

River and Sound

Issue 2 Winter 2007

Old Lyme Historical Society, Inc.
"The history of Old Lyme – the people of Old Lyme"



Historical Society in 2006: new projects, growing participation

The year just past – our second year of operations – was a busy one for the Old Lyme Historical Society.

Prompted by the success of *Poverty Island*, our first publication, we are planning to issue a second printing of Neri Clark's memoir. The Society has received letters from several people with their own recollections of *Poverty Island* and the Clark family.

Also in 2006 we sponsored two well-attended talks and initiated a series of cemetery tours. Duck River cemetery was the first, to be followed by a tour of Lord cemetery this spring.

We are grateful to the Town of Old Lyme for its financial support. As interest in the Society and its activities grows, our website continues to receive inquiries concerning the history and families of Old Lyme. We encourage you to visit the website (www.olhsi.org), which has a new look and is easy to navigate.

During the past year the Historical Society's board members spent a significant amount of time examining the need for a home. As a first step, we have, with partial funding from the Connecticut Humanities Council, engaged a consultant to help us clarify our mission and our long-range contribution to the community. This process will entail three sessions, the first of which was completed in January. ◦

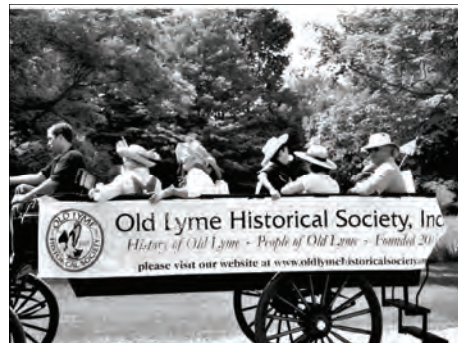
Memorial Day parade a highlight for region, Society

In 2006 the OLHSI once again joined representatives of other local organizations to march in Old Lyme's popular Memorial Day parade. Volunteers dressed in costumes were recruited to ride in a passenger wagon, provided by Foxglove Farm, drawn by two gray-and-white draft horses. With our banner unfurled, we distributed our literature along the route down Lyme Street to Duck River Cemetery.



Judy Whitney and Muffie Whitley.

We anticipate continued participation in the parade, which is a highlight of Memorial Day weekend on the Connecticut shoreline. ◦



2006 tours and talks

Duck River Cemetery visit

Forty people braved rainy weather on October 20 to visit Duck River Cemetery. Leading the tour was Old Lyme's historian, John Pfeiffer, who gave an engaging talk about the lives of ten people who are buried in the original section of the cemetery.

The oldest dated monument in the cemetery is the headstone of Renold Marvin, one of 32 original settlers; he is believed to have died in 1676. That gravestone likely marks the end of the most conservative period of Puritanism in Lyme. Most of the earliest settlers had been exclusively devoted to the "society" or congregation; they dressed alike, wore no personal adornment or jewelry, and had no private lives to speak of. People were considered insignificant as individuals even in death: they were interred reverently, but without attention to the details of their lives. As a result, there were no markers indicating the placement or significance of those deceased, and grave markers were not erected.

However, in the 1680s, prominent families began to engage stonecutters to make gravestones for their deceased relatives. Along with domestic architecture, gravestone design became increasingly personalized and embellished, as a way to acknowledge individual accomplishments. ○

Tales of local steamboats

Lymes' Senior Center was the site on November 9 of "Steamboats on the Connecticut River and Other Salty Stories," a lecture and slide presentations given by Steven Cryan and Captain Earl Maxfield. For the 50 attendees, highlights included personal anecdotes and answers to questions concerning shipping, commerce, and the river conditions through the years. The event was one in a continuing series of talks sponsored by the Society on topics that highlight the rich history of Old Lyme and its environs.

A native of Old Saybrook, Captain Maxfield is a graduate of King's Point Merchant Marine Academy, Class of 1950. He went to sea at age 15 and served in the Merchant Marine in World War II. He has been a New York City Harbor pilot, worked in the Great Lakes, and was employed for many years by Mobil Corporation. He continues to work as a freelancer.

Since graduating from Paier College of Arts in the early 1970s, Steve Cryan has been painting maritime and railroad subjects; his watercolors have won numerous awards. Over a dozen of his illustrations can be seen in the book *Where Rails Meet the Sea*. Since 1994 he has been the guest curator for the Connecticut River Museum's popular holiday train exhibit "Trains, Tracks and Trimmings." ○



Enhanced website prompts queries about Old Lyme history

Thanks to board member Jim Noyes, the Historical Society has forged a new relationship with the Old Lyme schools. Tammy Stearns, one of Jim's neighbors and the media coordinator for Regional District 18, responded to his request for help in updating our website. Tammy has enlisted high school junior Rachel Gaudio to work on the site as her community service project. Rachel attended the Duck River cemetery tour as a reporter and took photographs. Examples of her efforts may be found on the "Links" section of our website (www.olhsi.org).

The website is receiving an increasing number of requests for information about Old Lyme history, many of them from out-of-state relatives of former and current relatives. We have been able to provide information about the Pecks, one of the original families, for some descendants living in California, and we have responded to an inquiry from a woman in Japan regarding members of the Griswold family.

OLHSI publication highlights local life during 1930s Depression



Last summer marked the publication of Neri A. Clark's *Poverty Island*, a memoir of a young man's adventures and hard times on an island during the Great Depression. The 500-acre island, located off Griswold Point in Old Lyme, is now referred to as "Great Island" but was known as "Poverty Island" by local people in the 1930s. It is now a nature preserve. Dr. Clark, who died at age 88 last July, described the hardscrabble existence endured by his family in a town usually thought to have escaped the economic downturns of the 1930s.

Illustrations are by Catherine Christiano, an Old Lyme artist who graduated from the Lyme Academy College of Fine Arts and has exhibited locally.

Poverty Island is the first in a series of planned monographs that tell stories

about life in Old Lyme. The book is being sold at the Florence Griswold Museum and at an independent bookstore in Mystic. Along with note cards of the illustrations, it is also available at The Turning Page bookstore.



Volunteers needed!

OLHSI projects in the works

First settlers

The Archive Committee is continuing its long-term effort to trace the descendants of the original settlers who came to the Lyme plantation on the east side of the Connecticut River in 1667. Thanks to the research of Judy Tucker and Marilyn Davis, we now know that Joseph Hand's son, also named Joseph, enlisted at Hancock, Massachusetts, and served in the Revolutionary War. Jonathan Huntley, son of John Huntley, also served. Henry Champion, Jr., was a Brigadier General. Of the 34 original settlers, approximately 15 of the descendants fought in the Revolutionary War. Anyone wishing to join this effort is encouraged to call committee chair Alison Mitchell, at 434-3118.

1938 hurricane

Plans are under way to hold an exhibit in 2008 that will commemorate the 70th anniversary of the 1938 hurricane, which swept through Old Lyme and caused major property damage, especially along the beaches. We are looking for photographs, newspaper articles, letters, and personal accounts. The research is being headed by Sidney Mattoon and Muffie Whitley. You may contact them by mail or through our website (www.olhsi.org).

Old Lyme Historical Society, Inc.
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for news of...

the Society's next cemetery tour,
Old Lyme's Memorial Day parade,
and other coming events.

The Old Lyme Historical Society, Inc.

was established in 2005 to collect, preserve,
and interpret the rich history of Old Lyme,
Connecticut, and its environs for the benefit
of its residents and visitors.

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P.O. Box 352, Old Lyme, CT 06371
www.OLHSI.org
info@oldlymehistoricalsociety.org

Join us in appreciating Old Lyme's colorful history and sharing it with others!

Please make your tax-deductible check payable to the **Old Lyme
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