as well as we hope, there will be more to come. One of the houses incorporates a historic garden, so we may well be on our way to another "Aha!" moment.

Alison C. Mitchell
Chair, Publications Committee



Old Lyme Historical Society, Inc.

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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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OLHSI officers, from left: Timothy Griswold, Mark Lander, Martha Hansen, Carol Winters.
Photo: James Meehan

From the Co-chairs

The Old Lyme Historical Society has had another good spring and summer.

In May, we held our annual Dinner Lecture featuring Old Lyme Historian Dr. John Pfeiffer who reminded us of our duty to preserve "...Old Lyme's Historical and Cultural Resources." The lecture was preceded by the usual excellent meal prepared and served by Coffee's Market.

In June, our Annual Membership Meeting was held at the Phoebe Griffin Noyes Library. In addition to the "State of the Society" reports, Archives Committee member Mark Lander reported on the church in Newport, Rhode Island built of McCurdy granite from Old Lyme, and on the history of the Shoreline Electric Railway, the trolley line which served Old Lyme from 1913-1919. Elections were held, with three officers continuing to serve: Tim Griswold, Co-chair; Martha Hansen, Secretary; Carol Winters, Treasurer. A new Co-chair, Mark Lander, was selected to replace Dyanne Rafal, whom we thank for her service to the Board and the Society for the past two years. At the annual meeting, Michaelle Pearson was presented with the Chairman's Award by Dyanne and Tim Griswold for her outstanding contributions to the Society.

During the summer, the Society supported the Old Lyme Phoebe Griffin Noyes Library in its "One Town, One Book" program, featuring "The Bean Trees" by Barbara Kingsolver. We would be remiss if we did not thank the good folks at the Library for their support of the Society, graciously allowing us office space and the use of the Community Room for our monthly meetings.

In July, we participated in the Sound View Artisan Fair, where we had a chance to sell our new poster and booklet, "Noteworthy Houses of Old Lyme," by Alison C. Mitchell and Michaelle Pearson. Shortly thereafter we took part in the Midsummer Festival, again having a chance to sell our poster as well as our other publications.

Upcoming Events include an invitation for members of the Society to visit the historic Bushnell Farm in Old Saybrook on November 2. On November 8, we will host an event at the Lyme Art Association to celebrate the official launch of the poster and of our new 2014 calendar.

The Co-Chairs urge all who have not renewed their memberships to please do so. The Old Lyme Historical Society is only as strong as the members who support it. Thank you for a good year.

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

Railroad Comes to the Connecticut Shoreline

by Mark Lander, Alison C. Mitchell & Michaëlle Pearson



Train crossing Connecticut River bridge to stop at Lyme depot, c. 1890. Lyme Historical Society Archives, Florence Griswold Museum.

In 1848, the Connecticut General Assembly granted a charter to the New Haven and New London Railroad to lay tracks along the Connecticut shoreline. Construction started in 1850. Tracks were laid in Old Saybrook, on the west bank of the Connecticut River, and on the east bank, in what was then called Lyme. The NH & NL was officially opened in 1852. In 1864, the New Haven to New London route was renamed the Shore Line Railway.

Because there was no railroad bridge connecting the two tracks, passengers had to disembark, take a steam ferry across, climb aboard a waiting train on the opposite side, and continue on their way. There were roundhouses with turntables on both sides of the river which enabled the locomotives to reverse direction.

Train stations were constructed on each river bank; the one on the west bank was called Connecticut River; the one on the east bank was named Lyme Station, which stood quite close to where the Department of Environmental Protection building is today. An additional station was built at the head of Main Street in Old Saybrook, approximately where the present Amtrak station stands. On the Old Lyme side, a station was built at Black Hall, near the intersection of Bailey and Mile Creek Roads and another at South Lyme, near the entrance to today's Point O' Woods beach community.

In 1870, the first bridge was built. It carried the single track across the river and was, at various times, both a covered and an uncovered bridge. This bridge was replaced some years later with an open iron bridge and then in 1907, the present two-track bridge was erected. It's interesting to note that the abutments for the present bridge are wide enough to accommodate four tracks if needed.

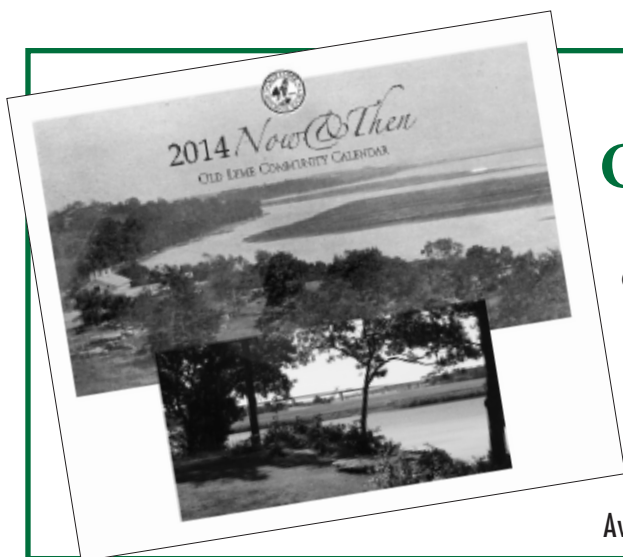
With the construction of the first bridge, Lyme Station was eventually deemed to be too far from the tracks, so it was replaced by a new Lyme Station near the junction of today's McCurdy Road and Route 156.

Sound View Station, located just off today's Cross Lane, began as a whistle stop in 1902, and by 1905, residents were petitioning for a proper station with a regular schedule to accommodate the growing crowds of beachgoers traveling from the Hartford area. Black Hall Station was deemed unnecessary, and was decommissioned in 1909. With the increasing affordability of the automobile in the 1920s, and newly-available intercity bus service, all three of Old Lyme's stations and the Connecticut River station in Old Saybrook were rendered obsolete.

The last station to close was Lyme Station, probably in the 1930s. The last station in existence was the South Lyme Station which had been converted into a store. In 1970, the building caught fire and burned. Other than the tracks themselves, there remain few traces of the train stations in Old Lyme.

Interestingly, in the 1850s, just before the southern part of Lyme was renamed Old Lyme, surveys were taken for the Norwich and Lyme Railroad but construction was never begun and no one seems to know the proposed route.

Now, in 2013, the local flourishing commuter railroad, Shoreline East, serves towns from New Haven east to Old Saybrook and New London. There is talk of a future railroad stop in Niantic. Is it possible that Old Lyme will one day again boast a train station? We shall have to wait and see.



2014 *Now & Then* Old Lyme Community Calendar

Available November 8th, 2013

Once again – featuring showcase photographs from the archives and their contemporary counterparts.

With gratitude to our 2014 sponsors,

OLHSI presents the 2nd annual calendar of community events for the upcoming new year.

A great holiday gift at just \$12.00.

Available at the Old Lyme PGN Library & www.oldlymehistoricalsociety.org

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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, 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

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2014 OLHSI memberships run now through January 1, 2015

Dues are fully tax-deductible.

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You may also use PayPal, on our website. *Thanks for your generosity!*

My check for \$ _____ is enclosed.

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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.