Old Lyme Historical Society

Walking Tour



This self-guided Lyme Street walking tour is a publication of the Old Lyme Historical Society, founded in 2005 to collect, preserve, interpret and promote the rich history of Old Lyme and its environs for the benefit of residents and visitors. New members are always welcome. Please visit OLHSI.org to learn more about the Society, our events, publications, and membership.

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Cover illustration by Mary Lohman

Lyme Street - East Side - South of I-95



1 McCurdy Road - Marvin-Griffin House - c. 1820
Sometime around 1820, the Marvin family had the main section of this house precut and barged down to Old Lyme, replacing a 17th Century structure built by Reinhold Marvin, a drafter of the 1665 "Loving Parting" between Saybrook and Lyme. Stephen J. Lord purchased the house in 1828, adding the wings and ionic columns circa 1842. His daughter, Gertrude married Dr. Edward Griffin, who kept an office and apothecary in the house until the late 19th Century. It remained in the Griffin family until the 1990's, and since 1997 has been the rectory of Christ the King RC Church.

1 Lyme Street - McCurdy House - c. 1700



In 1754, merchant John McCurdy purchased this 4-room colonial from Amos Tinker, and commissioned numerous renovations and additions. McCurdy was a staunch patriot during the Revolution, and the house served as General Washington's headquarters on April 10, 1776. General Lafayette stayed here in 1778 (his troops were quartered on the Green) and visited again in 1824. In the 1860's, Judge Charles J. McCurdy and his daughter Evelyn moved in and made further renovations, including the arch-style windows. Judge McCurdy was Chief Justice of the Connecticut Supreme Court, Lieutenant Governor, and US Chargé d'Affaires in Vienna.



5 Lyme Street - Captain Samuel Mather House - 1790
This 3 1/2 story gambrel style house was built for wealthy merchant Captain Samuel Mather, a trader with the West Indies. In 1880 it was deeded to the First Congregational Church, and serves as the church Parsonage to this day. The paneled doorway with transom light above and clapboarding that graduates in width from the bottom to the top, are considered outstanding examples of this Colonial type.

9 Lyme Street - "Boxwood" - 1842



Built for merchant Richard Sill Griswold in 1842, this classic Greek Revival features Ionic fluted columns and the balanced architecture that was the height of mid-19th century style. In 1890, the roof and cupola were raised and the third story added to accommodate Mrs. Griswold's boarding school for girls. In 1904, Boxwood became a hotel for summer visitors to Old Lyme, including Woodrow Wilson and his wife, artist Ellen Axson Wilson, who studied painting at Florence Griswold's. In 1943, Boxwood was the site of the melodramatic, still-unsolved "pickle murder". In 1958, it was converted to apartments, then became Boxwood condominiums in 1985.



25 Lyme Street - JA Rowland General Store - 1867
From 1867 to 1948 the J. A. Rowland Hardware Store occupied this building. In 1948 it was sold to Smith's Hardware. Antiques dealer Richard T. French purchased it in 1975, then in 1976 it became the Country Duffer clothing store. Since 1988, this building has housed The Cooley Gallery, renowned art dealers and appraisers.



31 Lyme Street - Capt. Daniel Chadwick House c. 1830

Captain Daniel Chadwick, a famed packet ship captain of the Black X Line, was called "Admiral of the Fleet", and praised for his temperance principles aboard ship. He commissioned this classical edifice, with its flat roof and Captain's Walk, and retired here in 1853, after thirty years on the high seas. Captain Chadwick died tragically in 1855, and after the Civil War the house became a boys' boarding school. The two second story front rooms were added in 1905.

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2 Library Lane - Old Lyme Phoebe Griffin Noyes Library 1898



The Library was commissioned by Charles Ludington to honor his mother-in-law, teacher and artist Phoebe Griffin Noyes, who was born at this site. Designed by architects Stephenson and Greene, the Colonial Revival building features many classical details such as Palladian windows and a colonnaded front portico. The Library hosted the Lyme Art Colony's annual exhibition until 1921. The Evelyn McCurdy-Salisbury wing was added in 1925 and a substantial addition was completed in 1994. The Library is slated for a full interior renovation in 2019.



45 Lyme Street -Catherine & Simon Whipp House - c. 1837

A gambrel-roofed cape set perpendicular to the street, it was formerly the kitchen ell of the Captain Samuel Mather House. (See 5 Lyme Street) The house was moved here in 1837 by the Chadwick family. Simon Whipp, a tailor, purchased the property in 1850.

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49 Lyme Street Center School 1934



The earlier school building on this site was razed in 1934 to make way for the Center School. Built as a WPA project using granite from a local quarry, it currently houses Region 18's preschool program and district offices.



55 Lyme Street - Old Lyme Historical Society - 1910

The Old Lyme Gun Club building was purchased by the Old Lyme Grange #162 and moved from Maple Avenue to its current location in 1928. It served as the Grange Hall until 2014. It is currently the home of the Old Lyme Historical Society.

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75 Lyme Street - 1844



This classic example of "Gothic Cottage" architecture was designed by architects Alexander Jackson Davis and Andrew Jackson Downing. The style features long windows for landscape views, outdoor porches and ornate "gingerbread-style" trim.

Lyme Street - East Side - *North of I-95*

85 Lyme Street - Old Lyme Inn



There have been two Old Lyme Inns in town. The first was located on Ferry Road, and was torn down and replaced by Lyme Regis, now a group of condominiums. The property upon which the current inn stands was a 300-acre working farm originally owned by David Chadwick, and then by the Champlain family who built this two-story home circa 1856. In the late 1950's when the Connecticut Turnpike was constructed, the Champlain house was sold and became the Barbizon Oak Inn. In 1965 the inn, then run as the Elegante Restaurant, was severely damaged by fire. Since then it has had several owners, and became known as the Old Lyme Inn. Current owners Ken & Chris Kitchings completed a substantial renovation and restoration in 2012, featuring attractively-furnished rooms, and an updated restaurant. The Kitchings' also opened a club, "The Side Door," showcasing top jazz performers.



105 Lyme Street

This house was part of a large tract of land along the Lieutenant River once owned by the Noyes family. The area was known as "Noyestown". The residence built for Dr. Richard Noyes circa 1814, replaced an earlier Noyes home on site. This classic Federal design remained in the Noyes family into the late 1930's. From 1939 to 1946 the house was used as the Madison Military Academy, a college preparatory school for boys. It then became the White Farms Inn and was a popular restaurant known for its fine dining. Since then it has been a private residence.

1 Sill Lane - Peck Tavern circa 1680



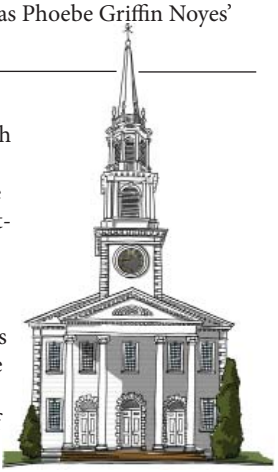
Originally built by Samuel Tinker, the oldest part of the building likely dates to 1680, with substantial renovations in the 1730s and 1760s made by the Peck family who kept a tavern there until the 1800s. Merchant and patriot John McCurdy ran a store there in the 1750s, and the tavern was known as a site for handing out clothing, food and supplies during the Revolutionary War. An unusual feature of the tavern is the second-floor ballroom, which may be divided into smaller rooms via an ingenious partition swung down from the ceiling. Local legend says that Washington and/or Lafayette may have danced upon this floor. The house remained in the Peck family until 1904. In the 1930s, it was home to the Old Lyme Guild, a non-profit arts and crafts organization. It is now a private residence.

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Lyme Street - West Side - South of I-95



2 Lyme Street - Charles Ludington House - 1893
The current building was designed by architect Henry R. Marshall for the Charles Ludington family. Mr. Marshall was inspired by the Centennial Exhibition of 1876. This site formerly housed the Parsons' Tavern, a meeting place for Lyme's Sons of Liberty, which later served as Phoebe Griffin Noyes' school in the 1830s.



2 Ferry Road - First Congregational Church - 1910
This historic church dates to 1907, but the congregation is much older, dating to c. 1665 with Moses Noyes as its first minister. The first three meetinghouses were located atop Meetinghouse Hill to prevent possible Indian ambushes. When the third meeting house was destroyed by lightning in 1815, a new one was commissioned at the present site, designed by Samuel Belcher, and completed in 1817. Belcher's style was strongly influenced by Sir Christopher Wren whose use of Ionic columns is perhaps best exemplified by St. Paul's Cathedral in London. In 1907, the church was destroyed by a "fire of suspicious origin", and the congregation asked architect Ernest Greene to build a fireproof replica of Belcher's design, which was completed in 1910.



6 Lyme Street - Stephen Peck House - 1860
This house contains a hidden stairway leading to two separate attic rooms. Listed on Connecticut's Freedom Trail, it was likely a stop on the Underground Railroad. In the mid-19th century the "Corner Store" stood on the south-east corner. Legend has it that in 1840 a stock of cannon balls, intended for use against the British in the War of 1812, was found in the store's cellar. The store was a recruiting office and news center during the Civil War, and sold merchandise through the 1940s.

8 Lyme Street - c. 1928
Woodward Griswold, who owned the adjoining property, ordered a nine-room prefabricated mail order kit house from Sears Roebuck. The "Lexington" model was advertised as "true Colonial in type" and "already cut and fitted" and cost $4,472, one of the company's higher-priced designs.





10 Lyme Street - The Village Shops - 1929
Francis Roche built this as a store for Woodward ("Woodie") Griswold. Its roofline complemented the neighboring Masonic Hall. It opened as the new IGA grocery, and was the first in town to sell Birds Eye frozen foods. Woodie had Roche add a structure on the right for his wife Clara Griswold's Toy Museum. On the left was James' Pharmacy run by the brother of Anna James, first African American female pharmacist in Connecticut. In the mid-twentieth century this commercial building was the site of many stores: The Yankee Peddler, a knitting shop in the tiny toy museum space, Emily Brown's Dress Shop, a flower shop, and several artist studios and galleries.



20 Lyme Street - Masonic Hall - c. 1921
The Masonic Lodge Hall (now a private residence) was built on the site of the former Lyme Academy which was destroyed by fire in 1885. Part of the old town hall was hauled down Lyme Street to become the ground floor which opened as the new post office in 1922. The second floor was the meeting place of Pythagoras Lodge of Free & Accepted Masons. The building was designed by Harry Griswold, brother of Woodie Griswold. The *New Era* newspaper praised its classical colonial style and noted that the postmaster was busy explaining the modern gadgetry such as post office boxes to his patrons.

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22 Lyme Street - Baptist Church - c. 1843
For the sum of $120, a tract of land "8 rods in length from east to west and 5 rods in length from north to south was purchased by the Baptist Society upon which a meeting house was erected" in 1843. In 1926, it was sold to the Episcopal Diocese with the restriction that it never be sold to a Catholic Church. In 1937, with the Baptist Society agreeing to lift the restriction, the Episcopals sold the church to Christ the King Catholic Church for $1.00. In 2007 it was sold as a private residence, Christ the King having built a modern church off McCurdy Road.





24/26 Lyme Street - c. 1837
Originally one lot, 26 Lyme Street was listed as 1/4 acre that included a house and a barn. By 1850 it was owned by David Morley, a grandson of Hannah Griswold, who operated a carriage and cabinet shop. Morley also made coffins. Early in the 20th century, a building was erected on 24 Lyme Street with a common water supply. In 1929, a grocery store known as the Economy Store was opened. Liquor was not sold as it was next door to a church. From 1947-1971 it was operated successfully by William Spencer as Spencer's Market. In 1962 the property was divided into two parcels, and in 1971 Spencer's widow sold 24 and 26 to Richard French, an antiques dealer.

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32 Lyme Street - Joseph Peck House - 1699
This house was built by Joseph Peck on the site of the present Florence Griswold Museum. In 1816 it was sold to Jonathan Tinker who moved it to its present location on sleigh runners pulled by oxen. It has had an illustrious history having been owned in the 1870s by Morrison Remick Waite, Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. One of his frequent summer visitors was President Rutherford Hayes. They often attended the 1st Congregational Church together down Lyme Street. In the 20th century, the house was owned in turn by the Beckwith, Dougherty, Burr, and McDermott families.



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52 Lyme Street – Memorial Town Hall - 1921
After the original structure was relocated to become the Masonic Hall (see 20 Lyme St.) a new building was erected in 1921. The Memorial Town Hall (named in honor of the soldiers of the Great War) remained as originally built until its renovation and expansion in 2008. The building now boasts a large hall for town meetings.



54 Lyme Street - 1726



WPA records date this house to 1726, when it was owned by the Avery family. It is more familiarly known as the Justin Smith House, as the Smiths were thought to have owned it for over 150 years. A small colonial, its gambrel roof, central chimney and tidy proportions bear witness to its early 18th century provenance.



60 Lyme Street - Bugbee's Store - 1887

Known for many years as "Bugbee's Store," James Bugbee built a house next to a storage building and later remodeled it into his store in 1889. He deeded the store to his daughter and granddaughters and lived out his life in the house abutting the store. In subsequent years it was owned by various Old Lyme families including Elizabeth Griswold Whitley and her husband, Joseph.

64/68 Lyme Street - 1890



Site of Old Lyme's first post office, it was also a general store operated by W. E. Clark, and a favorite place to exchange village news while awaiting twice daily mailbags to arrive. Clark's son Clarence delivered mail in a horse-drawn carriage and daughter, Helen, sorted the mail as assistant postmistress. The next shop owner was Alice Rogers (1934-1973), who ran a popular giftshop, selling cards, toys, and books as well as a busy lending library.



76 Lyme Street - Amos Bacon House -1850

Built for sea captain Amos Bacon in 1850, and subsequently occupied by Charles Ebert and his wife, Mary Roberts Ebert, from 1919-1959. The Eberts were American Impressionist painters and members of the Old Lyme Art Colony. The elegant front portico, prominent eaves, fireplaces, wide cornices, and flat roof exemplify the Italianate style popular in the 1840s. The property sits on a double lot, and springtime visitors are greeted by a profusion of daffodils.

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78 Lyme Street - Deming /Avery House - 1726



One of the oldest houses on the street, this residence is known to old-timers as the Deming-Avery house. It has had many additions/alterations over the years well into the 20th century. However, it clearly exemplifies the early Colonial style with its simple yet symmetrical facade. The gambrel roof uses shorter timbers while increasing headroom, and the central chimney provides warmth to all parts of the house. A Royalist embroidery sampler was found when the fireplace was being repaired. Father and son U.S. senators Thomas and Chris Dodd have both lived in the house, as well as artist George Bogert.



84 Lyme Street - John Sill House - 1817

Famed architect Samuel Belcher built this house for newly-wed John Sill, a merchant with an aversion to the customs service. The house features a hidden closet in an upstairs cupboard where Captain Sill was said to have hidden smuggled silks, and other valuable goods. Legend has it that when Sill was arrested and held in New Haven, he would steal away at night to meet his wife Abby. He rode to Saybrook where his cousin would row him across the river. After a goodnight kiss, Sill would be rowed back, and return to prison before dawn. The house features a 25-foot hall and Palladian windows. A front porch was replaced by curving staircases in the 20th Century.

90 Lyme Street - Lyme Art Association



The Lyme Art Association has roots going back to 1901, and has flourished at this location since 1921. Charles A. Platt (1861-1933), a prominent American artist, landscape designer and gardener as well as a noted architect, designed the building with its creative natural lighted main gallery. Platt also designed among other buildings, the Freer Gallery in Washington, D.C., and the Lyman Allyn Museum in New London, CT. The Association boasts a member roster of more than a thousand professional and developing artists who have the opportunity to display their work in juried exhibitions throughout the year. In addition, affordable art classes, workshops, and lectures are offered to the public. Open 10 am to 5 pm, Wednesday through Sunday.



96 Lyme Street - Florence Griswold Museum

The Florence Griswold house was built by William Noyes Jr. in 1817, incorporating the kitchen of an earlier house. The house was designed by Samuel Belcher, the architect who designed the First Congregational Church of Old Lyme and the Captain John Sill house. The late Georgian façade is embellished with a tall portico, deep cornices, a central Palladian window, and flanking corner quoins.

Captain Robert Griswold purchased the house in 1841, and at the turn of the 20th century his daughter Florence transformed this family home into a boarding house for artists such as Henry Ward Ranger, Willard Metcalf, and Childe Hassam. The house is now part of the Florence Griswold Museum, considered "The Home of American Impressionism". Open 10 am to 5 pm, Tuesday through Saturday, 1-5pm Sunday.

100 Lyme Street - The Bee & Thistle Inn



Built in 1756 as a family residence by Judge William Noyes. The house was originally situated closer to the road. Architectural features include a gambrel roof, and nine windows across the front of the house including the two-story Palladian entryway. At the turn of the 20th century, the Hodgson family lovingly restored the house and added a sunken garden and porches on both sides. It was later sold to Henrietta Greenleaf Lindsay who transformed the house into an inn sometime in the 1940's upon the advice of her good friend, Broadway actress Elsie Ferguson. The name and logo were inspired by the Ferguson clan emblem. The inn is currently owned and operated by David Rufo.

Illustrations by Edie Twining Design

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