



Women's Suffrage Program & Dinner

June 25, 6:30pm, Lakeview Restaurant
*Honoring 100 years of Coventry women in
elected office – by Sue Way*

When asked if we would consider putting up a display in our Town Hall display case honoring the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution giving women the right to vote we responded, Of course we would! We were also asked if we knew who the first woman was to vote in Coventry. I was quite sure we did not know, and that there was probably no official record of that. The only possibility of finding that information would be a newspaper article or information passed down in someone's family.



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(Cont'd on Page 2)

Historic Coventry Village Walk

Saturday, April 25, 1pm

Join local historic house guy and Society member Steve Marshall for a walk around our historic village. Depart from Coventry Arts & Antiques, 1140 Main Street, at 1pm. Take a spring walk and get to know your local town history.

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

Please note that we are monitoring the Coronavirus situation and will make any decision about whether to postpone any activities when we can better assess the situation. For the latest information about any meeting or program changes watch your email or our Facebook page facebook.com/coventryhistory/.

Postponed

Stew and Story

The Caprilands Experience

Due to concerns about the Coronavirus and following advice about social distancing, we have postponed our annual March Stew and Story to a future date. Watch for the rescheduled program in the coming months.



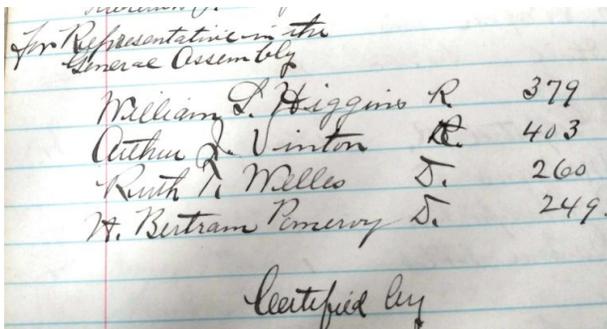
Mark Your Calendars

Apr 9	Executive Board Mtg, Strong Porter, 7pm
Apr 25	Historic Walk, Cov Arts & Antiques, 1pm
May 14	Executive Board Mtg, Strong Porter, 7pm
May 30-31	Tag Sale & Museum Opening, Strong Porter, 9am-3pm
Jun 11	Executive Board Mtg, Strong Porter, 7pm
Jun 21	Sundae on a Sunday, Brick School, 1-3 pm
Jun 25	Women's Suffrage Event, Lakeview Rest, 6:30pm

Strong-Porter Museum open Sundays 11-3 Jun-Oct
Brick School open 1st & 3rd Sundays 1-4 May-early Oct
Archives available Saturdays 10am - 1pm or by appointment (860-712-4278)

(Women's Suffrage, Cont'd.) A newspaper search so far has turned up the first woman to vote in Wethersfield, Hartford and Willimantic, the last 2 being the Mayors' wives. That in itself might be a clue. Coventry had a Board of Selectmen - perhaps one of their wives? I thought we certainly could research the first women to run for elected office. I sent a message to Joan Lewis, and she stated that women had served on the Board of Education long before Rose Fowler first ran for a seat on the Town Council and won in 1971, the year after the Town had changed to the Council/ Manager form of government. Joan first ran for the Board of Education that same year and won. She mentioned that Suzanne Brainard had served on the Board of Education before her.

Following that, I sent a message to John Brainard, Suzanne's son, and he could tell me that she had served on the Board and that his Grandmother, Ruth T. Welles, had served in the State Legislature. John called his brother Tom to get the particular facts. Ruth, grandmother of the Brainard boys and their Welles and Smith cousins, was actively involved with the suffrage organization led by Katharine Houghton Hepburn (mother of actress Katharine Hepburn) in Hartford. She first ran for the State Legislature in 1921 and lost to incumbents Dr William Higgins and Arthur Vinton. She ran again in 1942 and won and served one term, making her the first woman from Coventry to run for and serve in State elected office.



Annual Meeting Records, Town of Coventry



Caprilands Tag Sale & Display

**Strong Porter House, 2382 South Street
Sat & Sun May 30-31 9am-3pm**

The Coventry Historical Society is happy to announce we will be hosting a second Caprilands tag sale on May 30th & 31st that will include many new items that have been discovered since the September tag sale.



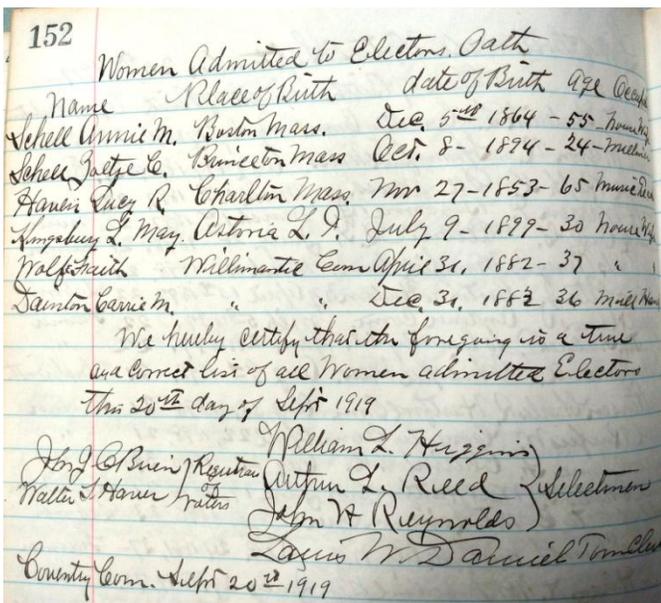
The sale will take place on the grounds of the Strong Porter Museum, 2382 South Street, from 9am-3pm.

Items for sale include many of Adema Simmons' personal collection of books and records, and a variety of Caprilands kitchenware and household items.

Visitors will also have an opportunity to view the Caprilands exhibit on display in the Strong Porter House. Please join us as we celebrate a new season at the Strong Porter Museum.

(Women’s Suffrage, Cont’d.) The State of Connecticut was one of several states that passed a law allowing women to vote in local school-related elections. Connecticut’s law was passed in 1893, and Mrs. Lydia A. Mason was elected to the Board of School Visitors in 1895, and would therefore seem to be the first woman elected to public office in Coventry. She served until 1898, when Mrs. Ellen I. Topliff was elected to her seat. Linda E. Stanley replaced Ellen Topliff in 1904 in what had apparently become the woman’s seat on the five member Board of School Visitors. Linda Stanley served until 1929, setting an example of 26 years of service that would be difficult to beat. Ruth Welles also ran for the Board of School Visitors in 1921 and won, breaking the one woman seat rule that had prevailed. Thereafter there were often two or more women on that Board.

In the course of doing research in the reports of annual town meetings, which can be found in the Town Clerk’s office, I came across a list of six women who registered to vote in October 1919.



Annual Meeting Records, Town of Coventry

The 19th Amendment had passed in the Congress by then, but was not ratified until August 18, 1920. I believe these six women can be said to be

the first women to register to vote in Coventry. The following October there is a list of some 300 women who registered, but they are listed alphabetically so it’s not possible to determine who was first in line. The six who registered the year before were clearly the first in line.

We will make copies of that list of 300 plus women who were registered to vote in 1920 to display at our Women’s Suffrage Program and Dinner honoring 100 years of Coventry women in elected office, scheduled for June 25th at 6:30 at Lakeview Restaurant, 50 Lake Street, Coventry. Our speaker will be Mary Ann Handley, retired State Senator and History Professor from Manchester, who worked with Joan Lewis when she served in the State Legislature. Her presentation will be “The Road to the 19th Amendment”.

If you’re doing the math as I was and have lived in town for awhile you may realize that Joan has served on the Board of Education, the Town Council or in the State Legislature for most of the last 50 years! Our list of women who have served the town in elected office is long and continues to grow. Please join us to celebrate.

Thursday, June 25 6:30pm
Lakeview Restaurant
Guest Speaker Mary Ann Handley
–The Fight for Women’s Suffrage
Entertainment by Manchester Troubadour Bill Ludwig



Join us on Thursday, June 25, at the Lakeview Restaurant, for a presentation by Mary Ann Handley, former State Senator from Manchester, as she shares the story of the fight for women’s suffrage. Bill Ludwig, Manchester’s Troubadour, will entertain us with music from the 1920s. We will also be honoring the women from Coventry who have served in elected public office over the last 100 years. Buffet dinner will be served at Lakeview Restaurant. Tickets will be sold in advance (email info@ctcoventryhistoricalsociety.org) or at the door. Cost: \$30.00 per person. Event begins at 6:30 pm.

Archivist's Corner – by Sue Way

We received an anonymous donation through the mail last winter from Hebron that included these two photos, perhaps both taken at Dr. William Higgins 2nd marriage celebration. One picture shows Higgins and his bride.



The other photo includes (left to right) Lew Phillips-postmaster, Reginald Storrs Carpenter, Dr. Higgins, and Harold Carpenter (Reginald's brother). Bill Jobbagy mentioned upon seeing these photos that Reginald Carpenter and his wife lived on Wall St. and sat down with him for an afternoon around 2003 when Bill was writing his The History of Coventry, Connecticut, to share their memories. The Carpenter family is included in the 1940 US Census record on page 5.



We are hoping to make available to members and Strong Porter visitors copies of Bill's book this year. The above mentioned donation also included a nice copy of Images of America Coventry. As the Archives already has 2 copies of this title, we will put the donated copy on our sale table for \$12. Proceeds will fund more archival supplies.

Shop Amazon

Log on to www.smile.amazon.com, select Coventry Historical Society, Coventry, CT, as your preferred charity, and a portion of the cost of your purchases will be donated to us.



Sundae on a Sunday

Brick School House

1095 Merrow Road

Sunday, June 21, 1-3pm

Our annual Father's Day Ice Cream Social has been offering free sundaes to dads for over a decade! A donation of \$3 requested for all others.

Friends of Strong

The maintenance committee has been busy with projects around our properties. A riser was installed on the septic tank to make



maintenance easier. As planned, new cabinets, countertop and a sink were installed in our tenant's kitchen and several plumbing issues were addressed. Soon we hope to repair a rotted corner post on the barn and make other improvements. Typical spring projects involve raking and general cleanup and will begin shortly at Strong Porter and the Brick School. Contact Jim Wicks (860-874-2346 jjwicks@gmail.com) or Steve Marshall (historichouseguy@gmail.com) for more info or to volunteer.

