River & Sound

Old Lyme Historical Society, Inc.
*"The history of Old Lyme – the people of Old Lyme"*

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# Joseph Rogers: A Patriot's Sacrifice

*The March to Valley Forge, December 19, 1777*
William Brooke Thomas Trego, 1883

AMERICA 250

Would you risk everything for a cause greater than yourself? Would you leave behind your family, your home, and the life you built—knowing you may never return—all in the name of freedom? In 1775, at 55 years old, Joseph Rogers did just that. At an age when most men would have stayed behind, he chose to fight, to stand against tyranny, and to help build a nation rooted in the ideals of democracy. Today, as we face new challenges to that same democracy, the story of Lyme resident Joseph Rogers reminds us that courage is not just found on the battlefield—it is found in the choices we make every day to defend what is right.

Joseph Rogers was born on August 31, 1719 in Lyme, Connecticut to Alice Champion and Jonathan R. Rogers. He was a descendant of Thomas Rogers, a Mayflower passenger, and Matthew Griswold, the first settler of Lyme. On March 15, 1743, at the age of 23, Joseph married Diadama Beckwith, and together, they raised seven children along the Connecticut shoreline.

In 1775 Joseph was 55 years old—a father, landowner, and established community member. Unlike younger recruits, he was well past the typical age for military service. Yet, when war broke out, he chose to fight for independence, enlisting in Colonel Samuel Holden Parsons' 6th Connecticut Regiment, formed in April–May 1775 from volunteers across New London, Hartford, and present-day Middlesex Counties. Assigned to Captain Ely's Company (mostly men from Lyme), Joseph's journey into war had begun.

Joseph's regiment initially performed local defense duties in New London, but by June 17, 1775, they received orders to march to Boston, joining General Spencer's Brigade in Roxbury. There, he and his fellow soldiers took part in the Siege of Boston, a pivotal early campaign aimed at forcing the British out of the city. The regiment spent months fortifying positions, skirmishing with British forces, and enduring the hardships of an extended siege. By December 10, 1775, Joseph's first term of service ended, and he returned home—but his role in the Revolution was far from over.

## The Battle of Germantown (October 4, 1777)

As the war escalated, Joseph once again answered the call. By 1777, he had joined the Continental Army, fighting in one of its boldest engagements—the Battle of Germantown, fought outside Philadelphia on October 4, 1777.

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*The mission of the Old Lyme Historical Society is to collect, preserve, interpret and promote the rich history of Old Lyme and its environs for the benefit of residents and visitors.*



River&Sound
NEWSLETTER

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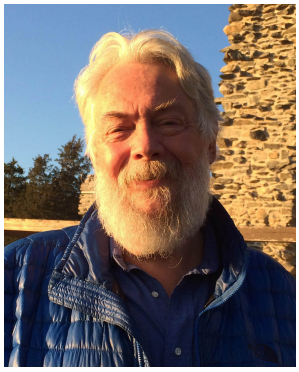
# From the Chair



Dear Members,

Ned Pfeiffer's April talk on Native American Sites in Old Lyme was very well attended, as was his guided walk at Watch Rock. Our thanks to Dr. Pfeiffer, and to the Old Lyme Land Trust for co-hosting his very informative presentation.

OLHSI's Annual Meeting (see below) is open to all. Following a brief business meeting, there will be refreshments, hors d'oeuvres, and a Trivia match on Old Lyme History. Bring your A game and join in, or just enjoy the spectacle.

Make Music Day is a world-wide celebration of live music on the summer solstice (June 21), and Lyme Street will host a wide range of local musicians and musical groups. OLHSI will once again mount a percussion array that's always a hit with our younger neighbors.

See our booth at Old Lyme's Midsummer Festival (July 26). Join us on the Town Green the next day for free ice cream while you listen to a concert by the Town Band. It is the Band's 50th anniversary this year, and OLHSI is proud to be a co-sponsor of this event.

On August 18th, Jim Lampos will talk about the historic views of Old Lyme preserved in postcards, the IM and Instagram of their day. The Historical Society has an extensive collection, and Mr. Lampos is well versed in local history, particularly that of the beach communities, a favorite subject of twentieth-century postcards.

As always, please see our web site for details of these and other Old Lyme Historical Society events. Thank you for your support!

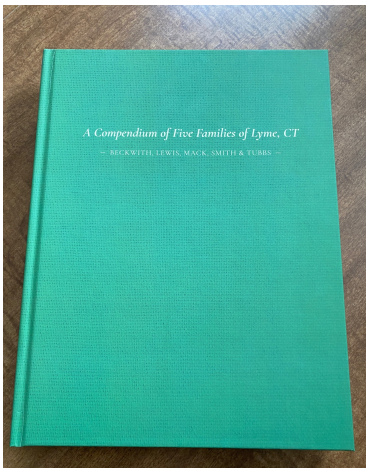
*– Mark Terwilliger, Chair*
*Old Lyme Historical Society, Inc.*

## Notice of Annual Meeting

The Old Lyme Historical Society, Inc. will hold its Annual Meeting at 55 Lyme Street, Old Lyme, CT on Monday, June 9, 2025 at 6:00 pm. All are welcome. The agenda includes the election of officers for the coming year, installation of new Trustees to the Board, and the presentation of the Society's scholarship and volunteer recognition awards. The Carol Noyes Winters Scholarship is available to high school students of Lyme and Old Lyme going on to study history in college. The James Brewster Noyes Award is given each year for outstanding service to OLHSI in its mission to collect, preserve, interpret and promote the rich history of Old Lyme. Light hors d'oeuvres and refreshments will be served after the business meeting. After the business meeting, there will be a Trivia contest on Old Lyme History, open to all comers.

# From the Archives

The Old Lyme Historical Society recently received a very large (9ft x 5ft) antique 48-star American flag, made of wool with hand-appliqued cotton stars. This flag is very interesting, as the 48th star may have been added later, or may just be a reinforcement or repair. Research is ongoing.




Photographs by Michaelle Pearson

We also received a copy of *A Compendium of Five Families of Lyme, Connecticut* from author Jonathan Twiss. The book features detailed information about the Beckwith, Lewis, Mack, Smith, and Tubbs families, including numerous color photographs of gravestones and home sites. Twiss noted that he had spent 50 years researching this project in libraries, court houses, cemeteries, and archives. The book is available for purchase from the author at jptwiss@comcast.net.

The Old Lyme Historical Society is seeking donations of memorabilia from 1776, 1876, or 1976 for use in exhibits celebrating America 250 in 2026. If you have items to donate, please send an email to info@oldlymehistorical.org

The archives are open Mondays from 9am-1pm, and Thursdays from 11am-2pm. Entrance is at the rear of the building.

*– Michaelle Pearson & Maryy Ellen Jewett*
*Archives Co-Chairs*

# Upcoming Events

## OLHSI 20th Annual Meeting

**Monday, June 9th (6:00 p.m.)**

The Old Lyme Historical Society, Inc. will hold its 20th Annual Meeting at 55 Lyme Street in Old Lyme. All members are welcome.

## Make Music Day

**Saturday June, 21st**
**(5:00 –7:00 p.m.)**

Every Summer Solstice you will find Lyme Street alive with local residents strolling the street and listening to a variety of music genres including folk, pop, and American.

## Midsummer Festival

**Saturday July, 26th**
**(9:00 a.m. –3:00 p.m.)**

Old Lyme's celebration of art, music, food and family fun is back! Events will include a car show, local vendors and artists, a 5K run, live music, food trucks, family-friendly activities, and much more.

## Old Lyme Town Band & Ice Cream Social

**Sunday July, 27th**
**(4 p.m. – 6 p.m.)**
**Town Green, Old Lyme**

Complimentary Ice Cream during the concert from Hallmark Ice Cream thanks to our generous sponsors.

## *Having a Swell Time–*

**Historic Postcards from Old Lyme**
**Monday, August, 18th**
**(7:00 p.m.)**
*Presented by Jim Lampos*

# Joseph Rogers: A Patriot's Sacrifice

*(Continued from page 1)*

Washington launched an attack by four separate columns, seeking to surround a significant part of the British army guarding their newly-captured city of Philadelphia. The plan was too complex. Fog and poor communications meant some forces went astray and others arrived piecemeal, but fighting was fierce. The British failed to capitalize on their victory and allowed Washington's forces to regroup. Joseph was among the soldiers who endured the brutal fighting, retreating alongside his comrades but with a renewed sense of resolve for the war ahead.

### Valley Forge: The Turning Point (Winter 1777-1778)

Following the defeat at Germantown, Washington made a critical decision—to encamp his 12,000-man army at Valley Forge, just outside British-occupied Philadelphia. Joseph was among the men who marched into Valley Forge on December 19, 1777, resigned to the challenges of winter encampment.

The winter of 1777-1778 was a test of endurance, with soldiers constructing 1,500 log huts, foraging for supplies, and suffering from disease outbreaks that would ultimately claim nearly 2,000 lives. Despite the hardships, Valley Forge became the proving ground for the Continental Army. Under the instruction of Baron von Steuben, a former Prussian officer, Joseph and his fellow soldiers underwent rigorous training, transforming from a collection of colonial militias into a cohesive and disciplined fighting force.

By the time the army emerged from Valley Forge in June 1778, they were stronger, better trained, and more capable than ever before—ready to face the British in open battle.

### The Battle of Monmouth (June 28, 1778)

Joseph's next major engagement came just days after leaving Valley Forge. On June 28, 1778, in the sweltering heat of summer, Washington's army intercepted the British retreating from Philadelphia to New York at the Battle of Monmouth in New Jersey.

The battle initially teetered on the brink of disaster when General Charles Lee lost control and coordination of his dispersed commands, and the British aggressively pressed their advantage. Washington, arriving on the battlefield, rallied the troops, personally taking charge of the fight. Joseph fought in one of the longest battles of the war, enduring intense artillery fire, counterattacks, and extreme heat that killed nearly as many men that day as bullets. By nightfall, the British withdrew under cover of darkness, marking an important victory for the Continental Army and its commander.

Monmouth proved that the training at Valley Forge had worked. The Continental Army had fought some of the best units of the British Army to a standstill. Though the British would go on to mount significant coastal raids, the war in the north largely settled down to keeping British forces bottled up in New York.

### Final Days at Fishkill (1778-1779)

After Monmouth, Joseph was stationed at Fishkill, New York, an essential supply depot and hospital center for the Continental Army. In the summer of 1778, he was recorded as tending to the sick, a testament to the devastating toll of disease on the army. He remained at Fishkill for the next year, supporting the war effort. In July 1779, at the age of 59, Joseph passed away in Continental service—his final sacrifice for the nation he had fought to help create.

### A Legacy of Freedom

Joseph Rogers' journey through the Revolutionary War was one of courage, endurance, and unwavering patriotism. From the siege lines of Boston to the winter at Valley Forge, from the battles of Germantown and Monmouth to his final days at Fishkill, he witnessed and participated in the transformation of a collection of state militiamen into a Continental Army—an army that would ultimately win American independence.

Though he did not live to see the war's end, his sacrifice endures—in the freedoms we cherish and in the generations of his family that followed. His descendants, many of whom rest in Laysville Cemetery in Old Lyme, carry forward the legacy of a man who, at 55 years old, chose to fight for a nation that was yet to be born.

Joseph Rogers did not live to see the birth of the nation he fought for, but his sacrifice helped make it possible. He stood alongside thousands of others who endured war, hunger, and hardship so that future generations could live in a free and independent country. Yet, their battle did not win a final victory—it remains the responsibility of each new generation to defend and uphold the ideals of democracy and justice. Today, as we approach the 250th anniversary of our nation—once again facing threats to those same freedoms – we must ask ourselves: Would we have the same courage? Would we stand up, as he did, to defend what we believe in?

***– Jaymie Nickerson-Buckmaster***