



The Acorn

NEWSLETTER OF THE LEDYARD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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February 2013

Leading Ladies at March Meeting Patty Carver to Highlight Pioneer Women

For our first program of 2013, we are pleased to partner with the Ledyard Library Friends to present the “second act” of Patty Carver’s popular “This Old Hat” series. This inventive and engaging event focuses on five noted American women, each of whom was the first to accomplish her ground-breaking achievement.

In the presentation, Dolley Madison tells her story of saving the Declaration of Independence during the War of 1812 and how she served as the “Hostess in the President’s House” for sixteen years. Elizabeth Blackwell was the first American woman to become a doctor. She tells the story of her first day at medical school. Nellie Bly was the first undercover reporter. She tells of the story of how she spent ten days in Blackwell’s Island, New York’s notorious madhouse. Belva Lockwood, in 1884, was the first woman to run for President. Belva Lockwood also sings and talks about Eleanor Roosevelt, the remarkable American woman who never wanted to be a president’s wife, but came to be known as “First Lady of the World.”

The meeting will take place on **Sunday afternoon, March 3rd; at 2:00 PM.** It will be held at the **Ledyard Senior Center, 12 Van Tassel Drive in Gales Ferry.** Please come and enjoy this historical event.

Ever Been Down on the Farm? April Meeting on Ledyard Agriculture

For its first century as an independent town, Ledyard was inarguably an agricultural community. Even after the arrival of the first major industry, Dow Chemical, in 1952, the *Connecticut State Register and Manual*, the well-known “blue book,” continued to list “agriculture” ahead of “manufacture of chemicals” as the principal industries. Not until 1969 did chemicals surge to the head of the list, but even in more recent years agrarian pursuits remained in our profile as “egg production, orchards and nurseries.”

If you’ve ever worked on a farm, in an orchard, or raised chickens, in Ledyard or anywhere else, please join us at the April membership meeting where we’ll reminisce about farming in Ledyard and talk about the farms, big and small, that remain. The evening will start with an illustrated lecture by town historian Kit Foster, after which residents old and new will share their memories and experiences of farming in Ledyard.

If you have photographs of Ledyard farming we’ll be very grateful if you can share them with us and posterity. Our “catch and release” program enables us to scan them on site so you can take them home. Join us at the **Ledyard Senior Center, 12 Van Tassel Drive, on Wednesday evening, April 10, at 7:00 PM.**

Mark Your Calendar

Sunday, March 3, 2013: Membership meeting, Leading Ladies, joint program with Ledyard Library Friends, Ledyard Senior Center, 2:00 PM.

Wednesday, March 13, 2013: Executive Board meeting, Gales Ferry Community Center, 7:00 PM.

Wednesday, April 10, 2013: Membership meeting, "Down on the Farm," Ledyard Senior Center, 7:00 PM.

Wednesday, May 8, 2013, Executive Board meeting, Gales Ferry Community Center, 7:00 PM.

Sunday, June 9, 2013, Annual meeting, "The War of 1813," Ledyard Senior Center, 2:00 PM.

Date to be announced: Mount Decatur Walk, details to follow..

REMEMBER, the Nathan Lester House is available for use by small groups of up to 35 people. Contact caretakers Lee Moore and Dan Weaver at 860-464-2040, or email nathanlesterhouse@yahoo.com for more information or for tours out of season.

The Acorn

MIGHTY OAKS FROM LITTLE ACORNS GROW

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The War of 1813 Commodore Decatur Comes to Gales Ferry

The year 2012 is over, so one might be excused for thinking the bicentennial celebrations for the War of 1812 have ended. Nothing could be farther from the truth, as Ledyard's part in the war didn't begin until June 1813.

That was the month that Commodore Stephen Decatur, commander of a small fleet in Long Island Sound, found himself avoiding British warships sighted near Block Island. The fleet sought refuge in New London Harbor, there to find themselves stuck. Failing to arouse much sympathy with citizens near the coast, the Commodore moved his ships upriver to Gales Ferry, where they would spend the winter and build fortifications on what we now call Mount Decatur.

Our annual meeting in June is an appropriate time to observe the bicentenary of Decatur's arrival on the mountain that now bears his name. Town historian Kit Foster will give an illustrated lecture, and, as a special treat, Tom Callinan, Connecticut's first Official Troubadour, will perform for us a song he has written about the Commodore's arrival in New London and winter at Gales Ferry. Callinan, now a resident of Norwich, has been working on an extensive program of diverse songs about the War, of which this new work forms a part.

Efforts are underway to organize a reprise of 2012's Mount Decatur Walk, to visit the remnants of the hastily-built fort. We expect this to take place soon after our meeting, through the cooperation of Styron LLC, Americas Styrenics, Dow Chemical, the Community Advisory Panel for the Allyn's Point Plant, and the Town of Ledyard. Further information on the event will appear in upcoming issues of *The Acorn*.

Highlights from the Executive Board Meeting, Nov. 14, 2012

The Board met at the Gales Ferry Community Center at 7:00 PM. Present were President Kit Foster, Vice President Vin Godino, Secretary Lee Moore, and committee chairs John Bolduc, Bill Fossum and Ellen Fossum.

- The Society will join with the Ledyard Library Friends for a program “Leading Ladies,” by Patty Carver, for the next membership meeting, to be held March 3rd.
- The board considered a proposal for a dues increase, compiled after comparing to those of other nearby historical societies. It was voted to present the new schedule at the annual meeting in June, to begin in July if adopted.
- It was decided to hold the February membership meeting on the 3rd of March, in order to accommodate the speaker’s schedule. This will also place the meeting in Women’s History month.
- Vacancies persist for treasurer, publicity and hospitality, being filled on an ad hoc basis by other officers.
- Curator Bill Fossum will be reviewing the Accessions List, with a view toward clarifying which items belong to the Society and which are on loan.

The above report has been condensed by the editor from the official minutes taken by Secretary Lee Moore.

Scholarship Applicants Sought

For the past three years the Society has awarded a \$1,000 scholarship to a graduating senior from Ledyard High School. The Society has voted to present a similar award to a graduate of the LHS Class of 2013.

To be eligible, a student must have plans to attain a college degree, and have participated in community or extracurricular activities. Applications may be obtained from the Ledyard High School Guidance Office, or downloaded from the Historical Society website:

<http://ledyardhistory.org/assets/LHS%20Scholarship%20Application.pdf>

The deadline is April 23, 2013.

Mystic Ships and the American Civil War Bill Peterson to Speak at Mystic River

The Mystic River Historical Society will present “Mystic Ships and the American Civil War” at their **March 27th** meeting. During the four years of the Civil War, Mystic-built and -owned ships were involved in nearly all the theaters of action. Nearly 80 vessels were built at Mystic during the war, including 57 steam vessels, and most participated in one way or another as gunboats, troop and supply transports or on blockade duty along the southern coast. Bill will discuss the careers of just a few of these vessels, including the ironclad *Galena*, the wooden gunboats *Varuna* and *Albatross* and even a few vessels that saw service in the Confederate cause. The meeting will take place at the **Mystic Congregational Church**, beginning at **7:30 PM**.

History in Small Helpings Pick Steel Mill Site East of Niantic Bay

WASHINGTON (AP)—A site on Long Island sound just east of Niantic Bay, Waterford, Conn., has been selected for New England's new steel mill, John E. Kelly, consulting engineer said today.

The government issued a certificate of necessity yesterday to the New England Steel Development Corp., for the \$250,000,000 plant. This would permit a rapid tax write off and is expect to help finance the plant.

Kelly, who made the original survey for the plants for the New England Council and the Federal Reserve bank of Boston, said negotiations for a 1,600-acre tract are being handled by Waldo E. Clarke of New London. Clarke is a director of the Steel Development Corp.

The site, Kelly said, is on a peninsular (sic) with approximately 8,000 feet of water front. He describes it as the "best site for a steel mill north of Florida."

He said the site is on a shelf of granite at almost water-level, requiring no piling or dredging.

He said there is a depth of 83 feet of water immediately off the site and that vessels carrying ore and coal would be required to make no turns in docking.

Kelly said a 3,000 foot wharf will be built parallel to the shore, with ore vessels using one end and coal vessels the other. He estimated the cost of the land at \$3,000,000.

Kelly said the property can be obtained by New London and Waterford under legislation passed by the Connecticut legislature.

He said property owners would be paid "a fair price" and that it is expected the towns then will sell or turn over the property to the steel development corporation at a nominal price.

The Day, Jan. 12, 1951

Saxon Attacks Steel Mill Plan as Economically Unsound

A report entitled The Facts of an Integrated Steel Mill in Connecticut, released today by O. Glenn Saxon, professor of economics at Yale university, strongly questions the fairness and consistency of the course pursued by the advocates of the mill in the Waterford-New London area. Saxon's report is described as "prepared without compensation as a public service at the request of the Old Black Point Association of Niantic."

Says Facts Suppressed

Professor Saxon says in the report that "the public has been given only half-truths, conflicting data and inconsistent statements" on the steel mill proposal, despite all of the "propaganda" offered by the promoters of the mill. He charges that the proponents have concealed unfavorable factors in the situation, but have not hesitated to use portions of an unfavorable engineering survey, wherever these extracts help their cause.

They suppressed, he says, the unfavorable report of the Econometric Institute, for which the New England Council paid \$25,000, because it did not meet their views on the need of a mill in New England. Among other things he quotes A.B. Homer, president of the Bethlehem Steel Corp., as having said that it is "inconceivable" that a private company could make a success of a New England steel mill.

The Day, Mar. 27, 1951

This controversy continued for another 17 months before the project was abandoned. The area planned for the Pittsburgh of the East was later developed as the Millstone nuclear power plant in the 1960s.

-Editor



It's the Cat's Meow

Our edition in the Ledyard series of "Cat's Meow" collectibles is available. A faithful likeness of the Nathan Lester House joins earlier landmarks in the set, the Bill Library, Gales Ferry Library and Ledyard Congregational Church.

Priced at \$18.50, tax included, the Lester House Meows are **available at both libraries, at the Nathan Lester House.** They make great holiday gifts!

Would You Like to Receive the Acorn via Email?

Printing and mailing *The Acorn* is one of the Society's largest annual expenses. Delivery of the newsletter via email would cut down on these substantially. A number of members have signed up for email delivery, which comes as a pdf file in advance of the regular mailing. To change from postal to email delivery just email a request to the editor at acorn@kitfoster.com. Be sure to include the email address to which you want the issues sent.

Pay your dues, recruit a member?

Our membership year runs nominally from Annual Meeting to Annual Meeting. **Dues for 2012-2013 are now due and payable.** If your dues are paid through 2013 (check your mailing label), please use this form to recruit a new member.

**Ledyard Historical Society
Membership Year 2012-2013**

Name _____	_____ Senior \$5.00
Address _____	_____ Senior Couple \$8.00
_____	_____ Individual \$10.00
Telephone _____	_____ Family \$15.00
E-mail address _____	_____ Patron \$25.00
Special interests or comments _____	_____ Life \$150.00
_____	_____ Life Couple \$200.00

Mail to: Ledyard Historical Society
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THE LEDYARD HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

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Who's Who at Ledyard Historical Society 2012-2013

President: Kit Foster	464-6466	Second District Schoolhouse:	
Vice President:		Bill Fossum	464-2575
Vin Godino	464-6314	Hospitality:	
Secretary: Lee Moore	572-7084	Information Technology:	
Treasurer: Vacancy		Andrea Buka	235-2387
Programs: Ellen Fossum	464-2575	Publications: Rusty Godino	464-6314
Membership: John Bolduc	464-0366	Board Member-at-Large	
Historian: Jan Bell	464-2061	Gail Milroy	
Newsletter: Kit Foster	464-6466		
Publicity: Vacancy			
Curator: Bill Fossum	464-2575		

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