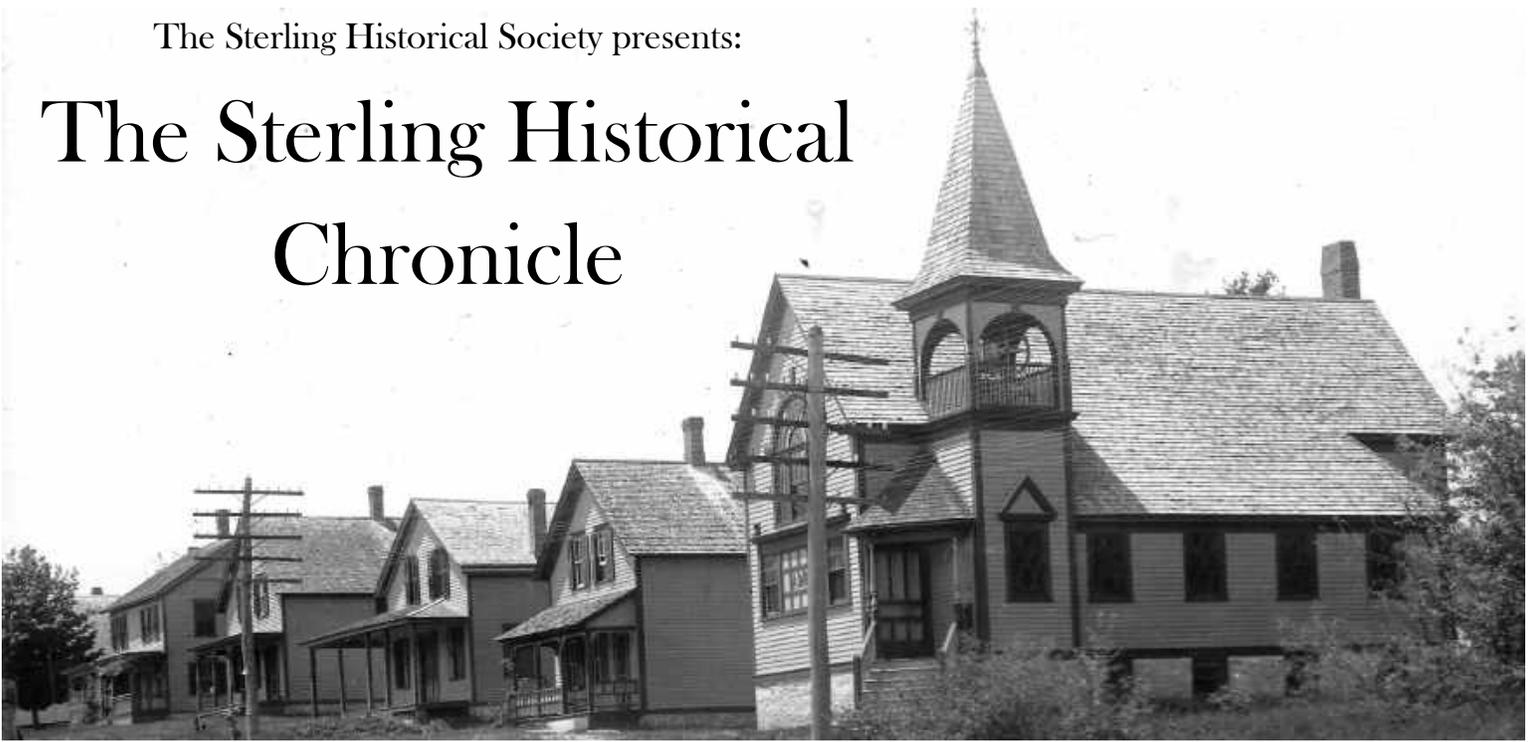


The Sterling Historical Society presents:

The Sterling Historical Chronicle



VOLUME 2

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Botanical Exhibits at the 37th Annual Grange Fair on Aug. 10.

Primitives for the generous donation of a hand-painted sign to raffle!

October 19 was our second time tabling at Farm Day and we sold a few more copies of [Sterling in Retrospect](#); speaking of which, please get your Christmas orders in as soon as possible as we may have to have more copies printed to meet demand.

Read on to learn more about our recent acquisitions, research projects, general historical society housekeeping, and more!

Dear Readers,

Our busy season here at the historical society has already drawn to a close. The Grange Fair, Family Day, and Farm Day have come and gone; we loved seeing everyone who came to talk with us during all of the different events! Now we move into the quiet season where I personally spend a lot of time bundled up indoors doing research on local history and genealogy.

We saw stunningly beautiful quilts at the Grange Fair on August 10 along with other exhibits, and Denise Coffey did a wonderful writeup of the event for the Courant Community. It was a lovely morning!

Family Day on September 14 was more quiet than we are used to (and we got rained on!) but overall still a success as we raised \$133 for our society. We shared the booth space with the Oneco UMC for the third year in a row and we thank them for allowing us to share the day with them. It is the biggest fundraising day of our year and requires a few months of planning to ensure all goes as smoothly as possible. Once again we thank Mill River



Our booth at Family Day on Sept. 14.

-Megan McGory-Gleason, President

Mighty Mike Stefanik

May 20, 1958– Sept. 15 2019



Getty Images



Mike Stefanik's last win at Thompson Speedway Motorsports Park at the 2013 Icebreaker, April 15, 2013 -contributed by Megan McGory-Gleason



-contributed by Brent Gleason

On September 15, Mike Stefanik crashed while testing his friend's Aerolite 103 plane after taking off from RICONN airport and passed away from his injuries later that evening. A nine-time NASCAR champion, Stefanik had retired from his 30+ year racing career and found a new passion for flying. He often flew out of RICONN in his own Quicksilver and could be seen on many beautiful days in the air over town.

Stefanik was said to be one of the greatest modified racing drivers in history and was a nominee for the NASCAR Hall of Fame in Charlotte, NC, which many suspect he will finally be inducted into in 2020.

This was a makeshift memorial placed at the small picnic area at the intersection of Rt. 14 and Rt. 14-A near RICONN on the day after the crash.

There are plans in the works for a more permanent memorial hopefully at a different location in the near future.

Neighborhood Change in Connecticut, 1934 to Present

RICONN used to be a dirt motorcycle race track more than 85 years ago.



MAGIC/UConn

We are looking for racing history pertaining to Sterling and Oneco! If you know of any racers who represented our town past and present (of all kinds), we would love to know their accomplishments and have copies of records, newspaper articles, photos, and so on, to add to our archives.

Recent Donations and Other News

There has been an uptick in material donations this fall and we are always amazed at the variety of items which arrive. Sometimes we receive items from other historical societies which they have deemed better suited for our archives rather than theirs (we occasionally trade photographs and ephemera with the Plainfield Historical Society) and we have begun to return the favor. As our new curator settles into his desk, we add piles of work for him to either add to our archive, or send on to another historical society. However, lately, the donations have been stunning; a never-before-seen photo of the Titus schoolhouse with descendants of the Titus family standing in front of it as well as some Titus family genealogy (the photo is in this newsletter! Read on to see). We also received, on the same day, a research project and an essay about the Finnish cultural heritage in our area as well as two photo albums of Sterling's Bicentennial celebration in 1994. One of the Finnish materials we received is titled *Our Stories, Our Places: Finnish Cultural Heritage in Connecticut* by Rachel Carley, Project Historian and sponsored by the Finnish American Heritage Society in Canterbury in conjunction with the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office.



Riverside Cemetery just over 105 years ago.

In October, we received even more exciting donations from Jim Mortimer including a photo of Orren Bates'



horse-drawn hearse which used to be taken as a prank on Halloween and left on an unsuspecting citizen's lawn to be found the following morning (left, the late Fred Stone's house can be seen in the background on the left and the other house on the right is approximately where the Oneco Post Office stands today). He also donated a U.S. Finishing Co. glass milk bottle for our showcase. The very large barn which housed the mill's dairy herd still stands today on the land of the late Earl Roberts, just off the sharp corner on Rt. 14.

Finally, in late October, we received Otis Remington's research on Sterling veterans and their burial places. He diligently researched as best he could, each veteran's military record and any other facts he felt were worthy of mention. We also received some cemetery records pertaining to Riverside Cemetery from the incorporation of the Riverside Cemetery Association in 1914. A photo from a small publication of the cemetery's by-laws is above.

In other news, on September 5, the Ye Olde Voluntown Pound received its 15 minutes of fame when it was featured in *Atlas Obscura* in Johnna Kaplan's article "New England Is Riddled With These Mysterious Stone Enclosures." On October 7, Megan McGory-Gleason gave a large presentation on the SHS' Cemetery Documentation Project to the Ekonk Grange for their monthly meeting. This presentation will be updated and given again at a later date to be determined.

We have been rearranging the SHS room to accommodate a "youth corner" for junior historians and tag-alongs; we have been in contact with SCS to hopefully forge a working relationship to incorporate some of our history into lesson plans. Who remembers when SMS used to have field trips around town to visit the different historical sites?

From the archives: Titus School



Titus School and Titus Family circa 1875. Samuel Nelson Titus is 8th from left (white beard, top hat). The September Gale of 1815 destroyed the Titus homestead and the Titus family moved into the schoolhouse while their home was rebuilt. Six weeks later, on October 26, 1815, Samuel Nelson Titus was born in the schoolhouse. His daughter, Lucy (Titus) Smith is 4th from left, likely holding granddaughter Julia Harris Smith.



Titus School, formerly located south of the intersection of Calvin French Road, Dixon Road, and Easy Street, as it was seen in 1931. It was no longer used after the new North Sterling School (a.k.a. New Titus School) was built. There is a stone monument marking the location of the old Titus School but no building remains.

-contributed by the late Edna Jordan

A Quick Historical Hike: Pharisee Rock Trail

By Megan McGory-Gleason

Just off of Cedar Swamp Road in the southern part of town just below Ekonk Hill lies the Pharisee Rock Trail, part of the Pachaug State Forest Trail System. Pharisee Rock, at an elevation of 584 feet, lies about a mile in the woods off an old cart path. It was visible from Rt. 49 up until the 1970's but no longer is.

Parking below Cedar Swamp Cemetery, the trail is now clearly marked with a white and blue blaze. At one point, the trail has become waterlogged at the Old Sap Mill Pond, and the path diverts down to a new wooden bridge over some small falls which run through the ruins of a mill.

Not far beyond this, the path turns right and ascends steeply to the top of the rock, where the barns of Molodich Farm can be seen in the distance when the leaves are down. It is said that American Indians used this location as a lookout and that it was a meetingplace for several tribes. The truth of this statement has not officially been researched.

As we walked this path, I couldn't help but wonder how accurate the accepted history actually is. Others have written that one of James Pike's "sapworks" mills is the ruins visible on the trail, yet research doesn't bear that out. I did some quick digging, both into Pharisee Rock and why it has that name, and also the mill ruins.

Pharisee Rock's first appearance by name seems to be a 1909 Norwich Bulletin article listing the names of all the farms on Ekonk, some of which were given names when the RFD started delivering mail out of Moosup in 1908. Pharisee Rock Farm was then the farm of Alfred Gallup, and this was the first currently known mention of Pharisee Rock. Ruth Gallup (a Gallup by marriage, as she was born on the neighboring Sayles farm) wrote in Sterling in Retrospect in 1976 that Pharisee Rock was named for the "tribe of Pharisees" from the Bible, but yet a 7-year-old Donald Gallup wrote to the Bulletin in 1921 that Pharisee Rock was named for a man by the name of Pharisee who fell to his death from the rocks. (There is not a vital record nor burial to corroborate this.)

Seems the mystery of Pharisee Rock remains a mystery for the time being.

Passing through the mill ruins, I couldn't help but feel this didn't look like a 19th century sap distillery. I know James Pike had a sap works near his home on Sterling Hill and there were others in town, but they are all clearly marked on an 1869 map of Sterling. There is nothing on that map in this location. I finally found a map from 1813 which shows all the different mills located in Sterling at that time, and in this location was a saw mill, as well as one on Porter Pond. By 1855, however, both saw mills were gone. Research continues!



Research Requests

These are requests which have been received by our society. We do our best to answer questions but perhaps our readers may be able to help, too! Please email sterlinghistoricalsocietyct@gmail.com with information if you are able to help.

- Information about Alexander Stewart (~1675-1742) and his wife, Margaret Dixon Stewart (d. 1729).
- Information about William Potter Young and also Potter's Factory on the Quanduck River.

Our Wishlist

- Does anyone have photos of Ms. Collins' and Mrs. Glaude's second grade class project from 1991-2 where the class made a 3-D replica of Oneco and Sterling?
- Vintage or Antique Sterling/Oneco/Ekonk postcards or real photo postcards (RPPCs), we just want to copy the images for our archives!

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 We have many resources available in our room for your own historical research including the C.E.T.A. Research papers compiled by a team of researchers in 1978 and led by Carolyn Bailey-Orr. This research, written by hand on several reams of yellow legal pads, has been organized and put into page protectors and binders by the SHS after we received the repository of information from the town hall. It took us five years of preparation to be able to present this project to the public! Much of the research was later compiled by Mrs. Orr into her book, *The Roads Lead Back to Glory* (1982), of which only 50 copies were originally printed. Another 50 were printed in 1991, and we are currently at work on scanning and digitizing her book in order to have it reprinted in the future.

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 Other resources we have include Frank Decker's life work of *The Pike Saga*, five large tomes of genealogical research written by Mr. Decker from the 70's through 1990. We will also be digitizing these and printing them so that they will be available to the public for the first time ever.

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 We also have The Hale Collection, some early Voluntown church records, and many hard to find & out of print books relating to all of eastern Connecticut. Come visit us and learn something new!

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Deadline for submissions: Feb. 1, 2020

Sterling Historical Society Officers:

President: Megan McGory Gleason

Vice President: Arlene Roberts

Secretary: Ruth Battey

Treasurer: Ron Marchesseault

Curator: Michael Gadoury

The Sterling Historical Society is located in Room 19 of the Sterling Municipal Building (the former Sterling Memorial School). Our mailing address is:

Sterling Historical Society

c/o Sterling Town Hall

P.O. Box 157

1183 Plainfield Pike

Oneco, CT 06373

Our meeting schedule is the **second Tuesday of every month except December** at 7PM unless otherwise announced. Our room is open from 6-8pm on that same second Tuesday, by appointment, and by chance.

Email: sterlinghistoricalsocietyct@gmail.com

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Facebook: <http://facebook.com/SterlingHistoricalSocietyct>

Instagram: [@sterlinghistoricalsocietyct](https://www.instagram.com/sterlinghistoricalsocietyct)