



The Acorn

NEWSLETTER OF THE LEDYARD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Volume XVIII Number 1

www.ledyardhistory.org

December 2022

Yuletide Cheer! Gala Holiday Gathering December 4th



For many years the Society has held a Yuletide celebration as the holiday season approaches. Suspended during the COVID pandemic, the events resumed last year.

With the Nathan Lester House Subcommittee of the Ledyard Historic District Commission, we are pleased to announce the 2022 Yuletide celebration will be held **Sunday, December 4th, 2022**, from **1:00 to 4:00 PM**. There will be self-guided tours of the house and barns, as well as activities out of doors. The renowned **Ledyard High School Carolers** will sing for us at **2:00 PM** and refreshments will be available throughout the afternoon.

The Nathan Lester House and Farm Tool Museum is located at **153 Vinegar Hill Road in Gales Ferry, 06335**. Come enjoy the season, bring some holiday goodies to share, and invite a friend.



Alonzo Main is coming from Long Pond to the Yule Celebration, no matter the weather.

Please Welcome Sharon and Matt

There are new caretakers at the Nathan Lester House. The Historic District Commission recently appointed Mathew and Sharon Finlayson Primett to the position, and they have taken up residence in the caretakers' quarters.



Sharon expresses their delight in taking up the position: "We are excited to be the new caretakers at the Nathan Lester house. We love the special place the museum holds in

the community and are looking forward to meeting everyone at the yule open house! We can't wait for next spring and all of the many ways we can share this treasure of early American life."

You may find Sharon's name and face familiar. She has been active in our Society for many years, as her parents, Jennifer and Sean Finlayson have involved their family at many Society and community events. Chief among these have been the Old Fashioned Fourth interpretive demonstrations at the Lester House, where Sean has been prominent with his forge and smithing demonstrations.

Sharon comes with long experience in market gardening and sales, as well as demonstrating and workshops on organic gardening. Most recently she has been garden manager for Gourmet Galley in Stonington, as well as running her own business, Dirty Knees Farm in Uncasville. Matt has experience in residential sanitation and the food supply industry.

Come and meet them at the celebration.

We Have Not Been Idle A Gallup-Lester Reunion

Although the Lester House has not opened on a regular schedule this past season, the House Committee and volunteers have hosted some special events.

In August, the Gallup Family Association held their Annual Meeting and Reunion Picnic at the house and grounds. While the seat of the Gallup clans is on Gallup Hill, this year they chose to follow the story of Susanna Gallup (1756-1840), who married Nathan Lester in 1796, and moved into the house he had built three years earlier. Susanna was 40 when she married; he was 56 and they had but one child who survived, Hannah, born in 1798. Her only sibling, a brother, died within hours of his birth in December 1800.

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MIGHTY OAKS FROM LITTLE ACORNS GROW

Published up to five times a year by Ledyard Historical Society, Inc., P.O. Box 411, Ledyard, CT 06339
Kit Foster, editor, acorn@ledyardhistory.org
email acorn@ledyardhistory.org.
Items for inclusion should be submitted by the first of September, November, January, March or May.
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Hannah married Captain Adam Larrabee in 1817, and they had nine children. Their fifth son, William, moved to Iowa in 1853. He became a prosperous mill owner and ventured into politics. He was elected Governor of Iowa in 1885 and served two terms. The City of Ledyard, Iowa, was incorporated in 1895, honoring the Governor's Connecticut birthplace. As of the 2020 census, Ledyard, Iowa, had a population of 121 (amazing, but true).

Tales Out of School

On October 28th, the Lester House, barns and grounds were opened to 90 third grade students, their teachers, aides and parent chaperones from Gallup Hill School.

Students toured the house and barns, and then walked the trail to the remains of the Ledyard Oak and learned of its role as the site of Native American councils before the European settlers arrived.

Known over the years as the Great Oak, the Lester Oak, the Larrabee Oak and the Graves Oak, after successive owners of the property, the tree was estimated to be 400 years old and was 70 feet tall with a crown of 105 feet. The circumference of the trunk was 21 feet.

The tree and its immediate surroundings were given to the town in the 1960s by the Hill family, who inherited it from Mrs. Hill's parents, Dr. and Mrs. Charles Graves.

The Town was later able to purchase the Lester House and 100 surrounding acres. Unfortunately, by 1969 gypsy moth caterpillars had defoliated the tree in successive years and it was declared dead. Although still standing in the year 2000, the trunk has now returned to the earth. Only a mound of crumbly mold marks its location. Next to it, however, stands a new white oak, planted by the Sprigs & Twigs landscaping company in the legendary oak's memory.

Following the Lester House visit, the school buses departed for the Up-Down Sawmill, where students experienced the mill in action.

Ruby Watrous stands before the Great Oak in 1940





THE LEDYARD HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

Box 411
Ledyard, Connecticut 06339

Please help rejuvenate your Society!

Our membership year runs nominally from Annual Meeting to Annual Meeting. **Dues for 2022-2023 are now due and payable.** We did not collect dues during our COVID hiatus in 2020-2021. Please help us to resume our important work with your dues, your inspiration and your talents.

Ledyard Historical Society Membership Year 2021-2022

Name _____ Student \$5.00
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