

Spring 2021

OUR TOWN OF SALEM CONNECTICUT



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Town of Salem
Department Phone Listing.....3

Thank You
to the Businesses.....3

From the Office of
the First Selectman.....4

Salem History.....6-14

The Whittleseys of Salem..6-7

Music Vale Seminary.....8-10

Life at Music Vale11-12

The Sculptor's Youth.....13-14

Welcome To Our New Newsletter!

Dear Fellow Townspeople,

After a long winter with many challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our New England spring season has finally arrived with the rebirth of our vegetation and the promise of a better year to come.

Welcome New Salem Residents!

We have had many new residents choose to make Salem their home. Welcome to our new townspeople! We encourage you to get involved with the many activities and organizations that serve our Town. Our fellow townspeople are helpful, kind, and have a welcoming spirit. Feel free to contact my office for the many opportunities for you in our Town.

Salem Library HVAC Replacement

We have completed the extensive Salem Library HVAC Replacement over the past several months. The aging air conditioner units were replaced with efficient heat pumps. The below-ground oil tank was removed, and a new propane tank was installed. The oil boilers were replaced with high efficiency

continued on page 4

270 Hartford Road, Salem, CT 06420 • Phone: 860-859-3873

VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT WWW.SALEMCT.GOV

BALLESTRINI'S Child Care Centers

Now Accepting Enrollments For Our Grand Reopening!

AGE APPROPRIATE PROGRAMS

Infant and Toddler: 6 Weeks- 3 Years

Preschool: 3-5 Years of age

Before and After Care:

Busing availed from Salem Elementary School.

Care available on snow days, Holidays, professional days and school vacations.

**Spaces
are
limited!**



To Register Or For More Information Visit Our Web Site :

www.Ballestrinis.com

WATERFORD

90 Rope Ferry Rd.
Waterford, CT
860-442-CARE (2273)

SALEM

11 Center St.
Salem, CT
860-859-CARE (2273)

NIANTIC

161 West Main St.
Niantic, CT
860-691-1300



Town of Salem Department Phone Listing

Agent for the Elderly	(860) 859-3873, x125
Assessor	(860) 859-3873, x140
Building Department	(860) 859-3873, x250
Fire Marshal	(860) 859-3873, x270
First Selectman's Office	(860) 859-3873, x100
Public Works	(860) 859-3873, x451
Recreation	(860) 859-3873, x275
Registrar of Voters	(860) 859-3873, x230
Tax Collector	(860) 859-3873, x150
Town Clerk	(860) 859-3873, x170
Zoning/Inland Wetlands Department	(860) 859-3873, x260
Animal Control Officer	(860) 848-3529
Uncas Health District	(860) 823-1189
Salem Free Public Library	(860) 859-1130
Salem School	(860) 859-0267
Transfer Station	(860) 859-2964
Gardner Lake Volunteer Fire Company	(860) 859-1743
Salem Volunteer Fire Company	(860) 859-0942
Resident State Troopers	(860) 859-2507
CT State Police, Troop K	(860) 465-5400
ALL EMERGENCIES, CALL 9-1-1	

Cover Photo Credit:

The Slater Memorial Museum's Whittlesey piano. Made of mahogany with rosewood inlay and decorated with gilt stenciling in a dolphin motif and brass ornaments. Its seven legs are turned in a rope pattern, and signed "J. Whittlesey". Photograph by Robb Cyr Photography. Reprinted from *Bela Lyon Pratt: Sculptor of Monument* Exhibition Catalog by Vivian E. Zoë, Director, Slater Memorial Museum.



The Town of Salem would like to thank the businesses that appear in this newsletter and to recognize them each as supporters and cornerstones of our community. For it is with their contributions that this newsletter has been produced at no charge to our residents. The Town would like to further request that citizens, in response, patronize these businesses first when given a choice as these businesses are saving each citizen tax dollars.

propane boilers. The archaic control system has been replaced by an energy efficient control system with five zones to provide efficient comfort to our patrons. We did negotiate a \$20,000.00 refund in regards to problems with the previous system, and this money was deposited into the Town's General Fund.

Our Salem Library is a wonderful place that provides many services for our residents and functions in many ways as our community center. In the next several months, we look forward to resuming many activities as we begin to emerge from the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Salem Receives \$120,000 Small Town Economic Assistance Program Grant (STEAP)

The Town of Salem received a \$120,000.00 STEAP Grant to remove the below-ground fuel tanks that service the Emergency Services, Public Works and School Bus Fleet. Below-ground fuel tanks have become problematic and expensive to maintain; they require additional pollution insurance and a monthly monitoring fee. They should be removed by age 25 and must be removed by age 30! The project planned for this Summer will include the removal of the existing fuel tank, inspection of the soil, removal of any contaminates found, and installation of a new above-ground fuel tank. The above-ground fuel tank will require updated electrical and a generator. Once the project is complete, we will have an up-to-date fuel source for our Emergency Vehicles, Public Works and the School Bus Fleet.

Do You Compost?

Many people in Salem compost their food waste – coffee grounds, vegetable scraps, egg shells, etc. These items add up to significant weight in your household trash.

The Town of Salem currently pays \$90.00 per ton to get rid of your household trash at the Transfer Station. On average 21% of household trash is food waste! Consider composting. Composting saves money and provides rich nutrients as fertilizer for the plants in your yard. Many residents make their own compost bin. A simple compost bin can be purchased for \$45.00 at SCRRRA.org.

In closing, with warmer weather, be sure to enjoy our beautiful spring season.
I am honored to be your First Selectman.

Respectfully,

Kevin T. Lyden, First Selectman



Sean Stevens, Nuisance Wildlife Control Officer
Humane Control • Relocation • Removal
Handling all pest control problems.

ctwildlifecontrol1000@gmail.com
(860) 941-6866 www.connecticutwildlifecontrol.com





Check out
our craft beer
selection!

Min. Pricing
on all liquor
and wines

Always happy to bring in special orders!

468 Old Colchester Rd.
Salem, CT 06420
(860) 887-1227

Mon - Thurs 10-8
Fri - Sat 10-9
Sunday 10-6



Excerpt from *Bela Lyon Pratt: Sculptor of Monument* Exhibition Catalog by Vivian E. Zoë, Director, Slater Memorial Museum. Geoff Serra, Leigh Thomas and Donna M. Wilson, Editors. Leigh Thomas, Catalog design. Barry Wilson, Photographer. Norwich, CT: Slater Memorial Museum of Norwich Free Academy, 2017.

THE WHITTLESEYS OF SALEM

Between 1835 and 1876, Salem, Connecticut, rose to national prominence as a cultural center for music under the genius of Bela Pratt's maternal grandfather, Orramel Whittlesey, and Music Vale Seminary. However, the Whittlesey family had been notable in Connecticut for generations.

Patriarch John Whittlesey, Orramel's grandfather, fought and died in the Revolutionary War at the Battle of Groton Heights. The next John Whittlesey married his cousin, Sally Whittlesey, (note spelling difference) and had five children, including sons John, Orramel and Henry. Two daughters died. Father John owned an ivory factory in Salem at a time when Connecticut owned 90% of the ivory market. His business may have been the inspiration for his sons to start the manufacture of fine pianos and pianofortes in the town.

In addition to running his ivory factory, John Whittlesey, Sr. was also a Methodist minister in the tradition of the day known as New Lights, followers of Henry Alline. The movement's new ideas caused these newborn faithful to shun vices and evil pastimes to live personally within an almost Puritan ethic.

As young boys, Orramel and his two brothers persuaded their dour father to buy them a piano, after which they begged for music lessons. Instead, he forced them

to pay from their ivory factory earnings for lessons in New London. Once each week, after they had finished their day's work, they drove to New London for piano lessons; leaving Salem at eight p.m., they arrived at New London at eleven-thirty. Their lessons of one hour each were finished at two-thirty a.m., and they drove back to Salem, arriving at five-thirty a.m. just in time to start the day's chores. Somehow, working in shifts, they also found time to practice for two hours each day.

After the boys matured into young men, John (Jr.) and Orramel planned to seek their fortunes in New York, leaving younger brother Henry behind. Since all three were still studying piano at the time, there was a need for an instrument in New York and another in Salem. Accordingly, Orramel disassembled the purchased piano of their youth and used it as a pattern to make another; then, he reassembled the original.

Immediately after his marriage at Salem in 1826, Orramel moved with his bride, Charlotte Meconda Morgan, to Buffalo where he perfected the craft of making pianos and, from a distance, shared trade "secrets" with his brothers still in Connecticut. The three brothers thus began the manufacture of pianos, which were made of rosewood and mahogany. All the finer workmanship, such as the sawing of the ivories and the inlaying of mother-of-pearl letters and ornamentation, was entirely by hand.

By 1832, Orramel Whittlesey and his brothers had returned to their childhood home in Salem where they



Skyline Kennels
"Country Inn for Pets"
Boarding and Grooming
(All dogs, cats, and exotics)
(860) 859-0353
Email info@skylinekennels.com
117 Skyline Dr.
Salem, CT 06420



Bondi COMMERCIAL
Specialists in Retail Placement, Land Assemblage & Building Conversions
"Our firm's goal is to provide a personalized, local, commercial brokerage service to regional and national clients seeking to sell, lease or purchase properties."
Check out or Salem & New London County Listings at www.bondicommercial.com
25 Witch Meadow Road, Salem, CT 06420 • bondi@snet.net
Office 860-887-3400 • fax 860-425-0887 • a division of Bondi, LLC



The Slater Memorial Museum's Whittlesey piano is made of mahogany with rosewood inlay, and is decorated with gilt stenciling in a dolphin motif and brass ornaments. Its seven legs are turned in a rope pattern, and it is signed "J. Whittlesey." Photo: Robb Cyr Photography.

continued to produce pianos. Their business was successful. Whittlesey pianos sold in New York City for between \$150 and \$250 (\$3,340 and \$5,567 today). As their skills improved, the brothers grew dissatisfied with their early work and wished it all destroyed.

Orramel was the most ambitious brother, with interests beyond the piano factory. He represented the town of Salem in the Connecticut General Assembly in 1832, and also served at various times as a member of the Connecticut House of Representatives and its Senate, as postmaster, justice of the peace, and Judge of Probate in the district that included Salem. However, it was his reputation as a musician that became widely known. He was often asked by parents to take on students from among his neighbors in Salem.

The Whittleseys' Music School was established partly as the result of a financial anomaly caused by a US budget surplus. The U.S. government resolved to distribute a portion of the funds to the states for educational purposes. Thus, piano-maker Orramel Whittlesey was able to realize a personal dream, withdrawing from the family business to open the school.

Leaving the manufacture of fine pianos to his brothers, John and Henry, could not have been easy. The workshop was very well respected, supplying pianos to the best houses around New England. Until about 1910 when the phonograph became widely available to middle-class homes, none would be considered complete without a piano and someone who was at least able to pluck out a tune.

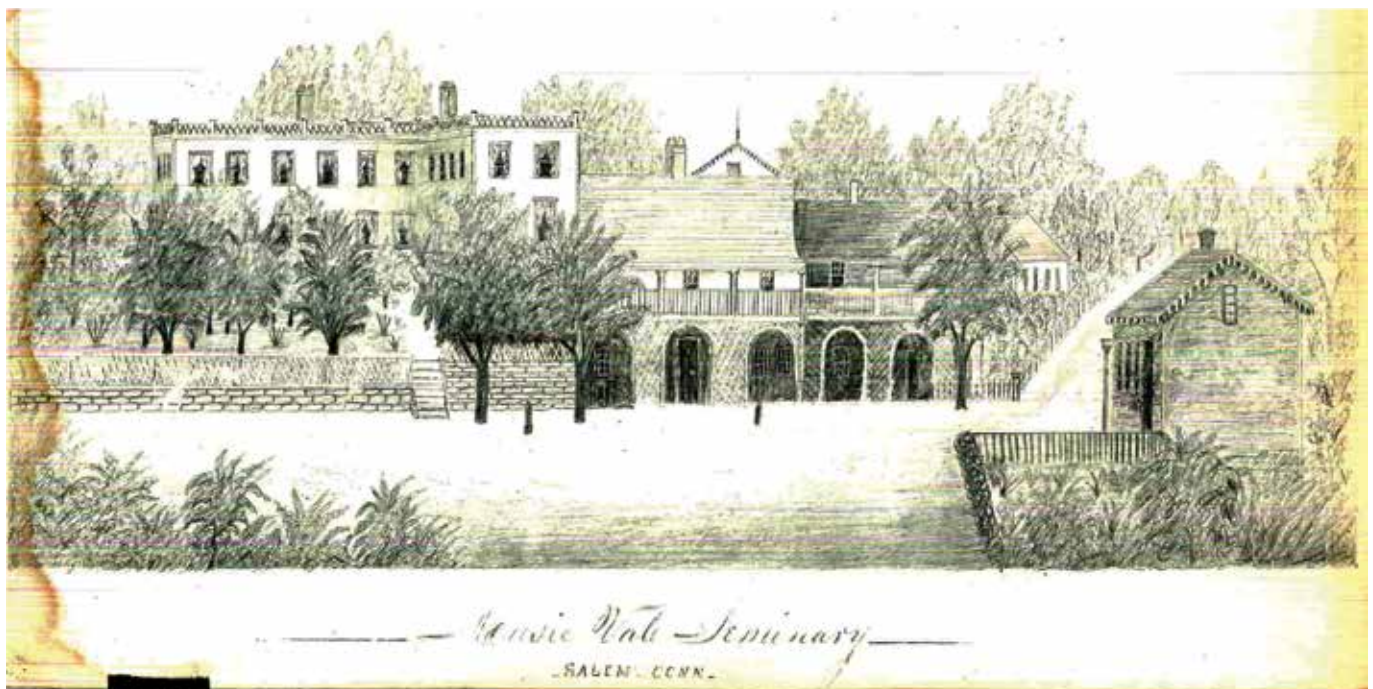
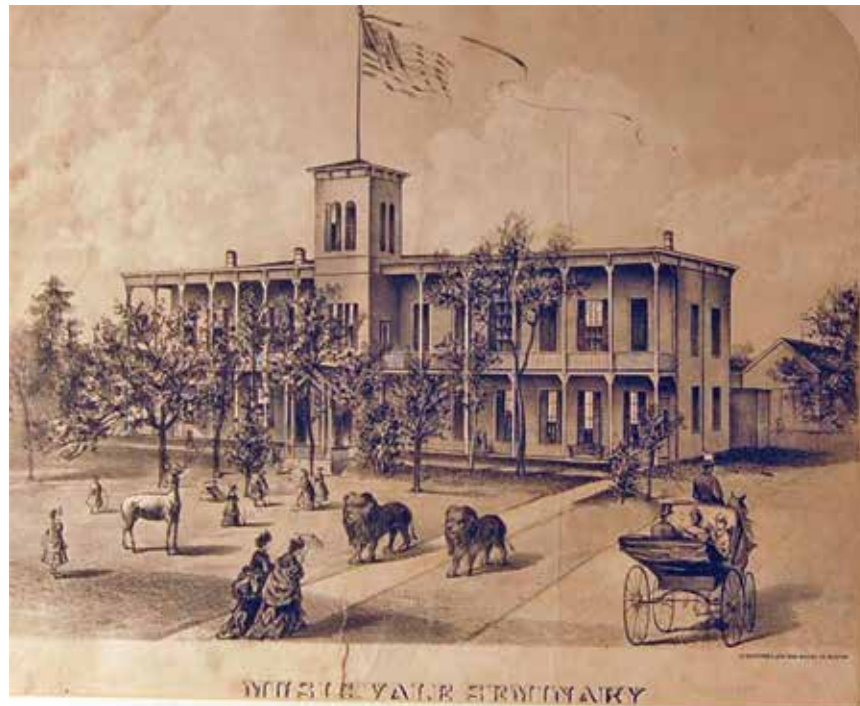


Orramel Whittlesey, photo courtesy of the Salem Historical Society.

MUSIC VALE SEMINARY

Music Vale Seminary, the first music school established in this country, was founded by Orramel Whittlesey in Salem, Connecticut. The date of its founding is given variously as 1835, 1836, and 1839. This discrepancy is attributed to what Orramel Whittlesey describes as the “modest beginning” of the school. It was a boarding school for young women from across the country known consecutively as Mr. Whittlesey’s School, Salem Normal Academy of Music, and finally as Music Vale Seminary and Normal Academy of Music. Many scholars of Connecticut history are particularly proud of Music Vale Seminary. And yet, it is a story veiled in obscurity, neglected even by scholars in academic institutions whose specialization is music and music history. Music Vale arguably affected more teachers of music and, as a result, more young students of music, and often in the Nation’s public schools, than any successive training institution.

Music Vale operated at what is now 149 Hartford Road in Salem until Orramel died. The iron plaque now marking the seminary’s location was issued in 1936 for



The original Music Vale building, which operated at what is now 149 Hartford Road, Salem, photo courtesy of the Salem Historical Society.

the state's tercentenary, along with similar signs at important historic sites. In the early years, Music Vale was a school program that largely took place in the home of Orramel and his wife, Meconda, as Mr. Whittlesey's School. With the Whittleseys' refusal of frequent requests to take in boarders, students found their own lodging nearby. That changed one stormy winter evening when two pupils, young ladies, arrived at the Whittlesey home and placed their trunks in the hall, saying: "Well, we have come, and you can't send us back such a night as this." Orramel was obliged to let them remain overnight, which resulted in their staying longer. Before spring twelve boarding pupils were accepted.

Music Vale soon grew in both size and in reputation. Orramel added a teaching staff which eventually included his four daughters, each of whom were students at Music Vale. At its height, the school's student body averaged eighty each year, reaching a peak enrollment of one hundred pupils.

As the school's principal, Orramel was a demanding instructor, and the discipline was rigid. The students arose at 5:00 A.M., dusted their pianos, and prepared for a day of four-hour practice periods with intermissions devoted to the study of theory. Monitors were posted outside the rooms to enforce these rules. A Normal Degree authorized by the state of Connecticut was awarded after one year of study and performance exams before a jury.

At left: Music Vale as it appeared rebuilt after a fire destroyed the original structure in 1868, photo courtesy of the Salem Historical Society.

The young women it trained to be instructors settled and taught throughout the country. Tuition, room and board totaled \$300 for the one-year program. Widows, orphans, and daughters of clergy were afforded special fees. The curriculum included both instrumental and theoretical studies. Lessons were given in voice culture, organ, piano, harp, and guitar, while the theory teaching included instruction in notation, harmony, thorough-bass, and the general laws of counterpoint and fugue.

Its first "class" was graduated in 1839, but the school was built over the course of twenty years from 1839 to 1859, when the concert hall was added. Later, the school became Salem Normal Academy of Music, acknowledging the training of teachers. An elaborate building was constructed that included lodging rooms, practice rooms (each with its own door to the outdoors for absolute privacy and to preserve concentration) and a well-appointed, 60-foot-long recital hall that included dressing rooms.

The extravagant musicals and operas (some composed by Whittlesey) staged in the great auditorium of Music Vale were ambitious and expensive undertakings. The hall itself, designed by a New York architect, with its frescoed walls and ceilings, elaborate boxes at the sides of the stage and a gallery at the rear, far exceeded in detail the appointments any concert hall of the prosperous cities of New London or Norwich. The curtains, one with a painting of Music Vale, and another with a likeness of the Arch of Titus with the Tiber in the distance, were a source of wonder to many visitors. Prominent



Roa Alammari, MD, FACOG
Robert Gildersleeve, MD, FACOG
Lesley Gumbs, MD, FACOG
Veronica Helgans, MD, FACOG
Yvette Martas, MD, FACOG
Devon Root, CNM, WHNP-BC
Stephanie Welsh, CNM, DNP

Lifelong Women's Healthcare
Adolescence • Pregnancy • Menopause

860-450-7227 (phone) 860-450-7231 (fax)

A member of



 Find us on Facebook
www.mansfieldobgyn.com

Your Local Realtor



I'm your neighbor...and a Realtor!
Living in Salem, I am familiar with the most appealing aspects of this town. I've been helping people buy & sell for 21 years. Let me help you find a buyer who loves this town as much as we do! Please call me today.

Kim Veronesi

Coldwell Banker Realty
132-1 Boston Post Rd. East Lyme, CT 06333
Cell: 860-214-4076
kim.veronesi@cbmoves.com
Licensed Realtor in CT



persons gathered from far distant places to attend the spectacular performances and to talk for months afterward of the amazing lighting and sound effects. "Real thunder" crashed when stage hands rolled iron balls across white oak boards in the wings, and lightning flashed from lighted blasting powder strung out on a tin plate.

The introduction of fully staged opera may have led to the demise of Music Vale. At a minimum, it caused the fire that destroyed the first buildings. One night in January 1868, the lightning special effects got out of control causing a fire that destroyed the school.

Despite burning to the ground the school was soon rebuilt. A larger, more luxuriously appointed building was erected with a tower at the center, topped with a harp as a weathervane, and equipped with modern conveniences, such as bathrooms and water closets. However, the Civil War had taken a great toll, virtually eliminating the southern students. One reason the Southern girls no longer came may have been Orramel's devout patriotism. He was known to fly a huge U.S. flag and to sound a cannon upon learning of each battle success of the Union Army.

By the late 1860's, Mrs. George (Sarah Whittlesey) Pratt, Bela Pratt's mother, had taken over managing the school for her aging father, but the death of Orramel Whittlesey in 1876 presaged the closing of the school. The school never regained the strength of its zenith. Numerous music and normal schools opened around the country, particularly intended for the education of young wom-

en and encouraged by the expansion of Western territories and the end of civil tensions. However, as late as 1879 the opera house was used by groups other than Music Vale for concerts and spectacles.

Two majestic lions are depicted at the entrance to Music Vale in the image at left. Poetically, when Orramel died and the seminary closed, the lions were moved to the family's private cemetery to guard their master's grave. When the school building burned to the ground for the second time in 1897, these two sentinels remained.



PICK UP DELIVERY | **ORDER online**

Wood Fired Brick Oven Pizza
AND MORE!

The PLUM Tomato

www.THEPLUMTOMATO.com

275 SOUTH MAIN ST, COLCHESTER (860) 537-3996
1 NEW LONDON RD, SALEM (860) 892-5295

MARKS
United Auto Parts

Auto Parts & Accessories
for All Domestic & Foreign Cars, Trucks & SUVs
"We go out of our way for you!"

- Personalized service and knowledgeable advice from real parts guys
- Fully stocked with new replacement, aftermarket, original OEM, refurbished, remanufactured and rebuilt auto parts and accessories, we have what you need.
- Custom paints and OEM colors mixed on site
- If we don't have it, we'll get it for you! Just about anything we don't have in stock can be here within 24 hours
- We carry **autobody** supplies like **EVERCOAT**® and **3M**
- Family owned and operated by Colchester natives Mark and Darlene Goodwin

www.MarksUnited.com

Visit us on Facebook at
Mark's United Auto Parts

95 South Main Street, Colchester, CT 06415
860-537-2348 or 860-537-2349
1-800-734-9529 • Fax 860-537-9653
With more than 48 years in the business, we know auto parts!

LIFE AT MUSIC VALE



Images: The faculty of Music Vale, 1865 (opposite page); Orramel Whittlesey and Music Vale students wearing opera costumes (above), photos courtesy of the Salem Historical Society.



In the mid-19th century, Orramel Whittlesey founded a music conservatory in Salem, Connecticut. The conservatory served as a boarding school attended primarily by young women who came from all over the country. First known as Mr. Whittlesey's School, then the Salem Normal Academy of Music, and finally the Music Vale Seminary and Normal Academy of Music, the school is often credited with being the first music conservatory in the United States.

The mostly young women who attended the school came from all over the young country and most, it seems, returned to their hamlets to join the ranks of classroom music teachers, tutors and mothers whose domestic skills were enhanced by their musical abilities. In her small booklet published as part of the celebrations related to the State of Connecticut's tercentenary in 1934, Frances Hall Johnson describes the students:

"They arrived at Norwich and they and their baggage were carried over to the school at Salem in two gaily-colored wagons called the Robin and the Bluebird. ...Music Vale and its surroundings became in time a kind of fairyland to the students, a world in itself. They learned to know the variety of the landscape around Salem, with its many lakes, wild crags, weird ravines. Fairy Lake, Lover's Leap, Elfin Glen and Moss Wood were names given to separate ponds, hills, and dales, which remain today. They were romantic and fanciful names that appealed to fair young ladies who had the joyous freedom of the woods...."

As the Principal of Music Vale, Orramel assured parents in his catalogues and circulars that their daughters, left in his charge, would be both protected and disciplined. He promoted the geographically remote character of the Seminary and of Salem as providing an opportunity for intensive concentration on study and practice. His methods were recognized across the country, and many prevailed upon him to convert and broaden the Seminary into a normal school for general instruction. He valiantly resisted, choosing to adhere to the original school structure that he felt able to do best.

Students were required to practice daily while under the attentive ear of their teacher. In addition, students held twice-weekly public concerts. These would include performances of the works of Beethoven, Mozart, Chopin and Mendelssohn. Gottschalk was popular at the time and concerts included the works of Wagner, Thalberg and Liszt.

Admission to Music Vale required letters of introduction from a clergyman for those pupils not previously known to the Whittleseys. Tuition was a bargain at a course price of \$150 for a twenty-week term (about \$2,870 at today's equivalent). Later, the year expanded to two terms of 22 weeks each, and fees to \$250, then \$300 per year. Daughters of clergymen, missionaries and widows and daughters of soldiers who had died in the defense of the Union were offered a 25% discount.

Among the material and equipment students were required to bring to the seminary were Maelzel's Bell Metronome, three sheets, two pairs of pillow cases, towels and toilet articles, napkins, napkin ring, fork, dessert and tea spoon, clothes bag, "all marked with the owner's name in full."

The "Ladies" were required to clean their own rooms, plus tidy their practice rooms and dust their pianos. Orramel's admonition was to "Be prompt to your [practice] hour and do not leave the piano or hold conversation with anyone save with your teacher until the gong announces its termination. The mind of the pupil must be engrossed and the train of thought unbroken to insure success." A student from Kentucky wrote home, "Strict! You have no idea what Yankee strictness means! There is no shirking the rules."

Contemporary colleagues of Orramel's came to observe and potentially learn from his methods. Dr. Lowell Mason and George F. Root, both of Massachusetts, came to Music Vale. Despite the numbers of women who passed through the seminary and received teaching certificates there, it is Lowell Mason (1792-1872) who is



largely credited with introducing music into American public schools.

In addition to being skilled and talented musicians, the seminary students were a literate bunch. They published their own newsletter, *The Gleaner of the Vale*. In it, they sang the praises of the school, openly analyzed their experiences and expressed their affection for their classmates and the glorious countryside; but for the students, "the joyous freedom of the woods" would certainly fade to absolute black during the required recitals.

Images: Music Vale's restored Bluebird Carriage, photo: Elizabeth Georgian / www.insearchofhs.com (previous page); Music Vale as it once stood at what is now 149 Hartford Road (Route 85), Salem. This view is facing South, the barn at the far right of the image still stands, photo: Music Vale Seminary, 1835-1876, Yale University Press (below).



THE SCULPTOR'S YOUTH

Bela Lyon Pratt (1867-1917) was born in Norwich, Connecticut, to Sarah Victoria Whittlesey (1831-1923) and George Pratt, a Yale-educated lawyer. Together, Bela Lyon Pratt's grandfather and great uncles, Orramel, Henry and John Whittlesey, started the first American piano-making company in Salem, Connecticut. Grandfather Orramel also founded the country's first music school for women, Music Vale Seminary, in Salem.

George Pratt (1832-1875) was born in East Weymouth, Massachusetts. He graduated from Yale College in 1857, after which he taught for a year in Blooming Grove, New York, while studying law. He then entered the law office



of the Hon. John T. Wait of Norwich, Connecticut, and was admitted to the bar in April, 1859. While working under Wait and studying for the bar exam, he resided with Wait in Salem, a short distance from Norwich. On July 31, 1858, George married Sarah Victoria Whittlesey, daughter of the Honorable Orramel Whittlesey, Music Vale proprietor and State Representative.

In addition to the obvious Salem connection, the couple may have met at the Providence Conference Seminary, a Methodist school in Rhode Island both had attended.

George Pratt was also elected to represent Salem in the Connecticut General Assembly in 1860, and the same year he and Sarah moved to Norwich, where he opened his own law office. In Norwich, the family lived at Rocklawn



above Broad Street. The house was a great stone pile on 12 acres at the highest point in the city. The Thames River, and now the Mohegan Sun Casino, are visible from this height. One envisions the 7-year-old Bela walking down the hill to the Broad Street School in the 1870's.

In 1864, '65, and '69, George represented Norwich in the General Assembly, and in that capacity was the author of several important measures. He rose steadily in his profession, and was for some years Norwich City Attorney. On a visit to the state's capital city, Hartford, in the middle of May, 1875, he contracted a cold which developed into typhoid pneumonia, followed by paralysis and meningitis, which caused his death in Norwich, June 4, 1875.

Sarah survived him by another 48 years, living to 92. She had six children; her youngest at the time of her husband's death, Minot Tully Pratt, was two-years-old. The grand house at the top of Norwich was placed on the market, furnished. It was described in the real estate listing as "a rare opportunity.... An elegant and substantial granite mansion ... furnished with all modern



Images: Sarah Victoria Whittlesey Pratt, Bela's mother, c. 1855; George Pratt, Bela's father, c. 1858, photo: Barry Wilson Rocklawn, the Pratt family home in Norwich, c. 1867, photo courtesy of Jennifer Sims (above).

improvements ... commanding an extensive view of the beautiful city of Norwich [that] ... in summer resembles an extensive forest park." Bordered by Orchard, Broad and Rockwell streets, the estate included a stocked fish pond, deer park, children's playhouse, paths, roads, stone carriage house and caretaker's cottage.

According to the eldest daughter, Alice, who was 14 when her father died, George's death broke Sarah's heart and very nearly left her destitute. Sarah was wholly dependent upon George, whose wealth was apparently invested mostly in real estate and at the time of his death the Long Recession already had a stranglehold on the United States economy.

With their children, Sarah moved briefly to 81 Union Street in downtown Norwich where Bela attended the School Street School. It would take five years to sell the Rocklawn property. In the meantime, Sarah moved the family to Salem and back to Norwich.

Six months after her husband's death, Sarah's sister, Jennette (Nettie) Morgan Whittlesey, who, though married, taught at Music Vale, died followed by her father, Orramel, another six months after that. Orramel had been ill for some time while Sarah and sister Carolyn (Kate) tried to keep Music Vale afloat despite a shift in their clientele. The school had suffered a devastating fire in 1868, but was rebuilt, even better and grander than before. Nevertheless, several factors affected attendance. Principal among these was the Civil War, which had taken a huge toll on the wealth of Southern families and their willingness to send their girls north to school.

Music Vale closed in 1873. The sisters tried to re-open in 1876, but two years later were forced to close again. Sister Elizabeth (Eliza) Tully Whittlesey was self-sufficient by the age of seventeen, teaching music in New York. So when she was widowed, it would not have been unthinkable in 1882 for Sarah to try to support herself and five surviving children by advertising her home at 81 Union Street, Norwich, as Sarah Whittlesey Normal School of Music.

By 1900, Sarah moved to Kansas City, Kansas, closer to her eldest son, Orramel, a lawyer (note change in spelling in third generation). After Music Vale failed, Kate taught music at institutions, mostly the mid-west, landing finally in Kansas. She was the head of the Music School at Topeka's Bethany College (originally the College of the Sisters of Bethany) until 1899 when she opened her own studio in Topeka. She taught until her death at 85.

In 1912 Bela purchased the Music Vale property in Salem. Of it, in letters to his mother, he writes:

December 24, 1911:

I have had Mel's dream of redeeming Salem, but it would cost too much. However, I don't give up hope of owning Music Vale some day. Two more years like the last two and I could have almost anything I want. There is absolutely no chance that a sculptor could ever make a farm pay. I feel sure that I could give up sculpture and make a living on any farm, "on a flat rock" even, but that's just the point, it depends on how much you put into it. That is rather more true of farming and sculpture than anything else I know about. You can't live in Boston and make a farm in Salem pay any more than you could live in Salem and run a successful studio in Boston.

October 6, 1912:

I am planning to be in Salem two weeks from today. I am going especially to see about "Music Vale" and if things go right, I may buy it. ...

October 27, 1912:

I have made an offer of \$2800, which I feel sure will be accepted for the Music Vale property! I do not expect to know for sure as the owners are in some sort of lawsuit and it won't be settled until December. I shall do nothing with the place except keep the buildings in repair and some of the brush down. I shall let Beebe or some one else keep stock there under the agreement that all the fodder and hay shall be fed out on the place and the manure put on the farm. I know that I am paying about \$800 too much, but as I got my final payment for the Library figures I am feeling very rich. The Rabbit-path was very beautiful. I wish you could have smelled the wet, fallen beech leaves and heard and seen the brook! The most beautiful spot on earth without a doubt.

November 10, 1912:

I am very pleased that you and the others are pleased about the purchase of Music Vale Farm. I'm sure that I have offered them a great deal more money than they can get from anybody else. I've made up my mind to have the place but don't tell anyone until after we have settled. If my dreams come true, the place will never be forgotten. Well, it is hard to keep from building castles in the air. The pools in the brook could be deepened and stocked with lots of trout. The old orchard could be trimmed and new trees planted. Thirty days labor by four husky men would clear off most of the brush. And someday I intend to put the very best work of my life down among the pines. It must be something serious and have the spirit of the brook and woods in it.



SALEM VALLEY FARMS

EST. ICE CREAM 1988

80 Flavors of Handcrafted
Premium Ice Cream
Open Seven Days a Week *during peak Summer*

20 Darling Rd • Salem, CT 06420
SalemValleyFarmsIceCream.com



CunninghamConstructionCT.com

Septic Install and Repairs • Water & Sewer • Excavating & Grading

Joe Cunningham - 860-857-8955
email: cunninghamconstructionct@gmail.com



Robert M. Baratt, DVM, DAVDC, DAVDC/Eq
Sarah S. Slater, DVM
12 Centre Street, Salem, CT 06420
860-859-1649 • salemvalleyinfo@gmail.com
www.salemvalleyvet.com

LEASE AVAILABLE



Cell: 860-214-4076
kimveronesi.cbintouch.com
kim.veronesi@cbmoves.com
Licensed in CT

Lease space available at Salem Marketplace, a very well maintained plaza. \$9.60-12.00sf/yr NNN. Great 1250sf 1st floor unit, perfect spot for retail store or professional office. Over 3000sf of 2nd floor office space, units from 500-1370sf. Some units have individual offices, kitchenettes, baths. Others are open and carpeted to be renovated to the tenants needs. Ability to combine units. Lots of windows for natural light and detailed woodwork makes for an attractive office space. Busy restaurant, bank and pharmacy brings foot traffic.



Kim Veronesi
Coldwell Banker Realty
132-1 Boston Post Road
East Lyme, CT 06033

MAPLE SHADE Services, LLC

Get Ready For Spring!

**Call Maple Shade Services
for your Spring Cleanup!**

Mason-Dump Deliveries
Bulk Waste Hauling • Snow Plowing
Cleanouts/Refuse Removal
In Driveway & Curbside Pickups
Auto Detailing

688 West Rd., Salem, CT 06420
cell 860-705-8415 • office 860-823-0043
Please call DAVID

TOWN OF SALEM
270 Hartford Road,
Salem, CT 06420

PRSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
HARRISBURG, PA
PERMIT NO. 609

Spring 2021



This Community Newsletter is produced for
the Town of Salem by Hometown Press
215.257.1500 • All rights reserved®



To Place An Ad Call Peggy Kucipak Albee at Hometown Press • 215-262-3617



LIVE *life* LOCALLY

Original Art Original Gifts Original Lifestyle

Everything here is made by LOCAL artists and artisans.

Current Gallery Show: "Local Inspiration"

featuring the artwork of **Doug Fortin** and a dozen other artists
portraying works of art inspired by local Connecticut scenes. Come see!



THE RED HOUSE

cultural *arts* center

22 Darling Road, Salem 860.608.6526 salemredhouse.com
(We are right behind Salem Valley Farms Ice Cream . . . hint, hint!)



Hours:

Thu & Fri Noon-5pm
Sat & Sun 10am-6pm

ART GALLERY • ARTISAN GIFTS