



The Boutwell House—1851

Then and Now

A Newsletter of the Groton Historical Society

Volume 8, Issue 2

Spring/Summer 2007

The Groton Historical Society To Host Upcoming Civil War Re-enactment

In 2005, one of the major 350th Anniversary events put on by the 350th celebration committee was the Civil War Re-enactment held at Hillbrook Orchard in July. The event was well received by both participants and spectators, with almost 300 re-enactors from around New England and 2,000+ visitors attending.

Due to the success of the first event, and at the urging of the re-enactment units who participated and towns people who attended, the Groton Historical Society is planning;

a Civil War Re-enactment & Living History Weekend at Hillbrook Orchard on Old Ayer Road July 13-15, 2007.

This event promises to be bigger and better than the first. The event is shaping up to be the largest Civil War encampment in New England this summer, with all re-enacting units having placed it on their event calendars. The Groton Historical Society will also play a feature role in the weekend festivities.

The encampment site will again be at Hillbrook Orchard and open to the public free of charge from 9:00 am—5:00 pm on Saturday, July 14th, and 9:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m. on Sunday, July 15th. The event will involve units for the North and South, as well as a civilian town. The weekend will include Fire Works on Friday night sponsored by the Groton Parks Department, military and civilian activities, demonstrations and living histories each day, with a special focus this year on first person interpretations of Lt. General Ulysses S. Grant and General Robert E. Lee, as well as Groton's own Dr. Samuel Green, Governor Boutwell and Capt. Moses Palmer. We are also hoping to portray the important work of the Women's Sanitary Commission, a predecessor of the American Red Cross. Battle scenes will be re-enacted on both Saturday and Sunday afternoons. Saturday's special activities will again include Shape Note singing and lessons, an old accapella singing method made famous in the movie *Cold Mountain*. The Groton Historical Society will also have vehicles and emergency apparatus of the period from their collection on display. A period dance for re-enactors and spectators will be held as well on Saturday evening at Hillbrook Orchard, with music provided by the Camp Lincoln String Band (very well attended event two years ago). Guided tours are also planned using the Historical Society's period Concord Coach. Sunday's activities will include a field church service and dress parade, in addition to the battle. A special commemorative newspaper containing interesting facts and background information about all the weekend's activities will be available for purchase at a variety of locations.

The weekend festivities will place a strong emphasis on living history. Events at the Boutwell House Museum will focus on post-war life, while activities at Hillbrook Orchard depict life during the Civil War. A special display of Civil War era documents and artifacts from the Society's collection will also be on display both at the Boutwell Museum and at the field. The museum will be open from 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. each day. Buses will run regularly between downtown Groton and Hillbrook Orchard for ease of access to both locations. A special trip to the Groton Cemetery to visit gravesites of our Civil War veterans is also scheduled.

The 2005 Re-enactment was tremendously popular and well attended. Visitors to Groton's second Civil War Living History and Re-enactment weekend are guaranteed to come away with a better understanding of what life was like for soldiers as well as civilians during this time period and how the war affected Groton, and other towns like it, even though the battles were fought far from home. It will be a weekend designed for families of all ages.

**Don't Miss the
Re-enactment
Benefit Concert
Featuring
Chris McDermott
Sunday, June 10th**

**See page 6
for details.**

President's Message ~

Dear Members,

It has been a while since we have a newsletter, so I have many exciting things to tell you. First and foremost is the weekend of July 13-15. The Historical Society is sponsoring a Reenactment Weekend similar to the one sponsored by Groton's 350th Committee in 2005. Please read about this exciting event in this newsletter. A benefit concert to support the re-enactment is being held on June 10th (see page 6 for details). We hope to see everyone at both events.

Last fall the Board voted to replace our 30+ year old furnace. The cost was high at \$13,800.00, but it has to heat not only our museum but also the two apartments which provide a modest income for the Society. The old furnace failed on too many occasions during the winter of 2005-2006. Dave Eliot of May & Hally said that replacement parts for such an old furnace were no longer available and strongly recommended we buy a new one. Well, we have a new furnace.

On a Saturday in February, the Board met for several hours to establish both short and long term goals. We discussed topics of education, space needs, collections management and many others. One of the most important short term goals is that we need to hire a part time (20 hours per week) person. Some of the necessary qualifications for the position are: office skills e.g. computer, copying machine, email, etc; telephone skills; ability to schedule, organize, and oversee researchers and volunteers; perform minor archival duties; facilitate group visits for school children and special groups; and finally have flexible working hours with perhaps one evening per week. It may be hoping for too much to find such a person, but we are committed to look. If you know of anyone who might be interested and meet most or all of our requirements, please have them contact me at home.

This summer, as in the past, the Boutwell House will be open from 2:00 to 4 :00 p.m. on Sunday afternoons from June through September. Jane Allen is our new chairperson for membership. She is coordinating the volunteers to serve as hosts. Please let her know which Sundays are best for you (978-448-5835). I personally enjoy very much talking with visitors who often have interesting stories to share about their experiences, knowledge, or history of Groton.

I hope you all have a wonderful summer,



You Helped in 2005 And We Need Your Help... AGAIN!

With the 2007 Civil War Reenactment weekend around the corner, we need your help once again, including:

- Hosts/hostesses at Hillbrook Orchard
- Hosts/hostesses at the Boutwell House
- Antique equipment display support
- Van Driver

If you think you can spare an hour or two doing any of the above or would like to try making an old fashioned recipe, please contact Su Peyton at 978-448-2878 or peyts@charter.net or su.peyton@gmail.com, for more information.

Ulysses S. Grant : Was He a Butcher or a Hero?

**Join Us on July 10, 2007 at 7:00 p.m.
At the MacNeil Lounge on Lawrence Academy
For a Special Living History
Presentation on
Ulysses S. Grant
By Renowned Civil War
Re-enactor, John Balco.**



U.S. Grant, taken at Cold Harbor, Virginia in 1864.
(Courtesy of the National Archives.)

John Balco began as a Civil War re-enactor while living in Virginia joining Company E, 33rd Virginia, Jackson's Brigade. Upon returning to Massachusetts, he continued as a Confederate with the 2nd South Carolina. He subsequently joined the 28th Massachusetts, Irish Brigade. He will portray post-war President Ulysses S. Grant during the upcoming Civil War Re-enactment Weekend in Groton.

While visiting an exhibit of Winslow Homer Civil War paintings in Portland, Mr. Balco was standing next to a statue of U.S. Grant, when his wife observed the close resemblance. Encouraged by other re-enactors, he began to develop a Grant persona.

Since then, John has performed as U. S. Grant before many historical societies, schools and other venues. Dates and facts are easy to find, but the most difficult challenge for a "first person" re-enactor is to understand the person himself or herself. After about two years of study he became comfortable with Grant the man.

Mr. Balco is a member of the Society of Europe that focuses on the international aspects of the Civil War. Members are military observers, ambassadors and other personalities lend their world vision to the conflict. There are also several first person impressionists of well known United States Civil War such as Abraham Lincoln, Mary Todd Lincoln and myself. He is also a member of the Civil War Roundtable of Central Massachusetts and has served as President of the organization. He is currently pursuing an MS degree in history at Fitchburg State College.

This program is free to the public and is made available by a grant from the Groton Trust Funds Lecture Fund.

**It's Not Too Late
To Become A Sponsor!**

The Hillbrook Orchard Times, Commemorative Newspaper and Program
for
The Groton Historical Society's 2007
North and South Civil War Re-enactment and Living History Weekend
July 13 – 15, 2007

The Groton Historical Society will be looking for help to defray the cost of presenting this special living history weekend. One of the exciting additions being planned is a special sixteen page, tabloid size commemorative newspaper/program, *The Hillbrook Orchard Times*, which will be sold before and during the weekend.

The program will include details about all of the special living history events going on during the weekend. Information on the re-enactment units and other participants attending the event, along with their historical backgrounds, will be highlighted, in addition to general information about Groton's contributions to the Civil War. The paper will also include informational maps and promote event sponsors and local services. The newspaper is guaranteed to be a "keeper"!

The Civil War event in 2005 drew over 300 re-enactors from all over New England to Groton and thousands of spectators. We are anticipating an even larger attendance this year. We hope you will support the Groton Historical Society's efforts and become one of our event sponsors by purchasing an ad for inclusion in the special edition of *The Hillbrook Orchard Times* commemorative newspaper.

Paid advertising will be available as follows:

Full page, 12-3/4 x 10" wide	\$500.00
1/2 page vertical, 12-3/4 x 4-5/8" (2 col)	\$250.00
1/2 page horizontal 6-1/4 x 10" (4 col)	\$250.00
1/4 page, 6-1/4 x 2 column wide	\$100.00
1/8 page, 2-7/8 x 2 column wide (4-5/8")	\$ 50.00
Business Card	\$ 25.00

Simple artwork layout service can be arranged. Final art layout is preferred, and pdf format is perfect. You will be contacted regarding the details.

Sponsors will be featured on an Honor Roll inside the front cover.

For more information please contact: Bonnie Carter at 978-448-9476 or bgcarter@aol.com.

Thank you for your support!



Yes, we want to be a sponsor of the GHS 2007 Civil War Re-enactment. Reserve the following ad size:

Full Page 1/2 Page vertical 1/2 Page Horizontal 1/4 Page 1/8 Page Business Card

Enclosed is my check for: _____ made out to The Groton Historical Society and send it to:

c/o Bonnie Carter
8 Lone Lane
Groton, MA 01450

Company Name: _____ Phone Number: _____
Address: _____ Contact: _____
Town: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Signature _____

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THE GROTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

Kindly respond by June 12, 2007.

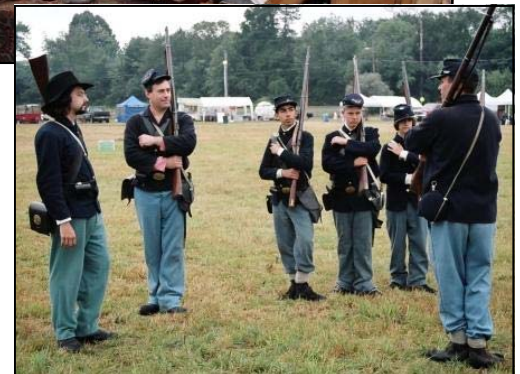
The Groton Historical Society is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) tax-deductible organization.

The Groton Historical Society
Is proud to present
A Civil War Re-enactment and
Living History Weekend
At Hillbrook Orchard in Groton, MA

July 13-15, 2007

Scenes from the Groton's 2005 Civil War Re-enactment.

Become a 2007 CW Sponsor TODAY!



The Groton Historical Society
172 Main Street, P.O. Box 202
Groton, MA 01450



Benefit Concert ~June 10, 2007~ The Bull Run Restaurant



Photo courtesy of Chris's website:
www.chrismcdermott.com

**Come One, Come All & Bring Your Friends
To the Civil War Re-enactment Fundraiser
Starring**

**Chris McDermott
With Brendan Carey Block on Fiddle**

Sunday, June 10, 2007

8:00 pm

**At the Bull Run Restaurant,
215 Great Rd., Rte. 2A, Shirley, MA**

**Make an evening of it!
\$30—dinner & show \$15—show only
Call 978-425-4311 to charge tickets**



The Boutwell House-1851

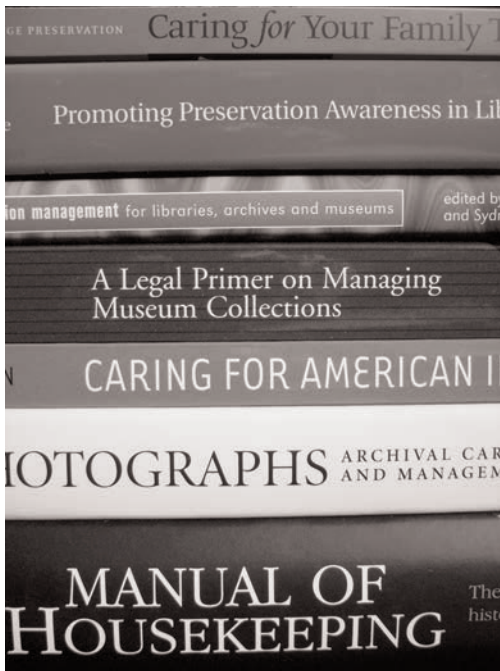
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Volume 9, Issue 4

Fall 2008

GHS Receives Collections Care Resources



In August the Groton Historical Society was notified that it had been selected to receive the *Connecting to Collections Bookshelf*, offered by the Institute of Museum and Library Services and the American Association for State and Local History.

The *Bookshelf* includes texts, charts, and other resources that deal with collections management and preservation. The topics covered in the resources include disaster planning, digitizing photograph collections, and climate control.

By retaining the *Collections Bookshelf* materials for the Groton Historical Society library, staff, volunteers, and the Collections Committee will all be better informed on how to care for the society's holdings and more knowledgeable when it comes time to pass the information along to the next generation.

President Ulysses S. Grant in Groton

As many readers may know, President Ulysses S. Grant visited Groton in the year 1869. In light of the recent Presidential election, it is interesting to look back over 100 years ago and read about that era's new President. The following is George S. Boutwell's account of Grant's visit to Groton:

Of the persons who have held the office of President of the United States General Grant is the only one who ever visited the town of Groton. There is a possibility that the elder Adams may have passed through the southerly part of the old town, -now the town of Ayer- on a visit to his cousin the Reverend Zabdiel Adams, who for many years was the settled minister at Lunenburg. John Adams and Zabdiel Adams were not only cousins, but they were friends and they were equally active in defense of Colonial rights previous to and during the revolutionary war.

The visit, if ever made, must have been made previous to the election of Mr. Adams to the presidency, as Zabdiel Adams did not outlive the administration of General Washington.

continued on page 4

President's Message~

Dear Members and Friends,

The leaves have turned and are falling, and falling – just waiting for us to rake them up from our lawns and driveways. Perhaps we will have a mild winter with almost no snow and no really cold temperatures. We can only hope.

The Historical Society had a great summer with open houses every Sunday from June through September. I hope you were able to visit and see our new exhibit on Groton architecture and houses. We have a wonderful history which is often evidenced in our houses. Our next door neighbor, the Drs. Lewis' house, is being refurbished. Most of you have probably noticed its soft brown color. Perhaps we started something when we had our house repainted several years ago. John Ott once gave me a copy of a book published around 1880. It stated that to paint a house white was like you were wearing your underwear outside. Although by today's standards this may seem acceptable, perhaps our predecessors had the right idea.

On to business. We have some changes to our membership levels . After many years of discussion, the Board of Directors has decided to increase the cost of membership. The Historical Society, like many not-for-profit organizations, relies on contributions, dues, and grants to sustain its efforts. With the economy currently being somewhat questionable, we are aware that many of you have decided to eliminate unnecessary expenditures. I hope that the Historical Society is important enough to you and to Groton that you will continue to support our efforts.

Sincerely,



Ted Roselund, President

Membership Update!

The Groton Historical Society is in the process of reorganizing and streamlining its membership process.

The first change the Groton Historical Society has implemented is an adjustment of membership rates and levels.

Our new rates are as follows:

- Annual Member (Individual or Family): \$35**
- GHS Sponsor: \$75**
- Corporate Sponsor: \$250**
- Life Member: \$500**
- Sustaining Member: \$1,000**

The memberships are all valid for one year upon receipt of dues.

Over the next few months we hope to finish transferring our membership list into a database which will allow us to better track donation and dues history and will also allow us to send out renewal notices when memberships are near expiration.

Also we are encouraging people to share their email addresses with us. We are continuing to send out paper newsletters but, on occasion, we use email for special announcements, calls for volunteers, etc. If you have not yet, and would like to give us your email address you can email us at:

hostess@grotonhistoricalsociety.org

Membership Update!

Join, Renew, or Tell a Friend!

Membership Form

<u>Sign up for:</u>	<u>Price</u>	<u>Total</u>
Annual Member (Individual or Family)	\$35	_____
GHS Sponsor	\$75	_____
Corporate Sponsor	\$250	_____
Life Member	\$500	_____
Sustaining Member	\$1,000	_____
Additional Contribution (Tax-Deductible)		_____
	Total	_____

Please tell me more about including GHS in my estate planning.

Name to appear on membership card:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Please mail to:

**The Groton Historical Society
172 Main Street
PO Box 202
Groton, MA 01450**

President Grant in Groton

continued from page 1

In the year 1869, and in the month of June, a grand musical jubilee was held in Boston in honor of the return of peace and the restoration of the Union.

General Grant attended the jubilee and at the end of his stay in Boston he honored us with a visit. We left Boston at about nine o'clock in the evening of June 16 at the end of a formal dinner at the Revere House. Ralph Waldo Emerson was at the party and on leaving the train at Concord, it was his mishap and the misfortune of a passenger who continued in the train, that Mr. Emerson carried away an overcoat which he did not own and left one that he did own.

Gen. Grant was accompanied by his Excellency Wm Claflin by Gen Underwood one of staff officers of the Governor and by Ulysses S. Grant Jr.-all of whom remained in Groton during the stay of Gen Grant.

We arrived at Groton at about ten o'clock. The President was met by a very considerable number of the citizens. He was saluted by the discharge of an ancient, small sized cannon, and he was escorted from the station to my house by the Groton Brass Band. The President had no respect for brass bands and he did not hesitate to say in conversations when he afterwards referred to his visit, that he had hoped to get into Groton and to get away without the aid of a brass band.

The next morning I gave the President an opportunity to see the town as far as it could be seen in a drive of an hour. He gave a public reception at my house between the hours of ten and eleven o'clock. In that time 3300 persons according to an accurate count, passed through the house and took the hand of the President.

The count was made by Dr Norman Smith and Mr Nathan Thayer- About 100 friends were in the house when the reception began- The reception was held in the drawing room on the north side of the house the people passing in at the front door and leaving the house by the door at the rear of the hall.

At half past twelve o'clock I accompanied him to Worcester, where he was received by the authorities of that city.

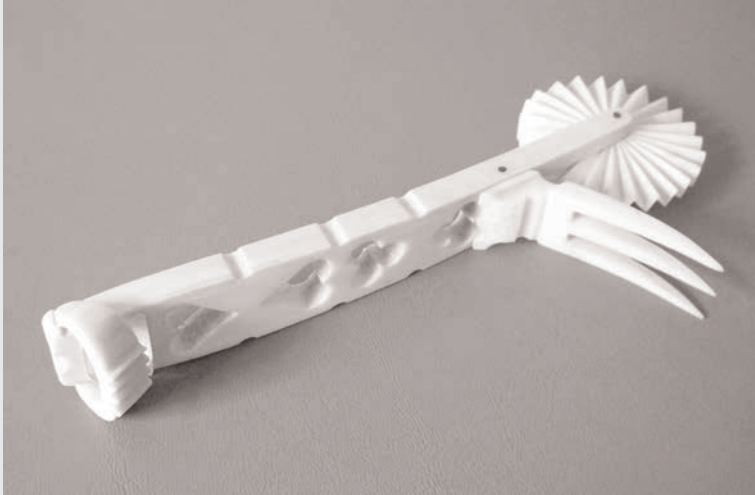
The other persons who accompanied the President to Worcester were Mrs. Boutwell, Miss Georgianna Boutwell, Miss Abby E. Boutwell, Mr. Nathan R. Thayer, Col. Daniel Needham Mrs Carrie Needham-Mr. Chas. W. Waters-Mr. Alexander Casey Mrs. Jennie Wellington, Miss Fannie Whiting Dr. Amos B. Bancroft Mrs. Marietta Bancroft,-and others-

General Grant said that it was the first time that he had ever had an official escort of ladies and gentlemen and that he considered the innovation a good one-

Gov. Claflin and Gen. Underwood accompanied the party to Worcester but Mr. Ulysses S. Grant Jr left the train at Ayer and Mr. Francis M. Boutwell escorted him to Boston.

As the house in which the President spent the night may outlast the persons now living it may not be out of place to say that he occupied the northerly room on the street front.

WHAT IS IT?



Each issue of the newsletter will feature a photo of an intriguing item from the Society's Collection. Tell us what you think the item is or what it was used for.

Email, Call or Write us
with your ideas
(contact info at page bottom)

Interesting responses and an explanation will appear in the next issue of the newsletter.

SO...WHAT WAS IT?



Congratulations to everyone who correctly identified last issue's item as a *baby minder*

This contraption is an antique equivalent of a modern baby walker. In this case, the baby would be placed in the wooden minder. The child could stand up by holding onto the top of the frame or one of the cross pieces. In this example, the tray on the front was used to hold toys. Some other improvements during the 19th century included adding wheels on the bottom so the child could push himself around and springs to allow the child to bounce.

Visit us, Write us, Call us, Email us

The Groton Historical Society

172 Main Street
PO Box 202
Groton, MA 01450

(978)488-0092
hostess@grotonhistoricalsociety.org



The Boutwell House-1851

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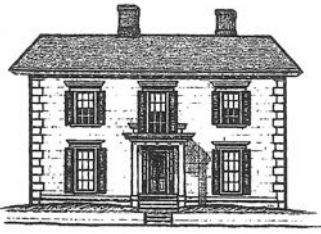
Successful Open House Season 2008

The doors to the Boutwell House were open every Sunday during the months of June through September. This summer brought more visitors than many recent years. There were many Sunday afternoons where over twenty people walked through the house. Many visitors were local, but many others came from out of town and out of state. Some visitors came to do research or ask specific questions. We had both repeat visitors and new visitors.

The Historical Society would like to extend a huge ***THANK YOU*** to everyone who helped make the season a success, volunteers and visitors alike.

We hope to see many of you next year for our Open House season. Watch for an update in our Spring newsletter-we hope to have a new exhibit, some re-worked displays, and other special events!

Thank You!



The Boutwell House-1851

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Volume 9, Issue 2

Spring 2008

Great Turnout at GHS Slideshow Program

Groton Pictured: 100 Years Ago, the first program of scanned and digitized pictures made from the Groton Historical Society's collection of glass slides, drew a standing-room-only crowd to Sibley Hall at Groton Public Library on January 8, 2008.

The society and the library joined to present the program. An afternoon showing and startlingly warm weather for the season helped draw an audience made up mostly of long-time residents of the town.

As Groton Historical Society President Ted Roselund got them to anticipate from his introductory remarks, the more than 40 century-old pictures, taken in 1907 by the Rev. C. W. Turner, were of excellent quality, sharp and clear black and white images.

Since the society has about 450 additional glass slides made by others, beyond those of Turner, Roselund said, the Society intends to have more pictures to show in the future and eventually hopes to publish a catalog of them all.

Viewers saw first the entire set of pictures in quick succession. In a playback, Tom Callahan, the society's program chairman, returned each scene to the screen for an extended look. For each he read brief identifying notes previously prepared for these slides and encouraged viewers in the audience to add out loud any details they could from their recollections. *(text by Charles David Gordon)*

In response to the high level of interest the first showing of the program elicited from the Groton community, the Historical Society and the Groton Public Library offered another showing of the slides on March 4, 2008 at 7 P.M. and, again, drew a large crowd.



Groton Historical Society Program Director, Tom Callahan, presents the *Groton Pictured* slideshow to a full house on January 8th.
Photo courtesy of Groton Public Library

President's Message~

Dear Members and Friends,

The Board of Directors is very happy to welcome two new members to the Board. Bonnie Carter has joined us as a Director and brings great knowledge of the town and a familiarity with Groton-related artifacts. Jane Morriss has agreed to join the Board as Publicist for the Society. We feel that it is very important that the entire community is aware of the Society, our programs, our collection, and our activities. Welcome Bonnie and Jane!

At our February meeting, we spent considerable time establishing goals for 2008 and perhaps beyond. Thanks to Jane Allen for facilitating the session. Our principle goals are:

- Establish priorities for facilities maintenance
- Improve outreach programs
- Raise funds to maintain the longevity of the Society
- Assess, expand, maintain, and promote the collection

Within each goal there are many specific goals that we will tackle over the next year. I ask you to be receptive to requests from any of us on the Board to help the Society achieve these goals. And, speaking of helping the Society, we need volunteers to host our Sunday open houses this summer. This is a wonderful chance to meet people and share your knowledge of Groton history.

The project of digitizing our collection of glass slides is going well. Tom Callahan, the Society's Program Director, put on a wonderful program at the Library with over 40 photographs taken in 1907 of Groton houses. Tom also included a great deal of information about the pictures and even current views of some of the houses. The first showing drew over 100 people and the second over 50. A very successful program! Thank you, Tom.

I hope you all feel that the Historical Society is offering something positive to the town. We would like very much to hear your comments and feelings. Please email us at hostess@grotonhistoricalsociety.org or call Kara Fossey at 978-488-0092.

Sincerely,



Ted Roselund, President

GHS Opens for 2008 Season on June 1st

The Boutwell House will be opening for its summer hours on June 1st. Open houses will be held on Sundays from 2-4 P.M. The last open Sunday for the season will be September 28th. Come see, for the first time or as a repeat visitor, the interesting and unique treasures that decorate the interior of the Boutwell House: furniture, textiles, decorative arts, tools, and documents. A new exhibit (preview on page 4) will also be in place for the start of the season and be available for viewing during all the open houses.

Call for Volunteers!

The Historical Society needs volunteers to act as hosts and hostesses during our open hours on Sunday afternoons from June to September. Hosts/Hostesses are responsible for greeting visitors to Boutwell House and interpreting the history of Groton and the house. Using provided tour material, guides will help visitors to understand Groton's past and the town's place in the greater context of Colonial American history.

This is a good opportunity to share your own knowledge with visitors and to also learn more about the history of the town. The artifacts in the Boutwell House are also a great resource for understanding New England domestic and social history.

**If you are interested in helping out for one Sunday, or for several,
please call Kara Fossey
at 978-448-0092**

Any and all help is greatly appreciated.

Exhibit Preview

The 2008 open season at the Groton Historical Society will offer something new for visitors. A new exhibit is being designed for the Boutwell House's rotating exhibit gallery. The exhibit will build upon the successful showing of the C.W. Turner photographs at the Library in January and March. Some of the photographs will be enlarged and on view. Other elements will also be added to create a different dimension. A combination of a few specific artifacts, photographs, maps, and a focus on changing architectural styles will combine together to create a fresh and new look at the buildings that line our streets.

Since the Groton Pictured slideshow program was presented, over 10 other C.W. Turner photographs have been located (see photograph below) and some of these will be unveiled at the new exhibit.



*Nahum Woods Place
Lowell Road, built c. 1720*

Visit us, Write us, Call us, Email us

The Groton Historical Society

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Tell us what you think the item is or what it was used for.

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or

Call or Write Us
(contact info on page 4)

Interesting responses and an explanation will appear in the next issue of the newsletter.



SO...WHAT WAS IT?



Congratulations to everyone who correctly identified last issue's item as a *bread toaster*.

And thanks for our favorite answer:
*A gizmo for incinerating junk mail in the hearth,
an old-fashioned SPAM deleter.*

All early American homes had tools similar to this that were used to toast bread on an open hearth. The thick slices of bread were placed between the iron gates and left to toast in the heat of the fire. The long shaft allowed for safe maneuvering by the fire and the wooden handle provided insulation.



The Boutwell House-1851

The Groton Historical Society

172 Main Street, P.O. Box 202
Groton, MA 01450

**Join the Groton Historical Society on
Tuesday April 8, 2008 at 7 P.M.**

Ink on Paper

Preserving Groton's Historic Town Records

Written history, ink on paper, is one of the most fragile artifacts that cultures, communities, and individuals can leave behind. It is also, arguably, the most important in piecing together the events of years past. Therefore, it is imperative that these early records are preserved.

During the last several years Groton has used Community Preservation Act funds to preserve over 30 volumes of written records dating back to the early 18th century. Many more are left to be assessed and preserved.

Bill Stewart of Brown's River Bindery is working on this Historic Town Record Preservation Project. He will be giving a talk on the history of the process of making paper, threats to paper artifacts, steps to preserve these records, and a slideshow detailing the preservation process.

**This presentation will be held on
April 8, 2008 at 7 P.M.
Groton Senior Center, 168 West Main Street, West Groton**



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Volume 9, Issue 3

Summer 2008

Schoolhouse Restoration Program a Bell Ringer!

By C. David Gordon

Groton Historical Society's July 8th program, "Ringing the Bell: Revisiting the One-Room Schoolhouse," couldn't have taken place at a better location: Groton's district schoolhouse, Sawtell School, known also as Chicopee School No. 7.

And what better speaker than Susan Fineman, "schoolmarm" at Nashua's restored District No. 1 Schoolhouse and an important figure in the Country School Association of America.

Work is well underway to restore Sawtell School. Many of the schoolbuilding's trustees and friends were present for the program, together acting as co-hosts for the occasion.

Fineman inspired continued work on restoration with her message about the need to preserve these buildings and to revisit the teaching and learning that went on inside them as important elements of the nation's past. The many photos she screened of restored country schoolhouses across the nation made us want to visit them and learn more about the story of each. Her images of schoolchildren and their teachers outside their schools and a few instances of a camera's catching instruction going on inside brought nostalgia for that simpler past.

Following the program, members and guests – many of them teachers or former teachers – moved out of the yet-to-be-restored interior of the schoolhouse into the gathering dusk to a cool spot outside. There they enjoyed homemade ice cream that the Society's Program Chairman Tom Callahan made. (It was excellent!) They added the ice cream to strawberry shortcake as they conversed about old school days. It became, in miniature, Groton's own strawberry festival!



Susan Fineman speaks to guests at the Chicopee Schoolhouse after her presentation on the importance of One-Room Schoolhouse preservation and restoration.

President's Message~

Dear Members,

I hope all of you are having an enjoyable summer. The Historical Society continues to prosper; particularly with Kara Fossey at the society three days a week. Kara has just completed a new exhibit featuring Groton architecture. The exhibit has many photos of Groton houses as they looked in 1907. The photos come from a large collection of glass slides in our possession. We have scanned many of the pictures into the computer and now have them available for all to see. We plan to make prints available for purchase in the future. Last spring, we held two presentations of our pictures at the Public Library. Over 150 people attended!

On July 8th, Tom Callahan, our Program chair, organized a special event at the Sawtell School. This is the one room school on Chicopee Row. We had an entertaining and informative presentation by Susan Fineman, a former Lowell school teacher who is extremely knowledgeable on the history and preservation of one room school houses in America. The presentation was followed with homemade vanilla ice cream (hand cranked by Tom), fresh strawberries, and shortcake. It was delicious.

On a less positive note, we had to pre-buy our heating oil for next winter. The bill was for \$13,664. This assumes the same oil consumption as last winter for the Boutwell House including its two apartments. I have asked Kris Kramer, building and grounds chair, to have the Electric Light Department do an energy audit on the Boutwell House. We hope to apply for a grant from the Community Protection Act (CPA) Committee to replace all the windows in the Boutwell House with energy efficient and architecturally correct windows. This will be a major undertaking, and I hope the Committee and the voters at Town Meeting will favorably consider us at the Spring Town Meeting.

Once again, I hope you have a happy and safe summer. Please come to one of our Sunday open houses to see our new exhibit. We are open from 2 until 4 pm.

Sincerely,



Ted Roselund, President

Preserving Town Records

By C. David Gordon

On April 6 the Groton Historical Society presented a program called an “Ink on Paper” at the Senior Center featuring the project to preserve Groton’s historic town records. The project to preserve early town records, financed by Community Preservation Act funds, is about 50 to 60 percent complete, according to Michael Roberts, on the GHS board and one of the initiators of Groton’s Community Preservation Act program.

Featured speaker on the program, Bill Stewart, document preservationist with Brown’s River Bindery of Essex Junction, Vermont, described the process that his company used to process Groton’s town records. At Brown’s River each step in the paper preservation process involves the skilled work of several different workers.

Old glue, stitching, and binding were removed and a water wash used to remove acidity in old paper and/or ink that can bring on deterioration. Special tape was used to mend tears, and fragmented edges were hand trimmed. Stitchers used an Irish linen thread to sew sets of pages together, and then these individual page sets were glued in one binding with a cover to form a book. Material too fragile to be re-sewn was placed in Mylar envelopes. The firm also microfilmed the original documents to provide a permanent record of the originals.

Acid in old paper or ink is but one source of paper deterioration, Stewart noted. Careless storage and handling; inappropriate means of repairing paper tears or binding failures; temperature, humidity, or light; and even natural catastrophes can also cause deterioration.

Although Groton’s town vault at Town Hall may be “a little on the small size,” Stewart said, storing the old town records in it has helped preserve them in better shape “than in so many communities in New England.” He praised the town for its “steps taken to preserve” valuable documents.

Join, Renew, or Tell a Friend!

Membership Form

<u>Sign up for:</u>	<u>Price</u>	<u>Total</u>
Individual Annual Member	\$15	_____
Annual Family Membership	\$25	_____
Annual Sponsor	\$50	_____
Annual Patron	\$75	_____
Life Member	\$150	_____
Silver Petapawag Partner	\$250	_____
Gold Petapawag Partner	\$350	_____
Platinum Petapawag Partner	\$500	_____
Additional Contribution (Tax-Deductible)		_____
	Total	_____

Please tell me more about including GHS in my estate planning.

Name to appear on membership card:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Please mail to:

**The Groton Historical Society
 172 Main Street
 PO Box 202
 Groton, MA 01450**

Why no Town Charter?

By Judy Adams

In light of recent events, the necessity for the town to apply for a charter, I found myself wondering why Groton DIDN'T have a charter. A trip to the library led me to Caleb Butler's 1848 "History of the Town of Groton" and very interesting details about the 17th century origins of our town.

In 1655, the General Court in Boston, then an agent of the King of England, granted a "plantation" eight miles square along the Nashua River, to a group of petitioners. These original proprietors were appointed to be the first selectmen for a term of 2 years. They were to encourage other settlers until there was enough of a community to support a minister and handle their own affairs, including the election of a new board of selectmen. According to Butler: "...the Governor and Company of Massachusetts Bay made grants of land to companies and individuals, for towns and plantations, usually annexing certain conditions to their grants: such as that a certain number of settlers or families would within a stated time build and settle upon the same; of that the gospel should be regularly preached...In this manner towns were constituted in Massachusetts, without any more formal act of incorporation. There were 44 towns thus established within the Plymouth and Massachusetts Colonies before the year 1655."

I surmise that, since many of those original 44 towns rapidly grew into urban and suburban communities, most of them long since applied for charters, in order to make the necessary changes to their forms of government that their growth required. The government of Groton has finally reached that size and complexity.

It is interesting to note that new settlers were given separate plots of different types of land: meadows and uplands, as well as up to 20 acres for a house. But settlers were slow to take advantage of this offer.

In 1659, the General Court responded to a petition from one of the Selectmen for a committee to investigate the reason for this. According to Butler, "...there seems to have been some improper management by the proprietors...which hindered and delayed its settlement..." The committee appointed by the Court declared exactly how much of each kind of land the proprietors should hold for themselves, and stipulated that the remainder should accommodate at least 60 families.

By 1662, it appears that enough families had settled in Groton that the town was now managing its own government. A Town Meeting at that time appointed a clerk and decreed that land records should be kept. The Meeting also addressed issues of rights of way and trees thereon.

By rights conveyed by the Massachusetts General Court in 1655 the town of Groton carried on without a charter for 353 years.

WHAT IS IT?

Each issue of the newsletter will feature a photo of an intriguing item from the Society's Collection.

Tell us what you think the item is or what it was used for.

Hint: Object is approximately 2 feet tall

Email, Call or Write us
with your ideas
(contact info at page bottom)

Interesting responses and an explanation will appear in the next issue of the newsletter.



SO...WHAT WAS IT?



Congratulations to everyone who correctly identified last issue's item as a
handcuffs

And thanks for our favorite guess:
A pair of eyeglasses

This pair of 19th century handcuffs looks quite different from modern restraints. This design was not adjustable and did not allow for different sized wrists-it was one size fits all! Therefore, you could either be thick-wristed and significantly uncomfortable or thin-wristed with a (lucky) potential escape!

Visit us, Write us, Call us, Email us

The Groton Historical Society

172 Main Street
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(978)488-0092
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The Boutwell House-1851

The Groton Historical Society

172 Main Street, P.O. Box 202

Groton, MA 01450

Visit the Historical Society!

Sundays 2 PM to 4 PM

(through September 28th)

The Historical Society opens its doors on Sunday afternoons at 2 PM. The rooms of the Boutwell House are filled with interesting and intriguing artifacts. Just a sampling of the treasures on view:

- *embroidered Prescott-Lawrence Coat of Arms
- *tall case clock made by E. Patch, Groton, 1815
- *military roll of Groton Civil War soldiers
- *large collection of fire buckets
- *bed in which President Grant slept during his visit to Groton

Even if you have visited recently, you may want to plan another trip to see our new exhibit:

Building Groton: 100 Years of Domestic Architecture

The exhibit features photographs taken by C.W. Turner in 1907 that illustrate the predominant architectural styles in Groton during the 18th and 19th centuries. A number of the photographs are on view with pertinent historical information. Also a slideshow of the whole collection of photographs runs continuously in the exhibit gallery.



Then and Now

A Newsletter of the Groton Historical Society

Volume 9, Issue 1

Winter 2008

Generous Gifts Continue to Enhance Collection



Zelda Moore, of Ayer, presented Groton Historical Society President Ted Roselund with two publications by Edward Adams Richardson. The presentation took place at the Society's October Board of Directors Meeting.

by William Miller in the early forties." He provides names, describes homesteads and gives insight into the environment that encouraged many local Grotonians to become Millerites. *Moors School at the Old District No. 2: The Story of a District School* is a delightful and informative glimpse into the history of the educational scene in 19th century Groton. In addition to multiple lists of students who attended the district school, he includes many photographs of prominent citizens and many structures in town as well as background information about many of the town residents.

Each booklet is a fascinating read for any local history buff and we hope to provide access to these treasures to any interested researcher.

Zelda Moore, a distinguished guest at the November 17 monthly board meeting of the Groton Historical Society, presented to the Society two historical pamphlets written by Edward Adams Richardson, a prominent member and historian of the Ayer community in the late 19th and early 20th century. Ms. Moore, herself a noted resource and preserver of local history, was close to the author's son, Ralph, who continued in his father's footsteps, chronicling and collecting artifacts and documents relating to the history of Ayer. With each offering, there is an obituary notice from the Turners Public Spirit dated January 11, 1919 that fully describes the life of Edward A. Richardson.

Edward, a local businessman, politician and civic leader, wrote articles for the local press about history of the area. *The Community: The Story of a Neighborhood* is a friendly, accessible, almost folksy discussion of the area of Groton that "...was a gathering place in the year 1847 and thereafter of kindred spirits who had become knitted together in the bonds of friendship and in their faith in the second advent of Christ as set forth

President's Message ~

Dear Historical Society members,

It has been a while since you have heard from us, but hopefully that will change as we have a new employee to welcome to the Society. Kara Fossey is working at the Society for 20 hours per week. She has lots of enthusiasm, education, and experience to make her a wonderful addition to our organization. Another article by our Curator, Barbara Spiegleman, will tell you much more about Kara.

This past year has been an exciting one for us. We sponsored the Civil War re-enactment at the Rosenbergers' in July. We had over 350 reenactors, several local people to represent Gov. Boutwell, Moses Palmer and others at the Boutwell House and many volunteers to make the weekend successful. I must mention Su Peyton, who chaired the event, Earl & Bonnie Carter, Eleanor Gavazzi, Tom Summers, Don Black, Savas Danos, and many others who made the weekend a great success. We had over 1,500 spectators on Saturday and over 1,000 on Sunday. I must give special thanks to Andrew and Billie Rosenberger for allowing us to use their beautiful apple orchard and fields.

In September, we hosted 5 third grade classes (not all at once) from the Florence Roche School. They were given a tour of the Boutwell House including a chance to sit on the bed where President Grant slept in 1869. After visiting the Boutwell House, the school children visited the Old Burying Ground with Eleanor Gavazzi and Debbie Beal Normandin as hosts. We had almost 125 children accompanied with teachers and parents.

In October we had a new balustrade constructed over the front portico. It replaces the balustrade that was there in 1851 when the house was built.

Looking forward to 2008, we have a planning meeting scheduled for January 19th to set our goals for this year.

Sincerely,



Ted Roselund, President

Visit us, Write us, Call us, Email us

The Groton Historical Society

172 Main Street
PO Box 202
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hostess@grotonhistoricalsociety.org

New Face at GHS!

Members of the Board are pleased to announce the hiring of Kara Fossey as our new administrative assistant. Kara's presence as a staff member provides our community with an accessible contact person to field requests, conduct tours and arrange research opportunities as well as fuel the machinery that keeps the daily operation running. Kara's credentials for this position matched our needs for an individual who could help steer our organization toward the goals we set forth this past year. She was an art history major at Wheaton College, received a certificate in Museum Studies from Tufts University, worked as a curator on exhibits and cataloged artifacts and documents for the Townsend Historical Society. She brings a passion for local history and a keen interest in offering this history to the wider Groton Community in all its elements. We welcome Kara to our organization and look forward to her becoming the public face that represents the Groton Historical Society.

New Face at GHS!

January marks a new year and our new time to call for members.
Join or Renew!

2008 Membership Form

<u>Sign up for:</u>	<u>Price</u>	<u>Total</u>
Individual Annual Member	\$15	___
Annual Family Membership	\$25	___
Annual Sponsor	\$50	___
Annual Patron	\$75	___
Life Member	\$150	___
Silver Petapawag Partner	\$250	___
Gold Petapawag Partner	\$350	___
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Additional Contribution (Tax-Deductible)		___
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Living History at Boutwell House

Hillbrook Orchard is not the only place in town providing glimpses of the nation's past during the Civil War re-enactment last summer from July 13 to 15. Historic figures portrayed by re-enactors spent some time at Boutwell House too, including President Ulysses S. Grant (played by John Balco), Governor George Boutwell (Brian Bixby), and Union Officer and Groton resident Captain Moses Palmer (James Reynolds).

Other re-enactors played the roles of Mrs. Boutwell, Dr. Samuel Green, and representatives of the Women's Sanitary Commission. The Commission brought with them a box of goods they'd packed to send to a Union soldier.



Historical Society Hosts Third Grade Classes



Barbara Spiegelman, Boutwell House Museum Curator, greeted one of the third grade classes from Florence Roche School as they prepare to tour the Society's headquarters.

Over a period of three days in October, five third grade classes from the Florence Roche School visited the Boutwell House and the Old Burying Ground for tours and to hear stories of old days in Groton. This reflected a renewed commitment by the Board of Directors to engage the young people of Groton with the rich history of their town and its place in the larger context of American history. Judging from the thank you letters we received, the children were especially impressed by the chance to sit on the bed in which President Grant slept, by how heavy the Civil War scattergun is, and by what life was like for Groton children during earlier times.

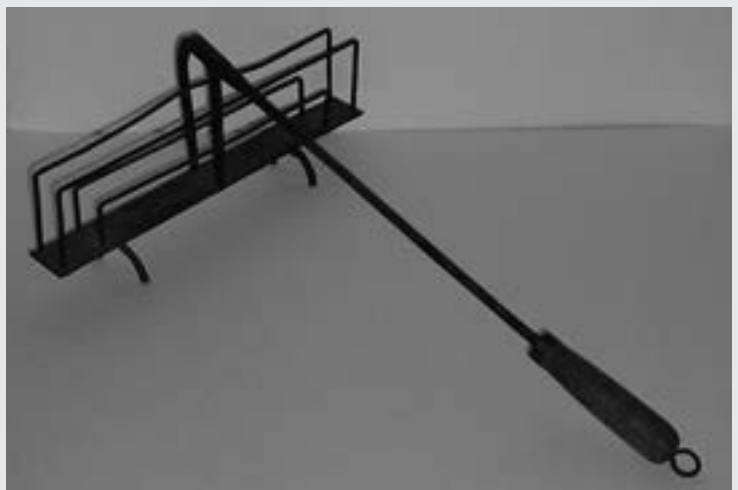
The Society continues to focus on and expand its educational efforts to include the young people of Groton and to be an ongoing resource for the schools.

WHAT IS IT?

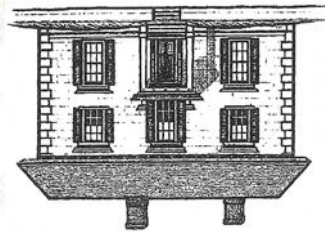
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Email your ideas to:
hostess@grotonhistoricalsociety.org

Interesting responses and an explanation will appear in the next issue of the newsletter.



The Groton Historical Society
172 Main Street, P.O. Box 202
Groton, MA 01450



**Be sure not to miss the Groton Historical Society's
January meeting at 2 P.M., January 8, 2008.**

There will be a special daytime program jointly presented by the Groton Historical Society and the Groton Public Library.

Groton Pictured: 100 Years Ago

Come view a newly recovered collection of photographs of Groton homes and places taken in 1907 by Rev. C.W. Turner. The images have been scanned and digitized by Susanne Olson of the library staff from glass plates long in possession of the Historical Society. They are remarkably detailed and very intriguing.

According to William Richard Cutter's *Historic Homes and Places and Genealogical and Personal Memoirs Relating to the Families of Middlesex County, Massachusetts*, photographs of the ten oldest properties extant in the town one hundred years ago comprise part of the collection. These include: the Parsonage, built by the town in 1706; the house of John Longley, 1712; the Samuel Bowers Tavern, 1750; the house of Abel Prescott, 1750; the Groton Inn, 1770; the house of Amos Lawrence, 1770; the Elnathan Sawtell Tavern, 1775; the house of Governor Sullivan, 1775; the house of Benjamin Bancroft, 1775 and the John Capell Tavern, 1785.

The meeting will be held at a special time, 2 P.M., on January 8, 2008 in Sibley Hall at the Groton Public Library. (A snow date has been set for January 15, same time and place). Please call the library at 978 448 1167 for more information.



The Boutwell House-1851

Then and Now

A Newsletter of the Groton Historical Society

Volume 10, Issue 3

December 2009

Groton Archeology Study

By Michael Roberts

This month the Town of Groton will see the start of an almost yearlong process designed to add our town's archeological resources to the inventory of those historic resources documented through the capable research of Sanford Johnson and others. As with the earlier studies of historic resources, these projects represent the town's Community Preservation dollars at work and will benefit our town and its citizens for many years to come. The idea for this project was developed by our Historical Commission, whose responsibility is to inventory and bring under its protection the historic and archeological resources of our community and to facilitate an understanding of these resources by the citizens of Groton, the region and the nation. Recently, the Commission developed a CPA project proposal with the co-sponsorship of the Groton Planning Board. As a result of that proposal, the town has selected the University of Massachusetts' Archeological Services group to conduct the project according to a scope-of-work developed by the Groton Historical Commission and the Groton Planning Board. In a support letter accompanying the proposal,

Historical Commission Chair Al Collins set the stage for the project. His text follows:

Some 15,000 years ago, the land upon which Groton sits emerged from beneath a one mile thick glacier which completely wiped clean and reshaped what is now the Town of Groton. Since that time our town lands, which are very unique in form, have seen various cultures and civilizations of Native Americans and European settlers who all had a hand in shaping life as we know it today. These many cultures and civilizations have all deposited remnants of their existence, only to be seemingly erased by the forces of nature. In reality, many of these remnants are still hidden beneath the layers of soil we currently live on and we are fortunate to retain the opportunity to identify, research, document and understand the cultures and civilizations of the past.

continued on page 4

American History Scholar Traces Path Leading to Civil War

By C. David Gordon

Leonard Richards, Professor of History Emeritus at University of Mass.-Amherst, presented the connection his studies indicate between the California Gold Rush of 1848 and the country's ultimately failed efforts prior to the Civil War to maintain a balance of power between northern and southern states and thereby preserve the Union.

Richards's illustrated talk before about 30 members and guests of the Groton Historical Society on October 20 at Lawrence Academy's MacNeil Lounge conveyed the essence of his 2007 book, "The California Gold Rush and the Coming of the Civil War."

Continued on page 6

President's Message~

Dear Members and Friends,

It has been a while since I have had a chance to share with you the many activities and happenings at the Historical Society. First and foremost, we had a very successful summer of Sunday open houses. Thank you very much to those who volunteered their time to be a host or hostess. We had many visitors not just from Groton but also many visitors from out of state. I know that everyone I escorted through the house, enjoyed very much seeing our collection.

We did have a problem this summer with the plumbing in one of the apartments. Water leaked from the second floor bathroom into the museum kitchen. Part of the ceiling fell. The mess has been cleaned, and we are expecting to have the ceiling repaired soon. We had to wait until after the open houses were through as every item must be removed from the kitchen before the repairs can be done.

As you know we have two rental apartments in the rear of the Boutwell House. In September, Leslie Smith informed us that she would be leaving after 15 years to move in with her daughter. The Board of Directors has discussed the possibility of not renting Leslie Smith's apartment, and instead using it as office and meeting space. If we were to rent that space, we would have to spend \$8,000 to \$10,000 in order to make it more functional and up-to-date. We believe that it would take over ten years before we could see a positive return of our investment.

And in October, Patricia Davies told us that after 7 years she had been informed of an opening at Willowdale and would be moving. If you have any thoughts or know of someone who might like to rent Patricia Davies' apartment, please either send me a note or an email at hostess@grotonhistoricalsociety.org

As the end of 2009 approaches, please include the Groton Historical Society in your charitable giving. As you know, we are a 501(c)(3) not for profit organization so your gifts are entirely tax deductible. Any and all gifts are very much appreciated.

I hope you all have a joyous holiday season.

Sincerely,



Ted Roselund, President

Proposal for New Educational Program: Groton Junior Historian

By Michael Roberts

Many years ago when I first got into the Historic Preservation business, I encountered a program that I learned to greatly admire over the years. Amazingly, this program is still alive and kicking!! Information about the program can be found at:

<http://ncmuseumofhistory.org/thjha/index.html>

Their web site informs us:

What is the Tar Heel Junior Historian Association?

Since 1953, the organization known as the Tar Heel Junior Historian Association (THJHA) has been encouraging the study of local and state history by North Carolina's young people. Students in grades four through twelve can form a THJHA club, as long as it includes one adult supervisor. Membership in the association is FREE!

North Carolina has a rich and colorful history that spans many centuries. People who helped shape the history of the Tar Heel State include men and women who lived in your community. You can learn much by talking to a senior citizen, visiting a factory or farm, reading an old newspaper, or examining an artifact. Tar Heel Junior Historians make significant contributions to their communities, and in doing so, they learn about themselves. Many of North Carolina's junior historians have received national recognition for their outstanding achievements.

I would like to propose that the Groton Historical Society look into the establishment of "The Groton Junior Historian" program along the lines of the North Carolina example. If there is interest in such a project please email me at redhawk.ma@charter.net, call me at 978-758-1999 or contact the society. If enough people express an interest our Education Committee could lead the way. Who knows, other communities or even the Commonwealth may follow where we lead!



Archeology Study, continued from page 1

Understanding this hidden history will help us understand who we are today and help in molding our town's future. Many cultures and civilizations have farmed, hunted and lived on our town land ranging from the Paleo, Archaic and Woodland Indians, the Nashoba People of the Pawtucket, Algonquian, Nipmuck and Massachusetts Indians thru to modern day's diverse international population and all have left remnants of their existence for us to discover and learn from. We've also shared our town land with past creatures such as the woolly mammoth, mastodons, giant elk and caribou along with giant beaver, bison and bear who all remain a piece of Groton's hidden historic past. As human creatures, whose existence on this earth will be but a brief passing moment, we must accept the primitive concept of time which recognizes the past, present and future as a single moment. We must understand the past as we do the present so we can plan the future and strive to plan in a sustainable way to the seventh generation as Native Americans have done for thousands of years.

In an effort to identify our historic past and preserve these hidden non-renewable cultural resources for future generations, the Groton Historical Commission in collaboration with the Groton Planning Board is proposing a Groton Communitywide Reconnaissance Archeological Survey, Management and Interpretive Planning Project. The purpose of this project is to conduct a community-wide reconnaissance level archeological survey to identify the patterns of prehistoric and historic occupation and activity in Groton, and to determine known and probable locations of archaeological resources associated with past cultures and civilizations. Protecting, preserving and interpreting historic and archeological sites, is an important factor in maintaining and enhancing the quality of life in our community. Thru concise documentation, linked with our project's proposed educational activities, Groton students, residents and town planners will be able to understand, preserve and use an irreplaceable heritage now and into the future.

This project is a continuation of the Groton Historical Commission's program of documenting the historic and archeological resources of Groton. The project also allows for the use of the results in the town's Master Plan and includes recommendations for interpreting historic and archeological information to the citizens of the town and visitors to Groton.

Project's products will include: 1) An application to the State Archeologist for a permit to conduct a reconnaissance archeological survey. 2) A list of known archeological sites and recommendations as to their National Register eligibility. 3) Townwide maps showing locations of zones of high, medium and low archeological potential for both prehistoric and historic period sites. 4) Implementation of two townwide "History Days." 5) Management and interpretive recommendations and proposed bylaws and review procedures for protection of local archeological resources. 6) Locations for interpretive activities and/or features. 7) New and updated site forms for prehistoric and historic archeological sites. 8) Implementation of an "Archeology Day" at Groton-Dunstable Elementary School and/or Middle School during Massachusetts Archeology Month in October. 9) Recommendations for creating a certified archival and artifactual repository at a location in Groton, in coordination with in coordination with the Groton Historical Society, the Groton Historical Commission, the Groton Historic Districts Commission and others. 10) Final archeological sensitivity map(s) and guide on GIS Database. 11) Digital copies of maps to be used with the Town Assessor's maps once they are transferred to GIS. 12) A final archeological reconnaissance report, including management recommendations and a plan for interpreting the historic and archeological resources of Groton.

This project, like the earlier historic-sites projects, is designed to identify and bring into the community planning process historic and archeological sites that make up the unique and historic heritage of Groton. Thus both archeological and historic resources will be able to be considered along with other environmental characteristics of Groton when growth and development decisions are being made.



WHAT IS IT?

Each issue of the newsletter will feature a photo of an intriguing item from the Society's Collection.

Beginning with this issue of the newsletter, the answer will be given on one of the following pages instead of in a subsequent issue.

hint: this item measures about 18 inches tall and stands on a base

{answer on page 7}

SO...WHAT WAS IT?

Congratulations to everyone who correctly identified last issue's item as a *ballot box*



This wooden hand-held box was one of the precursors to our modern day voting booth! In the 19th century, voters would cast their ballot with small wood or clay balls (pictured in the foreground).

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Civil War, continued from page 1

Richards found that the California Gold Rush set off a chain reaction of attempts aimed at keeping a delicate balance of power between so-called free states and slave states. The huge influx of men attracted to the state by the prospect of finding gold drove in a quickening pace the decision to achieve statehood.

This prospect raised the hopes of a few Southern planters, according to Richards. Facing the prospect of reduced profits at home from worn-out land, they saw California as a way to reverse their fortunes. They dreamed of transporting their slaves to the new state to work the goldfields. In that way they would again be rich and the slaves themselves would be more valuable.

California drew up a state constitution including a statement to outlaw slavery. This dismayed the planters, but that roadblock didn't stop some in the South. Richards outlined two separate attempts of different groups of Southerners to look even further south to preserve and even enhance Southern power. One group sought the conquest of Cuba with the idea to present two new states for acceptance into the Union. Another group aimed to conquer Nicaragua. The conquest of Cuba failed outright, and although Nicaragua fell to its invaders, nothing came of making this a state.

The U.S. Congress was hard pressed to work out ways to maintain the balance of northern and southern power, thrown off by California. Henry Clay proposed the Compromise of 1850 and Stephen A. Douglas finally got its elements passed in piecemeal fashion.

The U.S. government had an interest in all that gold too. Driving the development of a transcontinental railroad was the impetus to get the gold east as well as the need for a fast way to send troops west to protect the new areas. Of strategic importance was what route such a means of transportation should take and where its eastern terminal should be.

A southern route from New Orleans, across Texas and to California appeared to gain acceptance with the Gadsden Purchase of 1853.

Northerners began to worry that should this southern route be built first that would nix the building of a more northern route. The Kansas Nebraska Act paved the way for consideration of such a route through Omaha. But in turn, as Richards said, this act "set up a chain of events leading to the Civil War."

continued on page 7

Join, Renew, or Tell a Friend!

Membership Form

<u>Sign up for:</u>	<u>Price</u>	<u>Total</u>
Annual Member (Individual or Family)	\$35	_____
GHS Sponsor	\$75	_____
Corporate Sponsor	\$250	_____
Life Member	\$500	_____
Sustaining Member	\$1,000	_____
Additional Contribution (Tax-Deductible)		_____
		Total _____

Please tell me more about including GHS in my estate planning.

Name to appear on membership card:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Please mail to:

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Civil War, continued from page 6

Ironically, the Gold Rush lasted about a year with its prospecting on the surface of the earth done in the simplest ways. For further extraction of gold the prospector had to turn to hydraulic mining and what Richards termed “hard-rock mining” with its dug shafts underground.

Richards claims a special attraction to the Gold Rush of 1848 and the gold fields of California. His ancestors, he said, were hard-rock miners in Cornwall, England. They immigrated to California, where Richards grew up, and continued mining there. Family members were still mining when he grew up. Stories of the mines and mining “dribbled in as I grew up,” he said.

Richards earned a Ph. D. at the University of California–Davis in 1968. A former History Department chairman at his university, he won the American Historical Association’s Albert J. Beveridge Prize in 1970 for his study “Gentlemen of Property and Standing: Anti-abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America.” He wrote a textbook on the Jacksonian era, “The Advent of American Democracy”; co-edited a collection of documents on American history, “The American Record”; and wrote two other books on American history, “The Life and Times of Congressman John Quincy Adams” (1986) and “The Slave Power: The Free North and Southern Domination” (2000).

Funding for this program came in part from a grant from the Groton Commissioners of Trust Funds.



Professor Leonard Richards (above), photo by C. David Gordon

California Gold Country map (below)



WHAT IS IT? ANSWER

This object is a *lithopane*. Lithopanés are very thin pieces of porcelain with an image in low relief. When light shines behind a lithopane that image comes to life—it has more dimension and can be seen more clearly. Because light was meant to illuminate a lithopane, they were most often used as candle shields, firescreens, lamp shades, or were simply hung in windows to catch the light.



The Boutwell House-1851

The Groton Historical Society

172 Main Street, P.O. Box 202

Groton, MA 01450

Save the Date for our January Program!

Tuesday January 19, 2010

7:00 PM

Sibley Hall

Groton Public Library



The first of the Groton Historical Society's 2010 programs will be held on Tuesday January 19th at the Groton Public Library. At 7:00 PM in Sibley Hall, Reference Librarian Susanne Olson will give a presentation focusing on the Library's recent digitization project. Town Diaries from 1918 to 1958 have been scanned and later volumes will be available as the project continues. The library has also scanned issues of Turner's Public Spirit, a newspaper printed in Groton Junction (which became the town of Ayer in 1871). Currently, issues of the paper available online date from 1908 to 1921. The articles contained in these issues cover not only happenings in Ayer and Groton but also surrounding Massachusetts towns and several towns in Southern New Hampshire. This is a wonderful project that allows greater accessibility for researchers and anyone interested in studying the town's history. Not only can these digital files reach more people by being online, but they also help preserve the originals which can remain safely stored. Please visit the GPL's "Digital Library," accessible from the library's home page under "What We Have."



The Boutwell House-1851

Then and Now

A Newsletter of the Groton Historical Society

Volume 10, Issue 2

Spring 2009

Lowthorpe School Shines Forth in Historical Society Program & Exhibit

By C. David Gordon

Priscilla Hutt Williams's illustrated lecture on "Lowthorpe School of Landscape Architecture: Training Women in Groton 1901-1945," a Groton Historical Society program, opened for view a fascinating and relevant chapter of town history. Williams's subject drew an audience of 55 people to MacNeil Lounge on Lawrence Academy, quite close to the site of Lowthorpe, on March 29th, a cold, raw day that may have helped drive gardeners to the program rather than outside to tend their plants.

Little wonder that Williams should become enthralled with Lowthorpe School. Her Townsend company, Pumpkin Brook Organic Gardening, Inc., has a nursery division called The Seedling Specialist dedicated

to growing "heirloom plants" for her clients. Williams holds a Certificate in Conservation Horticulture from the New England Wild Flower Society and a Letter of Participation in Historic Landscape Preservation from Harvard University's Arnold Arboretum. She trains professional horticulturalists in organic gardening. For Williams her study of Lowthorpe is a work in progress. She spoke in her talk of the existence of "so many threads [of research] to continue with," as she prepares for a next lecture about Lowthorpe, before the Landscape Institute.

In three separate listings during her talk, Williams highlighted happenings at Lowthorpe, placing its golden age from 1920 to 1932. To add perspective she included in each of the three lists relevant events in the town and region and current events in the world outside. Between these helpful lists Williams screened photos that made the school and its program come alive again. Among the candid photos from a local woman's scrapbook I was especially drawn to scenes showing the utter delight and pride local boys were taking in being trained to work gardens of their own.

Post card pictures and photos from school publications and from a House Beautiful magazine article showed the old Prescott House, a centerpiece of the school, and the school grounds to be so attractive that if everything were still in place today surely visitors would flock there. What a beautiful setting to learn in!



GHS President Ted Roselund speaking with Priscilla Williams after the show

continued on page 3

President's Message~

Dear Members and Friends,

Spring is here at last. It seems that the winters are getting longer and longer. I only hope for a long and pleasant summer. And thinking of summer, we need you to volunteer to host our open houses. We ask for only 2 hours on a Sunday. I'll be happy to walk you through the Boutwell House to make you feel comfortable with our collection. Please call Kara at (978) 448-0092 or email her at hostess@grotonhistorical-society.org to sign up. It really is a rewarding and enjoyable time.

I am happy to announce that we are cosponsoring with Karl Rosenberger another Civil War reenactment weekend. Karl is one of Andrew and Billie's sons. He feels that our last reenactment was so well appreciated that we should host another. The event is scheduled for Columbus Day weekend, October 9 – 11. Please make a note in your calendar.

Tom Calahan continues to present us with wonderfully entertaining programs. Our most recent was a presentation by Priscilla Williams on the Lowthorpe School which was located at the current Country Day School. It operated in Groton from 1901 till 1945 and its purpose was to educate women in landscape architecture. In 1945 it merged with the Rhode Island School of Design. Kara Fossey has developed a wonderful display of the Lowthorpe School which you can see this summer at the Boutwell House.

I hope you all have a great summer, and please remember to consider to be a volunteer host or hostess and call or email Kara.

Sincerely,



Ted Roselund, President

'Lowthorpe School' contined from page 1

We in the audience saw students learning how to do land surveying and working in the gardens. Even as they did hands-on gardening they wore long white dresses.

Adding another visual dimension were some digitized images taken from glass slides found at Rhode Island School of Design, the institution which absorbed the Lowthorpe program in 1945. Here were examples of garden designs that Lowthorpe students had created in Newport as well as on the West Coast, in England as well as right at the school itself in Groton. The designs aimed to make it appear that a garden spot a viewer would be walking through had emerged quite naturally in that area. Emphasis would be placed on using plants native to the area.

A couple of photos taken just recently showed how things have changed at the location of the former school. Prescott House today no longer has its many tall chimneys. Dawson Gate with its stone arch can still be found but perhaps not the Dawson Dell with its pool cupped in granite and its plantings, so attractive in some of those glass slides.

Much of the pictorial delights along with lists of courses and other information charts from the school publications make up the exhibit on Lowthorpe School to be found at Boutwell House. Bobbie Speigelman, the Society's curator, and Kara Fossey, its administrative assistant, have created this exhibit.

Lowthorpe School lasted just a short while, but a brush with its story is a reminder that caring to make the world around us more attractive and pleasing is important for human health and happiness in any age. Then too, growing things to eat in our own backyards or in community gardens has come back into prominence in our age. During the school's existence, Lowthorpe School faculty and students helped townspeople to beautify their town and take pride in what they could grow.

Join, Renew, or Tell a Friend!

Membership Form

<u>Sign up for:</u>	<u>Price</u>	<u>Total</u>
Annual Member (Individual or Family)	\$35	_____
GHS Sponsor	\$75	_____
Corporate Sponsor	\$250	_____
Life Member	\$500	_____
Sustaining Member	\$1,000	_____
Additional Contribution (Tax-Deductible)		_____
		Total _____

Please tell me more about including GHS in my estate planning.

Name to appear on membership card:

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Murder at the Sawmill: the Story of Nate Nutting Retold

By: Judy Adams

Nate Nutting lived in Groton during the late 19th century. His home was on a “highway” laid out in 1672 from the Boston Road to the present Old Aye Road. It was called Hill Side Road in the 1875 Atlas of Middlesex Co., Mass., which shows the site of his house and sawmill. By Nate Nutting’s time, this road had been abandoned due to later road developments and the site was little more than a track through the woods. Today the western end is Indian Hill Road, the eastern end is named for Nate Nutting and the section between is a trail through conservation land.

If you go there today, you will wonder how there was ever enough water to turn a water wheel. Whoever built the sawmill could see that if he dammed up the small stream flowing under the road and over the embankment, he could hold back enough water to turn a mill wheel when he opened the sluiceway, at least, in the spring. Historians tell us that the water table was higher then, so looking back we should imagine more water flowing through the site in those days.

The remains of the earthen dam can still be seen. The stone lined sluiceway still channels the stream from the dam, under the road, and toward the embankment where the wheel once stood. The mill foundation is still there, built of huge stone blocks. And you can see the foundation of the house, between the mill and the road, made of field stone with trees and brush now growing in it. On one side of the foundation you can find bricks under the leaf cover, the remains of Nate’s fallen chimney. In the overgrown area below the mill there are remains of some of the mechanisms of the mill operation.

In her book, “A Plantation Called Petapawag,” Virginia May tells us the story of Nate Nutting. He and his wife were poor simple folk who probably kept pretty much to themselves. When they had to go to the village, they hitched their old milk cow to a wagon. Plodding along, dressed in their shabby country clothes, it’s not hard to imagine that some thoughtless people laughed and joked about them. A group of boys and young men, who wandered around town, had often harassed Nate and his wife at their isolated home, drinking up their cider and making a nuisance of themselves. Nate had reported this to the local constable, but what could be done when they lived so far from town and there was no way to call for help when they needed it. Nate finally decided not to put up with it any longer, to be ready to defend himself and his property with his gun.

On the evening of May 16, 1887, a man made his way through the woods to see Nate Nutting about something. Mrs. May suggests in her book that he had had too much to drink. This seems likely, because an argument started, and the man began to threaten Nate, chasing him up the stairs. Nate was not to be treated badly again; he grabbed his rifle and shot the man. On the stairwell he couldn’t miss; the man was killed and Nate went to jail. But folks sympathized with Nate and his wife. They knew about the young ruffians who terrorized some of the area’s more vulnerable citizens. These folks bailed Nate Nutting out of jail and convinced the Grand Jury that the killing was justifiable homicide. So Nate was let out and went back home to his wife on the Hill Side Road. It’s unlikely anyone came around to bother him again.



WHAT IS IT?



Each issue of the newsletter will feature a photo of an intriguing item from the Society's Collection. Tell us what you think the item is or what it was used for.

Email, Call or Write us with your ideas
(contact info at page bottom)

Interesting responses and an explanation will appear in the next issue of the newsletter.

SO...WHAT WAS IT?

Congratulations to everyone who correctly identified last issue's item as a *shoe last*



This small wooden shoe last is a child's size 5. The form was said to be used by the Shakers. It would have been used to make both the right and left shoe, before separate shoe forms were made. These forms could also be inserted into existing shoes in order to give support while repairs were being made. This example is marked "Mt. Delight, Deerfield, NH."

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The Boutwell House-1851

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Open House Season to Start June 7th!

The Historical Society's regular Open House season begins on June 7th. Starting then and ending on September 27th, the Boutwell House will be open every Sunday afternoon from 2 to 4 PM. Come see, for the first time or as a repeat visitor, the interesting and unique treasures that decorate the interior of the Boutwell House. A new exhibit on the Lowthorpe School will be available for viewing all summer. Come get an early look at it on **May 9th** and **10th** when the Boutwell House is open from **11 AM to 3 PM** for a special Open House weekend.

The Historical Society is still seeking volunteers to act as hosts and hostesses during our open hours on Sunday afternoons from June to September. Hosts/Hostesses are responsible for greeting visitors to the Boutwell House and being available to discuss questions any guests may have about Groton or the Boutwell House. Using provided tour material, guides will help visitors to understand Groton's past and the town's place in the greater context of American history. This is a good opportunity to both share your own knowledge with visitors and to also learn more about the history of the town. The artifacts in the Boutwell House are also a great resource for understanding New England domestic and social history.

**If you are interested in helping out
please call Kara Fossey
at 978-448-0092
or email
hostess@grotonhistoricalsociety.org
Any and all help is greatly appreciated.**



The Boutwell House-1851

Then and Now

A Newsletter of the Groton Historical Society

Volume 10, Issue 1

Winter 2009

‘Shadow Catcher’ Program is Hands-on Experience!

By C. David Gordon

The January 6 program of the Groton Historical Society brought some Society members and friends to Groton School to examine Edward S. Curtis’s landmark study in photographs and commentary entitled *The North American Indian*.

Dr. John Tyler, a member of the school’s History Department and director of its de Menil Gallery, introduced the group to the 20-volume collection at the school’s McCormick Library. The Society’s Program Director Thomas Callahan arranged for this program.

Each volume includes a portfolio of large prints loose in a binder and a bound volume of text providing Curtis’s description of individuals in



Dr. John Tyler presenting one of Edward S. Curtis’ portfolios.

the photos and lore about the particular tribe concentrated on. Dr. Tyler described the set as “one of the most significant and controversial representations of traditional American Indian culture ever produced [and it] continues to exert a major influence on the image of [Native Americans] in popular culture.”

Following his introduction to Curtis’s project, Dr. Tyler guided program participants as they each carefully leafed through the free-standing photographs in some of the portfolios and read bits from the associated volumes of text.

Curtis’s work and subscription sales plan was indeed large-scale. His over 2,000 photogravure plates and writings depicted 80 tribes from America’s central plains and Pacific Northwest and included those in British Columbia and Alaska. He lived with Native Americans for about 22 years.

Curtis had hoped to prepare 500 sets of these photographs and writings to sell. He approached President Theodore Roosevelt in 1906 for financial backing. Roosevelt in turn referred him to John Pierpont Morgan, who became Curtis’s sponsor. Roosevelt wrote a forward for the first volume. Curtis started the project in 1896, expecting to finish in six years, but did not complete it until 1930. In each volume, Curtis’s images -- formed by a silver-gelatin, dry-plate process on glass plates -- were beautifully reproduced on quality paper with an expensive leather binding used. Little wonder that the

continued on page 3

President's Message~

Dear Members and Friends,

I would like to share with you some words from Liz Strachan about the Society's efforts to reach out to the public schools. Liz has been Chairperson of the Education Committee for the past several years and I really appreciate her efforts along with other members of the committee: David Gordon, Bobbie Spiegelman, and Kara Fossey.

"About 2 years ago, The Board of Directors of the Historical Society decided that an important part of our mission should be to reach out to the community in order to expand awareness of Groton's long and interesting history. By sharing the unique resources in our possession, we might help Groton's history come alive to all its citizens.

We have begun by focusing on third graders at the Florence Roche School. Last spring five third grade classes visited the Boutwell House for guided tours. They sat on a bed slept in by President Grant, examined various old artifacts and photos, learned that Governor Boutwell walked down Station Avenue every-day to get on a train to go to the State House in Boston, and imagined what Groton was like during that era. We expect this to be an annual visit.

This year the committee has been diligently working on developing "learning kits" for the teachers in Groton schools to use in their classrooms. The first kit is based on a daily log which was kept by esteemed citizen, Caleb Butler, from 1802 until around 1860. The log (which the Society possesses) recorded weather, growing conditions, and sometimes news items of the day. The children will learn much more about Mr. Butler (who made the first map of Groton, wrote the first history of Groton, and served as hog reeve, selectman, postmaster, surveyor, and Grand Master of the Masonic Lodge). They will be invited to keep their own logs and to carry out other classroom activities. The kits are organized to correspond to the State Curriculum Frameworks for 3rd grade.

In the future we hope to expose other age groups within the schools to our rich collection of primary resource materials."

Thank you Liz and the other members of the Education Committee.

Sincerely,



Ted Roselund, President

'Shadow Catcher' contined from page 1

extent of the project and high quality of reproduction required a high price: \$3,000 per set in 1907 with the price rising to \$4,200 by 1924.

Curtis ended up selling only about 220 sets. The project was a failure financially, Dr. Tyler noted.

Both Roosevelt and Morgan had ties to Groton School. Roosevelt and Groton School founder Dr. Endicott Peabody were friends, and Morgan had served on the school's first board of trustees. The Morgan family eventually donated to the school one of a few sets of Curtis's study originally promised to Morgan.

According to Dr. Tyler, part of the controversy surrounding Curtis's work came from his assumption that these tribes were fast disappearing, while in actuality Native American lives and ways have changed over time but the people have not vanished.

Adding to the controversy is the contrived nature of many of the photos. Curtis often had his subjects put on out-of-date costumes for the camera. He would carefully arrange photos, which in part was due to the nature of the photographic technology he used, which could not allow him to take stop-motion candid shots. If this approach distorted the actual view of Native American life, then it could bring into question "the value of the photos as any sort of historic evidence," Dr. Tyler pointed out.

Curtis drew further controversy that he violated Native Americans' right to privacy when he photographed some of them conducting religious ceremonies.

Aside from such concerns, our group's examination of some of the work easily confirmed Dr. Tyler's description of these photos as "very beautiful images." Curtis viewed each photograph as a work of art. He was very much aware of the pictorial quality of each photo he took, carefully composing shots and carrying out photo processing techniques like cropping to convey the quality of romantic beauty of a life he expected soon might disappear.

Our group found that the portfolios contain many close-ups of individual tribal leaders, their time-etched faces revealing strength and character.

continued on page 4

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Membership Form

<u>Sign up for:</u>	<u>Price</u>	<u>Total</u>
Annual Member (Individual or Family)	\$35	_____
GHS Sponsor	\$75	_____
Corporate Sponsor	\$250	_____
Life Member	\$500	_____
Sustaining Member	\$1,000	_____
Additional Contribution (Tax-Deductible)		_____
		Total _____

Please tell me more about including GHS in my estate planning.

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Please mail to:

**The Groton Historical Society
172 Main Street
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Groton, MA 01450**

Training Session Offered at the Boutwell House for Summer Volunteers

The Historical Society needs volunteers to act as hosts and hostesses during our open hours on Sunday afternoons from June to September. Hosts/Hostesses are responsible for greeting visitors to Boutwell House and interpreting the history of Groton and the house. Using provided tour material, guides will help visitors to understand Groton's past and the town's place in the greater context of American history.

The Historical Society is offering a training session this Spring to prepare volunteers for the Open Houses. These sessions will familiarize volunteers with the Boutwell House and the artifacts within it. The session will also cover frequently asked visitor questions and will include time for volunteers to ask questions.

To accommodate most schedules, this session will be held twice and those who plan on coming may pick whichever date he or she prefers:

Saturday April 18th at 10:30 AM
or
Wednesday April 22nd at 6:30 PM

This is a good opportunity to both share your own knowledge with visitors and to also learn more about the history of the town. The artifacts in the Boutwell House are also a great resource for understanding New England domestic and social history.

**If you are interested in helping out for one Sunday, or for several!,
and would like to sign up for a training session
please call Kara Fossey
at 978-448-0092
or email
hostess@grotonhistoricalsociety.org**

.....
'Shadow Catcher' continued from page 3

Other shots show whole figures of Native Americans caught up in a dance ritual or posed in a native costume. There are also compelling portraits of individual young men and women of the tribes and even a few babies.

Curtis photographed war parties planning a raid or ready to ride. We saw a horse and rider drinking from a stream. Others in his photos are carrying out various occupations. A flock of sheep appears in a Navaho photo.

Some of the more idyllic shots are those Curtis took of tepees at various camping grounds often beside a stream. Romantic they may have been, but the photos generally gave us some idea of the places where these tribes made their homes and moved about, and we saw their surroundings as they looked in the different seasons.

WHAT IS IT?



Each issue of the newsletter will feature a photo of an intriguing item from the Society's Collection.

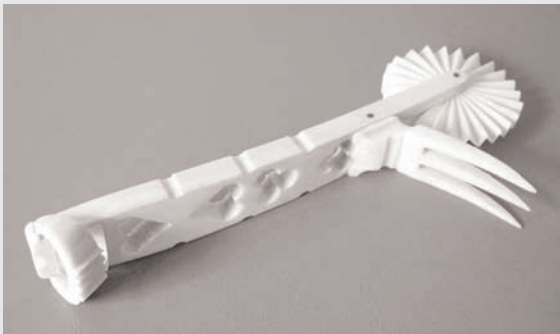
Tell us what you think the item is or what it was used for.

Email, Call or Write us
with your ideas
(contact info at page bottom)

Interesting responses and an explanation will appear in the next issue of the newsletter.

SO...WHAT WAS IT?

Congratulations to everyone who correctly identified last issue's item as a
pie crimper



This bone or ivory pie crimper features carved decoration on the handle.

"The pie crimper is a simple device for cutting pastry, pie strips, and cookies, and for fluting pie edges and sealing pie crusts together...The earliest crimpers were of all wood, cast bronze, iron, or whalebone, or a combination of these materials. Later ones were tin-plated, and in the early 1900's some were patented with aluminum wheels."

(Source: Spinning Wheel, October 1966)

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March Program: The Lowthorpe School



Lowthorpe School as pictured in a school catalogue

At the end of March the Groton Historical Society will present a program on the Lowthorpe School featuring a presentation by Priscilla Williams. The Lowthorpe School was founded in 1901 in Groton for the purpose of educating women in Horticulture and Landscape Design.

The school remained in Groton until the 1940s at which time it was absorbed into the Rhode Island School of Design.

Invitations and notices for the program will come out during the next couple weeks and will have all the details including date, time, and location.

Please join us, tentatively on March 24th, for this program to kick-off Spring!



The Boutwell House-1851

Then and Now

A Newsletter of the Groton Historical Society

Volume 11, Issue 3

October 2010

www.grotonhistoricalsociety.org

Visit us online at www.grotonhistoricalsociety.org. We update our new website with upcoming programs, news, and our 'object of the month.' The current object is a panoramic photograph of Hollingsworth & Vose's Annual Outing, July 26, 1924 taken at the West Groton Athletic Fields. Maybe you'll recognize someone!



detail of photograph, July 26, 1924

Boutwell House Kitchen Project

BEFORE



For many years the kitchen and pantry in the Boutwell House kitchen were filled with an interesting, but odd, array of kitchen implements, cooking tools, and unrelated collections such as muskets and lanterns, from various time periods.

INCIDENT



Because of the plumbing problem, the plaster on the kitchen ceiling weakened and fell to the floor. Though creating a mess, fortunately damage to the items in the room was very minimal.

continued on page 3

President's Message~

Dear Members and Friends,

We have a major project under way at the Historical Society which is detailed in the following pages of the newsletter. Our kitchen suffered from water damage last year and part of the ceiling fell to the floor. Today, thanks to Bonnie and Earl Carter, the entire contents of the kitchen has been removed and stored appropriately in other areas in the Boutwell house. Very shortly, the ceiling will be repaired, then the walls, and finally fresh paint will finish off the project.

After all the basic restorative work is done, we will redecorate the kitchen. This time we will not have muskets, fire buckets, or drums in the kitchen. Our plan is to present a kitchen representative of the mid 1800's; complete with a stove and an ice box. The items which we have taken from the kitchen (guns, fire buckets and drums, etc.) will either be displayed in more appropriate exhibits or kept safe in archival storage.

Kara will move her office to the bedroom of the very small apartment which we have decided not to rent, but rather to use as additional Historical Society space. Included in this space will be a meeting room and additional storage.

Outreach within the community continues to be a high priority for us. We are working with the public schools to expand our involvement with both the primary and secondary grades. As I have reported before, we had a wonderful time with third grade classes visiting the Boutwell House and seeing some of what life was like in the mid 1800's. We are hoping to establish a "young historian" program with high school students which might help to prove that life was, in fact, possible without email, texting, iphones, ipods, etc.-not to mention indoor plumbing and electricity!

Finally, we have begun a search for a new President of the Society. Jane and I have decided to move from our ten room house to something smaller and closer to Boston. I am committed to remain as President until a new President is in place. If any of you has a suggestion, please call Kara at the society at 978-448-0092.

Sincerely,



Ted Roselund, President

Visit us, Write us, Call us, Email us

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info@grotonhistoricalsociety.org

Kitchen Project *continued*

CEILING



Before starting repair on the damaged ceiling, every single item in the kitchen and attached pantry needed to be relocated to new space inside the Boutwell House. A detailed plan was developed to guide this task.

continued on page 5

Books for Purchase

The Groton Historical Society has a number of books for sale at the Boutwell House. If you are interested in ordering copies or arranging a visit to preview the books, please call 978-448-0092 or email info@grotonhistoricalsociety.org

- Images of America, Groton \$21.99
- Academy Days/Groton Days \$12.00
- George S. Boutwell \$20.00
- Groton Epitaphs (Soft Cover) \$6.00
- Groton Epitaphs (Hard Cover) \$10.00
- Groton Houses \$12.00
- Groton Plantation \$12.00
- Index to Butler's History \$5.00
- Tercentenary Book, 1955 \$10.00

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GHS Sponsor	\$75	_____
Corporate Sponsor	\$250	_____
Life Member	\$500	_____
Sustaining Member	\$1,000	_____
Additional Contribution (Tax-Deductible)		_____
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Groton Historical Society goes “off the beaten path” in search of local history

By C. David Gordon

The prospect of a summer evening bus ride to four historically appealing sites in town attracted well over 50 members and friends of the Groton Historical Society on July 13th. The hot weather and rain sprinkles didn't seem to matter at all. Since local history seekers overflowed the Buckingham bus to the extent that a whole string of tour people in cars had to follow after the bus and because of a general acclamation about how appealing this event was, the Society's Board of Directors has vowed to plan another history bus trip in the future, perhaps even making it an annual event.

First stop on this tour was the Groton fairgrounds, where Groton farmer Ramona Tolles evoked images of horse shows organized by the Groton Pony Club, of trotting-horse training and races there, and of agricultural fairs. Listeners looked out upon the half-mile track and then glanced behind them to see the stables and exhibit hall.

Now 14 horses are boarded here, according to Bill Krikorian of the Groton Riding and Driving Club, the nonprofit organization acting as custodian of the property. In early morning and late afternoon visitors can see the horses being exercised on the track.

At the next stop, the Petapawag Boat Launch on the Nashua River just off Route 119, speaker Michael Roberts, archaeologist in town, welcomed his listeners “to Papermill Village.” An audience member added that her grandfather had managed the mill and lived on the site there. Following up on lore regarding the ruined mill on the site was left for another time, though.

Roberts chose rather to draw a vivid picture of John Tinker, seventeenth-century entrepreneur who established a trading post here with the intent of exchanging goods with a nearby Native American village. Roberts described Tinker as no stereotypical frontier trapper or Indian trader; rather, he was an English gentleman whose business and legal matters sent him often back and forth between the colonies and England. Although he had a hand in establishing Groton and Lancaster, he most certainly did not spend much of his time here. Having studied the man, Roberts said he found Tinker “a really interesting guy,” and Roberts spoke of this spot as “one of my favorite places in Groton.”

As twilight came on, the caravan moved along Reedy Meadow Road and Chicopee Row, briefly sliding into Dunstable and then slipping back into Groton to the colonial farmhouse of Carl Flowers well off the beaten path. The travelers stood before the front of his dwelling as Flowers, also a farmer, spoke of how this building qualifies for placement on the National Register of Historic Places. First, his research indicates the central portion had been built in 1721 and its northern extension in about 1825. Second, also making it worthy of National Register placement, he thinks, is the long line of families who have lived here and yet perhaps because of the place's peculiar location at town's end are not to be found linked with this place in the old town history books.

Flowers told about a Bowers family starting out and later ownership switching to a Wood family. In time came the Fitzpatricks, a first Catholic family in the area. James Fitzpatrick, St., became “a highly respected” man in town, Flowers had found, master of the local Grange. His son had married a Protestant, Lillian Johnson, in 1887. Flowers said the Ku Klux Klan had burned crosses around the property in the 1920s, to remind others of the family's Irish Catholic background. It was this segment of society that the Klan in its infamy targeted here in this area.

Flowers's uncle and aunt purchased the place in 1942. In 1963 the family added on the building's southern extension.

continued on next page

“off the beaten path” *continued*

continued from previous page

Darkness prompted changing presentation about a final place in town, the Lost Lake neighborhood, from a stop at Sargisson Beach to the Society’s Boutwell House. Peri Schultz, member of the Mountain Lakes Club, showed how unique this area is. She illustrated her talk with memorabilia from the local history collection of Earl Carter, her neighbor and friend. She traced the saga of Lost Lake from its start as a Native American hunting ground and later a cow pasture, through its being turned into a reservoir for the city of Nashua, to its being the location of the explosive influx starting in 1925 of Bostonians, enticed to purchase 20-foot by 100-foot lots for \$75 each as a cherished piece of the countryside in the Lost Lake area. She noted too how fewer families came to the area during the Depression and World War II and spoke of the conversion to year-around homes that started in the 1960s. She drew attention to certain landmarks around the neighborhood – Kitty’s Variety Store, Baby Beach, and the tricky Pork Barrel dip in the road.

Following the “nontrip” to Lost Lake, members and guests right there at Boutwell House enjoyed GHS Program Chairman Tom Callahan’s traditional summer treat, homemade strawberry shortcake and ice cream.

Kitchen Project *continued*

OBJECTS



Every item in the kitchen and pantry was photographed with its accession number noted. Each item was then placed in a storage box in a closet newly outfitted with shelves. The new location of each item was updated in the Collections database.

AFTER



With everything removed from the kitchen, the room is ready for repair work to begin. This clean slate gives us the opportunity to rethink the kitchen display and choose which objects will come back into the room.

The new kitchen exhibit will be streamlined to focus more on a true 19th century kitchen. We will use appropriate items from our collection to both show items that would have been in a 19th century kitchen and also to document the processes at work there: making butter, canning food, etc



The Boutwell House-1851

The Groton Historical Society

172 Main Street, P.O. Box 202

Groton, MA 01450

The Archaeology of Groton: Results of the Groton Community-wide Survey

A Presentation by:

*Dr. Mitchell T. Mulholland
UMASS Archaeological Services*

*Sunday, October 17th at 2 PM
at the Williams Barn,
160 Chicopee Row, Groton, MA*

A presentation sponsored by the Groton Historical Society, the Groton Historical Commission, the Groton Planning Board, and the University of Massachusetts.

Funded by the Community Preservation Act



The Boutwell House-1851

Then and Now

A Newsletter of the Groton Historical Society

Volume 11, Issue 1

May 2010

Groton Archaeological Survey Update

By Michael Roberts

First Phase of Communitywide Archaeological Survey Nears Completion.

Work by: Michael Roberts, Dr. Mitch Mullholland, Chris Donta, and Sheila Charles

The first phase of our town's archaeological survey is coming to an end. We will soon receive the following products; a copy of the permit application to the State Archeologist, a copy of the permit, a comprehensive work summary, an outline of management recommendations, a site list, draft town wide maps and a draft listing of interpretive themes. Below Project Principal Investigator Dr. Mitch Mullholland describes current progress and Project Historian Sheila Charles discusses her

research to date. Sheila is typically enthusiastic about her projects but I think Groton has amped that up.

Mitch says:

With funds and support from the town's Community Preservation Committee, UMASS Archaeological Services (UMAS) of Amherst is conducting a communitywide archaeological reconnaissance survey for the town of Groton. The project is being coordinated by Local Project Coordinator Michael Roberts. The purpose of the survey is to identify archaeological sites within the town for use as a planning and educational tool, and to inform the people of Groton about the rich archaeological heritage of the town. The study will provide information on Native American sites that may date as early as 12,000 years ago, and as recent as the 20th century. European American sites from the 17th century to the 20th century may include foundations of residences, farmsteads, abandoned roads and railroads, commercial and industrial sites.

Archaeological sites contain useful information about the sites' occupants, and provide unique information about the town's residents that is rarely found in published records.

Background research is well underway. Native American specialists have researched the Inventory of Archaeological Assets at the Massachusetts Historical Commission in Boston for the locations of recorded



Native American artifacts on display at the Groton Historical Society

continued on page 4

President's Message~

Dear Members and Friends,

We have had a busy and successful Spring! We have a great new exhibit at the Boutwell House created entirely by Kara Fossey. The exhibit uses photographs featured in our new book enhanced by other artifacts, photos, and documents. The many visitors we had for our open house and book sale on February 13th thoroughly enjoyed Kara's work. We had another open house on March 20th as part of the GrotonREADS Walking Tour. An additional display was set up for this open house which showcases artifacts from Pre-Revolutionary Groton.

At a recent Board of Directors meeting we established a new sub committee to consider the feasibility of a History Club for Groton-Dunstable students as well as students from Lawrence Academy and Groton School. Our hope is to interest young people in history much the same way as 4-H interests our youth in animal husbandry and agriculture. I continue to feel strongly that the Historical Society must reach out to the community to interest all ages in our history and our heritage.

We still have copies of our new book *Images of America: Groton* which features over 200 photographs-many of which have never before been published. Please contact Kara at the society to arrange a time to purchase the book. All profits from books purchased directly from us benefit the society.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ted Roselund". The ink is dark and the signature is written on a light-colored background.

Ted Roselund, President

Visit us, Write us, Call us, Email us

The Groton Historical Society

172 Main Street
PO Box 202
Groton, MA 01450

(978)488-0092

hostess@grotonhistoricalsociety.org

Digital Library

By C. David Gordon

Groton Public Library is in the process of unlocking three keys to the town's past, easing considerably residents' access to a broader understanding of the town and area. Reference Librarian Susanne Olson introduced the Society's members and guests at the library's Sibley Hall in a mid January Society program to the resources being made available through the library's Digital Library project. Already on line at the library's website are copies of Turner's Public Spirit newspaper from 1908 to 1921. Soon the public will be able to access on line background details on some 350 homes, businesses, schools, and public buildings of significant historical interest in the town as reported in Groton's three-year Architectural Survey, conducted by Sanford Johnson. A work that continues in progress is the indexing of an estimated 3,000 pages of the Groton town diaries for the years from 1918 to 1971 with about 400 pages already digitized and available for on-line viewing.



Reference Librarian Susanne Olson speaking to guests

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Additional Contribution (Tax-Deductible)		_____
		Total _____

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Archaeological Survey

continued from page 1

archaeological sites in the town. Historic maps have been collected from the town library, Massachusetts Archives, and other sources. Several of the maps show locations of historic period sites, and list their owners. Archaeologists have researched town and regional histories, archaeological publications, and historical society records to find references to archaeological sites.

Sites found during the research are being mapped on topographic maps. Sites will be added as the project progresses. A predictive model has been developed for the project. The model is based on site locational characteristics known from archaeological surveys and Native American site studies that have been conducted over the past 30 years in Massachusetts. The model has been modified for the town of Groton. In the model, soil and geological information are combined with topographic characteristics, and the results are being transferred to maps of the town. One map indicates areas that have a high potential to contain Native American sites. A separate map indicates the areas of high site potential for European American sites. These maps will be used by the Groton Historical Commission, the Planning Board and other town commissions, and can be used to predict the presence of archaeological sites if an area is threatened by development. At the end of the project, the maps, along with a survey report may be used by the town as a management tool that can result in the protection of the town's archaeological resource.

UMAS is nearing completion of the first of four phases of the study. The group will participate locally in various programs to provide information about archaeology of the area, and to discuss the project. Also presentations will include a talk about archaeology of the Groton area and the region where citizens of Groton will be asked to provide information about what they know of archaeology in the town. They will be encouraged to show artifacts they have found. Archaeologists will identify and date the artifacts, and provide a discussion of the finds.

From Sheila:

Groton today is a direct result of social and economic patterns of the past as well as the environment and character of the land. While many aspects of Groton's history are well documented due to the capable local historians of the past, historic and archaeological research will continue to produce new information, deepening our understanding and appreciation of the unique heritage of Groton.

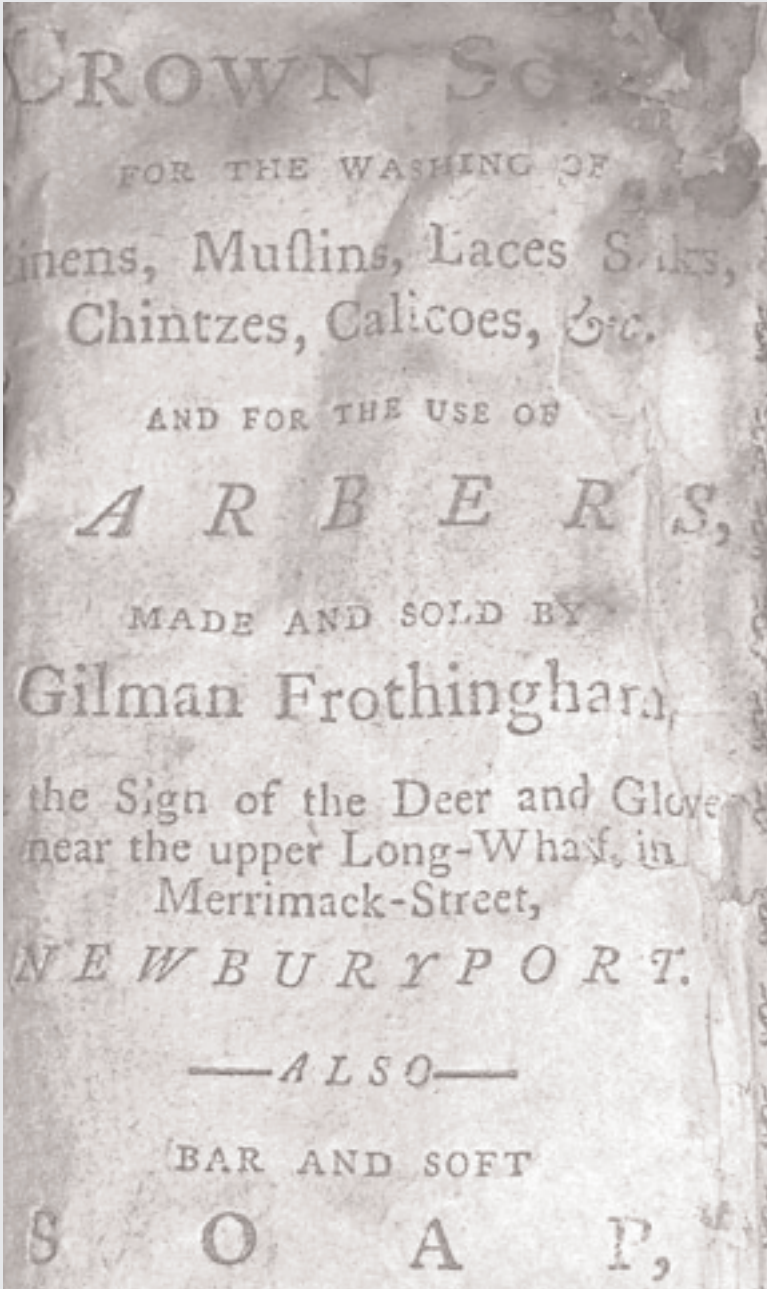
Historic and archaeological research is being conducted to identify existing and potential locations of archaeological resources in Groton. Both primary and secondary sources are being reviewed, derived from archives at the Groton Public Library, Massachusetts Historical Commission, Massachusetts State Archives, MIT Roach Library, Nashua Public Library, University of Massachusetts Amherst Library, and John Milner Associates in Littleton. Data is being gathered pertaining to eight intricately linked historic themes: European American early settlement of the Massachusetts Colony frontier; Domestic life and the social fabric of the community over time (including class structure and ethnic heritage reflected in Groton's founders, prominent families, landowners, tenants, immigrant groups, and enslaved and free people of African and Native American descent); Agricultural pursuits; Economy and industry (including aspects of economic growth and decline associated with commerce, artisan craft trades, and industry); Civic life and public buildings; Overland transportation; Burial traditions; and Twentieth Century transitions and impacts. Many sites contain overlays reflecting an array of past activities associated with the history of the community from the 1650s through the 21st century. Archaeological correlates are associated with each of the historic themes and knowledge of these sites and their components can be used to ensure effective protection of Groton's significant archaeological resources.

continued on next page

Archaeological Survey

continued from previous page

On a personal note, this preliminary investigation has me enthralled by the colorful stories of Groton's residents -- European American frontiersmen, Indian captives, governors and political activists; officers of the Colonial militia, industrial entrepreneurs associated with multiple successive industrial operations; subsistence and diversified farmers gradually replaced by specialized and consolidated agricultural properties; prosperous tavern and innkeepers and merchants fronting the busy stagecoach routes; religious theologians; and artistic and literary savants. Groton's history and the associated archaeological manifestations are likely to be special, locally distinctive and nationally significant.



WHAT IS IT?

This is an early bar of soap in its original packaging. This “Crown Soap” was made and sold by Gilman Frothingham in Newburyport, MA. Frothingham (1764/5-1825) was a “leather dresser.” Leather dressers worked on the final stages of preparing hides. After the leather dresser performed his duties, the leather was ready to make into goods to be purchased.

Frothingham grew up to work in the family shop that his step-father Timothy Dexter worked at. This shop was at the corner of Green and Merrimac(k) Streets . Dexter offered blubber and tallow for sale. His wife, (Frothingham’s mother) was a seamstress and stiched leather goods with the leather produced by her husband. In 1787 Frothingham sold his share of the Frothingham property to his step-father, at which point Dexter sold the entire parcel.



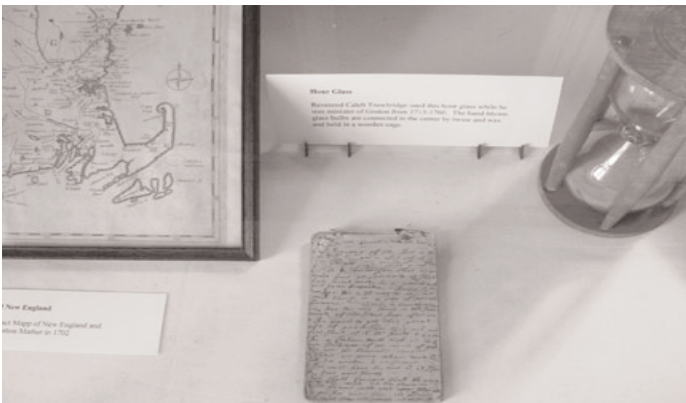
The Boutwell House-1851

The Groton Historical Society

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New Open House Schedule

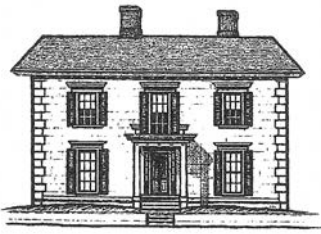
One of the changes the GHS is making this year is altering its open house schedule. **The Boutwell House will no longer be open every Sunday in the summer from 2 PM to 4 PM.** Instead, the society is going to be open at various times throughout the year, usually in conjunction with other community events, or for themed programs. While the schedule is not yet finalized, plans include: a holiday open house in December with a focus on holiday customs; and an ‘open garage’ day when visitors can get a peek at the interesting artifacts housed in our garage (town hearse, passenger coach, cow treadmill/log splitting invention, etc). Additionally, for each open house, the society will have a different “featured” object on display for visitors. It is our hope that these special open houses will give variety to our public offerings and provide a reason for visitors to come back and see us again! Look for a final schedule in the next month. As always, we are also open by appointment! Please contact the society for more details at 978-448-0092.



detail of Pre-Revolutionary Groton display



detail of William Wharton's bird-banding log



The Boutwell House-1851

Then and Now

A Newsletter of the Groton Historical Society

Volume 11, Issue 2

April 2010

New GHS Website Up and Running!

The Groton Historical Society proudly announces its new website! It is our hope that our new site will be easier to navigate and more useful to researchers and visitors. The “What’s New” block, visible on every page, has links to our upcoming programs, our featured ‘object of the month,’ and news briefs about historical society happenings. It is our goal to update frequently and avoid being static. Please visit our the new website, designed by Bear Graphics & Communications, at www.grotonhistoricalsociety.org



Groton Communitywide Agricultural Context, Inventory and Management Planning Project

By Michael Roberts

At spring Town Meeting 2010 the Town approved the proposal from the Groton Historical Commission to develop an agricultural context and other tasks relating to the history of agriculture in the town, the current nature of agriculture in the town and the future of agriculture in the town. The purpose of the project is to conduct a community-wide research, survey and analysis study to identify, assess and document the agricultural history of Groton and the local, regional, national and international trends and events that shaped that history. The primary goal of the study is to inform the citizens of Groton on the deep agricultural traditions in their community and their role in maintaining a sustainable community in the past and into the future. The study will develop a “historic agricultural context” for Groton and Northern Middlesex County which will be used to establish the significance of properties, features and objects to be inventoried. Once the inventory of significant resources is established they can be managed in accordance with state and federal standards. It is expected that the survey will be conducted town-wide. The information and accompanying recommendations will be presented in a format that will allow more effective protection of significant historic agricultural resources in the town, through existing and potential future public permitting and approval processes and through ongoing public and private efforts at land acquisition and protection. Specific project goals will include the following:

continued on page 5

President's Message~

Greetings members and friends,

I hope you enjoy the beautiful flowers in front of the Boutwell House. As most of you know the Groton Garden Club had the trellises built and planted the roses, Clematis and other plantings to recreate what existed in the 19th century when George Boutwell and his family lived in the house. I really believe our appearance adds to making Groton center one of the loveliest in Massachusetts.

A few weeks ago we had 4 third grade classes from Florence Roche tour our museum. Each class has around 25 students. A number of volunteers spent over an hour with each class sharing history, explaining artifacts, and explaining colonial life in Groton to the attentive 9 year olds. The feedback I have heard from parents is that the children thoroughly enjoyed their experience. I hope to continue this program every spring as I think it is a positive adventure for youngsters to learn what life was like without electricity, central heat, telephones, computers, iPods, automobiles, and all our modern conveniences that we take for granted.

As you may have heard or read, we have decided not to be open every Sunday through the summer. However, we will be open for special occasions centered on other town events. Low attendance at Sunday openings is our principle reason for this change. And we will always be available by appointment by calling (978) 448-0092. Another reason for not opening every Sunday this summer is that we plan to have the kitchen ceiling repaired, the kitchen painted, and to redecorate the kitchen as an 1850's kitchen. We currently have muskets, cannon balls, fire buckets, drums and other items that do not belong in the kitchen. We hope to find somewhere else to display these items.

I am very excited about our July program, a bus tour of Groton Historic sites. My only concern is that we can only accommodate 32 people. If many more express interest in this program than will fit on the bus, we will offer to repeat the program at a later date.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I wish you all a warm, happy and fun summer.

Sincerely,

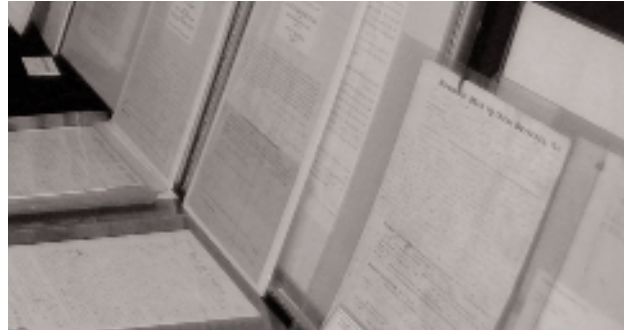


Ted Roselund, President



Anna Elliot and Harris McWade examine a photo of the Groton Hunt Club from Earl Carter's "myseum" collection.

Members of the GHS board were recently invited to be the first group to see Earl Carter's "myseum". Earl's private collection was dismounted six years ago following a fire in the building that houses his collections. After significant renovations and many improvements, the "Myseum" (a private museum) is back together and ready to host visitors.



WHAT IS IT?



Each issue of the newsletter will feature a photo of an intriguing item from the Society's Collection and the answer will be given on one of the following pages.

hint: this item measures about 5 inches in length

{answer on page 5}

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The Groton Historical Society

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Revisiting the Story of a Determined Cowbird

In the last issue of our newsletter we featured the bird banding log of William P. Wharton. He kept records of birds that he banded at his farm on Broadmeadow starting in the 1920s. Tucked in with his records was a newspaper article with a handwritten note: "Early May 1961, Groton Landmark?"

In "Groton Cowbird Finds 'There's No Place Like Home,'" Geraldine M. Tolles writes about a persistent cowbird that Wharton "caught and banded three years ago." Cowbirds are considered parasitic and will take over other birds nests, laying their own eggs in them. So when the cowbird returned to Groton, Wharton decided to release her miles away from Groton. He tried releasing her in both Fitchburg and New Ipswich but she found her way back. He then took her to Wilmington, VT but again she returned, just three days later.

"By this time," Tolles writes, "Mr. Wharton was thoroughly intrigued by this brownish-gray feathered creature and decided to continue his experiment in testing the homing instinct of this bird." The bird was brought to Ithaca, NY and released but about twelve days found her way back to Groton.

After several more releases and returns, Wharton caged the bird and made plans for her future. Writes Tolles: "Arrangements are being made to have a pilot take her to some distant point, probably Atlanta, GA...Mr. Wharton is fully expecting his own little 'Sally Sly' will take her forced trip south philosophically and resignedly wing her way back home in the minimum amount of time."



cowbird egg in bluebird nest

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Membership Form

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Annual Member (Individual or Family)	\$35	_____
GHS Sponsor	\$75	_____
Corporate Sponsor	\$250	_____
Life Member	\$500	_____
Sustaining Member	\$1,000	_____
Additional Contribution (Tax-Deductible)		_____
		Total _____

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Agricultural Planning Project, *continued from page 1*

1. An agricultural historic context for Groton and Northern Middlesex County describing the history of agricultural activities in Groton from farming by pre-contact peoples through 20th Century farming. The context will include the layout and architecture of farms and other agricultural activities, the crops produced in Groton throughout the time periods, the factors that influenced those decisions and the place of Groton agriculture in the regional, national and world setting. This context will be developed to Massachusetts Historic Commission standards and the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation recommendations for significance and management of these resources.
2. A list of known agricultural sites and features throughout Groton. recommendations for their National Register eligibility, management and interpretation.
3. Town wide maps showing locations of inventoried resources and the development of an agricultural overlay that can be integrated with the town's GIS system.
4. Hold an educational interactive agricultural history day or weekend at the Williams Barn to be a collaborative effort by the Historic Commission, Williams Barn Committee, Agricultural Commission, Historical Society, the Groton Grange Organization and the Groton Dunstable School District.
5. Create an educational agricultural project in conjunction with the school system.
6. Management and interpretive recommendations, bylaws and review procedures for protection of local agricultural resources and locations for interpretive activities and/or features.
7. Create new and updated existing site forms for agricultural sites.
8. Create agricultural location map(s) and guide on GIS Database. Digital copies of maps to be used with the Town Assessor's maps once they are transferred to GIS.
9. Create agricultural context and inventory report, management recommendations and a plan for interpreting the modern and historic agricultural resources of Groton.
10. For three selected farms create a detailed historic narrative to include owners, buildings, spatial organization of the farm, crops, livestock, natural resources, natural features, boundaries, stone walls, transportation, etc and the connection to the community.
11. Identify and document any historic and current agricultural retail activities.
12. Research and document agricultural activities that have been started and have since disappeared as well as the evolution of crops.
13. Identify agricultural protection tools that can be utilized to protect undeveloped agricultural parcels.
14. Suggest landscapes and view sheds to be protected to help maintain the agricultural character of the town.

The study is planned to be complete in early 2012.

WHAT IS IT? ANSWER

This object is a *rattle*. Baby rattles were once made of clay. Hollow figures, usually in the form of animals or birds, were constructed and filled with small balls. Since clay is somewhat fragile, rattles were soon produced using both silver and wood. Sometimes handles of rattles were made of coral or other surfaces that felt cool against the gums. This rattle is constructed of fine wood and its handle features a carved swan or crane neck.



The Boutwell House-1851

The Groton Historical Society

172 Main Street, P.O. Box 202

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Off the Beaten Path



A midsummer's eve ramble through old Groton neighborhoods

Join us for a two-hour bus tour alive with Groton history! Stops will be made at or near: the fairgrounds, the soapstone quarry, Lost Lake, and more! Free and open to the public.

Tuesday July 13, 2010

7:00 PM

172 Main Street

Bus leaves from the Boutwell House

Space is limited, reservations recommended.

Bus will return to the Boutwell House where all are welcome to enjoy homemade ice cream and strawberry shortcake

Then and Now

Volume 12, Issue 4

October 2011

Groton Historical Society

Established in 1894 to preserve and share the history of Groton

The Story of the Groton Inn

Guest columnist Deborah E. Johnson, founding Editor and Publisher of The Groton Herald, celebrates the long history of the Groton Inn, which burned nearly to the ground in a four-alarm fire of undetermined origin on the night of August 2nd, 2011. Drawing on public records, newspaper accounts, the 1976 application to the National Register of Historic Places, and writings of venerable Groton historians preserved in the Groton Public Library, Johnson notes highlights of the story of the Inn from its earliest beginnings to its sad ending as a burned-out shell awaiting demolition as a threat to public safety.

When the centuries-old Groton Inn succumbed to fire on a clear dry night in August this year, the town lost a major tie to its past. Once there were as many as fourteen, possibly more, taverns and inns serving wayfarers in the years Groton was a stop on stagecoach lines running from Boston to Keene, NH, and eventually farther north to Vermont and then Canada. But most have long since disappeared. The Groton Inn reached back to Groton's earliest days and remained a business establishment beyond stagecoach and railroad days and into the 21st century, almost without a break. It was listed on the



Groton Inn around the turn of the twentieth century.

National Register of Historic Places in 1976, the first such designation in Groton.

How old was the Inn really? Does its history extend back to 1678, as the sign still standing in front of the burned-out building claims? Or does the well-documented year 1761 have the better claim?

Early Beginnings of the Groton Inn

The land now associated with the Groton Inn had been part of the Rev. Samuel Willard's property, 14 acres or so on both sides of Main Street. Willard was an original proprietor of Groton and the town's first settled minister (1664-1676), but Willard left with the other settlers when the town was burned out in 1676 during King Philip's War. Records show that some years later, one John Ames, originally of Boxford, owned land on Main Street and in February 1723 or 1724, sold four acres to Samuel Parker who already owned land around Half Moon Meadow (lowland between Gibbet Hill and Main Street). In 1748 Ames sold additional land to Caleb Trowbridge, Sr.

These two separate transactions raise questions about when the first building was constructed at the present site of the Groton Inn. According to Virginia May in her book *Groton Houses*, "If the Inn site was on

continued on page 3

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2 Main Street View/Witnessing Our Past

I can't think of a time in recent memory when our picture-perfect Main Street view of our quintessential New England town has been in greater jeopardy. The loss of the Groton Inn in the devastating fire on August 2nd will alter the perception of welcome and well-being the Inn provided to centuries of passing travelers as well as those of us who live here. We are left wondering what the loss of this beloved, old white two-story building with blue doors, long inviting porch, and a signboard dated 1678 really means to our town.

Since the recent fire, people are asking about the Inn's history, its owners, its famous patrons, its place in the folklore of the town and—most of all--what will happen to this historic structure. The Groton Historical Society will, of course, continue to provide information on its history and perhaps be a refuge for salvaged elements of its structure. But the future of the Inn is between the Inn's owner and the town's Historical Commission and Historic Districts Commission. The loss of the Inn reminds us of how vulnerable our old buildings and historic landscapes are and how much our community is hurt when they disappear.

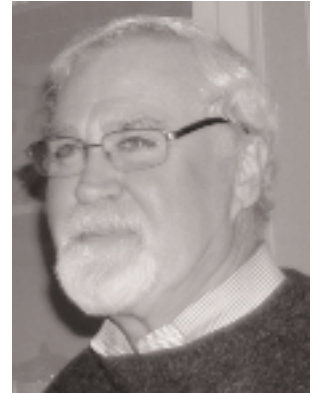
Such calamities often point up another real fact, which is how little we know about some of the buildings, places, and people we often take for granted, assuming they will always be around. The Groton Inn has stood here for nearly three hundred years watching our town grow and evolve into the place it is today, a town of well-educated, bright and caring citizens. It has been a witness to our past, one that now needs our help so as not to become a forgotten memory of another time.

Gathering Memories

We as a town need to think about how we go about documenting everyday life in Groton. In recent years we have watched buildings change use, houses moved and rebuilt, new signs put on streets, brooks, and fields with few of us remembering where the names originated or who those people were. We see obituary notices each week of fellow citizens with incredible personal histories, their stories only appearing at their death, when we learn that they fought for our country, saved lives, operated businesses

that shaped our economy.

The Groton Historical Society was created to collect, save and provide a place to preserve information and objects about our town. To do that we need the help of people who can take the time to document these resources, whether seniors with stories to tell or businesses looking to find a home for their records. We need to make copies of photographs of the people, places and events that tell our story but may be gone tomorrow.



Where are those scrapbooks, photo albums, clippings, and ephemeral materials that document town events and might remind us what the Farmers and Mechanics Club and their Fairgrounds meant to our parents? Where are the images of farm crops, barns, and livestock that celebrate our agricultural past? The town's Historical Commission has funded and carried out archaeological, agricultural, and building surveys of our community, and in each case they have had to scour for information and pictures.

So let's not allow another historic witness like the Groton Inn fall without doing what we can to preserve its value and meaning to the context of our town. Change is inevitable, but documenting the buildings and people around us can put change in perspective and help future generations understand what we had the privilege of calling our own.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "John H. Ott", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John H. Ott
President, GHS
October 2011

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Please call or email to make an appointment

Parker's purchase from Ames, he could have put up a building there after 1724 but not before. If it was on Ames-Trowbridge property, nothing went up until at least 1748." What can be established is that in 1761 the Rev. Samuel Dana, minister of the church in Groton from 1761 to 1775, built a house on the site of the Groton Inn, possibly around a preexisting half-house (which may have been used as an inn) built by Parker between 1724 and 1748. Thus the association of the year 1761 with the Groton Inn.

Dana, a Tory sympathizer, was ejected from the church pulpit by his congregants in May 1775 and moved away from his Main St. house. Six years later, near the end of the Revolutionary War, Jonathan Keep, a blacksmith from Westford, purchased this house to open Keep's Tavern. Virginia May says, "It is Keep who is considered the first landlord of the old Inn which has continued as an inn since [Keep] took over."

Meanwhile, in 1754-1755, prior to Keep's purchase, the town replaced its third meetinghouse with the fourth (and present) meetinghouse, now First Parish Church, on the same site across the street from the Inn. To make room for the new structure, the third meetinghouse was moved to a nearby field where it served as a barn for the next 40 years.

Jonathan Keep sold the Inn to his son-in-law Isaiah Hall in 1794, and in that year the former third meetinghouse was moved from its field and attached to the existing inn building. After renovations Isaiah along with his brother Joseph became landlords and changed the name to Hall's Tavern. The application to the National Register of Historic

Places states, "Architectural evidence of this origin (the third meetinghouse) is found in the remains of the high pulpit and in the irregular fenestration along the sides of the building, reflecting the custom of the pew-owners' installation of their own ventilation."

Legacy of the Richardson Tavern

In 1678 Gershom Hobart, second minister to the town (1678-1704), built a small house approximately where the former Baptist Church stands today (Paul Matisse's studio and home on the corner of Main Street and Legion Road). In 1704 part of Hobart's land became the town's first cemetery (the Old Burying Ground). The remaining land and house changed hands repeatedly over the next hundred years, finally coming under Jephthah Richardson's ownership. Jephthah put a second-story ballroom with a vaulted ceiling on his little house as part of the renovations he made to create Richardson Tavern, which he ran until 1806.

Several other innkeepers followed him, but by 1833 competition from two other inns on Main Street--Dearborn Emerson's new tavern (on the site of Groton Market on Main Street) and Jonathan Keep's Inn (later Groton Inn)--Richardson Tavern went out of business. According to Charles Ruckstuhl in *Forgotten Tales of Groton 1676-1941* and his source, Isabel Beal, in 1840 the Richardson building was cut up and the ballroom portion moved down Main Street to become the northern section of the Groton Inn. Thus the association of the year 1678 with the Groton Inn.

continued on page 4

Library Display Honors Groton Inn

Leather-bound registers sitting on antique bookshelves in the office of the Groton Historical Society suddenly had a major significance after the destructive fire on August 2, 2011, engulfed the Groton Inn. Two of these old books, which contain pages of signatures of travelers who stopped to eat or sleep at the Inn over the last few hundred years, have been brought to the Groton Public library to highlight some of the artifacts and history of the Inn in an exhibit currently on display on the top floor of the library just inside the front entrance (see photo).

The two registers in the case cover two separate time periods: the larger book, the earliest one in the GHS collection, dates from 1857 and reveals some creativity in how the pages were used to record visitors and events. The newer book, from 1921, features the signatures of Mrs. James Roosevelt and her granddaughter Anna, FDR's mother and oldest daughter, who might possibly have been visiting James, the eldest son of the future president who



was a student at Groton School.

Innkeeper Nelson Hoar's photograph is in the exhibit, along with his well-used frog stamp and several 19th-century postcards. We hope the display whets your appetite for more information about our stately Inn and its prominence in our town.
-- B. S.

4 Groton Inn *continued from page 3*

Virginia May says that in 1840, “the main part of the Richardson tavern was moved down the Main Street and added to the north end of the Inn.” The 1976 application to the National Register of Historic Places says, “Evidence pointing to the seventeenth-century origins can be found in the vaulted inn ballroom ceiling and structural details in the attic.” However, this “evidence” is for a well-documented, late-eighteenth-century addition (the ballroom), so it is difficult to be certain that any part of the 1678 Hobart house actually made the move to the inn site.

There is agreement, however, that the last major addition to the Groton Inn came in 1840 when a large room (perhaps the Richardson Tavern ballroom) was attached to the north side and six dormer windows and a porch running the length of the front were added to the Main Street façade. The porch roof was held up by mahogany pillars salvaged from First Parish Church which, in 1839, had undergone extensive renovations including removal of a gallery in the sanctuary held up by these pillars and a reorientation of the entire building so it faced the common rather than Lowell Road. An enormous roof covering what was by then at least three disparate buildings—the original Dana house, the outgrown third meetinghouse, and the Richardson ballroom—united the whole and gave the Inn the appearance that it maintained until it was destroyed by fire 170 years later.

Nineteenth-Century Doings at the Inn

In 1805 Isaac Child arrived on the scene and bought into the business which once again was renamed, this time Hall & Child’s Inn. By state statute a Probate Court was held in Groton at the Inn on specified dates beginning in 1813 and continued to be held at the Inn until 1866 when the court was moved to Cambridge. St. Paul’s Lodge of Masons held its initial installation of new members August 9, 1797, at the Inn and continued to meet there until 1847. The Groton Fire Club began holding their meetings at the Inn Feb. 5, 1816, after the private home where they had been meeting was burned. The meeting place remained the same until 1871 although the name of the Inn continued to change.

Back in 1825 Joseph Nelson Hoar bought the property and ran it for most of the next fifteen years with the exception of 1836-1837 when brothers-in-law Moses Gill and Henry Lawrence rented the property and ran the Inn. During Hoar’s tenure Selectmen held their monthly meetings at the Inn for four months of the year, using two other inns for meeting places for the other eight months. Stagecoach business was in its prime back then. A Way bill dated April 13, 1842, recording fares from Keene to Groton

and Boston shows that cost of travel from Boston to Groton was \$1.25 each way.

The stagecoach trade suffered a decline around 1848, when the railroad came to Groton, although the railroad brought new business to town. The Inn became headquarters for Railroad Board meetings and Probate Court. Again ownership changed. James Minot Colburn, a baker, managed the inn for one year until J. Nelson Hoar, son of earlier owner Joseph Hoar, bought the business. Nelson and later his youngest three daughters, Lilla, Eliza, and Eva, carried the business into the 20th century. The Hoars called the Inn Central House but the name “Groton Inn,” first coined by the *Nashua Daily Press* in 1896, became popular. For most of the next hundred years the name stuck. Prior to 1897 when town water became available, the Hoars built an open water-collecting tank on top of the Inn which provided running water to the rooms below. The Inn during this time was painted a dark brown or red and was covered with climbing vines. The sisters were known for their hospitality toward their overnight and dining guests and performed most of the serving themselves.

By this time the Inn was the only hotel remaining in Groton. A Mrs. Scott of Boston purchased the Inn from the sisters in 1901. She herself did not run the business but did sell it to Groton native Charles H. Dodge in 1906. Dodge was the carpenter who had built Groton Public Library in 1892, the Groton Water Company’s pumping station at Baddacook Pond in 1897, and in 1904 the stone wall and lodge house on Main St. that was supposed to lead up to General Bancroft’s dream castle on Gibbet Hill.

During Dodge’s years as innkeeper, he made some minor changes to the interior but the most obvious change was to the exterior. He added to the rear of the building and enclosed the side porch which came to be known as Dodge Porch. The application to the National Register of Historic Places says of the porch: “On the gable end of the Main St. section is a one-story enclosed porch . . . with a flat roof and windows with fifteen lights arranged in groups of four.” In 1914, in a nod to automobile traffic, Dodge moved the horse barn to the rear of the property and built the garage that is now referred to as The Carriage House. Dodge died in 1921 and his daughter together with her niece and husband Helen and Dana Sherlaw took over management of the Inn.

Twentieth-Century Owners

During the Sherlaws’ tenure the Inn was closed in winter months of 1932-1933 and again in 1933-1934. Prior to Miss Dodge’s death in 1939, the Sherlaws sold the Inn to

continued on page 5

Michael Sheedy with Harold Marriott (no relation to the Marriott chain of hotels) managing the business. Virginia May tells us: “Mr. Marriott was landlord until 1954 (he had bought the business from Sheedy in the late 1940s), maintaining high standards, providing excellent meals and introducing liquor to the establishment.” Marriott’s son-in-law managed the business for him from 1947 until 1955, about six months after Sheedy had sold the Inn to Joseph Gabriel Baum.

During the Sheedy/Baum years many additional changes were made to the interior of the Inn. In 1957 a pool was added and the former barn was converted into a club house for the pool. Mr. Baum died in 1960 and the Bear Hill Industrial Development Trust, which held the mortgage, took over the Inn under three managers Robert Frazer (1960-62), Ossie Land, and Robert Stukenberg. The Inn closed in July 1966 and was not reopened until September 1969 by its new owners, Robert and Pat Frazer, who raised their combined family of twelve children there. The Inn closed again seven years later despite the Frazers’ attempts to keep it open after Groton’s Board of Health ruled May 1, 1974, that the Inn’s septic system was not adequate for its use.

In May 1976, the Bicentennial year, in the hope that such designation would help the Frazers keep the Inn open, application to the National Register of Historic Places was made on behalf of the Inn. The form was prepared by Judy D. Dobbs, National Register Editor, and Groton residents Georgess McHargue and architect Anthony Hars. Pat Frazer provided much of the historical record, and McHargue compiled and wrote the contents including taking photographs of the Inn and outbuildings. The Frazers had refinanced with two mortgages at high interest rates in an attempt to cover the cost of a new septic system but were unable to keep up monthly payments. They lost the Inn, and it was auctioned off to Monument



*Groton Inn after the fire, prior to demolition.
Photo by C. David Gordon.*

Federal Savings and Loan Association of Leominster, holder of the first mortgage, for a bid of \$133,000, on July 22, 1976. The National Register designation arrived a few weeks later.

George Pergantis, a contractor from Lowell, purchased the Inn from the bank in 1977 for \$149,000 and reopened it in early 1980 after extensive renovations. While he worked on the main building, he used the old garage as a public dining room and rented out the apartments in the two rear buildings. He eventually renamed his hostelry the Stagecoach Inn and painted his sign to read “CIRCA 1678.” Others tried over the years to purchase the business from him, but Pergantis has kept ownership. Though its date of origin is obscure, the date of its final closing is not in doubt. The Inn is under order of demolition issued to Pergantis on August 22nd by Groton Building Inspector Milton Kinney. With Pergantis’s blessing, the remains of the building have been surveyed by professional historians and preservationists with an eye to salvaging any historical treasures to keep alive memories of the Groton Inn.



Check This Out Online!

Love at the Beach

A Courtship in Letters

Nancy Wiewel Jandro is transcribing letters written by her grandparents Winthrop (from Groton) and Louise (from Ellsworth, ME) during their long-distance courtship in the 1920s. She has begun posting them on her blog site <http://loveatthebeachletters.wordpress.com> and invites you to visit the site and read the whole story as it unfolds. There are frequent references to the Groton Inn and other places in town back then. It’s a charming bit of Groton history from 90 years ago.



6 *Repairing Boutwell House--Step 1: Plan of Work*

Alvin B. Collins, chair of the Groton Historical Commission, was consultant to the GHS on its successful effort to acquire a CPA grant for essential repairs to Boutwell House [see Then and Now, April and July issues]. He has agreed to serve as Project Manager for the Boutwell House Rehabilitation Project. In the first of regular updates on this work, Collins describes how such a project gets underway.

This proud house that stands on Main Street across from Town Hall is so well constructed that it will certainly outlive all of us. Certain components of every structure eventually need replacement, but from what I've discovered at Boutwell, these components today are limited to some roof repairs and plumbing and electrical upgrades. The bones of the house are as strong as they were when the building was masterfully constructed back in 1851 for George Boutwell.

In starting the rehabilitation project, I've been spending time organizing administrative matters, reviewing the proposed work, drafting boilerplate RFP [request for proposal] language, and creating all of the safety plans mandated by law. Over the past couple of weeks, I've walked, crawled and climbed through most of Boutwell House as well as the carriage house to document the proposed work in more detail so that RFPs for all of the work can be drafted.

Preparing for Bids, Storing the Collection

The original description of proposed work used to secure CPA funds needs a bit more detail added in order to solicit solid bids for each aspect of the project, and I would expect to have much of this detail work completed by the beginning of September so the bid process can begin. Dan Barton [Groton architect and chair of the Groton Historic Districts Commission] has agreed to help in the floor plan drawings and Architectural Access Board variance process that will allow us to circumvent some ADA access requirements dictated by the building code. Our project will include creating house access and adding an accessible bathroom for physically challenged people.

John Ott and I will work together to create a proj-

ect plan as to where, when, and how the Society's collections can be stored, secured, and protected. Most of the work within the house will be limited to the rear portions of the house, so it may make sense to fill the front rooms of the house with collections and then secure the storage area doorways with temporary structures that will ensure protection and eliminate dust infiltration. This will happen before any work can take place, since once work commences there will be areas of the house that will be off limits to anyone not properly qualified to be in the work zone.

Roof, Pipes and Wires, Other Stuff

Quick overviews of work details I've noted to date include an inspection of the roof on both the main house and the carriage house. The carriage house will need just the rear roof and the cupola roof stripped, sheathing repaired and re-roofed, while the main house needs attention throughout to repair shingles where roofing nails have worked their way loose piercing the shingles. The roof access hatch needs attention to ensure it maintains a tight seal to the elements above and that it will stay secured in high winds.

The plumbing copper pipes as well as all of the cast iron waste pipes have to be replaced since the copper fittings are starting to leak and the cast iron has rotted from the inside compromising the pipe wall thickness and creating small leaks here and there. Electricity will need upgrading to include a new additional electric panel, possibly new underground main service wires, and the addition of outlets and lighting as the needs determine. Insulation will be added to the attic, windows will be tightened up, and an effort will be made to repoint the foundation as much as possible to eliminate both air and critter infiltration. Exterior regrading against the foundation will help water runoff flow away from the house rather than into the basement as it currently does. This will keep some of the basement dampness at bay.

Once the detailing work is done, the project can progress to the next phase of securing bids, starting the work, and looking to the future of Boutwell House.



Did You Know

. . . that German prisoners of war once picked apples in Groton orchards? During WWII, several thousand German and Italian POWs were held at Fort Devens and were conscripted to help ease the labor shortage in our area by working on local farms and orchards. They worked alongside local men and boys such as Leroy ["Roy"] Johnson who, as a teenager, was an apple picker at Priest Orchard. Roy tells how Don Priest put a stop to some POWs deliberately bruising the apples. Don handed out candy and other tasty snacks that the hungry Germans would never get as rations at the Fort. Don's clear message was to handle the apples with care and reap a sweet reward. It worked! --E.S.

C. David Gordon, GHS Vice President

This year's summer program – an evening bus ride on July 12 to two working farms in town followed by a pause for refreshments at a barn on a former farm – paid tribute to Groton's continuing heritage of farming. First stop was the old Phineas Dunsmore farm on Maple Avenue. Although farm operator Chris Shattuck was busy haying, the Society's Program Chairman Tom Callahan filled his 30 listeners with information about the history of this farm. All admired the three-story Victorian horse barn and the setting of farm buildings in spacious open fields.

Then we were taken to the compact farming operation of David Luther, owner of the old Benjamin Moors House and farm on Farmers Row. After noting the perfect gem of a house, we walked back of it to marvel at a panorama of row upon row of vegetables of all types, all in abundant growth, along the back of the property. Close by were a few cows, pigs, and chickens in a rolling hen house (see photo). From his gardens Luther maintains a CSA fresh-food-providing service to eight families.

The last stop was for the promised refreshments. We settled in the barn at the old Job Shattuck House on Longley Road, now owned by Dick Csaplar, to enjoy Callahan's traditional summer treat of strawberry shortcake



topped with homemade vanilla ice cream. On the way there, Callahan had the bus stop on Nod Road to point out the southern reaches of Shattuck's original 500-acre farm, which once extended all the way to the Nashua River.

According to a recent survey by Oakfield Research of Concord, there are 66 private farms and five civic or nonprofit farming operations in Groton. Agriculture is indeed alive and well here in town.



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Membership Form

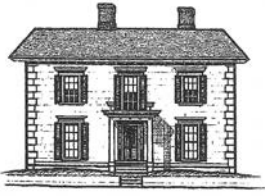
Annual Member-individual or family	\$35
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Groton Historical Society

172 Main Street, P.O. Box 202

Groton, MA 01450

Then and Now

October 2011

Volume 12, Issue 4

Upcoming Programs

October 4, 11, 18: Historic Groton Houses

A three-part series on Groton houses: architecture, relocation, and restoration.
Please visit www.gpl.org or call 978-448-1167 for more information.
Tuesdays from 7:00-8:30 PM, Sibley Hall, Groton Public Library.

October 16: A Walk in the Woods

Join us for an archaeological/historical exploration of the Nate Nutting mill site.
Talks by Judy Adams and others about Nate Nutting and the history of small agricultural mills.
Wear comfortable clothing as there will be walking involved.
Please park and meet at the field across from 207 Indian Hill Road at 2:00 PM.
Free and Open to the public. Refreshments to follow. Please call 978-448-0092 for more information.
Thanks to the Groton Commissioners of Trust Funds.

Newsletter Committee

Kara Fossey
C. David Gordon
Bobbie Spiegelman
Liz Strachan
Barbara Murray, Copyeditor

October 30: Annual Meeting

The Groton Historical Society's Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday, October 30th at 2:00 PM at Legion Hall. Please join us to hear the proposed slate of officers for 2011-2012 and a presentation of the newly developed Long-Range Plan which will guide the society in the coming years.
All are welcome!

Then and Now

Volume 12, Issue 3

July 2011

Groton Historical Society

Established in 1894 to preserve and share the history of Groton

An Unequivocal Win – Boutwell House gets CPC Grant

Bonnie Carter, GHS Board Member

On May 2, 2011, late in the evening of the 2nd session of Groton’s Spring Town Meeting, voters unanimously awarded the Groton Historical Society a CPC Grant of \$176,525 for repairs to Boutwell House. This happy outcome was the culmination of six intensive months of grant preparation and presentations to town boards and committees to ensure that we qualified for a CPC grant. The money will be used to cover plumbing and electrical repairs, adding insulation, and providing handicap accessibility on the first floor.

Our need was great and our story compelling. It began on October 16, 2011, when the GHS Board of Directors gave me permission to assemble a two-page Project Summary which was required for review by the Community Preservation Committee, the group responsible for oversight of the Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds and selection and recommendation of Groton CPA proposals. This summary, if accepted, would allow us to proceed with the project application. If we failed we would have to wait another year to try again for a grant. The project summary, due Oct 29, was filed on



Boutwell House entrance—June 2011

Oct 28, beating the deadline. I was determined to continue to beat every deadline if we were allowed to proceed with the project, and that is exactly what we did.

On November 15, finding our project proposal sufficiently interesting, the CPC board invited us to verbally present and defend our initial application. With nearly all of the GHS board of directors backing me up, I nervously presented our case. Through the rest of November and December, John Ott, Michael Roberts, Al Collins and I worked to gather the materials required to comply with the CPC application. Deadline for submitting a review draft was January 8. We submitted our draft on January 7.

Three snowstorms postponed the review process but finally we appeared before the CPC board on Feb 7th. We were missing the actual deed restriction document but we promised to have it delivered straight away once it was prepared, and so we did. The next hurdle was completing the full grant application.

At first the application seemed daunting; too many questions with unknown

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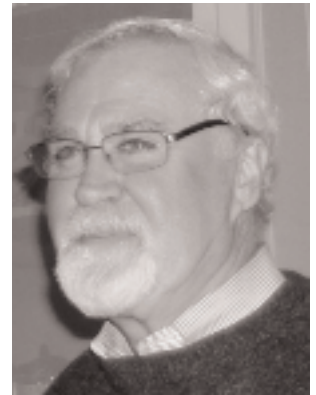
2 *Main Street View*

I want to begin my column by expressing my personal gratitude and that of the Board of Directors to the voters in the Town of Groton who unanimously supported the Society's proposal for a \$176,525 Community Preservation Grant at this year's Town Meeting. The vote of confidence shown in the future of this organization by our friends, members and townspeople has brought a new sense of determination to the Board to complete its Long-range Plan and get back in business. The Historical Society has assembled a team of experienced preservation consultants and leadership personnel from related town committees to make sure the work we are about to begin will be done well and long serve the Society and its mission.

To that end, we have asked individuals from the Board of Selectmen, the Historical Commission, and the Finance and CPC Committees to help direct and guide our project. It will be a challenge to do all we want to do with the resources we have but the CPC grant is the foundation upon which we will build our fundraising campaign. We are also looking at other state agencies, including the Massachusetts Cultural Council through its Cultural Facilities Fund, to secure additional monies to implement energy-saving changes, safety and fire suppression systems, foundation and drainage work, and further ADA improvements to be sure that the Governor George S. Boutwell House will be a well-cared-for and accessible town museum for all.

Besides the physical renovations to Boutwell House, the Society must also make improvements to its

financial foundation, by growing its membership and proving to donors and contributors that it is a skillful manager of its resources and a faithful steward of all that is entrusted to its care. We can do this by building an endowment that will have the assets to protect and guarantee the preservation of the collections, archives and property we hold as trustees of Groton's historic legacy. The process has to begin with individual memberships, business support and partnerships between organizations who share and care about preserving Groton's story. I want to encourage every member, every friend of the GHS, to think about other family members and friends who might like to join us by having them visit our website for more information. Every journey needs a starting point and www.grotonhistoricalsociety.org is just a click away. Have a safe summer and watch for news of our upcoming programs and tours.



A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'John H. Ott', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John H. Ott
President, GHS
July 2011

Visit us, Write us, Call us, Email us

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Monday 10 AM - 2 PM
Wednesday 10 AM - 2 PM
Thursday 10 AM - 2 PM

Please call or email to make an appointment

visit us at www.grotonhistoricalsociety.org

answers. But with help from all the folks on the GHS board, we challenged each question, mined data, and prepared multiple examples to support our answers. Our final document--200 pages long--was copied and bound into 15 identical notebooks and scanned to CDs. On February 18th, we delivered all the notebooks and CDs, four days before the snow-delayed final deadline of February 22. Once again we beat the deadline.

During March we attended a public hearing each week. AT the CPC public hearing on March 1, we were hit with some very blunt questions from the floor regarding eligibility of our application, questions about rehabilitation versus maintenance. On March 8, the Finance Committee reviewed all CPC grant proposals and recommended our application along with several others. The vote would have been unanimous but two FinCom members abstained because they were also GHS board members.

On March 21, we divided forces to attend two critical meetings held on the same night. The Selectmen's review of financial articles went smoothly with a few easy questions, and the board recommended our application, with one member, also a GHS board member, abstaining. On the other side of town at the CPC meeting, things were not proceeding as well. The CPC vote was 3 in favor and 3 against, with 1 abstention, because the deed restriction was still not physically in the notebook. On April 5th the Deed Preservation Restriction was delivered, and a second vote came back with 6 in favor and 1 abstention.

Finally it was the day of Town Meeting—April 25th. We set up a large display board in the lobby of the Middle School and greeted people with handouts, membership applications, and hopeful words. We were more than ready for a presentation on the floor of the meeting, with slides queued and speeches perfected, but it got late and the meeting was adjourned until May 2nd. We waited one more week and were rewarded with one of the few unanimous votes of the meeting. Boutwell House received its CPC grant.

Throughout this entire six-month process, every member of the Board of Directors contributed, helped prepare, or was present at meetings large and small. This was not a process accomplished by any single person or small group. My profound thanks to everyone who helped pull off this incredible project. The real work on this project now falls to John Ott and Al Collins to manage this undertaking for the next year and to comply with the strict work rules laid out by the CPC and National Park Service regulations (invoked because Boutwell House is listed on the National Register of Historic Places).

However, we cannot live by grants alone. I challenge our members and the community to step up and support the organization responsible for safeguarding the history of our town and the region. Whether your support is financial or by volunteering at our events, the Groton Historical Society needs, and appreciates, your help.

❧

Clean Up Day at the GHS Barn

On Sunday May 22, from 1 to 4 pm, nine industrious GHS board members gathered to sort out the barn contents and clean out the side porch of Boutwell House, bringing much order out of chaos to both places. Peter Benedict gets special mention for bringing (and using) his industrial vacuum cleaner, weed wacker, rakes, grease for the hinges on the doors, and an ice-filled bucket of soft drinks. The side porch had to be emptied because it will figure prominently in making our museum handicapped accessible. With Bobbie Spiegelman holding the door, Tom Callahan, at left, and Mike Flynn removed an old dollhouse (top photo). With an eye for both preservation and conservation of artifacts, John Ott and Anna Eliot looked over various items retrieved from the barn (bottom photo).

Photos by C. David Gordon.

❧



4 *Rewards of Sorting Ephemera at GHS*

Judy Adams, GHS Volunteer

I am a history buff, and for several years as a volunteer at Boutwell House, I have been sorting boxes and drawers full of handwritten documents, ledgers, and ephemera--fascinating glimpses into Groton's past.

Ephemera is written or printed matter that was meant to be needed or used for a short time--to be thrown out and not saved. These materials often portray the lifestyle of the times, items such as social invitations and cultural event programs. Buttons and posters call attention to political events. Bills of sale show products used by the community, both local and imported from outside the area.

By an interesting coincidence I was pondering some ship's documents from 1858-1860 and wondering about their relevance to Groton, when I wandered into the Ulysses S. Grant bedroom on the second floor of Boutwell House. There on the wall was a portrait of the ship's captain, Lewis L. Condry, who lived here in the center of town. His ship was the *Moses Davenport*, a freighter bound to London, Liverpool, and St. Petersburg, Russia, among other distant places. In another room of Boutwell House, in a trunk given to the society by Captain Condry, a ship's log was found with the *Davenport* registered at Newburyport bound from London to Boston. The entry for October 12-14, 1860, tells of "strong gales," crew complaining of "being exhausted with pumping." The ship was leaking badly and "Capt. Condry & chief officer . . . concluded . . . it would be for the best interest of the voyage to put into Plymouth (England) and try to find the leak."

Not all ledgers found at Boutwell House are so dramatic in content. Most of them contain household, farm, and business records. Also interesting are doctors' records; one record book in particular, from a hundred years, ago is written in a ledger printed specifically for doctors and is

full of advertisements for medicines and remedies available back then.

Groton Historical Society documents include many from the 18th century concerning how the town handled indigents, indentured servants, and illegitimate children. Each town was responsible for its own indigent population and maintained a poor house, but also paid householders to take in various people in need. If a person from Groton ended up in need in another town, that town submitted a bill to the town of Groton! These customs originated in England where the Poor Laws had evolved over 500 years.

The handwritten land deeds are also very interesting, describing the boundaries of land parcels in down-to-earth ways. One deed dated March 14, 1744, "in the eighteenth year of His Majesty's Reign" specifies "by estimation 138 acres bounded as follows - beginning att [sic] a Pitch Pine att [sic] the North Westerly Corner and bound Westerly on land [owned by William Tarbell and Elisha Rockwood] to a Pitch Pine on the West Side of the Squannicook River South Westerly to Phinehas Burt's Land to a Red Oak." Trees are often mentioned as markers as well as rock cairns, streams, or fords in the river.

I hope the Groton Historical Society never runs out of 'stuff' I can sort!

The Groton Historical Society depends on its generous volunteers who donate their time in a variety of capacities. We are happy to develop projects for anyone interested in helping out at our organization. Opportunities are varied and include working on membership, collections, education and social media. Any person interested in Groton's history or in the museum field is welcome to join us!



Exhibit at de Menil Gallery Captivates GHS Members

C. David Gordon, GHS Vice President

A perk of membership in the Groton Historical Society was a private viewing on May 18 of a remarkable exhibit of black and white photos of white churches in New England at Groton School's de Menil Gallery. The 40 photos on display were chosen by architectural photographer Steve Rosenthal from his book *White on White: Churches of Rural New England*.

This program formed the first connection between the school's gallery and the Society. In introductory

remarks that evening, Society President John Ott noted that Boutwell House lacks gallery space that the art center might make available for displaying important pieces in the Society's collection.

Our host, John Tyler, administrator of the gallery and head of the school's History Department, said that the gallery has state-of-the-art temperature and humidity control, but lacks sufficient storage capacity to support a

continued on page 7

From Club House to Private Home: 5 Groton House Gets Second Life

C. David Gordon, GHS Vice President

Groton's many beautiful old homes have deservedly drawn a great deal of attention. But have you ever stopped to think that other Groton houses not so antique or elaborate may also have interesting stories of their origin and use. One such modest-sized home with an unusual background is situated in the woods off Lowell Road within walking distance of Baddacook Pond.

This home's origin can be traced back to a November 1930 letter sent to 500 alumni of Dartmouth College living in Boston. In it the writers, also Dartmouth alumni, raised a possibility and asked a question. The reader was to picture "a cabin about 30 miles from the city, close enough to be within easy reach even without a car, yet in wooded country, sheltered in winter, cool when city thermometers are at ninety in the shade; located, we'll say, on a lake or stream, with opportunities for swimming, canoeing, and fishing, hiking, skiing and skating."

The question asked in the letter was this: "If you had such a place within easy commuting distance, wouldn't it solve the problem of many a week-end holiday?"

The letter was aimed especially at younger Dartmouth alumni out of the college up to five years, starting a career and living in or near the city. The idea was to replicate one of the string of cabins that those young men as undergraduates had the opportunity to use for their outdoor recreation – all operated by the Dartmouth Outing Club, based in Hanover, NH.

The DOC, thought to be the oldest such club in an American college, continues to maintain such cabins for undergraduates and alumni to enjoy. The cabin proposed in the 1930 letter would be "a structure similar to those of DOC with the complete equipment of an outing cabin, including a large fireplace, a stove and cooking utensils, an outdoor oven for summer cooking, modern steel bunks, mattresses and blankets, a saw, an axe, and so on." The use of this cabin "would be regulated so as to prevent conduct which might bring discredit to the name of the club or the college."

Response to the letter was extraordinarily positive, with respondents agreeing on four basic requirements thought to be important: "privacy, accessibility from Boston, good skiing conditions, and proximity to a desirable swimming hole." Perhaps anticipating that the proposition would meet with widespread appeal, the letter writers had already informed the College president of the plan, consulted with the College trustees and its alumni council as well as the DOC, and talked with fellow classmates



Sketch by architect Lloyd K. Neidlinger '23 of cabin built in Groton in 1931 for the Dartmouth Outing Club of Boston. Drawing originally appeared in the October 1931 Dartmouth Alumni Magazine. Used by permission.

about the venture.

One of the initiators of the idea, Hans Paschen, a 1928 graduate of Dartmouth's Business School, reported the full story of the cabin in the Dartmouth alumni magazine for October 1931. The Dartmouth Outing Club of Boston was formed, complete with bylaws, a trust agreement, and slate of officers. It was "the first DOC for alumni," Paschen wrote later in a 1981 typewritten reminiscence. Sufficient funds were raised by Dec. 31, 1930, to cover estimated expenditures for site purchase. By then the club had 50 founders and 261 members.

DOC Comes to Groton

About 30 locations beyond the metropolitan Boston area were investigated, and late in March 1931 the search ended with the discovery of a site in Groton – 12.5 acres "half a mile from Baddacook Pond," a lot with "meadows for games and outdoor picnic places, and "a good steep slope which someday will make a miniature ski-jump."

The cabin was designed by Lloyd K. Neidlinger, '23, an architect with Harper and West of Boston. The floor plan shows a substantial living room with a huge stone fireplace with room for 24 people, a bunk room accommodating up to eight people, a kitchen, and a dressing room. A covered porch led off the kitchen, and an open porch wrapped around the outer walls of the living room. Alumni supplied the lumber and some equipment at substantial price savings. Graduates soon paid for the expenses of land purchase (\$500) and cabin building (about \$3,500).

continued on page 6

6 Groton House Gets Second Life *continued from page 5*

As he looked back on the project in the 1980s, Paschen said, "Some of us thought that the building period was the best time of all." A local stonemason constructed the foundations and fireplace with alumni assistance. As regards cabin construction, a Groton carpenter "became a stalwart teacher and guide to keep the Sunday volunteer builders out of trouble." Unfortunately, names of both the stonemason and carpenter have been lost.

"Everybody knew everybody else and many of us made lasting friendships with fellow alumni whom we had not known in our Hanover days," Paschen wrote. "We took some trips, hiked, cut brush and firewood on our dozen acres of land, but the main attraction seemed to have been to get away from city living, to have companionship of friends, and to do it inexpensively."

DOC Leaves, New Owners Arrive

World War II brought an end to the DOC of Boston along with its Groton cabin. "The war, gas rationing and all that went with it, hit us hard," Paschen wrote. Following the war, he wrote, "valiant efforts were made to get a new start, but the chain had been broken." The trustees finally disbanded the DOC of Boston and sold the cabin, turning over the proceeds to the DOC in Hanover.

Some years later, new owners Aaron Glazer and Ann Humphrey did more by far than simply maintain the integrity of the cabin. Like the Dartmouth grads, they were looking for the peace and quiet of the country, opportunities to hike, swim, and ski and to work to beautify the place. They transformed the cabin into a modern home -- weathertight, with up-to-date mechanical systems and a more refined interior that retains something of its former simplicity and closeness to nature. They also planted a variety of trees and shrubs about the property.

Their efforts were featured in the July 11, 1993,



*Former DOC cabin as it looks today.
Photo by C. David Gordon.*

Boston Sunday Herald magazine section with a written description of the renovations by Alice Cary and seven rich color photographs by George Meredith. A few years later, with more new homes encroaching on their solitude, Glazer and Humphrey sold this once isolated home and found the seclusion they treasure in mid coastal Maine.

Since buying the property in 2000, the present owners, James G. Stefely and Nancy Graupner, have enlarged the cabin with a two-story addition, taking painstaking care to make the addition reflect the fine features of the original home, from the same rough clapboard exterior to the handsome new fieldstone fireplace and fine woodwork used in the interior. The DOC spirit still lives in this modern house in the woods that remains faithful to its past.

[C. David Gordon is a graduate of Dartmouth College, Class of 1955.]



Did You Know.....

... that one of the more important town officers in the early days of Groton was that of hog reeve [also hog-reeve or hogreeve]? The hog reeve's duty was to round up pigs that broke loose from their pens and to take them to the pound which was, at one time, near where the Legion Hall now stands. Owners of stray pigs would be fined. This job was important because a stray pig could destroy a family's garden, a most precious food source then. The word reeve is related to the word sheriff, sometimes written as sherreve in medieval times. Regardless of the spelling, the officer's duty was to enforce laws and to keep order.

--E.S.

permanent collection of its own. Both speakers referred to the gallery as “a community resource,” and Ott voiced the hope that Society members would regularly “come to see what’s going on at the gallery.”

Rosenthal’s photos are truly works of art in themselves, taken from the 1960s to recently as 2008. The artist had patiently waited for the time when the light would strike in just the perfect way, and though each photo seemed deceptively simple at first glance, each merited a closer look to catch all elements seen by the camera.

Some photos were of whole facades or portions of the sides of some churches. Others focused on doorways, windows and shutters, or the fancy wood trim around these. Of special interest was a photo of First Parish Church of Groton. Another photo was of First Parish Church in Ashby.

The photo display was a traveling exhibition compiled by Cambridge-based Historic New England, formerly known as The Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities.



John Tyler, left, director of the de Menil gallery at Groton School, shares fine points of the photo exhibit with GHS members Tom Callahan, Barbara Murray, Lili Ott, and John Ott. Photo by C. David Gordon.

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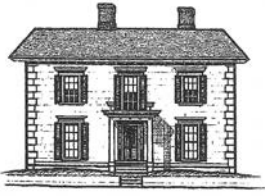
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Groton Historical Society

172 Main Street, P.O. Box 202

Groton, MA 01450

Then and Now

July 2011

Volume 12, Issue 3

Upcoming Programs

Off the Beaten Path: A Midsummer's Eve Ramble

**July 12
6:30 PM**

**\$10/members
\$15/non-members**

**Space is limited
Reservations required
Call 978-448-0092**

Join us for another bus tour to several historic spots in Groton all linked by their agricultural heritage. Tour will conclude at the final site with homemade strawberry shortcake and ice cream.

Bus will depart Boutwell House (172 Main Street) at 6:30 PM and return to the same location at 9:30 PM.

Please call 978-448-0092 to reserve your spot by Monday July 11.

Newsletter Committee

Kara Fossey
C. David Gordon
Bobbie Spiegelman
Liz Strachan
Barbara Murray, Copyeditor





The Boutwell House-1851

Then and Now

A Newsletter of the Groton Historical Society

Volume 12, Issue 1

January 2011

Meet the President: John H. Ott heads the Groton Historical Society

C. David Gordon, Vice President, GHS

John Harlow Ott has devoted his career to preserving and making accessible to others the various elements of American history that have fascinated him. Today an independent museum consultant, he is using his understanding and experience to help revitalize the Boutwell House museum and move the Groton Historical Society forward. We welcome him as the new president of the Society.

John was born in Canada but grew up in Philadelphia, PA, which he said served as his “introduction to history on a real scale.” He majored in American History at Eastern University in St. Davids, PA, earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1966. The next year he earned a Master’s degree in American Museum Management in 1967 through the Cooperstown Graduate Programs offered by the State University of New York-Oneonta and the New York State Historical Association at Cooperstown.

Following three years active duty as an officer in the U.S. Army Ordnance Corps, for which he received the Bronze Star and Army Commendation Medal for service in Vietnam, John started his professional career as curator of collections at Hancock Shaker Village. He would stay on to work as Hancock’s director for 12 years. John’s master’s thesis on the Hancock Shakers led to the publication in 1976 of his book *Hancock Shaker Village: A Guidebook and History*.

John subsequently served as executive director of the Atlanta Historical Society from 1983 to 1991, of the B&O Railroad Museum in Baltimore from 1991 to 1999, and of the Scottish Rite Masonic National Heritage Museum and Library in Lexington, MA, from 1999 to 2007. Recently he served for nine months as interim executive director of the Northeast Document Conservation Center in Andover, MA until a

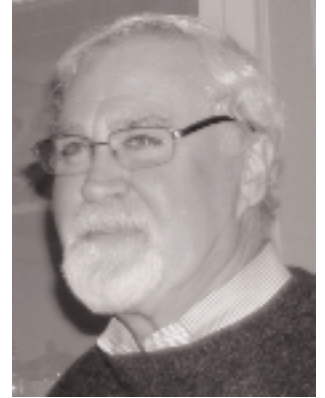
continued on page 4



John Ott (right), incoming Groton Historical Society president, congratulates outgoing president, Ted Roselund, at a reception honoring Ted for seven years of service at the helm of the 117-year-old Society. Ted expressed pride in the Society’s accomplishments during his tenure, especially the Civil War reenactments at Hillbrook Orchard in 2005 and 2007, a very successful antiques auction, visits to Boutwell House by third graders, and the ongoing series of programs and exhibits.

Main Street View~

As the Groton Historical Society's new President, I am calling my newsletter column the Main Street View, through which I want to share the positive outlook, progress, and vision I have for this organization as we move forward in the New Year. But first I want to thank everyone, both members and friends, who responded financially to our year-end appeal to get the ball rolling. As many of you know, Boutwell House suffered two major plumbing failures during the past year that left considerable damage and some serious problems related to its infrastructure and operational use that must be dealt with before we can open again to the public. These problems are being addressed by a team of GHS board members and professional consultants. We are also seeking funds from the Community Preservation Committee to help with this rehabilitation work. It won't be an easy job but this grand old house was bequeathed to the Historical Society in 1933, has been its home since 1939, and has stood as one of the architectural gems of our town's beloved Main Street since 1851.



Boutwell House is the town's museum, its storehouse of antiquities. The Historical Society is the guardian of a sizeable portion of Groton's archives, historic images, maps, and other irreplaceable records. These assets need to be made accessible and available to its members, citizens and scholars, and anyone who wishes to see and/or use these materials. The house, though unbeknownst to many, was built by George S. Boutwell, the only Governor of Massachusetts to come from our town, who further served in our state legislature and the United States Congress and was Secretary of the Treasury under President Ulysses S. Grant, who did sleep in the house during a memorable visit in 1869.

But more important than all this history is the fact that this house is Groton's House of History and is not located in Boston, Worcester, or Springfield or some other significant Massachusetts town. It is right here on Main Street across from our Town Hall, centered on Station Avenue at the hub of anticipated future economic development with easy access to the Rail Trail and our own Rte. 119 "turnpike." It is viewed by people from many communities daily who pass by on their way to work.

Very shortly you will have the chance to view a small exhibit on the third floor of the Groton Public Library that will let the Historical Society share some of its meaningful documents and pieces of material culture related to people like ourselves--immigrants, settlers, and individuals who helped shape this community. It will be the first in a series of topical exhibits giving the Society a chance to display some of the captivating artifacts in its care. In addition we will continue to offer useful school programs, quality lectures, building tours, and special events that are not just our own but collaborative and partnering efforts with other educational and nonprofit bodies toward building an even greater appreciation of Groton's past. All of these efforts will take time, money, vision and planning but we have already begun.

I close this message with a promise--that the Groton Historical Society will do everything in its power to preserve, safeguard, and make accessible its home and its historical collections, knowing that it is the chief steward of Groton's historic past. My best wishes for 2011 and thanks for your continued support.

John H. Ott
President, GHS
January, 2011

A Most Pleasant Association

Bobbie Spiegelman, Curator, GHS

The 1976 Friends' edition of *The Groton Public Library: A History*, notes that in 1940 the "Groton Historical Society, which for many years had occupied Sibley Hall [the room in the basement of the original library building], completed the removal of its property to Boutwell House, across from Town Hall, thus bringing to an end what had been, for the trustees, a most pleasant association." This "pleasant association" may have been anticipated with the appointment of George S. Boutwell, in 1854, to a committee authorized to spend the \$500 donated by Abbott Lawrence to create a public library in our town. Mr. Boutwell also served as a library trustee until his death in 1905. His daughter, Georgianna Boutwell, had formed the Groton Historical Society in 1894, just a year after the cornerstone of the library building was laid. This proved to be a propitious time for both organizations. Our current Library Director Owen Shuman believes the blueprint for the original library building designated a separate room as the meeting place of the Historical Society.

Over the years former curators of the Society arranged occasional displays at the library in a special oak-trimmed glass case, but in the 1980s the relationship lapsed when the case was moved to Boutwell House to open up additional space in the library. Happily this classic case will soon be making its way back to its original home to renew the relationship that now combines a strong bond through technology with the more traditional approaches. The Society's new website (www.grotonhistoricalsociety.org) has a link to two digital collections housed at the library: The Groton Town Diaries from 1918 to 1971 and *Turner's Public Spirit* newspaper collection from 1908 to 1921.

The GrotonREADS program, begun in 2005, has provided opportunities to reconnect the two organizations with related programming and displays connected to the designated book chosen. The 2011 choice is *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down* by Anne Fadiman, and we're working on a display—featuring our newly restored case—at the library that will tie in with the history of immigration in our area over the generations.

We invite you to check out this new display between January and April any time you're visiting the third floor of the library just inside the Main Street entrance, and look for new exhibits through the year. The Society pledges to fill this shared case with relevant and interesting items to remind us all of our town's history and the responsibility of the Society and the Library to preserve our treasured past.



GHS curator Bobbie Spiegelman (left) and board member Peter Benedict begin cleaning the oak-trimmed glass display case before it is returned to its original home in the library to house changing displays of artifacts from Boutwell House.

www.grotonhistoricalsociety.org

Meet the President *continued*

continued from page 1

permanent director was hired.

Ostensibly retired after 37 years in museum management, John keeps his hand in as a consultant on museum operations, New England agriculture, farming methods, and the Shakers from his Pinehurst Books and Research consultancy in Groton. In addition to taking on the presidency of the Groton Historical Society, he is a board member of several nearby historical institutions, including Fruitlands Museum in Harvard, the Louisa May Alcott Memorial Association in Concord, the Fort Devens Museum on Devens, of the Freedom's Way Heritage Association, and the Northeast Document Conservation Center.

In 2006 the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester elected John a member in honor of his "historic preservation efforts in helping to preserve some of America's most important national landmarks." The Massachusetts Agricultural Club, founded in 1840, elected him a member in 2009.

John lives in Groton with his wife, Lili, who is director of the Concord Art Association. They have two grown children. At the couple's home, Pinehurst Farm, he continues to collect books on American agriculture, travel, and farm tools.



Flanked by board members Tom Callahan (left) and Mike Flynn, retiring GHS president Ted Roselund looks over his parting gift from the board – an autographed copy of local resident Karen Riggert's just published book of photographs, *Groton, Massachusetts – A Special New England Community*.

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The Groton Historical Society

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 Monday 10 AM - 2 PM
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Annual Member (Individual or Family)	\$35	_____
GHS Sponsor	\$75	_____
Corporate Sponsor	\$250	_____
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Please tell me more about including GHS in my estate planning.

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The Boutwell House-1851

The Groton Historical Society

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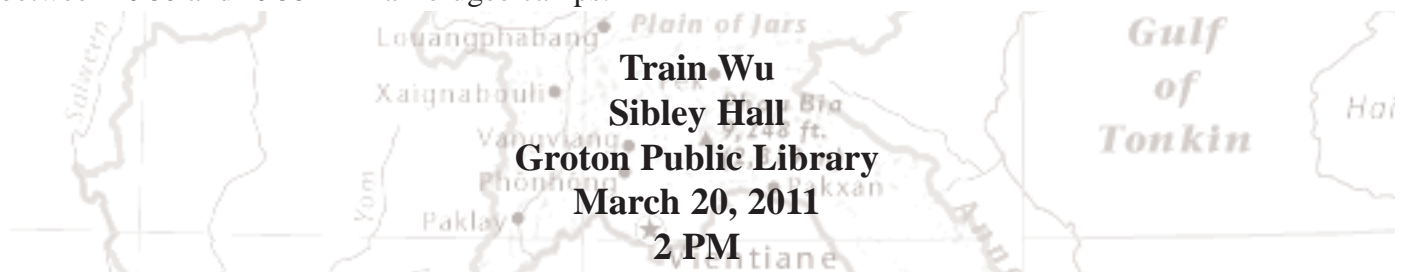
Upcoming Programs

January 23rd: Inside 164 Main Street

Peter Benedict, of 164 Main Street, will talk about: the importance of saving old houses, how to determine the age of a house by looking at construction methods, and the history of his own house and restoration projects that he has completed. Discussion time will follow and you are encouraged to bring questions for Peter about your own 'old house' projects. **Space for this program is limited and reservations are required. The program is free for Groton Historical Society members and \$5 for non-members. The event will take place at 164 Main Street at 2 PM on Sunday January 23rd.**

March 20th: The Hmong Experience

As it has over the past few years, the Groton Historical Society is pleased to participate in the town-wide GrotonREADS program. This year's book is *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*. In keeping with the theme of the Immigrant Experience, the Society has arranged for Train Wu to speak at the Library about the Hmong experience. Train, currently living in the Fitchburg area, was born in Laos and spent the years between 1980 and 1986 in Thai refugee camps.



Then and Now

Newsletter of the Groton Historical Society

Volume 13, Number 4

October 2012

Old-Time Electioneering Foreshadows Modern Politics

Judy Adams, GHS Volunteer

In early colonial days the instruments of politics consisted mostly of personal recommendations or endorsements, usually made by responsible citizens in favor of men whom they knew within their small communities. Then, as second and third generations moved out from the original settlements, their needs began to differ and they needed better representation in the governments which were still centered in their home towns. Support for candidates evolved from personal recommendations of friends to endorsements from committees, and modern politics was born.

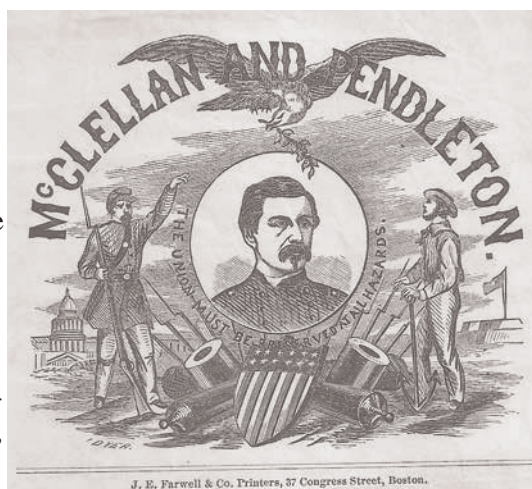
The Groton Historical Society's collection of political artifacts offers many examples of the tools of evolving politics. The advent of the printing press on this side of the Atlantic made possible much wider distribution of information about upcoming elections, the political parties and their candidates. The collection includes leaflets, monthlies, printed speeches and sermons, newspapers, and broadsides such as the one pictured here endorsing Massachusetts electors for George McClellan. McClellan ran unsuccessfully against President Lincoln in 1864. There is also an 1848 letter appeal for subscriptions to the newspaper "Emancipator," an instrument of the Liberty Party, with a notice about their coming convention at Faneuil Hall.

The collection also contains a fine selection of political buttons, some of which are in the current GHS display of election memorabilia at the Groton Public Library. While there is confusion about the origin of such buttons as we know them, it is known that a real coat button was cast in support of George Washington during his presidency, and Andrew Jackson's

likeness was presented on a button to promote his second run for the office. Some of the buttons in the GHS collection were formed in interesting shapes, such as two buttons from the 1896 election, a bicycle (with photos of Bryan and Sewall) and a bee (showing McKinley and Hobart). Unfortunately it is not known if these two buttons were significant as symbols in that particular election, won easily by McKinley.

Other unusual items include a potholder supporting Frederic W. Eddem, Republican nominee for state representative from the 11th Middlesex District; a bid for the

women's vote; and an interesting silk campaign ribbon. In 1840 when William Henry Harrison was running for president, he was pictured on a cream-colored ribbon that also showed his father's cabin in Indiana (see photo on page 4). The effect was to present Harrison as a common man, a man of the people, in contrast to the privileged position of his opponent, Martin Van Buren, who went down to defeat. There's nothing new about this political gambit!



FOR PRESIDENTIAL ELECTORS.

AT LARGE.

ROBERT C. WINTHROP, Boston.
ERASMUS D. BEACH, Springfield.

DISTRICTS.

1. — ABRAHAM H. HOWLAND,	New Bedford.
2. — JOHN WILSON,	Cohasset.
3. — ANDREW PEIRCE, JR.	Boston.
4. — ABRAM JACKSON,	Boston.
5. — S. E. PEABODY,	Salem.
6. — J. H. CARLETON,	Haverhill.
7. — LEVERETT SALTONSTALL,	Newton.
8. — ISAAC DAVIS,	Worcester.
9. — WILLIAM H. FULLER,	Whately.
10. — ABRAM PAIGE,	Springfield.

Broadside from 1864 presidential election lists electors supporting candidacy of George B. McClellan and George H. Pendleton in a losing race against Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson. From GHS Collection.

Entertaining a Factor in National Campaigns

In the late 19th century the telegraph expedited communications within political parties and strengthened them on a national level. In the collection there is a telegram to Gov. Boutwell from a New York Republican committee chairman arranging for Boutwell to speak in his area.

Huge public gatherings and social events for large donors were common in the 19th century. Items in the GHS collection tell about events very similar to those held today. Samuel Green, in his

continued on page 4

2 Main Street View: Looking Back—Moving Forward

As we approach this year's Annual Meeting, I thought it might be a good idea to take a brief look back at what our organization has accomplished this past year and then consider where we are going. Our Long-Range Strategic Plan for the next ten years remains our primary road map. Many of you had a hand in creating this forward-looking document.

A year ago we launched the Boutwell House Rehabilitation Project, with the hope that the renovation work would provide both operating cost savings and protection for this Groton architectural gem. The work now underway is made possible by a Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Grant and the generous grant of Community Preservation Act funds awarded at the April 2011 Town Meeting. Plumbers, electricians and demolition work have made great strides inside the house, and recently the side porch partitions were removed to make way for a new primary entrance to the house.

Volunteers Working on Many Fronts

A cadre of volunteers has been assisting with the acquisition of things like stoves, sinks, lighting devices, and other necessary pieces that will make the house a home. In addition there have been many gifts to the Historical Society in the form of renewed memberships and contributions of collections materials such as books, maps, postcards, broadsides, and manuscripts, ever expanding the holdings of the Society for research and exhibition purposes. Volunteers



have also been donating their time to help visiting researchers with names like Shattuck and Farnsworth, who deserve our attention.

Others are cataloging our Boutwell papers, researching articles for college and

graduate student studies on our Revolutionary War holdings, and producing exhibits on topics like the Civil War, Birds of Groton, agriculture in Groton, and ephemera of past political campaigns (see pages 1 and 5).

Over the past year, volunteers have assisted with housekeeping, house cleaning, equipment repairs, and landscaping upkeep (especially after last October's terrible snow storm that damaged many of our trees). And, heeding the Society's mission to discover and tell the story of Groton's unique past, volunteers have also developed and executed a variety of public programs, in particular, tours to a sawmill site, a soapstone quarry, local farms, places associated with revered Groton conservationist William P. Wharton (see page 6), and Jane Nylander's talk on 19th-century Victorian house technology. Volunteers have also helped with membership mailings, the restructuring of our Life Membership program, and most recently, participated at Grotonfest with a demonstration of spinning by Bonnie Carter and timber framing (see photo on this page of Peter Benedict instructing a youngster in the forgotten art of hand-boring peg holes in a framing post). These are just two examples of what I like to call our "History is Us" initiative of letting people participate in hands-on activities.

The Year to Come

So what is left to be done and what lies ahead? A LOT! We have been operating without paid staff this year to cut our costs, and we still have a lot of interior work to do on the house and more money to raise. We are looking for new members to provide curatorial, archival, building, landscaping and educational help as we move forward to accomplish the goals in our Long-Range Strategic Plan.

We want to capture and celebrate the stories of the local agricultural, historical, and environmental changes going on around us. So think about working with us on these challenges and getting friends and family to join – come to our annual meeting on Tuesday October 30 at 7 pm in Legion Hall to learn more and become a part of the Groton story. See you there and thank you.

John H. Ott
President, GHS
October 2012



*Issue sponsored by Kris Kramer, Realtor, EXIT Assurance Realty 978.807.7317
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Alvin B. Collins, Project Manager
Boutwell House Rehabilitation Project

The Governor Boutwell House has hidden mysteries just as all older houses have. These mysteries are being uncovered during the renovation project currently underway. As work progresses with walls being opened up and spaces being explored, we are finding clues to how this house evolved. This opens up the mind to visions of life as it might have been years ago for the Boutwell family—the Governor, his wife, Sarah, and their children, Georgianna and Francis.

George S. Boutwell commissioned the construction of an elegant residence on Main Street in Groton in 1851, the year he was elected governor of Massachusetts. The front part of the house appears to be pretty much as it was then, but the mid section and rear portions have been altered through the years to suit changing needs of the family. Our discoveries have stirred up a host of questions about the early days of what is now the headquarters and museum of the Groton Historical Society.

The front main section has two floors with a beautiful center staircase appearing to be as it was back in 1851 but a few structural peculiarities make for great conversation. The first-floor exterior walls are roughly 14 inches thick compared to the second-floor exterior walls that are only about 6 inches thick. From the basement if you look up into the first-floor walls through openings around some of the heating pipes, you will notice the interior cavity is plastered. The walls not only have plaster on the inside of the rooms but also inside the exterior walls, and my guess is the second floor is similar. **Was this a form of insulation, a way to minimize air infiltration or a way to make the house quieter?**

The second-floor room over the front entry is very small with a large floor-to-almost-ceiling front window, making me wonder what the Governor used this room for. **Was it his smoking room or did he use it as a private space in which to gather his thoughts? Did**

the oversize window allow access to the flat roof over the entry portico for the Governor to greet guests?

The third-floor attic has finished rooms, but the attic stair steepness suggests these rooms were probably for house staff and not the Boutwell family. **How many staff lived up there?**

Mid-Section Mysteries

The middle section of the first floor contains the kitchen, butler's pantry, and dining room. Inside the butler's pantry, you can see where part of the floor has been patched in, covering over the area where the original basement stairs were. Those old stairs gave easy access from the kitchen to the cool basement where most likely root vegetables and preserves were kept. **Why were the stairs moved?**

Imbedded in the kitchen wood floor are wear marks from years of kitchen staff shuffling in front of the kitchen wood-burning cook stove. **Can you envision the hard work it took to prepare meals 150 years ago?**

Some time in the past, a side porch and pantry room were added to the house. They covered over the original basement bulkhead, making it necessary to access the basement through a new rear entrance door. **Was this done to make the west side of the house more aesthetically pleasing to important visitors?**

Back End Mysteries

Off the kitchen was originally a rear shed or barn that housed a woodshed and water cistern. **Was there also a privy or two, since indoor plumbing was yet to be introduced to the house?**

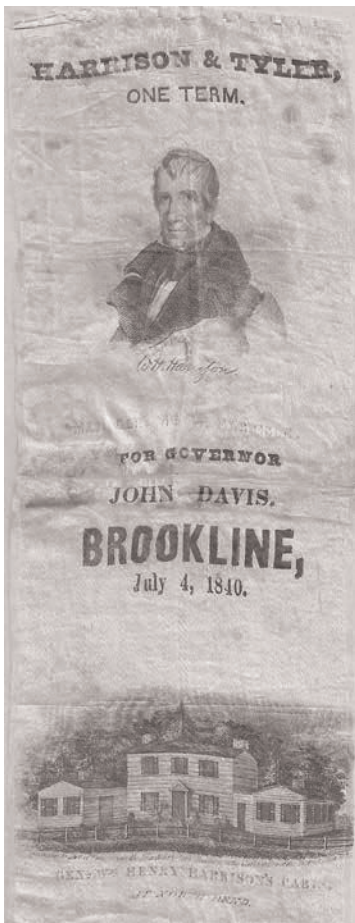
All of these early structures had been covered over years ago, but when we created a new ADA hand icapped-accessible bathroom, we exposed the old woodshed walls where you can see shadows of wood piled for use in the kitchen wood stove and house fireplaces. **How much wood did Boutwell use in a year?**



Gov. Boutwell's house mysteriously rendered on an old postcard published by G.E. Meyet and probably dating to the turn of the 19th century. Notice the fire hydrant by the sidewalk. Groton's first water company was formed in 1897. Postmarked 6 PM October 30, 1905, the card was sent to a Mr. Chas. Eldredge, Old Mystic, Conn. and received the next morning with the message "All well, lovely weather. See you later. Estelle."

4 Electioneering continued from page 1

1887 book *Collection of Papers relating to the History of Groton, Mass.*, described 4th of July celebrations in 1897 and 1808 which alternated under the auspices of the Democrats and the Federalists: “At that period the two political parties in Groton were very evenly divided,” Green wrote, “and partisan feelings ran high.” Again in June of 1869, when President Ulysses S. Grant visited Massachusetts and spent a night at the Boutwell home in Groton, there was a public reception the next day. Green reported, “Never before was there so great an assemblage of persons within the limits of the town.” Gov. Boutwell had just been appointed to serve as President Grant’s first Secretary of the Treasury. Originally a Democrat, Boutwell had helped found the Republican Party in 1854, with the goal of ending the expansion of slavery. An 1888 ticket to a Grand Republican Ratification Supper at Groton’s Town Hall, shown here, is part of the GHS collection.



Fragile silk ribbon from 1840 helped Whig candidate William Henry Harrison and his running mate John Tyler defeat incumbent Martin Van Buren, a Democrat, in the country’s 9th presidential election. From GHS Collection.

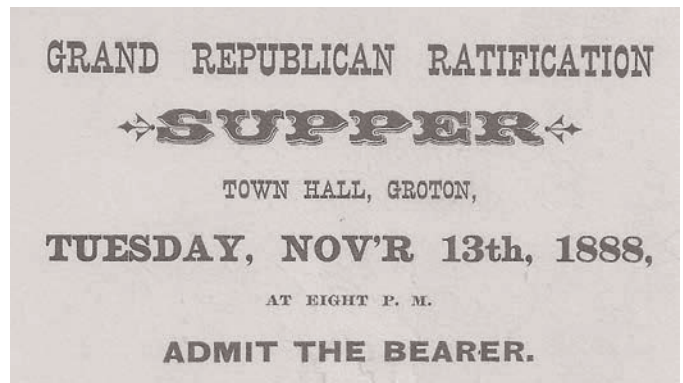
Seamy Side of Campaigning

George Boutwell had a reputation for scrupulous honesty, but this may have been rare among politicians even then. Caleb Butler, writing in his *History of the Town of Groton* in 1848, comments on “that ruling passion, thirst for office...[and] the facility of gratifying it by apostasy.” Clearly this craving for political power led to nefarious practices by others. Certain documents in the GHS collection bear witness to some of these.

In 1861 Republicans gathered in Convention at Groton Junction (Ayer). A broadside printed after the convention describes the informal nomination of J.M. Hollingsworth, Groton’s papermaker, for state Senate. It tells of “unfair and unprecedented means that had been resorted to for three years . . . [of] pensioned agents who had canvassed the District with

their bribes.”

In 1873 when Boutwell was elected to the U.S. Senate over Henry L. Dawes, a U.S. Representative from Pittsfield, MA, it was not without coming up against campaign practices that are familiar to us today. A letter to the Hon. George S. Boutwell contains an all-too-familiar disclaimer on campaign practices: “The friends of Mr. Dawes were unscrupulous in their statements and sometimes the case was a good deal beclouded; [however] while the Dawes men have had a perfect organization from the start, we have used only efforts to contradict falsehoods and representation.”



Ticket holders joined in celebration in 1888 when Benjamin Harrison defeated incumbent president Grover Cleveland, though he won by electoral vote only, not by popular vote. From GHS Collection.

The years running up to the election of 1900 were complicated by the issue of the annexation of the Philippine Islands in 1898. President McKinley had adopted an aggressive policy and Boutwell formed a strategy in opposition to his reelection. Boutwell’s Anti-Imperialist League published leaflets supporting their position. Leaflet No. 23, in our collection, points out that military reports “forgot . . . to explain the President’s flagrant and repeated violation of law in his effort to bring on war.” “Washington does not represent the country” was Boutwell’s cry in 1899, according to Thomas H. Brown in his book, *George Sewall Boutwell: Human Rights Advocate*.

Even with campaign management software and multiple books on the subject available today, much of electioneering as we know it is an old story. ■



Bobbie Spiegelman, Curator, GHS

The fervor of the 2012 presidential campaign has inspired a search of the stash of election memorabilia owned by the Groton Historical Society, and the quest has been quite rewarding. There were the usual buttons and a few bumper stickers that were familiar, but upon closer examination, a broader perspective was revealed. Judy Adams, our dedicated volunteer and cataloger extraordinaire, discovered election news in Francis Boutwell’s folksy letter to his father who was residing in Washington, D. C., at the time of the 1884 presidential election (when Grover Cleveland barely defeated James G. Blaine). Young Boutwell expressed concern about the “Independents” in town—as many as twenty—and noted the use of the new voting machines that were sure to add more security to the process.

The earliest document to surface was a wordy 1837 brochure, distributed by members of the Whig party, to encourage voters to support the party candidates in the state election in order to send a message to Washington and the Van Buren administration that voting men were not happy with the way things were being run. In our day of quick sound bites, I can’t imagine anyone taking the time to read anything as verbose as this.

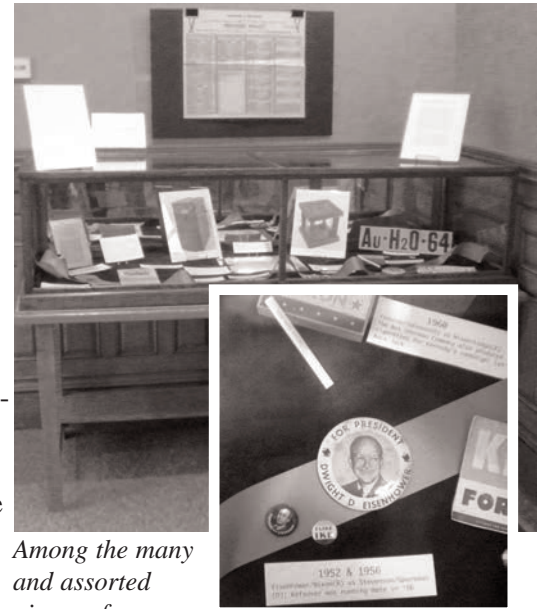
The most unusual find was in our collection’s campaign buttons. William Jennings Bryan, a candidate running for president in three different elections—1896, 1900, and 1908--had a flair for promoting himself, and Barry Goldwater had a name that lent itself to a creative bumper sticker (see photos). Nothing beat Nat Sherman’s presidential cigarettes and we’re lucky enough to have a box supporting Nixon in the 1960 campaign. There apparently was also one for John F. Kennedy that was stamped “Let’s Back Jack.” Eventually these would have been shunned, at least publicly, as the campaign to ban smoking had an early

start in 1970 when Nixon signed a law that banned cigarette ads on television and radio. He did indulge, but with a pipe.

There is a lot of compelling information readily available these days about presidential elections, perhaps too much. There is instant communication about candidates and

issues and an endless stream of information, some worthy, some frivolous. Some aspects of promoting candidates, however, seem to be timeless, as this exhibit of the Groton Historical Society’s election memorabilia highlights. Notice some of the issues driving the campaigns through the centuries and you might realize that some things never change (see Judy Adams’s story on page 1 of this newsletter).

We hope our GHS exhibit at the library (in the display case outside the Historical Room on the third floor) whets your appetite for more history, if only as an excuse to get away from the constant 24-7 barrage of sound bites of the current campaign. ■



Among the many and assorted pieces of campaign ephemera in the display, all from the GHS collection, are 15 different campaign buttons, from 1896 (William Jennings Bryan) through 1964 (Barry Goldwater running against Lyndon Johnson). Small photo shows array of items from 1952 to 1960. Photos by Barbara Murray.

Did You Know.....

... that during the years Gov. Boutwell lived at 172 Main Street with his family, the area immediately to the rear of the stately yellow house well known for its elegant, formal façade was farmland? As was typical of many residential lots in Groton, the Boutwells had a vegetable garden and crops such as rye and corn grown to feed horses and other livestock, a windmill that pumped water from three wells, a good-sized barn with carriage shed, wash lines for the family laundry, and fences. To the far rear, there was a farm road. It would have been common to see people outdoors working the land and doing other chores.

The “back forty” of Boutwell House looks very different today. The barn burned down in 1876 and was never replaced, and since the death of Georgianna Boutwell in 1933, the land has fallen into disuse and become overgrown with wild vegetation. Now, try to imagine how wonderful it would be to see this land restored and once again used, this time for the benefit of Groton’s citizens, especially children. This is exactly the vision of the GHS president, John Ott, and the current Board of Directors--the land reclaimed and trees thinned, a new windmill and fences built, gardens planted, and the area turned into an agrarian teaching site for all who are interested. Hopefully, with help and support of all who care about Groton’s history, it won’t be too long until the vision becomes reality.

--E.S.

6 Celebrating the Life and Work of William P. Wharton

C. David Gordon, GHS Vice President

One of the GHS's best outreach programs yet was the Midsummer's Eve Ramble on July 10 to three sites closely connected to Groton's foremost 20th-century conservationist and birdwatcher, William ("Billy") Pinkham Wharton—the Town Forest, the Wharton Plantation, and Wharton's own homestead, Five Oaks Farm on Broadmeadow Road.

Wharton was born in 1880 in Beverly, Massachusetts, and died in 1976 in Groton at the age of 96, having spent over 70 of his years mainly in Groton. Speakers Roy Johnson, William Conley, and Marion Stoddart conveyed details of the man they had personally known (see photo); Tom Callahan, as master of ceremonies, and Bobbie Spiegelman, the Society's curator, added what they had learned from their studies of the man.

Wharton was instrumental as part of a three-member committee (and also selectman at the time) in persuading the town to establish a Town Forest in 1922. It is dedicated to the memory of those from town who died in World War I. Wharton had been inspired by forest management practices he had seen on a visit to Germany involving the harvesting of trees in such a careful manner as to secure a perpetual supply of hardwoods. He influenced planning, preservation, and conservation on a town-wide scale as a member of Groton's first Planning Board in 1947. By the early 1950s this board had put in place a Conservation Land Use Plan and the Forest Management Plan for the Town Forest as well as working toward the creation of separate land-use zones.

A multimillionaire by the time he was 21, Wharton began buying up abandoned farm land adjacent to property



At our stop in the Town Forest and each of our later stops, Marion Stoddart and Leroy "Roy" Johnson spoke warmly of William Wharton, whom they both had known personally. Photo by Barbara Murray.

he owned on the shore of Baddacook Pond, where he had built a hut as his first dwelling in Groton. Here he could be close to nature and lead a contemplative life. --now known as Wharton Plantation--which grew to encompass 722 acres. In 1968 Wharton gave this land to the New England Forestry

Foundation which he had helped organize in 1944.

We learned from Tom Callahan that the hurricane of September 1938 and a devastating wind-driven fire raging for five days in April 1941 combined to destroy a considerable proportion of Wharton's forest plantation and this "nearly broke his spirit." Roy Johnson remembered picking up loads of trees at a Littleton nursery and bringing them to Wharton for planting as replacements for what had been destroyed. Johnson also recalled that a portable sawmill had been set up to handle the immense amount of downed timber. Men hired to run the operation lived in trailers at the site, and the sawn lumber was trucked to Fort Devens to be used in building barracks.

Birds First and Foremost

After he married, Wharton made his home at Five Oaks Farm on Broadmeadow Road starting in 1912. He became a gentleman farmer, Callahan noted, trying farming but soon giving it up. In the 1920s Wharton hired a farm manager and five or six hired hands to run a dairy and fruit farm operation. Eventually he sold the herd and leased the orchards to an apple wholesaler. At Five Oaks Wharton established a bird-banding station.

Johnson said he first met Wharton when he was a Boy Scout seeking guidance to earn a bird-watching merit badge. Actually, Wharton's deepest interest was in birds rather than trees, he said. Wharton could be working on a planting project but would stop to observe a pileated woodpecker. Wharton had been one of the first to receive a federal bird-banding license.

We learned that Wharton's legacy as a conservationist extended beyond the small town of Groton, reaching far across the nation to include Florida's Everglades National Park and the preservation of bison on the western plains. Wharton knew Franklin Delano Roosevelt from their shared schooldays at Groton School and thus had some influence in Washington when he went there to seek money for a study of Dutch Elm disease, which had struck locally. He served as a director of Massachusetts Audubon and was an incorporator of the Nashua River Watershed Association.

A fitting place to conclude this year's Midsummer ramble was a visit to Town Hall, where in the coolness and mosquito-free Selectmen's meeting room, we sampled strawberry shortcake topped by Tom Callahan's homemade ice cream. As a bonus, we were shown 1940 assessors' maps for Groton paid for by WPA funds and prepared under Wharton's direction as town assessor at the time.

What a rich heritage this man left behind for the town of Groton! ■

Clean-up Day at Boutwell House

Many hands made light work at Boutwell House on Saturday July 28, pulling weeds, trimming hedges, sweeping out the carriage house, cutting brush, and generally tidying up the grounds. Not so obvious but of equal



importance was the work of sorting, packing up, and removing an array of items from our collection temporarily stored on the side porch—from stoves and ice boxes to vases, bowls, and book shelves. The porch is now bare and ready for transformation into a new entrance to our house museum. The work crew for this clean-up session included John Ott (with hedge shears), Tom Callahan, David Gordon, and Liz Strachan (intrepid weed pullers), also Peter Benedict, Anna



Eliot, Barbara Murray, and Lili Ott. For those of you who missed this outing, take heart. More clean-up days are coming. Photos by Barbara Murray.

Boutwell House continued from page 3

The side entrance near the rear corner of the house leads into a hallway and second stairway to the upper floor. ***Was this added to give the Governor outside access from his library/office addition to a waiting carriage?***

The hallway is built over the old cistern. ***Did the house have town water by this time?***

A full bathroom was included in the library/office wing added on to the main house. ***Was this the only bathroom in the house or was another bathroom added somewhere in the house?***

Old houses are fascinating but there isn't room enough here to talk about all of the discoveries we made during the renovation work that have raised questions about life in Boutwell House. When our work is finished and the house is reopened, you will be invited to tour the refurbished rooms and view exhibits that will give everyone the opportunity to experience these uncovered mysteries and journey back to the days when the Boutwell family lived here. ■

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Boutwell House is temporarily closed for renovations. Please call or contact us by email with any questions.

TO REACH US:

Phone: 978-448-0092

Email: info@grotonhistoricalsociety.org

Website: www.grotonhistoricalsociety.org

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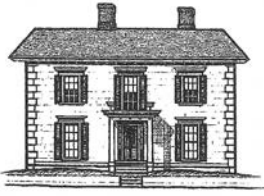
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Groton Historical Society

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Groton, MA 01450

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Then and Now

Volume 13, Number 4 October 2012

Upcoming Programs

Groton Historical Society Annual Meeting

Tuesday October • 30 7:00-9:00 PM • Legion Hall, Hollis Street

Calling all Members! Join us for an informative and fun evening. Al Collins, Project Manager for the Boutwell House Rehabilitation Project, will report on the ongoing renovations and share photos he has taken to document all facets of the work, funded by a CPA grant from the Town of Groton and a Cultural Facilities grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council. The meeting includes election of officers and directors for FY13, acceptance of revised Bylaws of the Society, and President John Ott's report on the year's accomplishments and plans for the future. Light refreshments are included.

Harvest Home: Regional Celebration of Our Local Agricultural Heritage

Multiple Programs from Freedom's Way National Heritage Area

Thursday October 18 Barns Across 3 Centuries – a talk by Sue Tully

6:30 to 8 pm • Dunstable Public Library, Dunstable, MA

Saturday October 20 Meet Marie and Carl Hills of Kimball Fruit Farm

1 to 3 pm • Lawrence Library, Pepperell, MA

Sunday October 21 John Ott looks at 19th Century American Farm Implements

1 to 3 pm • Beaver Brook Association, Hollis, NH

Sunday October 28 The Future's in the Dirt – a talk by farmer/author Ben Hewitt

2:30 to 5:30 pm • Groton Dunstable Regional High School Black Box Theatre

See www.grotonhistoricalsociety.org or www.freedomsway.org for more details

Then and Now

Volume 13, Number 2

April 2012

Roy Johnson's Remarkable Memory

Bobbie Spiegelman, GHS Curator

Whenever a question about Groton history pops up, the go-to guy is a lithe, eighty-three-year-old long-time resident of the town, Leroy E. (Roy) Johnson. He is most visible to me nowadays performing his part-time maintenance responsibilities at the Groton Public Library where he's been a mainstay for many decades, but his involvement in Groton and its history stretches across multiple arenas. One of his many interests centers on the Groton Historical Society, and we've chosen to capture his vast font of knowledge by recording his memories. We began an oral history project in February, 2010, and it continues to this day . . . without an end in sight.

When Kara Fossey and I started the process two years ago, we focused on Roy's own life story rather than his recollections of town events. We met Roy in the small conference room at the Groton Public Library, with our new-fangled digital recorder set up to freeze Roy's voice for posterity. More than a year later Liz Strachan and I picked up the project but not before we presented Roy with a new, more far-reaching theme: what makes Groton Groton. Roy accepted the challenge and came prepared for our first session with a stack of papers filled in with lists of names, places, organizations, and events—just about everything he could think of, and the lists are still growing even as we are embarking on our year anniversary.

Our recording equipment got fancier, too, with Dragon software to aid in the transcription of the sessions. Little did we know the challenges of recording Roy's Massachusetts twang and watching it miraculously spell out mysterious paragraphs of unreadable, nonsensical text. Roy, in his inimitable style of seen-it-all-and-not-get-flustered way of his, just sat back, chuckled and commented, "I guess we slew the d[D]ragon."



Roy Johnson, standing casually on one of the floats of a Luscombe 8A seaplane on Newfound Lake, Bristol, NH, qualified as a seaplane pilot in July 1947. Photo courtesy of Roy Johnson.

Hometown Boy Has Long History

Roy's family ties go all the way back to the 17th century to John Nutting, an émigré from England to Groton who lost his life when the town was burned in 1676. All the future generations were fixtures in this town maintaining their small farms and learning skills to sustain themselves and their families. Roy's grandmother, Nina Johnson, kept the family farm (located off Kemp Street near the present-day Kirk Farm) running until after World War I when her sons abandoned farm life to pursue other careers. Roy was born in Ayer Hospital to Leroy E. Johnson and Claudia McClain in 1928. He started his young life living on Broadmeadow Road and then moved around to various other locales in town perhaps giving him his early start in learning Groton's geography. After completing his schooling in town, he left to go to Illinois to follow his childhood dream of becoming a pilot. He got his license but

continued on page 6

2 Main Street View: Sustaining the Future

As the United States and so many other countries struggle to keep their economy and unemployment in check, even the smallest non-profit has to take responsibility for the role it plays in its community. This is true for service agencies delivering food to the poor or local historical societies trying to save their town's history or cultural heritage.

The Groton Historical Society has recently offered several successful programs on both the history and culture of Groton. We enjoyed a three-part collaborative program on Groton's historic houses in conjunction with the Groton Public Library. We studied local archaeology with a tour of the Nate Nutting mill site led by archaeologist Marty Dudek. We heard John Tyler, art historian at Groton School, talk about Boston architect Henry Vaughan, designer of St. John's Chapel at Groton School, and before that, architect of the first Groton School chapel, a Gothic structure given in 1904 to the Catholic community to become Sacred Heart church. Tyler's program was presented at St John's Chapel to a capacity crowd eager to learn what fate was in store for the early chapel, now on the market as the Catholics in Groton are faced with a consolidation of their parishes and reduction of real estate [see C. David Gordon's review of this program and the architect Henry Vaughan in this issue]. There have also been GHS-sponsored exhibits at the Groton Library on the late lamented Groton Inn and Groton's role in the Civil War.

And while all this is going on the Society has been hard at work on renovating Boutwell House, which has been closed for the duration while contractors shore up the infrastructure with new plumbing and electrical lines and repair the roof and sections of the foundation in preparation for its reopening next fall. But beyond these activities there have been an amazing number of meetings among its board of directors and dedicated advisors related to the future of the Historical Society. These meetings are delving into its strategic and long-range planning, its governance, organizational structure, financial stability, and membership growth. We are asking friends and donors to give us candid information about our

strengths and weaknesses and how we might take advantage of new opportunities while struggling to address threats to our future well being.



Can We Afford It?

How do we keep ourselves relevant and focused on the changing face of Groton? How do we go about offering programs for members and visitors that play to our community's strengths and its quality of life? How do we sustain the Society financially when many members are life members and no longer pay dues yet our operating costs increase? How do we fund the many important and significant educational programs, collection maintenance and conservation needs, and community service initiatives? And how do we develop future collections and exhibits and hire professional staff to manage all these endeavors?

The fact is we can't fund our future and we shouldn't even try without putting in place a well-structured, professionally led, comprehensively designed capital campaign. It must have a local leadership component second to none and a vision of the future that will assure success. And we will also need funds to increase our small endowment to sustain this entity for coming generations of Groton families.

In the next few months you will hear much more and I hope be challenged to help. Others groups have done it before, and we will do it this time. So accept our Membership Challenge (see page 4) and give a friend a membership and renew or upgrade your own as a first step onto the campaign ladder. And thanks for considering your role in our future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John H. Ott".

John H. Ott
President, GHS
April 2012

Boutwell House is temporarily closed for renovations and will reopen in early fall 2012.

Please contact us by email with any questions at info@grotonhistoricalsociety.org.
Check our website at www.grotonhistoricalsociety.org for program announcements and other news.

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Repairing Boutwell House

Step 3: Coming into the 21st Century

Alvin B. Collins, Project Manager
Boutwell House Rehabilitation Project

The work goes on. Plumbing has been the main focus of work since my last update which will help to bring the Boutwell House into the 21st century. Over the years, a lot of the plumbing throughout the house has been repaired and/or patched in order to keep water flowing. Unfortunately plumbing, like most utilities, has a limited useful life expectancy that, in the case of this house's plumbing, had been outlived. Copper pipes had failing joints, shutoffs didn't work, and the cast iron waste pipes were slowly rotting out, causing leakage issues throughout the system. After touring a number of plumbers through the house with everyone having different opinions as to what should be done and where piping could be run, I selected a local contractor, the PK McGuane Plumbing and Heating Company of Ayer. Paul McGuane, the company owner and master plumber, has had extensive experience in commercial cast iron and copper plumbing fabrications and installations. He was able to address every one of my concerns regarding functionality while maintaining the historic value of the house interior by routing pipes in the least conspicuous places.

New Plumbing in, Asbestos Out

The rear ADA-accessible bathroom on the first floor has been laid out as originally planned to incorporate all that will be required to comfortably service visitors with varying disabilities. The room is large enough to accommodate a person in a wheelchair and will house fixtures designed to meet all of their needs. The accessible route to the bathroom will take shape as the inside finish work gets underway. On the second floor, next door to the new Society office, a half bath and washroom was plumbed. Since this bathroom is not on the main level it will not be ADA-accessible but is sufficiently sized to meet the needs of the Society staff and volunteers. During the entire rough plumbing process, PK McGuane was able to keep the apartment functional with only a short disruption of service during the changeover from old plumbing to new plumbing.

To meet the design of the new second-floor office bathroom and the future kitchen soapstone sink, two heat radiators had to be relocated. Before that could happen, asbestos had to be removed from a substantial section of the mid-basement heating pipes. This was done by A&E Environmental Inc., a small abatement company from Templeton, MA, who secures permitting, cautiously removes hazardous materials, tests the post-removal air quality and properly disposes of a number of hazardous



*Restored soapstone sink awaits custom cabinet and period faucets before installation in Boutwell House kitchen.
Photo by Al Collins.*

materials including asbestos. Plumbers are not allowed to work on pipes that are wrapped in asbestos due to the possibility of creating asbestos dust in the process.

All of the new radiator piping is now in place but the radiators will not be reinstalled until they are painted and interior finish wood trim is installed and painted. We are sending out the radiators to be sandblasted to remove the years of paint applied over and over to the point that paint doesn't stick any more. Typically back in Governor Boutwell's day, heating radiators were painted silver, a color said to dissipate heat better than any other color. So once the radiator paint is stripped off, we will have them painted silver before installation.

Soapstone Sink Found, Wood-Burning Stove Sought

John Ott, our Society president, searched successfully for an authentic period soapstone sink to fulfill the dream of bringing the Boutwell House kitchen back to a functioning period kitchen that can be showcased as part of the museum collection. We have purchased a beautifully restored soapstone kitchen sink from Erickson's Antique Stoves in Littleton, MA, but installation will await the construction of a period-looking base cabinet for it to sit on. Erickson's will also be supplying period faucets to be fitted to the sink, making the new sink truly a piece of New England's historic past. The sink's soapstone has roots close to home, having been quarried in southern New Hampshire and fabricated into a sink housed in a 19th century New Hampshire farmhouse.

To top off the kitchen's functionality, John has his eye on a certain restored wood-burning stove of a design similar to the one originally in the Boutwell House kitchen,

continued on page 4

4 *Repairing Boutwell House* continued from page 3

and he has hopes of raising money to purchase this stove. Having a functional 1850's kitchen will be a great educational tool to engage children in learning how their great-great-great grandparents lived. Anyone willing to support the purchase of this beautiful stove with a donation should contact John at jhott2@juno.com to enable the kitchen to be functional once the project is complete.

Fire-Suppression System is Next

Once the rough plumbing was complete, fire-suppression sprinkler companies had an opportunity to bid on the fire-suppression system that will be paid for through the Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund grant the Society recently was awarded. The company I've selected is Fire Sprinkler Systems from Richmond, NH, which not only came in with the lowest bid but has experience working within a museum structure. The company's engineer spent several hours in the house under my supervision, mapping out locations of riser pipes and sprinkler heads trying to minimize disruption to the house interior. Sprinkler heads and some piping will be visible in every room but this will be a small price to pay for the ability to protect both the historic house and extensive collections against being destroyed by fire as was our cherished Groton Inn.

We have also started the electrical service upgrades with the first component being new circuit breaker panels in the basement that will feed the main house and the apartment separately. Rand O'Grady Electric from



*Electrician pulls new electric service wire for Boutwell House through underground conduit installed last December.
Photo by Al Collins.*

Groton will be installing new breaker panels which will eliminate the present hazard of non-code-compliant panels located in hazardous locations such as below heating system water pipes. Once a new main service wire is fed into the house underground from the street, the electrician will start upgrading circuits in the house and apartment. All in all since my last update in February, Boutwell House has become much safer and will be much more useful when it opens in the fall as a thoroughly updated, modernized version of its grand old self.



Did You Know.....

... that among the hundreds of pieces of china belonging to the Boutwell family are several pieces given to Miss Georgianna Boutwell by Mrs. Ulysses S. Grant? These include a "soup plate" that was part of the official White House china during the Grant administration, a cup and saucer brought from Japan by Mrs. Grant, and another cup and saucer given originally to Mrs. Grant by General Grant before he became President Grant. These gifts reflect the cordial relationship between the Boutwells and the Grants. Governor Boutwell served in President Grant's Cabinet as Secretary of the Treasury from 1869 to 1873. It was in June of 1869 that President Grant came to Groton to visit his new Treasury Secretary and spent the night at Boutwell House.

--E. S.

MEMBERSHIP CHALLENGE – BE A GHS CHAMPION

As the Society prepares to reopen Boutwell House to the public later this year, we challenge all present members to help us double our membership numbers by year's end. Just bring in at least one new member this year to help us celebrate when we dedicate Boutwell House as Groton's history center. All new members--and their recruiting Champions--will be recognized in October in the celebratory issue of *Then and Now*. Thank you all. Let the Games begin.

John Ott, President, and Peter Benedict, Membership Chairman

C. David Gordon, GHS Vice President

Months after the town lost Groton Inn to fire, attention has turned to another beleaguered Main Street landmark, the former Sacred Heart church building, once part of the Sacred Heart/St. James Parish, now closed and for sale. The Historical Society's February 5th program, devoted to the history of this church building, drew an audience of well over a hundred – by far the Society's best-attended event to date. Many former Sacred Heart parishioners came to be reminded of the past and learn more about the future of the 125-year-old structure that was the first Groton School chapel.

It was significant that the program was held in St. John's Chapel at Groton School, the large limestone edifice that is the present school chapel. John Tyler of the Groton School History Department and director of its de Menil Gallery began the Sacred Heart story by telling the story of its architect Englishman Henry Vaughan (1845-1917) and his abiding love for Gothic revival buildings. Vaughan brought the Gothic revival style with him to America in 1880. Tyler showed slides to illustrate how the original chapel fit into a period in church architecture where structures were made to "look English."

This architectural style with its soaring interiors, distinctive buttresses, arches, and groin-vaulted ceilings directed the worshiper's eyes upward. Groton School's first chapel, built in 1887, echoed something of this in its small space while taking as its model English cottage architecture. It had half-timbered exterior walls, windows located high up in the building, a steep roof with a small and pointed belfry, and stenciling on interior sanctuary walls suggesting the interior of 15th-century English churches. When Groton School had replaced it with the larger St. John's Chapel, the outgrown building was given by its



Sacred Heart Church in 2005, before its use as a parish church was discontinued. Photo by C. David Gordon.

benefactor William Amory Gardner to the Catholic community in town. It was literally rolled to its present location on Main Street in 1904 and became Sacred Heart Church. The new chapel at Groton School was also a gift of William Gardner, nephew of Isabella Stewart Gardner and her husband John L. Gardner.

Groton School had made a 25-foot addition to the old chapel in 1891. The school retained some of its Tiffany windows before allowing the building to be moved away. The relocated building still has its half-timbered walls, except for the clapboarded south front of the building and a different main entrance. Inside the sacristy has been enlarged, Tyler said.

Future of Sacred Heart Church Uncertain

Following Tyler's presentation, Thomas More College President William Edmund Fahey, Ph.D., explained what hopes the college has for the Sacred Heart Church building. Surprisingly, he said the college had first been interested in moving the church building to the institution's present location in Merrimack, NH. The former chapel aroused in college officials an interest in this area. With Groton chosen as the new location for the entire college, the hope became to "move the chapel home in a way" – place it on the future college campus on the corner of Peabody Street and Old Ayer Road close to where it had originally been built -- and to operate the building as a place of worship.

The college, though, must "look for a new Mr. Gardner" like the individual who paid for both chapels at Groton School. The Archdiocese of Boston has placed the building and land on the market, and the college remains "in negotiations" to obtain the building. Meanwhile it has recently been reported that the property, both land and building, might be purchased anonymously and donated to the town for nonprofit and commercial uses. What becomes of these plans we must wait and see.



On September 27, 1904, the former Groton School chapel was horse-drawn on rollers down Farmers Row and West Street across a narrow bridge over the railroad tracks to its new home at 297 Main Street. Photo courtesy of Sacred Heart Church.

6 Remarkable Memory *continued from page 1*

couldn't compete with the trained pilots who were returning home from fighting in WWII. He returned to his hometown and trained as a toolmaker eventually becoming supervisor for the experimental shop at GenRad where he worked for over 30 years.

Working off his voluminous list of memories, we decided to start the next phase of our project with a focus on agriculture. Roy started in with naming all the proprietors of apple orchards in town, both large and small. One could almost smell the pervasive scent of blossoms in spring and take in the vision of trees laden with glistening red apples at harvest time, there were so many. As a young boy, Roy helped out with the apple picking, along with many other of his contemporaries, and he once had the opportunity to work alongside German soldiers who were lent out as labor from Fort Devens where they were being held as prisoners during the war. Our agricultural landscape also included many farms of various acreages and some of the families of the larger ones took in children who were wards of the state to help with the work. The mention of these children, some of whom were befriended by Roy in his days at the Boutwell Elementary School, surfaced in the conversation as Roy's details came to life with anecdotes that fleshed out the stories behind the facts.

As Liz and I learned more about Roy's elementary school days, we heard about the monkey and other exotic pets being kept by Ev Cleary in his basement in his house on Main Street. Ev's sister, Celia, was the fourth-grade teacher in town, and she provided the link for her students to spend some Sunday afternoon hours in Ev's basement taking in the zoo. The monkeys weren't the only exotics in town, either, Roy told us. He got to feed hamburger on a stick to the two alligators living at Reg Hueber's expansive greenhouse on Groton School's campus where his father

worked after he lost his post office job.

This brief look back at Groton over 70 years ago conjures up images of a town quite different than the one we know today. Weekly home deliveries of ice cut from frozen Wattles Pond helped to preserve food that might have been purchased from a local Pepperell farmer who drove his blue truck with the fancy yellow wooden-spoked wheels through the downtown neighborhoods on a regular basis selling his vegetables. A few decades later, food stores popped up all over the town providing convenience to a populace that didn't necessarily own cars and walked or took any of a variety of public transportation offerings accessible from many points in town to do their shopping, go to work or go off for a day of pleasure. Can you picture a couple snowshoeing down a snow-covered Main Street, changing into their fancy clothes in what is now a bank parking lot to go dancing at Town Hall until the wee hours of the morning?

New Ways to Tell Groton's Story

As we undergo the renovation of the Boutwell House and reconfigure our use of the space in the best way to capture Groton's history, we recognize the importance of presenting our story from its beginning and to stay cognizant of more recent history as well. There is no better source than Roy to fill in parts of the early to mid-20th century, tapping his remarkable memory.

Roy's memories are helping us to imagine how we will tell Groton's story in our new space, giving us many ideas about programs, exhibits and other opportunities through which to deepen our knowledge. We're very appreciative of the many, many hours he's offered to us over the past year to get this story right and keep it alive.



The State of Agriculture in Groton

In 1771 Groton had 297 farmers but only 198 a hundred years later. The number of working oxen dropped from 372 to 32 in that time and the sheep count dropped from 1144 to 139. Meanwhile milk cows and cattle doubled from 652 to 1295, horses increased from 145 to 311, and the amount of hay harvested to feed these animals went from 1807 tons to 4452 tons. The numbers come from 19th-century census data collected in 1771, 1850, and 1880 –the “heyday of farming” in Groton. Today farming in our town has a different story to tell, as the Groton Agricultural Survey described here by GHS board member Michael Roberts makes clear. Mike was Agricultural Survey Project Manager for the CPA-funded study of past and present

farming in Groton, a project conceived by the Groton Historical Commission in collaboration with the Groton Planning Board, the Groton Agricultural Commission, the Williams Barn Committee, the Groton Historical Society, and the Groton Grange.

In January 2012, the Groton Historical Commission announced the satisfactory completion of its project to develop a comprehensive history of agriculture and farming in Groton and Groton Plantation. The three-part project was implemented by Oakfield Research of Concord, MA, with the goal to inform the citizens of Groton and the

continued on page 7



Visitors to Williams Barn on August 12, 2011, were welcomed to an exhibit celebrating the history and diversity of agriculture in Groton. The town-owned barn on Chicopee Row, which dates to 1840, has been carefully restored to serve as learning center, museum for farm implements, and trailhead for trails on town conservation lands. Photo by C. David Gordon.

Commonwealth about the long tradition of agriculture and farming as well as its importance to the past, present and future of our community. Section I of the Survey, called “Groton Farms: Understanding the past and planning for the future of agriculture in Groton,” traces farming and agriculture from the time of Native American farming of these lands over the past four centuries to establishing the context for thinking about farming today and into the future. Complete with images and maps the report leaves Groton readers with a clearer understanding of how farming and agriculture has been the backdrop against which the Town grew and responded to regional, national and international trends and other

events not necessarily related to agriculture. An Appendix to Section 1, called “Conversations with Groton Farmers,” is a fascinating collection of interviews with present-day farmers.

The second component of the Groton Farms project is a photo exhibit originally displayed at Williams Barn on August 12, 2011, during one of the Friday afternoon Farmer’s Market days. The portable exhibit, containing many old and new photos of Groton farm lands and activities, was very well received and is available for display at other venues.

The third part of the project (Section II of the written Survey) is a list of resources for new and seasoned farmers alike. Called a “Resource Guide for Local Farmers: Where to turn when you have more questions than answers,” it covers a variety of subjects--The Beginning Farmer, Land, Financial Sources and Resources, Organic Farming, Insurance and Risk Management, Energy, Newsletters, Reports, and Periodicals, Specialty Farming, and Agricultural Support Organizations.

The Survey is posted on the town website (www.townof-groton.org). Hard copies have been presented to town officials and others, and CDs containing text and illustrations are being distributed to every farmer in Groton. For more information and/or a copy of the CD (if you are a Society member), contact Michael Roberts at 978-758-1999. If you are not yet a member, please become one and receive your free CD while they last.

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MEMBERSHIP FORM

Annual Member--individual or family	\$35
GHS Sponsor	\$75
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Groton Historical Society

172 Main Street, P.O. Box 202

Groton, MA 01450

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Then and Now

Volume 13, Number 2 April 2012

Upcoming Programs

Tuesday May 1: Taste and Technology: The Impact of the Industrial Revolution on Domestic Furnishings, 1820-1860

7:00 PM • Sibley Hall • Groton Public Library

Presented by the Groton Historical Society and the Groton Public Library

Jane C. Nylander, President Emerita of Historic New England (formerly the Society for Preservation of New England Antiquities), will describe the effects on home decoration in the 19th century brought about by mechanized factory production of textiles, furniture, ceramics, glass, prints, wallpaper, and other household goods. For the first time, a wide range of furnishings was available at modest prices and home decoration has never been the same. Thanks to a grant from the Groton Commissioners of Trust Funds, the program is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served.

Sunday May 6: *Birds of Groton & Ayer* Revisited

2:00 PM • NRWA Resource Center • 592 Main St., Groton, MA

Presented by the Groton Historical Society and the Nashua River Watershed Association

Clayton Hobart, ornithologist, will tell us about recent changes in the bird population of the Groton/Ayer area. Mr. Hobart will reference both the 2011 MassAudubon report, *The State of the Birds* and the beloved field guide *Birds of Groton & Ayer* by the late Bertrand D. Hopkins, Groton physician and ardent bird watcher. Published in 1995, Bert's book contains 60 years of personal observations of bird activity in and around Groton and Ayer. Thanks to a grant from the Groton Commissioners of Trust Funds, the program is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served.

See www.grotonhistoricalsociety.org for more details on these and other GHS programs.

Then and Now

Newsletter of the Groton Historical Society

Volume 13, Number 3

July 2012

Modern-Day Pioneers in Groton

C. David Gordon, GHS Vice President

*In the year fifty-four they left for the west
Three pioneer families so full of zest.
Excitement ran high when in Groton town
They found what they wanted and settled down.*

*This is the way Martha C. Hill, a friend of the three families from Greater Boston, began the poem she dedicated to them at a party celebrating the 25th anniversary of the year the families established their summer camp on Lowell Road. In 1991, two of the pioneers, Carolyn B. and Arnold P. G. Peterson, compiled a family memoir they called *The 'Groton' Story*, from which this article derives. This story is especially dear to me because I lived there myself, in the house the Petersons built, for a decade or so when I was married to one of the pioneer daughters, the late Susan Skinner Gordon.*

Early in 1954, three families who had known each other as members of First Parish Unitarian Church of Newton found they shared the dream of finding vacation homes in the country with a pond nearby. Arnold and Carolyn Peterson, from Weston, and John and Virginia ("Ginny") Taplin of West Newton, enlisted Joseph Skinner, also of West Newton and with a background in commercial real estate, to search for a likely site, since Joe and his wife, Jeanne, also yearned for a place in the country. Among them the three families had eleven children.

Joe located by April a tract three miles out of the town center off Lowell Road (Route 40), the land rising beyond the far side of a meadow. The convergence of two streams formed a swampy area eventually draining into Whitney Pond (also called Cow Pond). Delighted by what they saw when they inspected Joe's "find" in rural Groton, the three families purchased 102.6 acres of land on June 14 from Cal (Caroline) Roberts, who lived across the street with her husband, Rex, who a decade later would publish the book *Your Engineered House*. The land, fronting Lowell Road and Whitney Pond, extended back into the woods over glacial terrain of drumlins and eskers all the way to the edge of the Mountain Lakes development.

The families built an access road from Lowell Road and a culvert over the brook that formed a first swimming hole. Joe himself suggested a spot for a well that proved a fine source of drinking water. Their first shelter was a large screened-in structure built by Rex Roberts and called the Pavilion, an open-air affair with a large common room with fireplace and three small rooms off to the sides, one for each family. Amenities included water piped in from the well, an ice box, and a wood-burning stove. Later would come storm windows and electricity.

Cherishing privacy, each family soon created a permanent camp site on which to raise tents. Joe had envisioned a pond situated on the low land through which the combined streams ran. The families hired Winthrop (Win) Parker of Ayer to scoop away the swampy, muddy ground down to a gravel base. Piled-up mud formed the pond's extensive side banks and was fashioned into an earthen

GHS on Parade!



GHS board members (from left) C. David Gordon, John Ott, Michael Flynn, Peter Benedict, and Barbara Murray line up behind our proud banner bearers Owen (left) and Luke Benedict as Groton's Memorial Day Parade on May 28, 2012, gets underway. Courtesy photo.

continued on page 4

2 Main Street View: Thanks for Your Work

Things may look deadly quiet at 172 Main St., home of the Groton Historical Society, but trust me, it is anything but. In the last two months not only has new electrical and plumbing installation work been going on inside, but in the small office upstairs, the archival processing work of the Boutwell Family papers, made possible by a generous \$3000 grant from the B.J. Anderson Foundation, has been taking place. This may involve the first reading of some documents and uncovering of others, like original letters from Benjamin Franklin in the 1770's relating to our nation's diplomatic efforts. If this whets your appetite for more you will have to wait until volunteer Judy Adams uncovers more. But those letters are in our care under Society stewardship.



Physical restoration work at Boutwell House, while mostly related to infrastructure, has also triggered new relationships with local and state organizations as we attempt to structure our funding of the renovation project. The technical paper work related to the \$79,000 Cultural Facilities Grant awarded by the Massachusetts Cultural Council is clearing its last hurdles, and the Society's Board of Directors has approved taking out a major \$60,000 Revolving Line of Credit with an area bank to ensure the project doesn't run into fiscal issues either while waiting for reimbursement from the state or having to wait to pay vendors whose own cash needs often are keen in this difficult economy.

Yet with all this fancy fiscal work going on, the Groton Historical Society has found it possible to again award a \$500 scholarship to a Groton-Dunstable High School senior for a meaningful historical essay on our community. Ms. Audrey Bryce, who for more than 15 years has overseen and managed this program, found great pleasure in awarding our 2012 Sheedy Scholarship to Christopher Scott Hourani, a very able student hoping to attend George Washington University.

But whatever work is undertaken by the Society it is only possible because you our members have renewed, upgraded or converted your membership, providing the operating funds we need to carry on our work. We are a volunteer organization made up of many committed and invested friends of the Society. We hold our collections in trust for the Town of Groton; the volunteers who make calls, write letters, process collections, run programs, and support town events are you and others like you. I can only admire and say thank you for your work. Groton is lucky to have the GHS and we are lucky to have YOU. Have a pleasant summer.

John H. Ott
President, GHS
July 2012

GHS Directors 2011-2012

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Lili Ott, Hospitality
Michael Roberts, Long-Range Planning
Bobbie Spiegelman, Curator/Collections

Advisors to the Board

Alvin Collins, CPA Project Manager
Valerie Jenkins and Ed Strachan, Finance
Ray Lyons, Counsel

Boutwell House is temporarily closed for renovations and will reopen in early fall 2012. Please call or contact us by email with any questions. Check our website often for program details and other news.

TO REACH US:

Phone:
978-448-0092

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info@grotonhistoricalsociety.org

Website:
www.grotonhistoricalsociety.org

From the Editor

We'd love to hear from you. This is your newsletter -- we hope you find it interesting. And I have a question for you: would you like to receive the GHS newsletter by email only, by snail mail only, or both ways? Please send me your comments and suggestions.

Barbara Murray
murraybar315@verizon.net

Issue sponsored by Kris Kramer, Realtor, EXIT Assurance Realty 978.807.7317
161 Main Street, Groton, MA 01450 www.EXITassurance.com

Bobbie Spiegelman, GHS Curator

As the Boutwell House renovations proceed, we continue to highlight aspects of our collection through a series of exhibits created for our display case on permanent loan at the Groton Public Library (See Call for Memorabilia on page 4). The current exhibit, on display through the end of August, grew out of a bird walk organized last May by the Nashua River Watershed Association. The idea of partnering with other organizations in town, such as the NRWA and the GPL, is appealing as it broadens the audiences for all of our events and opens up interesting and more innovative ways of interpreting our town's history.

Other programs around birds quickly emerged. The NRWA scheduled a bird walk for early June led by Mark Archambault, and before that, hosted a bird talk on May 6 at their Resource Center.

Ornithologist Clayton Hobart showed slides and discussed recent changes in the bird population around Groton and Ayer, comparing statistics from the MassAudubon report, *The State of the Birds in 2011*, with notes from a field guide published in 1995 by the late, beloved Bertrand B. Hopkins, called *Birds of Groton & Ayer*. The Society's contribution to the budding partnership of local cultural organizations was to set up an exhibit at



others in town to fill in the gaps.

Since Clay Hobart's talk centered on Bert Hopkins, we saw this as a logical place to begin. Conversations with Betsy Hopkins, Bert's widow, not only garnered us a copy of Bert's 1995 book that we didn't previously own, these also provided opportunities to learn so much more about our homegrown birder and his links to prominent birders in our area both past and present.

Increased interest in Bert's birding activities led us to Jerry Wooding, another of our local bird experts, who owned a rare copy of a 1947 pamphlet by Austen Fox Riggs II called *Notes on the Birds of Groton* that he graciously donated to the Society. It joins Bert's field guide and William Wharton's pamphlet on bird banding in the display case, along with Bert's field binoculars and five small stuffed native birds—a black-throated Blue Warbler, a Northern Parula, a Northern (Baltimore)



Bert Hopkins's book Birds of Groton & Ayer is the nucleus of the birding display at the library, which will run through the end of August. Stuffed birds in the case and in the wall niches (Northern Goshawk is shown) are on loan from the Shattuck Collection at the Lawrence Library in Pepperell. Photos by Barbara Murray.

the library related to birding. The Society already owned a pamphlet on bird banding by William Wharton (see Did You Know . . . on page 4), but this was not enough to build a display on, so the quest was on to reach out to

Oriole, a Black and White Warbler, and a Whip-Poor-Will--on loan from the Sidney Moore Shattuck Collection at the Lawrence Library in Pepperell. There is also one small wood model of a Bobwhite, a favorite of Betsy Hopkins, carved by Bert's brother, Edward, and painted by Edward's wife, Julia. Rounding out the exhibit, which nearly fills the Main Street entry hall of the library, are several photographs, two beautiful oversize illustrated books of birds from the GPL's holdings, other bird books, and two large mounted specimens in the niches above the display case—one a Northern Goshawk and the other an American (Common) Merganser--also from the Shattuck Collection.

This process of exploring new programming ideas around our collection led us to individuals who renewed their connections to the Society. We hope this approach might also help generate interest in our community with those who may now become Groton history enthusiasts. The Society's collection is filled with interesting, eclectic and significant items which, when put together, always tell an illuminating story. ■

4 *Did You Know.....*

... that one of Groton's most distinguished citizens, William P. Wharton, maintained a bird-banding station at his farm on Broadmeadow Road for 50 years? That between 1922 and 1950, he banded 38,057 birds? Wharton was one of the first private citizens to ever be awarded a Federal bird-banding permit. The birds were gently captured in mist nets, then banded and released after he noted in a record book such data as weight, approximate age, etc. Only a small percentage of birds were recovered, but data were recorded on those birds as well, especially the date and place of recovery. Two examples Wharton cited were a White Crowned Sparrow, banded in Groton on 10/12/39 and found dead on 1/28/40 at Mt. Home, TX, and a Black-throated Green Warbler banded in Groton on 5/24/33 and "caught" in W. Memphis, TN, on 10/22/33. Many recovered birds had been shot.

The Groton Historical Society is in possession of a binder containing some of Mr. Wharton's bird-banding records.
--E.S.

CALL FOR MEMORABILIA FOR UPCOMING LIBRARY DISPLAYS

September 4--November 16: Political Campaign Memorabilia from Past Elections

DO YOU HAVE old campaign buttons or posters or any other artifacts from past elections? Will you lend them to GHS for this display? Email us at info@grotonhistoricalsociety.org or call 978-448-0092.

November 16--January 7, 2013: A Display of Christmas Past in Groton

DO YOU HAVE old Christmas in Groton photos or other seasonal memorabilia? Will you lend them to GHS for this display? Email us at info@grotonhistoricalsociety.org or call 978-448-0092.

Pioneers continued from page 1

dam at the end closest to Whitney Pond--an undertaking that would surely not meet wetlands regulations today but was highly successful then. Loads of sand brought in formed a suitable beach for this new swimming and boating area. They called the pond Skitapet, a name fashioned from the opening letters of the families' last names—Skinner, Taplin, and Peterson.

Living Close to Nature

By 1960 each family had built their own vacation home, sturdy enough to live in year-round. They divided the land so that each had a 30-acre section and shared in common a fourth tract next to Lowell Road including the meadow.

The Skinners, first to build, chose the hill overlooking both Whitney and Skitapet ponds. They expanded the house as occasion arose, adding also a substantial barn, chicken house, and other outbuildings and carving out a lower pasture for cattle and horses and an upper pasture for sheep. The Taplins constructed a house perched atop a hog-back directly off Lowell Road, from which they could also

look down on both ponds. Below the house, on the Skitapet shore, they added a tennis court and bath house. John's business in the Boston area meant that their enjoyment of this spot was mostly on the weekends. The Petersons had a house constructed on a rise above the far shore of Skitapet, in between the Skinner house and the Taplin house (see drawing on page 5).

In 1975 the Skinners sold their home in West Newton and the Petersons their place in Weston and the two families moved fulltime to Groton. Carolyn worked in the Children's Room at Groton Public Library. Joe over time contributed much to Groton zoning and planning, its drinking water resources, and the workings of the Groton Conservation Trust.

In May 1971 Ginny Taplin organized the first "Groton Bird-In" and, except for the year 1980, this was an annual event for family and invited guests each May until 1983. That first year, according to the report, the group sighted 46 varieties of birds. The three families also

continued on page 5

identified and listed 86 varieties of wildflowers, 37 types of trees and shrubs, and 6 types of ferns.

Changes in the Offing

But people got older, moved away, died. In December 1979 the Petersons moved to Bainbridge Island in Washington State. Susan Skinner and her son, Bela, moved into the former Peterson house, where I joined them in 1984.

In 1983 Jeanne and Joe Skinner moved to a new home in the former upper pasture and sold their house on the hill below.

Meanwhile, in 1982 they had purchased a small house on Station Avenue in Groton Center that they had remodeled for use as a winter home. Troubled by suddenly appearing and fast-moving cancer, Joe died there in December 1985, an event the Petersons spoke of as “the saddest change in the community.” In 1987 Jeanne sold the house in the upper pasture.

As traveling back and forth between West Newton and Groton became more difficult, the Taplins sold their house on Lowell Road in 1994. Finally, with the sale of the former Peterson (now Gordon) house in January 1998, 44 years after the summer adventure began, the last connection with the founding families was severed.

Cherished Memories

What was it like to live in the woods in Groton in the 50s and 60s and 70s and 80s? The Petersons recorded many happy memories in their memoir. Jeanne Skinner loved “sharing and observing the richness of our land with our naturalist, Alan [Peterson].” Helen Taplin remembered “going barefoot all the time no matter what the terrain.” Rick Skinner spoke of the “mysterious places in the woods” he liked to explore. His twin sister Susan remembered “driving the old faded Chevy step-side pickup truck through the woods with Rick.” Janet Peterson wrote, “I remember how days had no beginning and no end. There

was a feeling of endless hours to spend daydreaming, pretending, and working.”

In concluding the memoir, the Petersons said, “Some things haven’t changed. Lady slippers still grow in the woods in the spring. Cardinal flowers bloom in the brook by the culvert. Blueberries, high and low bush, can be picked in the summer, Fish swim in the pond. Turtles sun themselves on the logs. Skinny dipping is possible for those who choose. We remember the wonderful times we spent around the pond, in the woods, by a camp fire, on the beach, at the pavilion, or on the meadow with our life-long friends.”



The Peterson house evolved from a rough-finished camp to a year-round modern residence but never lost its “little house in the woods” look or feel.

Lasting Legacy

The original 17 pioneers have moved on, but they left a permanent legacy to the people of Groton, thanks to generous gifts of conservation land from both the Taplins and the Skinners, more than 250 acres in all. Over the years both John Taplin and Joe Skinner purchased land

beyond the original 102 acres and have donated it, in several parcels, to the Groton Conservation Trust. Joe and Jeanne Skinner donated 51 acres they called Skitapet Conservation Land as a tribute to the three pioneer families. After Joe died in 1985, John and Ginny Taplin donated 128 acres of woodlands to be known as Skinner Forest in Joe’s memory. The Taplins also contributed land to the Lost Lake Recreation Area, the Duck Pond Conservation Area, and the Whitney Well Site (under the jurisdiction of the Groton Water Commission), and established the Taplin Wildlife Sanctuary at the edge of Whitney Pond where it meets Lowell Road.

The love of the land that brought the Skitapet pioneers to Groton in 1954 lives on through their generosity to the people of Groton, enabling others to get close to nature the way they and their families did fifty years ago. ■



Repairing Boutwell House

Step 4: Wiring, Heating, Sprinklers, and Stoves

*Alvin B. Collins, Project Manager
Boutwell House Rehabilitation Project*

Since last report, we have been working on items that are essential to the overall project but some of which will never be seen by visitors. Having been in the construction industry for most of my life, I know how proud contractors are of their work that is hidden behind plaster walls and ceilings, done many times in a very artistic manner that no one will ever see.

Wonders Behinds the Walls

Electricity is a critical component of every house so our electrician, Randy O'Grady of Groton, and I have been scouting the present electrical system for any component that is need of repair. We've created a list of all electrical needs in order of priority so that the most critical needs are met first, convenience needs are met second, and the wish list is addressed last based on the dollars available. With all house utilities hidden behind walls and above ceilings, you don't know what you don't know until you start working, and very often one item replaced leads to another unanticipated item to be replaced. As careful as we were in putting together the initial CPA Electrical budget, once we started work, many new items have been found that needed to be replaced.

Much of the house had been rewired maybe 50 to 70 years ago and in more recent years some upgrades had been done here and there. At this point much of this older wiring has either been repaired or replaced by Randy in an effort to make sure the new system lasts another 50 to 75 years. Most people don't realize that mice, chipmunks and squirrels love some of the fabric and plastic coatings used on electrical wires, chewing on the wire insulation until they get a slight shock. Once in a while the power of the electricity claims the life of a little critter when they bite through the insulation into the copper wires. Hopefully in our effort to seal up the foundation through the CPA grant foundation repointing

work, we have minimized any future destruction by our critter friends.

Converting to Gas Heat

Heating system specialists have been touring the house in an attempt to recommend the most efficient heating system for the house. It appears we will be using a small 95% efficient gas-fired hot water boiler with a very efficient SuperStor domestic hot water tank for the apartment. This system will be put on a separate gas meter so that, in the future, our tenant can pay for his or her own heat and hot water.

The main house will have a large 95% efficient gas-fired hot water boiler with three separate house heating zones installed. One zone will be for the first-floor main house including the kitchen area, one zone for the second-floor main house and one zone just for the second-floor office space. The thought is that the museum part of the house can be kept at 50 degrees in the winter with the office area being a comfortable 70 degrees or so when in use.

All of the thermostats will be replaced with digital thermostats that can be programed for time of use which will help tremendously in fuel economies. Since the main house will not be using very much domestic hot water, the hot water for the two bathroom hand sinks and the new kitchen soapstone sink will be supplied by a small electric hot water heater.



The Boutwell House kitchen will soon be graced by this reconditioned Hub wood-burning cook stove, described by its manufacturer Smith & Anthony Co. of Boston as "a range that permits more work to be done at one time than any other range made."

Photo by Barbara Murray.

Fire Sprinklers Next on List

Our fire suppression system has been thoroughly engineered, and the plans have been submitted to the Groton Fire Department for review. Our Engineer and Groton Firefighter/EMT Tyler Shute went back and forth over the best system design and in the end have come to an agreement for the best solution to address fire suppression needs throughout the entire Boutwell House. Fire Sprinkler Systems of Richmond, NH, has been selected

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to install the system, and they are patiently awaiting the Cultural Facilities Grant money to be certified so they can start work. Material costs have gone up almost 10% since they gave us the original quote but they have graciously agreed not to raise the price to us based on the original work quoted. Knowing that funding is very close to being certified, they have ordered all of the system materials in anticipation of starting very soon. [See *Main Street View on page 2 for an update on the status of this funding.*]

Donations Still Sought for Hub Stove

Halsey Platt of Groton has been contacted to build a kitchen sink base cabinet that is both functional and of period design. Dave Erickson of Littleton, who supplied our “new” kitchen soapstone sink and has vast knowledge of historic house components, has volunteered to assist in the design of the cabinet.



Small print in this old advertisement lists several advantages “found only in the HUB Range which makes Cooking a Pleasure.” Photo by Al Collins.

Mr. Erickson has also delivered our new Hub wood-burning kitchen cook stove, which is thought to be of the same design as one in the house back at the turn of the century (see photos). The Hub Cook Stove has been completely refurbished to the point that it is as good as new both in functionality and in looks . . . it is beautiful. The Historical Society has received over \$1500 in donations so far, a third of the way toward paying for this glorious stove. If you want to be a contributor in bringing history alive, please donate any amount you can to help out by sending a check made out to the Groton Historical Society (with HUB model woodstove on the memo line) to GHS, POB 202, Groton, MA 01450. We thank you. ■

GHS MEMBERSHIP FORM

Annual Member--individual or family	\$35
GHS Sponsor	\$75
Corporate Sponsor	\$250
Sustaining Member	\$1000
Additional Contribution	\$_____

Name(s): _____

Mailing Address: _____

Phone: (h) _____

(c) _____

Email Address: _____

Mail form and check to:

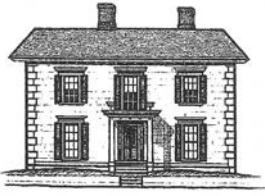
Groton Historical Society
PO Box 202
Groton, MA 01450

**-- MEMBERSHIP CHALLENGE --
BE A GHS CHAMPION**

As the Society prepares to reopen Boutwell House to the public later this year, we challenge all present members to help us double our membership numbers by year’s end. Just bring in at least one new member this year to help us celebrate when we dedicate Boutwell House as Groton’s history center.

Use the Membership Form on this page.

All new members--and their recruiting Champions—will be recognized in the celebratory October issue of *Then and Now*.



Groton Historical Society

172 Main Street, P.O. Box 202

Groton, MA 01450

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Then and Now

July 2012

Volume 13, Number 3

Upcoming Programs

Sunday October 14: Exploring the Groton Soapstone Quarry

2:00 PM • In the woods off Common Street, near the Rail Trail

Free and open to the public thanks to a grant from the Groton Commissioners of Trust Funds.

October is Archaeology Month in Massachusetts. Archaeologist Marty Dudek will take us on a walking tour around Groton's own soapstone quarry, located on GCT's Shepley Hill conservation land. The quarry was actively mined from 1828 to 1868. We will see various features of the quarry site and former mill buildings as well as examples of some of the products made at the mill. Wear sturdy shoes. The quarry is a quarter of a mile walk through the woods from Common Street.

Later in the Fall (dates to be announced): Harvest Celebration

Regional Celebration of the Harvest, Our Farmers, and Our Local Agricultural Heritage – sponsored by Freedom's Way with participation of nearby towns in the Freedom's Way National Heritage Area.

See www.grotonhistoricalsociety.org for more details

Then and Now

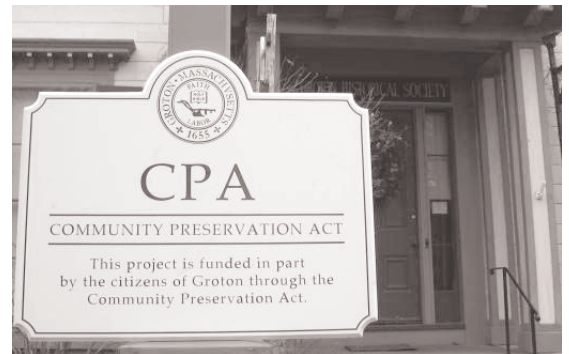
Volume 13, Number 1

February 2012

Repairing Boutwell House Step 2: Getting Construction Underway

*Alvin B. Collins, Project Manager
Boutwell House Rehabilitation Project*

Funding for this work comes from a CPA Grant of \$176, 525, awarded at Town Meeting in April 2011, and a grant of \$79,000 from the Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund, presented by Governor Deval Patrick to the Historical Society at Tower Hill Botanic Garden on November 17, 2011. These state grants are provided by the Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund, a program of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, administered through a collaborative arrangement between MassDevelopment and the Massachusetts Cultural Council, which support building projects for nonprofit arts, heritage, and science organizations across the Commonwealth. GHS is one of only 54 cultural organizations statewide that received a grant this year to support repairs, improvements, and expansions. The State grant, says John Ott, GHS president, "will allow us to install a fire suppression system for Boutwell House, as well as a new furnace for energy conservation."



*CPA sign sits proudly outside Boutwell House.
Photo by Al Collins*

The Boutwell House rehabilitation project is off to a great start. All of the preplanning has led to a smooth transition into the construction phase of the project, and with approval from the Historic Districts Commission, we have proceeded with most of the exterior items needing to be completed before cold weather arrived. Before work could commence permits had to be secured, and with the aid of Groton's Building Department, we have been able to secure all the permits required.

The Carriage House was the focus of our first piece of construction with both the rear roof and cupola roof being reshingled. The rear roof has been leaking for some time now, which has led to many sheets of roof sheathing rotting and in need of replacement. Along the sides and rear of the building, squirrels had chewed through the soffits and fascia boards to get inside out of the weather. Luckily, most of the nesting occurred within the soffits and was easy to remove as part of the replacement process. Since a lot of wood was replaced on both the cupola and the exterior of the building, the building will need to be repainted, which can probably be done in

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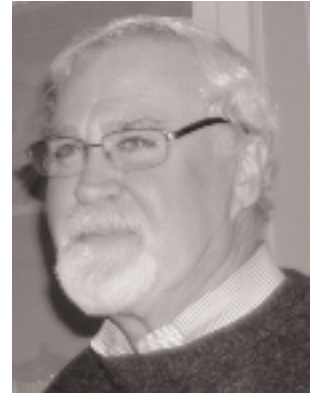
2 Main Street View/Reexamining The Past

When one thinks of a local historical society the words *insight, foresight, and delight* might not reflect the perception people carry of our small organization. Yet one of the responsibilities the Groton Historical Society carries is the obligation to remind its citizens, or those who do business in our community, of our town's past and its connection to the present.

During the past year in Groton people's lives have been altered by a variety of events and circumstances that are now a matter of record, but it is those varied and sometimes less than pleasant circumstances that give us our history and show the public character of our community. Over time citizens come and go, buildings come and go, yet the town remains with new faces and modern spaces replacing the old. It is good to occasionally reexamine the past to see where we have been and what we still have--and have responsibility for--that is truly important to the character of Groton. The record of the past written by people who cared just as much then as we do today about our town should not be lost or overlooked as time moves on.

So I quote a few poignant paragraphs of our town's history, from a letter written by William Lawrence to General Charles Bancroft on July 4th, 1905, on the occasion of the 250th Anniversary celebration of the settlement of Groton and printed in a pamphlet of Addresses delivered that day: Not being able to attend the celebration, Lawrence writes, "... with the scenes and people of Groton are bound up many of my happiest memories and associations. . . . The handsome face and kind heart of Aunt Eliza Green and the smell of her pies still seem to linger about her home as I pass it on my visits to Groton. . . . In the last 25 years the town has steadily improved in appearance. In fact if I might, how much more beautiful the town may be if every citizen would do his part toward making his paths, his barn and shed as neat, simple and attractive as possible. It is not so much a question of money as a desire to put a little thought and work into village improvements."

Lawrence goes on to say, "Groton has a history so great that it should stand to all who pass through it as a model Massachusetts village. Grateful for what the men and women have done in the past we should do our part toward the town, the Church and the nation in the future."



If we now 106 years later could take these words to heart and determine what each of us, either alone or together, can do to answer this seeming challenge, think what we might accomplish to make our town memorable to all who pass through daily.

The Historical Society is already renovating the Governor Boutwell House with the money from its citizens' CPA grant. Now with an additional award of \$79,000 from the Massachusetts Cultural Council's Cultural Facilities Fund for fire suppression and a new heating system, our hope is that by our look and from the smells emanating from our restored kitchen, with its 1890's Magic Hub Cook Stove, that the pleasant smells of Aunt Eliza's pies or bread can once again fill the air in this village, reminding everyone of what in one small way makes Groton home and this town ours, warts and all.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "John H. Ott".

John H. Ott
President, GHS
February 2012

Visit us, Write us, Call us, Email us

Groton Historical Society * 172 Main Street * PO Box 202 * Groton, MA 01450
(978) 448-0092 * info@grotonhistoricalsociety.org
www.grotonhistoricalsociety.org
Please call or email to make an appointment

**Issue sponsored by Kris Kramer, Realtor, EXIT Assurance Realty 978.807.7317
161 Main Street, Groton, MA 01450 www.EXITassurance.com**

the spring as part of the CPA-funded project.

On the main house roof, work took place to help extend the life of the existing roof. Shingles were replaced and repaired as needed, chimney flashings were inspected and repaired, and a new roof hatch cover was fabricated out of a composite material that should never rot. All of the soffit dentals on the front and back of the house have been secured with special fasteners since most of the existing fasteners had been compromised due to age and many dentals were separating from the roof structure. Fascia and soffit boards that had come loose were also resecured with screws rather than nails, which should allow for many years with little maintenance.

While work on the Carriage House was taking place, Society members moved all of the collections that were housed within the soon-to-be construction zone to other areas in the main house for protection [see Packing up the China, on this page]. The moving allowed members to re-evaluate collections including the cataloging of items not formerly cataloged, the packing of some items deemed for storage, and the discovery of items that had been previously stored. The rear of the main house on both the first and second floors has been sealed off to minimize any dust infiltration that could occur during demolition and the reconstruction of bathroom areas.

New Kitchen Chimney, Other Masonry Work

In years past, the kitchen chimney had been taken down to



*New kitchen chimney under construction.
Photo by Al Collins*

the roofline and needed to be reconstructed in order to make the kitchen functional again. We were able to reconstruct the chimney according to the design on the 1894 plans prepared for the renovations to the rear portion of the house when Boutwell's Library was added. Happily, we discovered the chimney had been clay-lined at some point in time, and this allowed us to reconstruct the chimney to make it operational by today's building codes. As part of the chimney rehabilitation, we opened up the original baking oven and found pieces of the old kitchen wood burning stove inside. To make the new chimney truly operable, the

continued on page 4

Packing up the China

Bobbie Spiegelman, Curator

Regular visitors to the Boutwell House over the decades of operation might have noticed various displays of china located throughout its rooms--displays tucked into niches off the dining room or behind glass cabinet doors in the butler's pantry or even eclectically situated in the Toy Room on the second floor. The array of china may have even gone unnoticed, but once the Board had the mandate to prepare the rooms for renovation, the collection of hundreds of pieces loomed rather large as the prospect of protecting every item became a priority (see photo).

With piles of flattened boxes, wrapping paper, packing tape, and Sharpie markers in hand, Mike Roberts, Liz Strachan, and I handled each delicate object carefully as the three of us packed up and amended our catalog to reflect the temporary changes. We were very fortunate to have the services of Marty Dudek, a colleague of Mike's and an expert appraiser of china, through this process. We welcome his input as a new member of our Collections



Photo by C. David Gordon

Committee as we tackle the challenge of how best to highlight this aspect of our holdings in the near future.

The end result: 28 boxes filled with these precious items. As demanding as this project was to complete, it was an important step in appreciating the extent of this aspect of our collection.

4 Construction Underway *continued from page 3*

plan is to add a kitchen wood stove with a steel fire pan below it to protect the floor from falling embers.

The brick masons worked on repointing both the interior and exterior of the stone foundation, which has tightened up the house from both water and critter infiltration. The masons also reconstructed the portion of the foundation below the kitchen pantry, closing up the old bulkhead that led down into the basement at one time. Gutters have been added in various places to keep water runoff away from the house in an effort to make the basement drier. Round-style seamless gutters with corrugated downspouts have been used to keep in style with the era of the house while contributing to less maintenance over time.

Walls Come Down, Electrical Service Goes Under

Demolition of the kitchen bathroom, the two rear storage closets and the second-floor bathroom have now been completed. The new accessible bathroom on the first floor has been framed as well as the new second-floor office bathroom. Framing has also been put up to block in door openings that will no longer be used and eventually plastered over. The “door to nowhere” at the base of the attic stairs has been reopened and will serve as access into the new rear office/research area. By doing this, the small fireplace room to the right rear of the main house can be used as a very nice display room linked to the old front office room through the connecting closet.

Electricity upgrades will allow us to add outlets and lighting that will show off collections and operate office equipment. The foundation of these upgrades will be a new underground electric service from the street to the house. We were able to bury conduit piping just before the temperatures plunged into winter weather solidifying the ground. Two additional lengths of conduit were laid in the electric trench for future phone and cable wires as part of a

plan to rid the house of all overhead wires. Laying extra conduit is typical with underground electric upgrades, but additional funding will be needed to finalize this work. In the spring the driveway will be re-graded along with more soil added against the foundation to aid in rainwater runoff.

The outside of the house is buttoned up for the winter with interior work ready to proceed. Plumbers have been touring the house to determine the work necessary to upgrade all of the plumbing. A kitchen soapstone sink will be installed on the wall against the butler’s pantry and the handicap-accessible bathroom will be installed within the confines of the two rear storage closets. A new half bathroom will open into the old second-floor former apartment kitchen, which will become the new main office area. We are working with the fire department and sprinkler system companies to determine the best sprinkler system to protect the house in case of fire. In years past the belief was that a halon fire suppression system was the best system for a museum but it is now believed that a wet-type system better serves the collections, the budget, and the environment.

As work moves on, it will be important for Society members to determine exactly how Boutwell House will be used in the future. The way each room is to be used will determine what electrical and other needs must be provided for to attain optimum use so that the collections can be prominently displayed and enjoyed by all.

This series of articles by Al Collins detailing the Boutwell House Rehabilitation Project will continue in upcoming newsletters. See “Repairing Boutwell House--Step 1: Plan of Work” in the October 2011 newsletter for a comprehensive description of the planning and advance preparation that had to be in place before renovations could begin.



Optimism Sets Tone of 2011 Annual Meeting

Liz Strachan, Clerk

The Society’s Annual Meeting was finally held on November 13, 2011, after a freak October nor’easter made it impossible to meet on the originally scheduled October date. President John Ott gave his end-of-year report, officers and directors were elected, Michael Roberts presented the Society’s 10-year plan for strategic growth, and a lively discussion amongst all attendees followed.

John noted that the Community Preservation

Commission grant (of \$176,525) and the recently awarded Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Grant (of \$79,000) will together help restore the infrastructure of the Boutwell House and make it more weather and fire resistant and more secure. Despite these awards, many financial challenges remain. There is the need for a paid assistant to perform needed office work and make the Boutwell House accessible to researchers and other visitors; also the Society’s wonderful collection of artifacts and other materials related to Groton’s history need to be properly cared for

continued on page 5

and displayed. Because of these and many other needs, a fundraising effort will begin soon, led by Anna Eliot and a paid professional.

Officers elected at the meeting are John Ott, President; C. David Gordon, Vice President; Michael Flynn, Treasurer; and Liz Strachan, Clerk. Newly elected to the Board of Directors as member at large is Barbara Murray, who will serve as newsletter editor and who, along with David Gordon, will have the special assignment of creating new publications in keeping with the Society's mission. Appointed earlier to serve as Advisors to the GHS Board are Al Collins, CPA Project Manager; Valerie Jenkins and Ed Strachan helping with finances; and Ray Lyons, Counsel.

Organizational changes made earlier include a new Governance Committee, chaired by Liz Strachan, charged with updating the Society's Bylaws and reviewing the responsibilities of each standing committee. Also new is the Development Committee, chaired by Anna Eliot, and the Long-Range Planning committee, chaired by Michael Roberts. Directors who chair other standing committees are

Peter Benedict, Membership; Tom Callahan, Programs; Bonnie Carter, Publicity; David Gordon, Publications; Kris Kramer, Buildings and Grounds; Lili Ott, Hospitality; Bobbie Spiegelman, Curatorial/Collections; and Liz Strachan, Nominating Committee.

The Society's Long-Range Plan, created over the past year by Michael Roberts and his planning committee, sets forth the steps to achieve a vision for the Society as a vibrant organization actively engaging our community and beyond and fully realizing our mission. The current draft of the Plan, with goals for one year, five years, and ten years out, is posted on www.grotonhistoricalsociety.org, the Society website.

The attendees at this year's Annual Meeting exchanged many good ideas for upcoming programs and discussed ways to connect with and be more open to the community, including young people, and to take leadership in preserving Groton's landscape and town center. The gathering was held at Legion Hall on Hollis Street.



Happy Crowd Attends Nate Nutting Mill Site Program

Judy Adams, GHS Volunteer

On October 16, 2011, the Groton Historical Society celebrated Archaeology Month by sponsoring a walk to the Nate Nutting Mill Site off Indian Hill Road. Because our town was settled so early in New England history, and because it has largely remained out beyond the burgeoning development of the metropolitan area, there are many hidden remnants of that early settlement, such as the artifacts of the Nutting sawmill.

About 50 people came to this GHS program on a beautiful fall Sunday afternoon, gathering in a field on Indian Hill Road owned by Camilla and Arthur Blackman to look at a display of old pictures of Nate Nutting and his house, recent photos taken at the mill site, drawings detailing the operation of a water-powered sawmill, and a copy of a *NY Times* article describing a murder on that site on May 16, 1887, attributed to Nate Nutting. GHS member Judy Adams retold the story to the group, citing Virginia May's book *Groton Plantation*, in which May reports that Nutting killed a man in defense of himself and his property. Under pressure from the townsfolk, he was eventually let off with a verdict of justifiable homicide.

Visiting archaeologist Martin Dudek shared his knowledge of early sawmills before leading his enthusiastic audience on a short hike to the site.

There had recently been heavy rains, and water was rushing down the old stone-lined sluiceway built to serve the mill. Usually there is so little flow in this stream that it's hard to imagine enough water power to turn a wheel, suggesting that the mill was probably seasonal. While nothing is left of the old mill structure, large foundation stones are still in place as well as a huge jumble of rocks that probably supported the mill itself and the wheel. A large gear wheel lies in the brush alongside. The Nutting house foundation, overgrown with saplings, is nearby. Bricks from its fallen chimney are in the leaf mulch along with bits and pieces of household glass, pottery and metal.

Drawing on his 19 years of experience directing excavations at Native American and historic sites in New England, Marty described what the mill site would have looked like 125 years ago. He answered many questions and told the group that, due to the extensive remains, the Nate Nutting Mill Site might well qualify for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Fortunately the land is now conserved as Blackman Woods. The Walk in the Woods program ended with refreshments back at the field, including GHS Program Chair Tom Callahan's signature treat, homemade ice cream—pumpkin flavor this time.



6 Board Retreat Envisions Future of GHS

C. David Gordon, GHS Vice President

Every one of the Groton Historical Society officers and Board members participated in the day-long retreat held in the Parish House at First Parish Church of Groton on November 9, 2011. President John Ott established the topics of discussion, and professional mediator Sue Lotz deftly kept us on target. As we shared our thoughts in one big circle, breaking only for buffet lunch in the same room, we gained a clearer sense of purpose for the Society and made plans for how to help the Society move forward while Boutwell House is undergoing renovations and is closed to the public.

Lotz asked us each to tell the others: “What excites you about the Groton Historical Society?” Some spoke of having an opportunity here to discover historical materials and stories. Others found it exciting to be able to share with others the history they have discovered, adding that the organization has the potential to enhance that sharing. “Once we figure out how to use our collection, people will be overwhelmed with what we have,” President John Ott said.

Hopes for GHS Five Years From Now

Sharing our hopes for what the Society might have accomplished by 2017, five years from now, we envisioned seeing changes like these:

- Boutwell House will be in operation and “look great.” It will be a community center, a beehive of activity, with new displays bringing people back again and again and interesting programs yielding large attendance – all made known by timely publicity.
- A small staff of paid professionals will oversee day-to-day operations, but a growing cadre of volunteers will carry out much of the planned activities. More people will be participating in researching history and collecting oral histories as well as helping with visitors and planning programs and displays.
- The Society will run a battle reenactment once every five years.
- School classes will come here to get connected with local history and a few students will return to become research associates.
- We will have tied in with other historical resources in town such as the public library and with historical organizations in surrounding communities.
- People can connect via the Internet with historical materials and programs in other resource spots as well as in the Society’s own collection.
- New GHS publications are on the horizon, with preparation underway to update the *Groton at 350* book of

the town’s history and possibly adding a supplement to it every decade.

- Extensive renovations will be made to the existing carriage house to provide adequate space for meetings, sufficient space for displaying large equipment in our collection, or new space for an extensive exhibit devoted to agriculture.
- A grateful public will have donated funds not only for operations but also to establish a “healthy” trust fund.

Input on the Long-Range Plan

Discussion of hopes for the future brought out some that might be added to the Society’s new Long-Range Plan--adding property to the Society’s holding, perhaps not all located contiguous to Boutwell House; adding an administration and governance section, with an organizational chart and a plan for professional administration of the Society; adding provision for a volunteers program with its own coordinator; setting up a mechanism to establish coordination with other organizations and other historical societies and planning joint programs. Curator Bobbie Spiegelman suggested that provision needs to be made too about “the way we get money [and] how to write grants.”

Reconfiguring Boutwell House

Next on the Retreat agenda was tackling the huge task of working out “how to arrange, utilize, and manage Boutwell House to best tell Groton’s story and to serve our members and the visiting public.” We looked at floor plans for each of Boutwell House’s four stories and considered uses for rooms and heard about structural considerations that will determine what can or cannot be done in a certain area.

All agreed that the new public entrance to the building would be at the side porch. Tentatively, the red [drawing] room could become an orientation room for visitors and the smaller front parlor a room for displays. The kitchen, a natural center of life, and the dining room could be restored to their former uses. The first floor of the former apartment would offer a staff entrance and room for a handicapped-accessible bathroom. Other space needs are for a publications room and retail store.

On the second floor, restoration is needed in the Grant Bedroom, Governor Boutwell’s office (most recently used as an administrative office), and his library (previously the former apartment’s kitchen). New office and research space, as well as a staff kitchenette and bathroom will be carved out of that former apartment area also. Other small rooms on this level could be used for displays.

The Board Retreat ended with many questions still unanswered but with enthusiasm running high for the future of GHS.

This is an addendum to Deborah Johnson’s “Story of the Groton Inn,” which appeared in the October 2011 issue of this newsletter. Johnson’s account began with the bad news that the Groton Inn succumbed to fire on the night of August 2, 2011, and ended with the order of demolition issued to owner George Pergantis by Groton Building Inspector Milton Kinney on August 22, 2011. By presstime in October, we did not know if the order would be carried out. Now we do. The inn has been razed and the site completely cleared. Debris was trucked to Maine for disposal.

The demolition order called for the owner to “demolish the building and cause the immediate area to be leveled to conform to adjacent grades with inorganic fill.” Pergantis applied for a demolition permit on September 1, saying (as quoted in the August 9 *Boston Globe*), “I’m going to demolish everything. I’m not going to keep it. Every time I see it, I cry.” He hired local contractor Brian Lagasse of Lagasse Trucking to remove all traces of the heavily damaged structure. Demolition began on October 28 and was completed by November 4. The cellar hole was filled in and the site leveled according to the town’s demolition requirements (see photo).

Efforts of concerned citizens to modify the demolition order and to salvage part of the building were of no



Photo by Barbara Murray

avail. The chain link fence around the site has been removed, and we are painfully reminded that a grand and gracious witness to our town’s historic past has been lost.



Board of Directors 2011-2012

(and committee assignments)

- John H. Ott, President
- C. David Gordon, Vice President,
also Publications
- Michael F. Flynn, Treasurer
- Elizabeth Strachan, Clerk,
also Nominating/Governance

- Peter Benedict, Membership
- Tom Callahan, Programs
- Bonnie Carter, Publicity
- Anna Eliot, Development
- Kristin S. Kramer, Buildings & Grounds
- Barbara Murray, Newsletter
- Lili Ott, Hospitality
- Michael Roberts, Long-Range Planning
- Bobbie Spiegelman, Curator/Collections

Advisors to the Board

- Alvin Collins, CPA Project Manager
- Valerie Jenkins and Ed Strachan, Finance
- Ray Lyons, Counsel

Membership Form

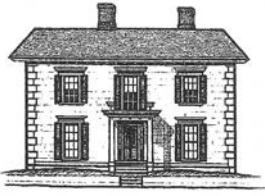
Annual Member-individual or family	\$35
GHS Sponsor	\$75
Corporate Sponsor	\$250
Sustaining Member	\$1,000
Additional Tax-Deductible Contribution	\$_____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____



Groton Historical Society

172 Main Street, P.O. Box 202

Groton, MA 01450

Then and Now

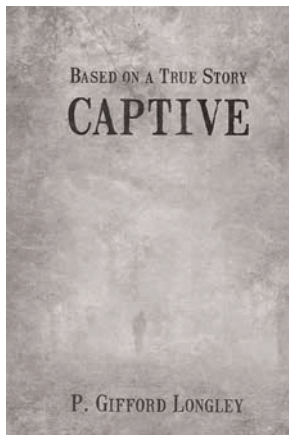
February 2012

Volume 13, Number 1

Upcoming Program

March 18: A Retelling of the Longley Massacre

2:00 PM • MacNeil Lounge • Lawrence Academy



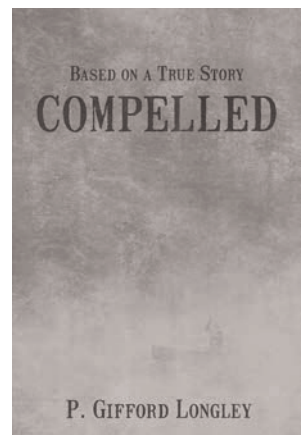
Come join us on Sunday, March 18 at 2 p.m. in the MacNeil Lounge at Lawrence Academy to hear Peter Longley talk about his two novels, *Captive* and *Compelled*, based on the events of the 1694 Abenaki Indian raid on the Groton settlement. The novels retell the capture and life experience of John Longley, an ancestor of the author, who was taken into captivity.

Mr. Longley will present his story from the combined perspective of the importance of remembering this event in Groton's history as well as the need to bring it to life—to make it memorable so that the story will not again be forgotten.

Mr. Longley says he has documented the tale in a way it hasn't been told before—weaving in the culture of the times and the motives of those involved, and making it as if you are there as a witness, watching it unfold. His novels have recently been published and are widely available.

The program is free and open to the public.

See www.grotonhistoricalsociety.org for more details on this and other GHS programs.



Then and Now

Newsletter of the Groton Historical Society

Volume 14, Number 4

Fall 2013

Impersonating the Governor

Brian Bixby, historian, guest contributor

GHS Curator Bobbie Spiegelman asked Dr. Brian Bixby, a historian born and raised in Groton, to recreate his portrayal of George S. Boutwell, Groton's only governor and noted inhabitant in 19th-century Groton, at the Society's Annual Meeting on Saturday, October 5, 2013, and to stay on in character at the Society's Open House that afternoon. Bixby is the son of lifelong Groton resident Rudolph Bixby, a past president of the Historical Society. His own interest in history, which he attributes to his parents, took him to Harvard to study colonial religious history, to the New School for Social Research for an M.A. in Historical Studies, then to UMass Amherst for a Ph.D in History. Here he describes his latest research into the life of our little-known governor.

To prepare myself to become Governor Boutwell for the day, I consulted several stacks of letters from or to George S. Boutwell that were rediscovered at the Boutwell House in 2000-2001, in particular, two packages of family correspondence. The earlier package, dated 1882, contained primarily letters addressed to Boutwell from his daughter, Georgianna, his wife, Sarah, and his son, Francis. The later package, dated 1885, was almost entirely letters written by Boutwell to his daughter Georgianna (see Letters Home, page 4). To date, only a few of these letters have been read or catalogued.

Although Boutwell no longer held a national political post in 1882 or 1885, he still spent much of the year in Washington, D.C., working as a patent lawyer and serving the Federal Government in several capacities as a lawyer in internal law. He relied on his family members, especially



Still in character during the Open House following the Annual Meeting, Governor Boutwell conversed about 19th-century town politics with GHS present-day member Jean Temple. Photo by David Gordon



Audience at the GHS Annual Meeting Saturday October 5 paid close attention to the principal speaker of the day, none other than the honorable Governor George S. Boutwell (played by Brian Bixby). Photo by David Gordon

Francis (Frank) and Sarah, to keep him informed of the family's financial status and problems with the farm. Boutwell and his family seem to have lived a dignified life appropriate for a former governor and Cabinet official, but they struggled to pay their bills. Boutwell's legal practice in Washington was apparently not that lucrative, and his son's part in the Boston practice did not seem to help much. New England farming was suffering from a steady and gradual drop in prices, and Boutwell had problems with his farm overseer and hands.

The family members wrote each other frequently when Boutwell was away in Washington. Georgianna wrote copiously on Groton social life and politics, her own social life, and farming matters. She was very interested in Washington politics and wanted to be remembered by her acquaintances there. Boutwell's letters to her were full of Washington political gossip and whom he had met at social gatherings.

Frank wrote less frequently, usually about a mixture of legal affairs and decisions to be made about the farm. Sarah wrote about farming affairs and even made some decisions, but she preferred to defer to her husband and Frank. She was often ailing. However, despite saying how happy she was that Boutwell was no longer in politics, she salted some of her letters with political

Continued on page 4

Main Street View: Air of Promise Comes to GHS

On Saturday, October 5th, the first Open House showcasing the work and improvements made to the Governor Boutwell House took place with a cross section of members, friends, neighbors and Groton citizens passing



The Boutwell dining room is again looking splendid, with the original family china on display in the butler's pantry. Photo by David Gordon

through the Society's soon-to-be porch entry front door. The Open House was preceded by the Society's Annual Meeting when a litany of accomplishments, opportunities and challenges were shared with those in attendance (see page 3). The house looked wonderful, bright and clean, with plants and flowers from porch to parlor. There was an air of promise throughout the home from front parlor to our new kitchen and map room to the "let me

get to work" offices on the second floor.

There was no doubt in anyone's mind that the Society had changed. A reporter from the *Groton Landmark* kept running from board member to visitor asking them what made the place feel so different,



Upstairs in the new office, Shirley Wishart and Brian Bixby impersonating Governor Boutwell examine an early map of Groton. Photo by David Gordon

remembering his own last visit when it all seemed so dark, tired and foreboding. The answer that almost everyone gave was the sense of warmth, welcome and inclusion that they found when they entered. For some it was their first Boutwell House visit and therefore they had nothing to compare it to, but for others, the improvements were electric, and yes there was new gallery lighting in several rooms. But it was the tenor of hospitality and welcome—"we're so glad you came" or "so nice to see you" and "remember there is cider and refreshments on the lawn"—which, along with a few neighborly chickens wandering about, made the place feel like a part of a real agriculturally based community.

But for those of us on the Board of Directors or serving as advisory or planning committee members, we realize there is still a great deal to do and room for much greater volunteer involvement in the Society. Yes we are a membership organization, but anyone living in Groton or one of our surrounding towns can be a member. No one is voted into membership—you just join with the flick of a pen and a small contribution. All, regardless of race, creed, gender, social status or age, are welcome, and families especially have a role in our future. Historical societies are not just for seniors, but seniors working with children together can share generational knowledge that gives an organization like the GHS its educational value and helps to support its mission to preserve, share and protect the stories, artifacts and history of our/their town.

Looking for Volunteers

In the coming months there will be more opportunities for members and visitors to share in the activities of the Society. We will be working on plans to organize, manage and assess our collections. Whether done on site or off site in a temporary storage facility, we will get our house back as a museum, a center for inquiry about Groton's past, or the place to help those who once called Groton home with their genealogical quests. So consider joining our endeavor and continue to look for the sounds, smells and notices of a live and kicking modern day history center.

The GHS sends its best wishes for Thanksgiving and the holiday season with your gifts always appreciated at this time of year.

John H. Ott
President, GHS
Fall 2013

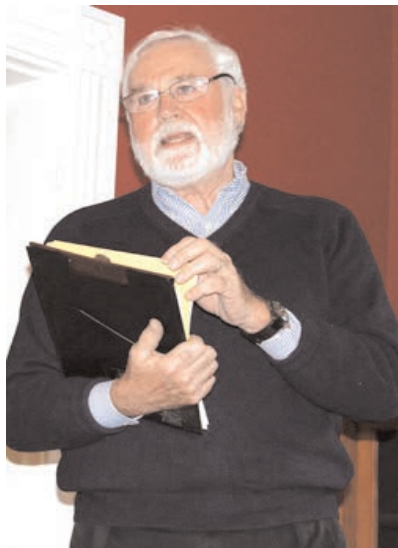
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A Very Special Annual Meeting

Liz Strachan, Clerk

On Saturday October 5, a quintessential autumn day in Groton with warm air wafting through the open doors of the Boutwell House, the 2013 Annual Meeting of the Groton Historical Society was held with 10 board members and 13 other members and guests present.

President John Ott welcomed all attendees and opened the business part of the meeting. Stuart Shuman provided the Treasurer's Report in the form of an income/expense statement that reflected where money had been spent. The current bank balance is \$16,943.25, and the value of the



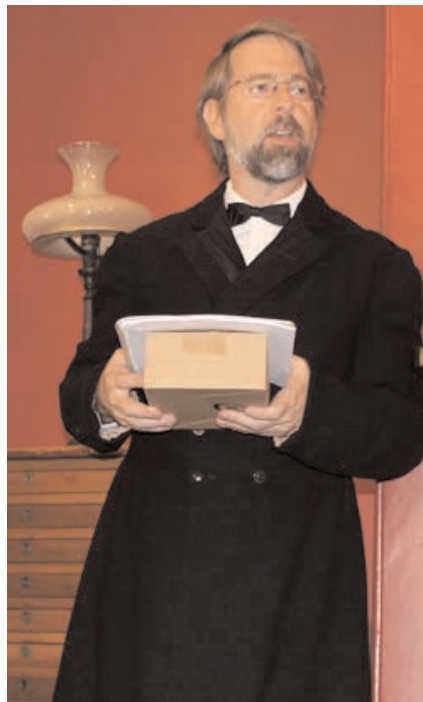
John Ott

Endowment Fund as of September 30, 2013, is \$174,626.63. Stuart described the new process for creating committee budgets and the overall budget going forward.

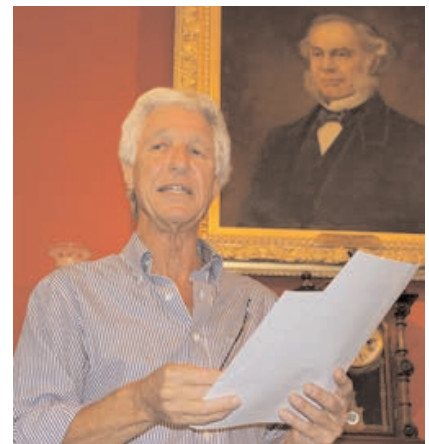
Liz Strachan read the slate of nominees for officers and board members for 2013-2014, noting several changes from last year: Mike Flynn is to become Asst. Treasurer and Stuart Shuman, Treasurer. Tom Callahan, after several years of adeptly organizing all the Society's programs, is stepping down from the board, but will remain active as a member of the Program Committee. Patti Modzelewski is our new Membership Committee Chair, and Greg Fishbone joins the Board as a Member-at-Large. Nancy Barringer placed her name in nomination to be a Member-at-Large, and Judy Adams offered to serve as Co-chair of the Program Committee. All other board members and officers remain as before (see GHS Directors 2013-2014, page 7). The proposed slate of nominees was approved unanimously and all were thanked for their service to the Society.

The Society's activities and progress this year were summarized by John Ott. The first phase of the renovation of Boutwell House has been completed. This includes new wiring, plumbing, security, telephone and fire suppression systems. The heating system was converted to gas from oil. Restored areas have been cleared of clutter and thoroughly cleaned. The next phase of work will involve clearing and restoring remaining interior spaces, organizing and documenting the collections, determining how the spaces will be used to be most accessible and educational for the public, acquiring modern exhibit cases, and much more.

John noted our ongoing relationship with several other town



"Governor Boutwell"



Stuart Shuman

organizations including the schools, Garden Club, Woman's Club, and Library. Fundraising activities have included a Teddy Bear Tea and a recent auction. We continue to provide scholarships to deserving public school students. The Society plans to reopen to the public on a more regular basis when we have enough volunteers and/or a regular paid staff person.

John then welcomed "Governor Boutwell," personified by Brian Bixby, a Groton native and history professor who has extensively researched George Boutwell. The "Governor," now retired, told the audience that he has tried to follow the philosophy of Cincinnattus who believed that those in high office ought to serve for a time and return to their former lives. In Boutwell's case, this was farming. The governor noted that now that he was back in Groton, he could see a need to do something about "the school situation"; that is, the town needed to create a new high school on a level with the two private academies in town. The governor answered many questions from the audience and was a delight to all.

The meeting adjourned and guests enjoyed a tour of the beautiful restored areas of the Boutwell House. ■

observations which shows she kept up with events.

In his letters to “My dear Georgie,” Boutwell comes across as a man interested in Groton affairs, but who was mostly preoccupied with his business and political connections in Washington. Even so, during the 1880s, Boutwell continued to be involved in Groton’s efforts to build a high school and secure funds for a library building as part of his lifelong commitment to learning. He felt the

pull of both private life and public life and uneasily straddled the heritage of the past and the challenges of the future. The letters I have been privileged to read offer a fresh perspective on Boutwell’s life as a family man, gentleman farmer, and citizen of Groton. I drew on them heavily in my portrayal of this revered and fascinating man who gave much to his town as well as his country. ■

Letters Home

The Boutwells habitually wrote to each other frequently when they were separated. Even though George S. Boutwell said in a letter from Washington, D.C., dated January 27, 1885, that he usually writes his wife, Sarah, or daughter, Georgie, every other day, Georgie frequently complained that he didn’t write often enough! Piecing bits and pieces of all the letters I read together, I was able to make out quite a bit about Boutwell family relations.

I had read perhaps four letters from Boutwell’s wife, Sarah, and had thought her a simple homebody. And I wondered why she didn’t live with her husband in Washington, instead of staying at home in Groton, during the early 1880s.



George Sewall Boutwell in 1869. Photo from GHS Archives.

And she mentioned in a letter dated December 26, 1882, that “Groton is very gay,” with the literary club meeting, band concerts, lyceum lectures, and church entertainments. But she

also kept up on the farm’s business, whether it be laying stone walls or deciding how to sell the milk (April 22, 1882). And as it turns out, she hated keeping house in Washington and never wanted to do it again (May 14, 1882). Indeed, I have to wonder if she regretted her husband’s political career, for on March 9, 1882, she sagely noted, “A man who holds a public office makes a sacrifice of his independence of thought and actions if nothing more.”

Boutwell often said that he was above seeking office, and yet his letters to Georgie from 1885 were full of Washington politics. I can’t help but think he still had a hankering for a political job. And like father, like daughter. Georgie was a formidable woman. The school authorities once specifically sent *her* to West Groton to help teach and manage *the boys* in the school there. She was not shy about making demands on her father, even sending telegrams to demand answers on farming business from him (February 22 and June 14, 1882). Yet when a school board vacancy was about to open up, and some people said Georgie should run, she told her father on March 16, 1881, that it is something she would have liked once, implying she was now past that. Well, apparently the temptations of office were too great: she did run and did get on the school board. In a letter Boutwell wrote her on February 3, 1885, he even offers her campaign advice for her reelection. When she

was defeated, Boutwell tried to console her in a letter dated July 10 by noting how holding public office tends to corrupt people.

Boutwell must have loved his daughter, for he even made humorous comments to her in his letters, something I’ve otherwise never seen in his correspondence. Describing a certain Prof. Harris of Concord, Massachusetts, as a humbug, Boutwell said of Harris’s ideas that “what is intelligible is not new . . . what is new is not intelligible”

(May 6, 1885). Commenting on how the lack of rain had almost burnt the lawn back in Groton, Boutwell made fun of the idea of divine Providence, saying that while the organization of the world is perfect, its administration is surely defective (July 1, 1885). And in a letter dated December 2, 1885, Boutwell showed he well knew what his daughter was like by writing to her that “It is plain that girls should be made to obey when children, otherwise they get bossy!”



Georgianna Adelia Boutwell. Courtesy of GHS.

--Brian Bixby

GHS Greets "Governor Boutwell" at Fall Open House

Lili Ott, GHS Hospitality Committee Chair

The October 5 Open House at Boutwell House provided a progress report for members and friends to see the array of changes wrought over the last few years while the house has been closed for renovation and repair. About 80 people



toured the house over the four-hour span from 11 am to 3 pm. The welcoming committee included not only board members but also feathered friends in the form of the Benedict family chickens, who were a big hit with visiting children and added to the historical flavor.

Board volunteers acted as docents, welcoming visitors through the restored side porch entrance, explaining the newly renovated kitchen with its HUB stove and soapstone sink (which will be used for living history programs), and showing the cleared front parlor with its spacious dimensions and new track lighting. A handicapped accessible bathroom has been added on the first floor. Upstairs the new offices for researchers and volunteers were on view with furniture donated by Fidelity Bank, new carpeting, and updated wi-fi and phones. The small bathroom upstairs has also been updated. New ceilings installed in rooms that suffered severe water damage looked like they had always been there, so the volunteers used "before" pictures to show the differences.

Several of the craftspeople who had done work on the house were delighted to show off their work to their friends. Board members brought their families, and old and new members enjoyed hearing from former Groton resident Brian Bixby, who came costumed as Gov. George Boutwell and stayed in character throughout the afternoon talking about Groton in his day. We all enjoyed delicious fresh cider and treats baked by GHS bakers and served by GHS volunteers including seven-year-old Olivia Carter, granddaughter of board member Bonnie Carter. Olivia has a decided flair for cookie arranging, and we hope she will be helping at Boutwell House for many Open Houses to come. According to her grandmother, she enjoyed hearing "the actor-man telling us about the old history house." Photo below shows Livey and the "actor-man" with Gineane Haberlin and her daughter, Cameryn. ■



Making Boutwell House Accessible

Alvin B. Collins, Project Manager
Boutwell House Rehabilitation Project

Since my last project update, in the July issue of *Then and Now*, the Governor Boutwell House has experienced an Open House (see page 5) to introduce Groton residents to the improvements completed, funded through the combination of a Community Preservation Act grant and a Massachusetts Cultural Facilities grant. Even though many of the improvements are hidden behind walls, such as electrical, plumbing, insulation and heating upgrades, all of the work has been very well received. The Society is in the midst of planning an official grand opening in the spring or early summer of 2014, which will allow programs and events to joyfully resume at the house.

Lorayne Black, ASLA, Landscape Architect of Groton, has completed the design of an exterior ADA accessible sloped walkway that will be the finishing touch to this lengthy project. The original thought behind making the Boutwell House accessible to all was by means of a simply constructed wooden ramp system commonly seen on older structures. Accessibility was never thought of



Side porch gets fresh paint prior to construction of a new ADA accessible walkway. Photo by Al Collins

back then. Through informal discussions with various Groton Boards, it was decided that the Boutwell House, because of its historic nature and its prominent location on Groton's Main Street, should be treated as a candidate for an accessible entrance that would both enhance the building exterior and add aesthetic value to Main Street.

First Step: Commission on Accessibility

Months of planning, measuring and designing have been spent to produce a plan that I think will be a center of attention for all who visit Boutwell House in the future. I'm also sure that this plan will be a pacesetter for any others trying to make an older house accessible because of the time spent thinking outside the box to create something very special.

However, designing something special is one thing. Getting it approved by the various town boards is another. It has taken even more months of discussion, meetings and plan revisions, starting with Groton's Commission on Accessibility, which acts as an advisory committee for projects such as ours of adding accessibility to a structure or area. Most of us take for granted the ability to walk anywhere we choose, but many people find even the simple process of passing through a doorway a challenge. Lorayne and I met with the Commission on Accessibility early on in the process to show and explain our intent regarding Boutwell's accessibility. We solicited and appreciated feedback from a Commission that strives to meet the needs of the physically challenged. The Commissioners were very receptive to our plan as drawn, but suggested improvements to make it even better.

Next: The Planning Board

Once the plan was revised, we presented it to the Groton Planning Board for a couple of reasons. We wanted their input re: the design since it will add a substantial exterior feature to the side of Boutwell House, and we also asked them to waive the need for a full site plan review. Again the plan was well received, with board members citing a few minor improvements. A full site plan review would have called for additional documentation and meetings, and that would have added another level of complexity to the project. After much discussion, the Board voted to waive the full site plan review requirement but asked that we keep them informed of any changes to the plan.

Finally: the Historic Districts Commission

We then had two Boards/Committees under our belt with one more to go. Our next obligation in the process was to present the plan to the Groton Historic Districts Commission, which oversees compliance of projects along Main Street and Farmers Row to be designed in a manner consistent with the historic nature of the districts. Boutwell House is on the National Register of Historic Places, so not only does the HDC want to make certain our project won't jeopardize the historic nature of Main Street, but also to make sure the aesthetic value of the house is not

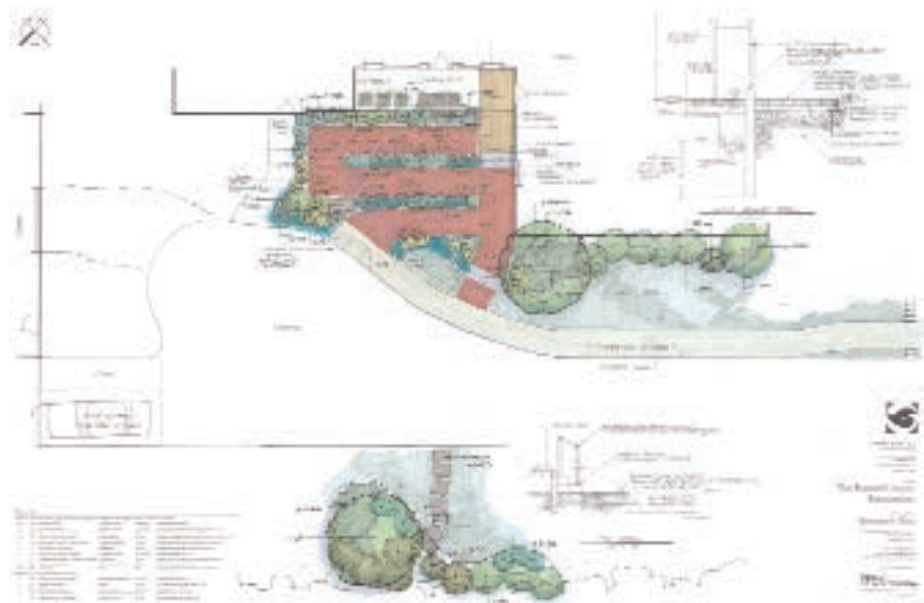
Continued on page 7

not compromised. There was much discussion leading to a few design suggestions, but the overall concept and design was completely embraced by the Commission. Still, our project was considered to be substantial enough to warrant a public hearing so that neighbors and other residents could weigh in on what we were proposing. The public hearing was advertised as required and held on September 17 in the meeting room at Town Hall. A few comments were heard with the overall atmosphere being in favor of what we were proposing.

Project out to Bid

Our much-reviewed plan has now been put out to bid to three reputable local landscape construction companies. The project will consist of a walkway constructed mainly out of earthen materials and will not be a typical ramp system. The use of earthen materials, the end result of hours of creative design meetings, will give us a sloped walkway that will wind up the side of Boutwell House through landscape features. We will also connect the new, sloped walkway to the sidewalk on Main Street by means of a paved path along the driveway passing through the granite wall at the sidewalk where the original carriage mounting-block is set. Bids are being received as I write this update with a hope to start construction as soon as possible this fall.

Ideally the landscaping should be done in unison with the walkway construction but the funding in place is not sufficient to provide the landscaping called for on the plan at this time. My hope is that all of you reading this newsletter will graciously open your wallets and purses to donate toward putting the frosting on this project in the form of landscaping. Once completed, this will be a project to be very proud of, especially if you've helped in the funding. Thank you all for being so patient in this prolonged and complicated renovation project. You will appreciate the time spent once Boutwell House is alive again with activity. ■



Lorayne Black's design of a gently sloped walkway offers a comfortable approach to the side porch, which will become the main entrance to the Boutwell House museum. The plan calls for a variety of trees and shrubs, perennials and ferns along the path and around the new granite bench dedicated to Georgianna Boutwell, a gift of the Groton Woman's Club on its 100th anniversary last May.

How to Reach Us

The Governor Boutwell House will be opening for business in late Spring 2014 after having been closed for renovations. Please call or email us with any questions.

Phone: 978-448-0092
Email: info@grotonhistoricalsociety.org
Website: www.grotonhistoricalsociety.org

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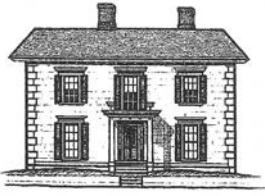
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Save the Date: January 21, 2014, Sibley Hall, Groton Public Library
Carl Flowers: How to Research the History of your House

GHS in the Community

Back-to-Back Events September 20th and 21st



The GHS Auction: Many thanks go to Anna Eliot, event chair (pictured with successful bidders Carol and Carl Canner); committee members Linda Andelman, Connie Sartini, Jane Bouvier, Shirley Wishart, and Donna Nowak and Michael LaTerz (shown intently tracking sales); also West Groton Troop 1 Boy Scouts Chris Brown, Brent Emerle, and Cameron Glennie, assisted by parents Michelle and Gary Emerle. Auctioneer was Darin Pelletier, Brookline, NH. Photos by David Gordon.



Grotonfest: Brisk sales of books, cider, and donuts were eclipsed by the child-friendly activity of peeling and coring apples with an old-timey peeler and the sure guidance of GHS President John Ott. Photo by Barbara Murray.



Then and Now

Newsletter of the Groton Historical Society

Volume 14, Number 2

April 2013

Fitch's Bridge: Replacement Will Link Town Trails

Paul G. Funch, Groton Trails Committee

On January 26, 2013, Groton voters approved the necessary funds for the purchase and installation of a 21st century replacement for Fitch's Bridge, which has spanned the Nashua River in one form or another for more than 250 years. First built as a cart bridge, perhaps as early as 1725, then rebuilt several times after being carried away by floods, it had fallen in disrepair and was closed to all traffic in 1965 or 1966. The new bridge will bring Groton's history to life. Construction is scheduled to begin this spring, with removal of the old bridge in May, repair of the abutments in June, replacement of the old bridge with a new span in July, and opening the bridge to the public in August. Paul Funch describes here the networks of trails both east and west of the Nashua River that a "new" Fitch's Bridge will connect.

Fitch's Bridge, named after Zachariah Fitch who was hired in 1803 to maintain the bridge in its early days, had allowed people, horses and goods to cross the Nashua River for perhaps 150 years, although the first settlers saw little need to bridge the river in the beginning, there being only wilderness on the far side. If they sought hay or lumber, said Virginia May in *Plantation*, they could cross at one of several fording places along the river.

The first substantial bridge on this site was built around 1740-1750 and repaired or rebuilt over the next 120 years. The last wooden structure, built in 1871 by Luther

Blood, Groton builder and resident of the house that is now the Parish House of First Parish Church of Groton, was replaced by a steel bridge finished on February 12, 1898.

The steel bridge, built by the Berlin, CT, Iron Bridge Co., was repaired once in 1921 but had to be closed to traffic around 1965 due to lack of adequate structural integrity, and it has not been repaired since then. For a number of years it was used by pedestrians despite some warning signs and flimsy barriers, but by around 2000 the flooring had significantly deteriorated and the bridge was deemed a hazard and permanently closed off with large concrete barriers by the Town of Groton.

Trails East of the River

At the time, due to its prominence in Groton's Master Plan, there was considerable interest on the part of several town boards and committees in repairing and reopening Fitch's Bridge, and that became a primary focus for the Groton Trails Committee, newly chartered by the Selectmen in March 1998. As a result of efforts over several decades, a patchwork quilt of land parcels were acquired by a number of public and private organizations and they are all finally connected by trails to Fitch's Bridge. Along the east side of the Nashua River, a continuous trail goes by the Groton Fairgrounds, owned by the Town of Groton, then through the Taisey Conservation Restriction around the Partridgeberry development, then through Groton Place and Sabine Woods, then across Groton School grounds,

and on to Surrenden Farm (part of which is now called General Field) at the border with Ayer. After some difficulties in establishing a right of way directly along the river bank,

the Trails Committee negotiated with a private developer to obtain a trail easement across a new housing development



The present Fitch's Bridge, graciously suspended over the Nashua River since 1874, but condemned and off-limits even to foot travel since 1966, will be removed and replaced this summer by a truss bridge with weathered steel finish designed to resemble the old bridge and thus reflect part of its heritage. Photo by Russell Harris.

Continued on page 7

Main Street View: Promises of Spring

While Spring this year began on March 20th, April for me is the month that marks that season by the smell of the damp earth, with new shoots of grass popping out of the ground and by the sounds of outdoor labor. The air hums with activity as work continues on the Boutwell House and next door at Peter Benedict's new barn. At the Historical



Society, work has gone on all winter as plasterers, carpenters and other craftsmen continue their efforts to restore the House and its interior (see page 3 for Al Collins's update on rehabbing our historic museum and office space). We aren't

there yet but getting closer every day.

One promised event that has some of us crossing our fingers, in hopes that at least the front parlor of the house will be ready, is the Groton Woman's Club's planned centennial celebration scheduled to be held in that parlor in May. So being under the scrutiny of the Club's Centennial Committee, chaired by Susan Slade, we have our work cut out for us. On May 17th the Club plans to commemorate its founding and first meeting hosted on March 8, 1913, in that very room by its founder and first President Georgianna Boutwell. In this historical setting the Club will rededicate itself to its mission of community service and honor the memory of all those early organizers, members, and friends who have made the Club one of Groton's venerable and service-oriented institutions.

Celebrating Agriculture

On another front, the Society will be collaborating with the Groton Public Library in late April to produce a display-

case exhibition focused on agriculture. GHS Curator Bobbie Spiegelman and I worked together to choose printed ephemera, catalogs, periodicals, manuscripts and farm tools that reflect the enormous impact New England manufacturers, primarily in Boston and Worcester, had on farming in the 19th century. It was a formative aspect of our nation's farming history. If you aren't familiar with *The New England Farmer* or *The Massachusetts Ploughman*, two important agriculture newspapers, or how a grafting chisel or corn husking peg was used, or the impact of the Groton Farmers and Mechanics Club's fairs had on the vitality and social well being of this community, then this will be an exhibit to see and enjoy. (The photos on page 4 are a sample of items you will find in the display case.)

Many of you, I hope, were able to attend our agriculture program on Saturday April 6th at the Groton Grange Hall on Champney Street, cosponsored by the Historical Society and Groton Grange #7. I had the honor of presenting an illustrated lecture on American farm implements and their impact on local agriculture. (See more on this subject on page 5 in David Gordon's close look at the 2011 Groton Agricultural Survey Project.)

So this Spring will be busy time for the GHS board of directors and volunteers with all our "house work" of varying sorts as we strive to bring our headquarters and museum back on line before summer's end. Stay tuned and look for more about all our efforts both in our newsletter and on line at www.grotonhistoricalsociety.org. And a special thank you to all who have contributed so far to this preservation project.

John H. Ott
President, GHS
January 2013



Exhibition Hall of the Farmers and Mechanics Club, seen here in 1943, was home to many summer agricultural fairs held at the Hazel Grove fairgrounds at the end of Jenkins Road. Today, the Club site and Fairgrounds site are under the care of the Groton Conservation Commission. Photo from the GHS archives.

Production of *Then and Now* is made possible in part by generous donations from Middlesex Savings Bank and from Kris Kramer, Realtor, EXIT Assurance Realty, 161 Main Street, Groton, MA 01450 -- 978.807.7317 -- www.EXITassurance.com.

Boutwell House in the Homestretch:

Heat's up, Plaster's on, Finish Work Has Begun

Alvin B. Collins, Project Manager
Boutwell House Rehabilitation Project

We have seen a flurry of activity in recent months surrounding the rehabilitation of Boutwell House. Late in December National Grid finally addressed the inadequate natural gas supply coming into the house so we could fire up the large main-house boiler. By this time the outside temperatures had dipped well into the teens, with interior temperatures close behind. Once the radiators were pumped full of hot water by our efficient new gas boiler, it took a full two days to get the main house up to only 50 degrees. The first floor can now be kept at a different temperature from the second floor, and the new office space can be kept at a higher temperature that will make it more comfortable.

Air testing of the entire fire suppression system has been successfully completed and Fire Chief Joe Bosselait has been contacted to perform an inspection prior to filling the system with water. Once the system has been certified as complete and operational, paperwork will be delivered to our insurance carrier stating such, with the anticipation that the Boutwell House insurance premium will go down.

Insulating from Attic to Cellar

Once fire suppression crews were out of the house and the Building Inspector signed off on all of the work to this point, it was time for the insulators to step in. Liberty Insulation of Hubbardston was selected to insulate the house, adding insulation wherever access was available. The entire attic has been blanketed with 12 inches of cellulose insulation including over the apartment area. Wall cavities in the new office area were filled with insulation to create an area that can be heated very easily and retain heat to make it a pleasant work environment. The third-floor attic space was encapsulated from overhead with insulation to help attain a more tempered area for storage year round. The combination of a highly efficient heating system and new insulation should create a more comfortable interior in a house that is more economical to heat. Our new ADA bathroom was also insulated and will be heated with a

small electric heater to protect the pipes from freezing and keep the bathroom at a pleasant usable temperature.

Staging up for Plastering

Another visit from the Groton Building Inspector to inspect the insulation allowed us to proceed into the plastering phase. Telford Plastering of Littleton, known for older house plastering restorations, began by building staging room by room to allow work on the high ceilings in Boutwell House. All of the room ceilings on both floors of the mid and rear section of the house have now been sheathed with blueboard and replastered. The dining room walls were covered with plastic sheets to protect the old wallpaper from plaster drips and splatters as the plasterer worked overhead. Replastering was done in lieu of repairing to eliminate the possibility of the cracks reappearing and because it is likely that all of these ceilings were originally painted with calcimine. Calcimine was easy to apply, covered evenly and looked great when done but new paints do not stick to it well. As years go by and coat upon coat of new paint is put over calcimine, the weight of the newer paint eventually makes the paint peel causing unsightly conditions that are difficult to repair.

On the other hand, the interior walls in this part of the house have had most of the cracks repaired and a few door openings have been in-filled to create better traffic flow. Our feeling was that by repairing the wall cracks instead of replastering, we could retain the older character of the rooms with original wall plaster.

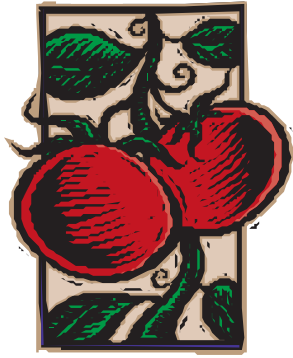
Trimming Out

Next we move on to finish carpentry, installing interior trim in the areas disturbed by the renovations. Baseboards and door trim will be fabricated to match trim in the same areas as closely as possible. Once interior trim is complete, the painters can begin painting the office area, followed by the plumber and electrician in an effort to get the new office up and running as soon as possible. And, once the new office is open, we can really get organized to bring life to Boutwell House once again. ■



From left: dining room protected with plastic sheeting, office insulated, wallboard installed, replastering done.

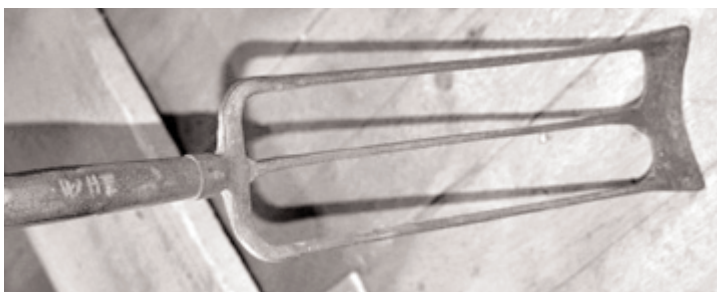
Did You Know.....



that while contemporary residents of Groton begin about now to dream of the luscious tomatoes they will grow in their gardens this season, this was not always so? It wasn't until about 1840 that the first tomatoes were grown in Groton. That was when William Lawrence of Boston sent some young plants to Groton on a stagecoach driven by Aaron Corey (the UPS man of his day?). The recipient was Dr. Joshua Green who gave them to Eliab Going Bolton, an experienced gardener in town. Mr. Bolton watched over them with great care as they were growing. Dr. Samuel Green writes in *The Natural History and the Topography of Groton, Massachusetts*, Volume 1, p. 103, "I remember with what great curiosity they were regarded by persons interested in such matters; and how the fruit as it ripened was carefully distributed in the neighborhood for trial and judgment. According to my recollection, the verdict at first was an unfavorable one; but this has long since been set aside, and a later tribunal has decreed otherwise. It has been decided that the tomato stands on the border-line of necessity, and has come to stay."

--E.S.

Photo Preview of Agricultural Display at GPL



Bobbie Spiegelman, GHS Curator, and John Ott, GHS President and collector of 19th-century farm implements, have gathered some of John's farm tools, catalogs, and periodicals for display at the Groton Public Library in late April and May (see page 8 for details). The items pictured here may or may not be in the exhibit. You will have to go and see. How many of the photos can you match to their descriptions?

Harness maker's vise to hold leather straps for mending; open-frame tilling spade that is easier to drive into the earth; BUCH #706 heavy double-drum spiked lawn aerator; hatching, a bed of nail spikes used to straighten and clean flax for spinning; tire measuring wheel (also called a traveler) used to measure the circumference of wheel rims; cranberry scoop with blunted iron teeth that won't damage the berries. Photos by Bobbie Spiegelman.

Farming in Groton: Survival, Subsistence, Niche Markets

C. David Gordon, GHS Member

What was the historic Groton like? Wasn't it a farming community, a quiet, sleepy little town? Weren't the farms pretty much alike: a modest house, a barn, perhaps one or two outbuildings, a milk cow or two, a few cattle, some chickens, possibly a couple of pigs, and a few acres given over to vegetables and even fruits, grassy meadows, and a woodlot? Not entirely so, concludes the final report of the Groton Agricultural Survey Project, prepared in 2011 by Oakfield Research of Concord, MA, which identifies different eras in Groton's agricultural history, from settlement down to the present, and describes how farming practices changed to meet the challenges of history and technology.

In colonial days farming was close to a survival existence, undertaken despite the danger of Indian attack yet including some small attempts to market goods to others. The Whitney farmstead, in continuous operation since 1684, became a subsistence farm by the early 18th century, when farmers had "enough crops, livestock, and help to sustain their families." This was before the industrial revolution, according to the report, when farmers as a rule rather than an exception worked other occupations around their farming. The Blood farm began in this era.

Industrial Revolution Intrudes

The 19th century brought the "Yankee Farm" – one started in the previous century and gradually coming under the influence of the industrial revolution. Farmers grew Irish potatoes to feed the new immigrants from Ireland and Canada working in the new big city mills. William Bainbridge in Groton kept as many as 2,000 Merino sheep for their wool. Farm families could do piecework at home assembling products from parts manufactured in the mills. It was a time of experimenting, growing mulberry trees to try to obtain silk, raising hops, having a first look at tomatoes. Irish Catholic Groton farmer James Fitzpatrick ran a "Yankee Farm."

The coming of the railroad to Groton had a decided effect on farming practices, for example, dairy farmers could ship butter and cheese to a wider market. This was also a time of great interest in learning the latest scientific methods and practices of farming through subscribing to periodicals and joining farming organizations.

Gentlemen Farmers Change the Scene

The town itself at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century attracted wealthy and educated outsiders to build estates here. Local "gentleman farmer" James Lawrence was joined by the Danielsons, the Sabines, and the Dumaines, who were drawn in part by the charm of Groton as well as its private schools and easy access to



Town-owned Williams Barn on Chicopee Row, circa 1840, speaks directly to farming in Groton in years past, conveying a sense of being there in mind and spirit through agriculturally related events held year-round and the Friday Farmers Market in summer and early fall. Photo by C. David Gordon.

cities by train. They formed the Groton Hunt Club, changing the land as they constructed bridle paths across their properties.

The estate farms called for a new managerial class. The report notes that the Lowthorpe School, in business in Groton from 1901 to 1945, offered degrees for women in garden design and horticulture pertaining especially to estates. William P. Wharton introduced forest management through the Town Memorial Forest and his Wharton Plantation.

By the 1930s, according to the report, Groton had ceased to be a marketing town and was less reliant on agriculture. There was a 40-year period in farming history (1949-1998) when many small farm operations had shut down. The report gives a full account of a new kind of farm established in Groton during that time—Gibbet Hill Farm, a large beef-raising enterprise owned by Marion Campbell and managed by Bill Conley. It was an all but self-sufficient farm with its 600 cows and 1,000 acres (many of them making again productive unused farm land).

Since the days of Campbell and her farm, Groton has seen a resurgence of small farms, many of them filling a marketing niche like the farming operation of John and Laurie Smigelski, which meets increased demand for hay.

Summing up the present state of farming in this "sleepy town" of Groton, the report concludes, "Every generation [of farmers] worked with less land, less family help, higher costs, more regulations than the one before it." Groton is considered to be more fortunate than other towns as regards its natural resources. Farming is recognized as vital to the town's culture and its biodiversity. But, in the last two decades, the demand for residential development and a depressed farm market have been a threat to continued farming. ■

Treasures of History: Groton's Town Diaries, 1918-1971

Susanne Olson, Reference Librarian
Groton Public Library

Groton may be unusual in having an appointed Town Diarist, a tradition that continues to this day. The Groton Public Library holds 18 volumes of the Town Diaries, spanning the years 1918-1971. They are a unique historical resource for the town, and over these years, seven women served consecutively as diarists—Emma Blood, Marion Torrey, Ella and Claribel Vickery, Susie Shattuck, Virginia May, and Isabel Beal. They recorded local happenings and gave national and international events a local context.

In the early years, the diarists wrote longhand descriptions and copied poems. Later pages are typewritten, and the diaries begin to look more like scrapbooks filled with newspaper clippings, event programs, photos and other memorabilia. Browsing the pages (over 3000 in all), we learn about the big storms and fires, tragic accidents, school graduations, fundraiser events and charitable work, new buildings appearing around town, soldiers going off to war, epidemics, town celebrations, and many other things.

Groton has no complete collection of old newspapers, so these diaries are a vital source of information about the town in the 20th century. Over time, however, the original volumes became increasingly fragile and brittle. In 2005 and 2006 the Groton Public Library Endowment Trust funded a major project to conserve them. Each volume was carefully cleaned and repaired. The work included deacidification of newsprint and wood pulp papers, as well as removal of discolored cellophane tape. Each page was also microfilmed to ensure the long-term preservation of its content. At the end of the project, the microfilm version of the Town Diaries was digitally scanned, and converted to



The earliest pages of the Groton Town Diaries are entirely handwritten, in tidy cursive script. Later volumes combine photos and newspaper clippings with handwritten or typed commentary. Diaries covering the years 1918 through 1971 have been cleaned, repaired, deacidified, microfilmed, and digitally scanned. They can all be accessed online. Photo by Susanne Olson.

image files that can be viewed over the Internet.

Starting in 2007, staff and loyal volunteers at the library have been working to index the Town Diaries and make them available for online viewing through the library's website under the Groton Public Library Digital Collection (<http://books.gpl.org/greenstone/cgi-bin/library.cgi>). [There is also a direct link to this collection from the homepage of the Groton Historical Society website under Links.] Indexing has so far been completed for the years 1918-1963. Anyone can browse the volumes page by page, or look up specific dates, places, people, or subjects in the index. Pages on the Hurricane of 1938 are especially interesting, as are these samples of April entries, from four of the early diarists.

April 27, 1928: The telephone subscribers in town, starting this Friday morning, are to be served from the new office at the corner of Main and Court streets...The switchboard is up-to-date in every detail and is large enough to provide for the ever-increasing telephone population of the town... In town today there are about 550 telephones. Most of these are main telephones, but in many modern homes there is a telephone on each floor. In the front of the office an illuminated sign will direct the people to an all-night public telephone. [Marion Torrey]

April 14, 1934: Passenger service will be discontinued on the Boston and Maine railroad, between Worcester and Nashua beginning April 15th. Bus service will take its place. [Ella Vickery]

April 1941: And now we record what is already known at the 'great fire,' the most ever known: with some 600 acres of W. P. Wharton's 'plantation' destroyed among the many, many more acres, buildings, etc. ... None who watched that terrible demon sweep across acre after acre beginning early in the afternoon of April 28 can ever forget and the expression 'like wild fire' will remain a vivid description of those three days of horror! ... At no time was the town threatened but the pall of smoke was everywhere, miles from the fire... All three days there were steady calls to town hall for more men to help in the fight. By night of the first day Groton's Red Cross were on the job to feed the tired fighters. All bread, practically, in homes and stores was used for sandwiches which were served with hot coffee. It was said that some of the CCC boys had been without food nearly a day, having fought another fire before coming to Groton, but for all this, there were those deserving of severe punishment, sightseers eating the Red Cross food!! [Susie Shattuck]

April 1964: Some of our Massachusetts people choose to go south and make themselves heard and seen in protests against segregation. [Virginia May] ■

Fitch's Bridge Continued from page 1

on Gratuity Rd. This easement was recorded in the deed and provides a trail from the Farmers and Mechanics parcel north to Gratuity Rd. near its intersection with Fitch's Bridge Rd. At that point, Fitch's Bridge Rd. is a dead-end dirt road that goes through the working farm of Gary Wilkins, whose farm stand is on Rte. 119, thus providing a safe and scenic path to Fitch's Bridge as well as a reminder of agriculture's importance to Groton.

Also on the east side of the Nashua River, hikers, bicyclists, and equestrians can take Fitch's Bridge Rd. east to Nod Rd., where they can access the state-owned J. Harry Rich Tree Farm State Forest, which connects with the Nashua River Rail Trail. An alternative route to the Rail Trail is to take Gratuity Rd. to Arlington St., where there is a steep unpaved access to the Rail Trail. From the Rail Trail, other trails connect nearly continuously to the eastern, northern, and southern borders of Groton. Altogether there are over 70 miles of trails east of the Nashua River that are part of that area's evolving trails network.

Trails West of the River

On the west side of the Nashua River there are another 30 miles of trails forming West Groton's trails network. A continuous trail on the west side of the river was just completed in December 2012 with the addition of a conservation restriction along 1.3 miles of the historic Brookline and Pepperell Railroad right-of-way. This trail goes south all the way to the Groton Town Forest, via the Blood Land acquired by the West Groton Water District, and to the Squannacook River along the border with Ayer. Trails also head west toward The Throne through parcels owned by the Groton Conservation Commission, the Groton Conservation Trust, and the New England Forestry Foundation. A continuous trail goes all the way across The Throne to Rockwood Lane near the Bertozzi Wildlife Area on the Squannacook River.

Once the work of removing the old bridge structure and replacing it with a new span safe for pedestrians, horses, and bike riders is done, the 70 miles of trails on the east side of the Nashua River will be directly linked to the 30 miles of trails on the west side. The new bridge will ensure this historical and vital connection for another 75 years - the expected lifespan of the bridge.

Modes of transportation and recreational needs change over time, but the importance of connections from one part of Groton to another will always remain. Without any doubt, the single most important recreational connection for Groton has been, and continues to be, Fitch's Bridge. ■



Wide web of trails converge at Fitch's Bridge. Trail maps are available from Town Hall and from the Trails Committee website, www.grotontrails.org.

Boutwell House is temporarily closed for renovations. Please call or contact us by email with any questions.

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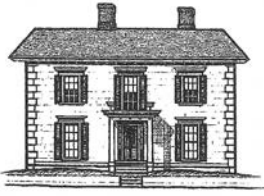
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Please make check out to Groton Historical Society and mail completed form and check to Groton Historical Society, POB 202, Groton, MA 01450



Groton Historical Society

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Coming Up . . .

New Exhibit at GPL--Celebrating Agriculture in Groton

Opening late April – in the display case outside the Historical Room (3rd floor) at the Groton Public Library – a selection of artifacts from John Ott's personal collection of 19th-century farm tools, catalogs, and periodicals that changed forever farming methods in Groton and elsewhere in the wake of the Industrial Revolution.

The exhibit recognizes our town's agricultural heritage and anticipates the first annual Agricultural Fair at Hazel Grove Fairgrounds, resurrecting a tradition that celebrated our farming communities in past centuries. The Ag Fair is scheduled for Sunday August 18 -- look for details in the July issue of *Then and Now* and on the GHS website.



Farmers Bulletins were produced by the US Dept. of Agriculture, Office of Experiment Stations, Washington, D.C., to describe experimental farming practices thought to be of general interest to farmers. Forty-three states had Experiment Stations in the 1890s. The one in Massachusetts was (and still is) in Amherst. John Ott's collection of 479 bulletins bound in 17 volumes covers the years 1890 to 1911. The bulletins offered, John says, "a wealth of information on countless ag and farm topics from barnyard manure to how to build an ice house."

Then and Now

Newsletter of the Groton Historical Society

Volume 14, Number 3

July 2013

An Afternoon in Georgianna's Parlor

Susan Slade

Outgoing President, Groton Woman's Club

One hundred years ago, in March, Georgianna Boutwell, daughter of Gov. and Mrs. George Boutwell, invited several women to her family home on Main Street to talk about forming a service club for women. It quickly became the Groton Woman's Club and thrives today, with Georgianna remembered as its founder. Her home, now known as the Governor Boutwell House, has been since 1939 home to the Groton Historical Society, which coincidentally was founded by Georgianna in 1894, nineteen years before she started the GWC.

Boutwell House has been closed to the public while undergoing extensive rehabilitation over the past 18 months. But when GWC president Susan Slade broached the idea to GHS president John Ott of holding the Club's centennial celebration at the house, the response was positive. And so it was that the Red Room (Georgianna's parlor) was given high priority for sprucing up in time to welcome the GWC on this auspicious occasion—a joint undertaking by two organizations that both owe their existence to the same indefatigable woman, Georgianna Boutwell. What follows is a warm first-person account of that memorable afternoon in Georgianna's parlor.

The day finally came, May 17, 2013. After over a year of planning and reading old minutes, the interest and excitement was building. The day was picture perfect, sunny and warm with a slight breeze. Many of us had never been in the Governor Boutwell House so there was no previous visit to color our experience.

The plan was to have a box lunch first at the Union Congregational Church just down the street, so there would be minimal clean up and there would be more time at the Boutwell House. When we arrived we dedicated a granite bench, which was the Club's gift to honor Georgianna Boutwell (see photo). The bench sits near the top of the driveway, and the paver in front of it reads GROTON WOMAN'S CLUB FOUNDED BY GEORGIANNA BOUTWELL 1913 - 2013.

In reading the Club's early minutes, my imagination created pictures of the ladies who formed the Club and their desire to bring services to the people of Groton. What was it that led them to start this organization that has endured 100 years? In the beginning they met twice a month in Georgianna's parlor and always had music and served tea along with a speaker or some kind of program.

The first services they set up were hot school lunches and a well-baby clinic so that gave us a feeling of what was important to them. All this created the expectation of what it would be like to be in the room where it all actually began.

We had many more members attend on this lovely



Standing by the granite bench dedicated on May 17 to the memory of Georgianna Boutwell, founder of the Groton Woman's Club in 1913, are (from left) president-elect Nancy Olson, retiring president Susan Slade, and John Ott, president of the Groton Historical Society. Photo by Ellen Hargraves.

afternoon than we had expected. Inside the house Stuart Schulman on the violin and Susan Randazzo on the cello were performing music I believe the early members would have enjoyed. I walked into the parlor and faced the marble mantle which John Ott had decorated with flags and a photograph of Georgianna Boutwell, who was seventy years old when she organized the Club. As I turned and looked out over the ladies sitting there as I have for the last three years at every

Continued on page 4

Main Street View: "Can't We Go Any Faster?"

This used to be a line I heard from my children on long trips in the summer, followed by "When are we going to get there?" Both of these questions now roll off the tongues of Society members and friends who patiently wait to see our renovation project finished in the hope of finally, once again, getting to see and enjoy their museum, the



Governor Boutwell House. The truth is, however, the house still has a way to go to live up to what I perceive are the public's expectations given the town's investment. Not that there aren't a dedicated number of

people who have and still are willing to help, but the process is a tedious one -- scheduling work and finding the right materials, as well as trying to understand how best to use the collections while presenting a story that will engage visitors and students alike.

The house's great kitchen is nearly done, with period appliances now being installed. The room is plastered and painted and will soon be ready for use (on page 3 Al Collins describes what still needs doing to get us ready for our eagerly awaited Open House in October). The main parlor of the house--the Red Room--has already been put into service thanks to the Groton Woman's Club, which held its centennial celebration in the room on May 17th, under the watchful eye of its founder, Georgianna Boutwell. Her picture and the ceremonial gavel of those early days sit on the room's fireplace mantle (see Dave Gordon's photo at right). It was a wonderful affair utilizing the symbolism of the house's renovation to mark the Club's own rejuvenation and growth at 100 (on page 1 guest contributor Susan Slade recalls the excitement of the day). The simple elegance of the uncluttered front hall and the fresh air from the open doors made Boutwell House both inviting to enter and warm with the hospitality of the day. Outside, next to the driveway, is a splendid new granite bench given by the Woman's Club to mark its centennial and honor its founder, Georgianna Boutwell.

GHS Office Ready to Go

Elsewhere in the house the new office areas are painted,

carpeted and now inhabited with office furniture donated through the generosity of Fidelity Bank in Leominster. Their contribution has saved the Society thousands of dollars and instilled a new air of professionalism about the premises. In addition, our new PastPerfect 5 Software Program gives the Society a greater ability to manage its corporate records, collections, membership and finances. Throw in a new phone system, a high-capacity copier and a few new work tables, and we will soon be ready to welcome researchers and genealogists, who have missed access to our archival holdings.

In the interim, we continue to offer programs for our members and friends, the most recent being a fascinating and informative Summer Ramble tour on July 22 of the Margaret Fuller sites in town with Nancy LeMay and others working with Judy Adams and Tom Callahan, our program committee.



Let me close by welcoming two new well-known local individuals to our board of directors, Patti Modzelewski and Stuart Shuman. They have jumped into the work of the Society bringing new energy and ideas to this long-standing Groton institution, which will celebrate its own 120th anniversary next year. Have a wonderful, safe summer and look for more information via the mail and our website on our summer activities and our plans for an Open House on October 5th.

*John H. Ott
President, GHS
July 2013*

Production of *Then and Now* is made possible in part by generous donations from Middlesex Savings Bank and from Kris Kramer, Realtor, EXIT Assurance Realty, 161 Main Street, Groton, MA 01450 -- 978.807.7317 -- www.EXITAssurance.com.

Nearly There:

Boutwell House to Reopen in the Fall

*Alvin B. Collins, Project Manager
Boutwell House Rehabilitation Project*

Both the Board of Directors and other members of the Groton Historical Society are breathing a sigh of relief as our massive renovation of Boutwell House is nearing the end. It has been quite an adventure orchestrating work related to both the town CPA Grant funded segment and the state Cultural Facilities Grant funded segment, both of which have impacted the completion of each other. CPA funding was initially spent to get the house to a point where it could accept the work funded by the Cultural Facilities Grant after which the rest of the CPA Grant funded work could be completed. Whoever thought it could get so complicated with both grants marching to a slightly different tune regarding the administration of each source of funding.

The new upstairs office rooms are complete and occupied, ready for volunteer staff to make the space their new home. All the walls and ceilings have now been painted, new carpeting has been installed and outlets and lighting have been replaced, making the work space bright and usable. We also have the addition of a new staff bathroom accessible from the office area. The original George Boutwell library cupboards inside this office space have been left in place with doors refitted and painted inside and out. The cupboards convey details of George Boutwell's existence, which adds to that special ghostly feeling as you walk through the house.

This space is now very pleasant and will be a productive area where the staff can now catalog the collections without feeling they are working out of a closet. This area will also provide research space for visitors eager to learn



*Boutwell House gleams with fresh paint, the work of Don Haberman and Son of Groton.
Photo by Al Collins.*



*Our old soapstone sinks have been installed on a new cabinet, custom-built by Broughton Woodworks of West Groton.
Photo by Al Collins.*

about George Boutwell, the Boutwell family and much of Groton's historic past. The rear set of stairs, now a welcoming approach to the upstairs office space, has received a fresh coat of paint. Don Haberman & Son Painting of Groton was selected to carefully perform all of the painting within the house and did a great job.

Turn of the Century Kitchen a Gem

Downstairs, in the midsection of the house, the kitchen and new ADA compliant bathroom have come together beautifully with new paint everywhere. With a functional accessible bathroom for visitors and a soon to be usable kitchen echoing a turn-of-the-century life style, this rehabilitated area should prove to be a focal point of the house once the public starts touring again. People will get a flavor of how daily food preparation was handled one hundred or more years ago. Children especially should like this area since it is so different from the modern-day conveniences they have grown up around. The accessible bathroom is to the rear of the house off the back kitchen hallway in what was originally an indoor woodshed. Remember that wood was the primary fuel way back when and a wood storage area had to be close at hand for those long cold winter days and nights. It also made for easy access to fuel the large cast iron wood-burning kitchen cook stove and the masonry beehive baking oven. The new bathroom and plumbing fixtures will allow use by any and all visitors without excluding physically challenged individuals.

Our new kitchen will soon house a fully restored HUB manufactured wood-burning cook stove, a pair of

Continued on page 4

Boutwell House to Reopen Continued from page 3

turn-of-the-century soapstone sinks salvaged from a farmhouse in New Hampshire and, if we can locate one, a period ice box. The soapstone sinks needed a period sink cabinet to sit upon so the services of Broughton Woodworks of West Groton were enlisted to design and fabricate the sink base. Beaded fir was the wood of choice used in the construction of the cabinet, with all of the construction details--wooden drawer slides, slotted wood screws and period hardware--mimicking details of the past. It was a complicated creation since the two soapstone sinks differ in size, requiring hours of documenting dimensions and configurations. The installation went perfectly and once the new period faucets are installed, the kitchen will come to life after years of being dormant.

Modern Safeguard

The new fire suppression system installed throughout the house has been tested, filled with water and is standing by ready to be used should the need arise. This is one of those additions to the house we hope is never used but we can all sleep a little better knowing that the Boutwell House Collections are safer today than they have ever been in the past. Most of the fire suppression piping that had to be installed within public view has been painted to match the wall color, making it gently fade

away into the background. Our system is filled with an anti-freezing agent that will also protect the entire system from freezing, including attics and outside porches, should the heating system be down for an extended period of time due to power outages.

Finishing Touch

Since my last update, work on the house interior has made rapid strides. The only work remaining is to set up the new HUB cook stove and complete miscellaneous plumbing and electrical work and window repair carpentry.

The Red Room (Georgianna Boutwell's parlor) at the front of the house was the first to be emptied of all boxes and extraneous furniture, then given a thorough cleaning and polishing to ready it for the first special event to take place in Boutwell House since renovations began nearly two years ago. On May 17th, the Groton Woman's Club, founded by Georgianna Boutwell, held its 100th anniversary meeting in most likely the same room that their first meeting was held 100 years ago.

Groton landscape architect Lorayne Black is designing an exterior ADA accessible ramp system that will be the finishing touch to this lengthy rehabilitation project. The ramp system will be constructed of earthen materials that will add a landscape element to the main driveway side of the house. The plan includes plantings that will complement the stately Boutwell House and should result in a very attractive new main entrance to the house accessible to all either by a set of steps or the new ADA accessible ramp.

If all goes well, we anticipate hosting an Open House at the refurbished home of Governor George Boutwell on October 5th with a day of festivities and tours of the house. Getting people back into Groton Historical Society's Boutwell House is of the utmost importance since all that has been done would have been done for naught, if people cannot enjoy what the house has to offer. ■



Mike and other pipe fitters from Fire Sprinkler Systems, Richmond, NH, have installed a full fire-suppression system throughout Boutwell House. Photo by Al Collins.

Georgianna's Parlor Continued from page 1

club meeting, everyone seemed different in some way. The singing of "America," which we do at every meeting, was the best I have ever heard. The thought in my mind was this is where it all began. We are full circle. I could not help but wonder what Georgianna would think if she were with us. The time had come to install the new officers, those who would begin the second century of the Club. The short ceremony seemed to have more meaning on that afternoon.

Now I am not usually one who would think about "spirits" being in a room and I thought if I said anything like that others would think I had gone off the deep end. But as the meeting was coming to a close and the ladies were preparing to leave, before I realized it, members were coming up to me to tell me how they could feel something in that parlor that was unexplainable. Members were talking about how they felt new energy to make the Club succeed to even greater accomplishments in the beginning of the second century. Was Georgianna there? I do not know, but if she was I hope she was pleased with the direction the ladies who followed her have taken what she created.

There have been many suggestions from members about meeting in Georgianna's parlor again. The one that I like is to have the installation of officers there every few years to give the new officers the experience of that unexplainable feeling in the room that many of us felt. ■

Happy Birthday, John Tinker:

Groton's First Entrepreneur

C. David Gordon

This issue of *Then and Now*, the GHS quarterly newsletter, comes, by happy coincidence, shortly after the 400th anniversary of the birth of one of Groton's original petitioners to establish the settlement that became the town of Groton. His name was John Tinker and he was born on July 13, 1613, in New Windsor, Berkshire, England.

Thanks to Michael Roberts, GHS board member, chair of the Society's Long Range Planning Committee, also chair of the town's Historical Commission, we have good information on Tinker's activities around 1655, the year Groton was founded. Mike, who is also a professional archaeologist, searched online and looked over the writings of Groton historians Caleb Butler, Samuel Green, and Virginia May to gather details for his talk on Tinker at our July 2010 Summer Ramble (held, would you believe, on the 13th, Tinker's actual birthdate!). Much of what follows is from Mike's presentation that night.

John Tinker immigrated to this country with his mother in 1617 at the age of 25, living first in Dorchester with his sisters, already settled here. Before his first year in the New World was out, Tinker had become known as a trusted "undertaker" (one who undertakes business for another) of important legal and business affairs for people. Between 1638 and 1653 he traveled to England several

times as the agent for some prominent people (among them, early American painter Augustine Clement and members of the Winthrop family, one of whom, John the Younger, served as Governor of Connecticut from 1659 to 1675). Tinker also had power of attorney to act on behalf of several other people.

Mike's research shows that, before his connection with the founding of Groton, Tinker lived in Connecticut, where, among other enterprises, he formed a partnership with two other men who saw a need that they felt they could supply. British Navy ships required tar for ship building and maintenance and had to rely on colonial suppliers since pitch-bearing trees in England had been destroyed. Back in Massachusetts, Tinker qualified to participate in the business affairs of Massachusetts Bay Company.

Early Trader with Native Americans

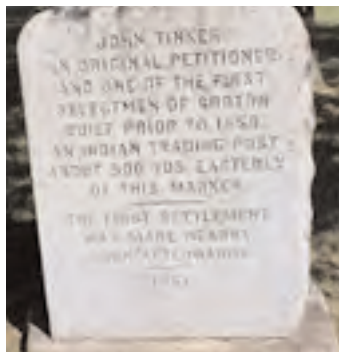
There is also evidence, Mike says, that Tinker was trading with Native Americans by 1655, and in 1658 he had been granted a license from Mass Bay Company to trade for furs in both Groton and Lancaster. It's believed that he established a trading post for commerce with Native Americans near a trail and river fording point close to the homeland of the Nipmuc people. That would be the Nashua River, at Stoney Wading Place off Nod Road.

In Mike's presentation, he asked the audience to imagine "a narrower Nashua River at this point, a well-used Indian trail crossing the river at a nearby ford and a deep dark forest made up of huge maples, beeches, some pines and other species of the early New England forest." There was not much dead wood on the forest floor, Mike said, for the native people collected this for their many fires. "The Nipmucs knew this landscape as their homeland which they nurtured and which had nurtured them for thousands of years. To the immigrant colonist it was a savage, deadly and evil place not to be trusted but to be overcome and tamed along with its inhabitants. But to some early settlers it was the opportunity of a lifetime—John Tinker was one of these."

One of Groton's Founders

About that time, Tinker joined with several other enterprising settlers to bring a petition before the Great and General Court for establishing Groton Plantation in May 1655. The names of the other petitioners can't be officially verified, other than Deane Winthrop, the first listed and credited with giving the new town the name of Groton after the town of his birth in Suffolk, England. Their names don't

Continued on page 6



The Tinker monument is, to the surprise of many people, a double-sided granite marker. The Tinker inscription, facing the river, dates to 1951, but on the reverse side is another inscription that dates to 1882 and commemorates the slaughter by Indians of two early settlers, John Shattuck and his son, also John.

The inscription on the Shattuck side of this unusual piece of granite reads: NEAR THIS SPOT JOHN SHATTUCK A SELECTMAN OF GROTON AND HIS SON JOHN WERE KILLED BY THE INDIANS MAY 8, 1709 WHILE CROSSING STONEY FORDWAY JUST BELOW THE PRESENT DAM. The Shattucks were killed only 50 years after Tinker's heyday. Such an irony, that the stone should present the first inhabitants of Groton, the Native Americans, in both a positive and negative light. Photos by C. David Gordon.



Did You Know.....



that besides being a governor, a congressman, a Secretary of the U.S. Treasury, and a storekeeper, George S. Boutwell of Groton was also a farmer? Gov. Boutwell and his son, Francis, farmed 600-700 acres near Groton center. The farm was located on the land below Gibbett Hill and behind Hollis Street. It is written that in the fall of 1897, the Boutwell farm produced 2000 baskets of peaches to send to market.

--E.S.

GHS Volunteer's Notebook: First in an Occasional Series

Judy Adams writes: As a research volunteer, I often sort through old documents at Boutwell House. Recently I was intrigued to find handwritten papers related to social issues in colonial Groton. Dated in the early 18th century, they described how the community dealt with indigents, illegitimacy, and indenture in a day long before welfare and Social Security as we know it. New England town policies concerned with these problems originated in the English Poor Laws of 1601.

I began to read about the 1601 law and, as usual in research, the bibliography in each book led me on to others. There were no acknowledged human rights advocates in those days, as, for example Gov. George Boutwell became more than a century later. The milk of human kindness did not always prevail, understandably, because the bottom line was the survival of isolated, self-sufficient communities.

Look for a glimpse into the origin of American social policy in a future issue of *Then and Now*.

--Judy Adams most recently helped program chairman Tom Callahan and guest speaker Nancy LeMay present a GHS summer program on Margaret Fuller, Transcendentalist author and onetime resident of Groton. In earlier issues of *Then and Now* Judy wrote about the Nate Nutting Mill Site (Feb 2012) and *Old Time Political Campaign Ephemera* (Oct 2012), both topics she researched in GHS archives.

John Tinker Continued from page 5

resonate down through successive generations in the town, unlike familiar names like Shattuck, Gilson, Dana, Blood, Nutting, and Tarbell that came with later settlers. So Tinker is not part of this legacy of multigenerational allegiance to the town. He is known, rather, as a single individual associated with this place at a crucial time, a time that was quite brief and even then shared with other locales.

Following the formation of Groton Plantation, in May 1655, Tinker and the other petitioners received appointments as Selectmen of Groton for two-year terms. In that same year Groton became an entity, Tinker moved to Lancaster. By 1657 he was appointed Lancaster's town clerk. The next year he moved again to New London, Connecticut, where in 1659 he served as town meeting moderator. Then in 1660 he became a deputy of the Connecticut General Court, the name, similar to that in Massachusetts at the time, for the colony's law-making body. In 1662, Tinker, at age 50, died "of unknown causes." Five months later the Connecticut General Court voted to pay expenses of his sickness and death, and he was buried in the Central Cemetery in Hartford, Connecticut.

But Groton does have a permanent memorial to John Tinker. In 1951, the Historical Society saw to it that a granite marker remembering Tinker was installed on a small triangle of parkland where Route 119 and Nod Road meet (see photos). The inscription reads: "JOHN TINKER AN ORIGINAL PETITIONER AND ONE OF THE FIRST SELECTMEN OF GROTON BUILT, PRIOR TO 1659, AN INDIAN TRADING POST ABOUT 500 YDS. EASTERLY OF THIS MARKER----THE FIRST SETTLEMENT WAS MADE NEARBY SOON AFTERWARDS."

Tinker was unique, says Mike, one who probably could be at home just as well in our era as he was in his own age. He was definitely not what you'd consider a typical frontiersman or settler. Mike says, "I was surprised to find that he was not a 'Leather stocking' pioneer but a quintessential colonial gentleman and entrepreneur equally at home in a deep woods trading post as in the Great and General Courts of Massachusetts, Connecticut and England."

Not a bad start, says Mike, for a town full of entrepreneurs. ■

WANTED

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Groton Historical Society Antiques Auction

September 20, 2013 | Groton Country Club

Clean out your attic, basement and closets to find early books,
old photos, prints, jewelry and other unique items.

Groton Memorabilia is highly desirable.

Nothing is too big or too small.

Description of Item: _____

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Tell us something about the item, e.g., Where does it come from? Has
it been in your family for a long time? For what was it used?

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Please provide the above information and return this form to:
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Please check one of the two boxes below:

I can drop off the item in the barn of the home of Lili and John Ott,
545 Farmers Row, Groton.

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Your response is appreciated before September 9, 2013

How to Reach Us

*The Governor Boutwell House will be
reopening for business in the fall of 2013
after having been closed for renovations.
Please contact us with any questions.*

Phone: 978-448-0092

Email: info@grotonhistoricalsociety.org

Website: www.grotonhistoricalsociety.org

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Bobbie Spiegelman, Curator/Collections

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Alvin Collins, CPA Project Manager
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Annual Individual / Family	\$35
Annual GHS Sponsor	\$75
Corporate Sponsor	\$250
Sustaining Member	\$1000
Additional contribution	\$ _____

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Coming Up...

Friday September 20: Antiques Auction to benefit GHS

5:30 PM at the Groton Country Club

We need your donations -- see page 7 for details

Saturday September 21: Grotonfest at Legion Field

10 AM to 5 PM: Stop by the GHS Booth

Saturday October 5: Governor Boutwell House Reopens

Check our website for details of this all-day celebration.

For more information about these events and other programs, please visit our website at

www.grotonhistoricalsociety.org

Then and Now

Newsletter of the Groton Historical Society

Volume 14, Number 1

January 2013

Walking Through History: Groton's Soapstone Quarry

C. David Gordon, GHS Board Member

A record number of almost 80 devotees of local history followed Archaeologist Marty Dudek along a quarter-mile path the afternoon of October 14, 2012, to view the site of Groton's old soapstone quarry and mining industry and hear what he had unearthed about its story (see photo).

This "walk through history" was Groton Historical Society's annual celebration of Archaeology Month. Dudek of Pepperell, who led the Society's tour of the Nate Nutting mill site off Indian Hill Road a year ago October to much acclaim, is the senior project manager and principal archaeologist at John Milner Associates, historic preservation and cultural resources management firm based in West Chester, PA. "It's pretty exciting to have a soapstone quarry right here in Groton," he said, since this stone is "not common." He conveyed a sense of excitement to his listeners as he had them pause at three different spots beside the now water-filled quarry, then talked about what might once have gone on in these quiet woods (see *Digging Further into the Past*, page 7).

Soapstone is a metamorphic rock, metamorphosis being a change in something's basic nature or structure, in this case

mineral deposits or sediments are changed by pressure, heat, and water from their original consistency, made more compact or more highly crystalline.

These particular deposits, heavily laced with talc,

along with other minerals, become a rock that is softer than slate or mica. Soapstone got its name from having a soapy feel to it when you move your hand along its surface.

The soapstone formation in Groton has a brown color while in other formations it could have a gray-green color. Dudek said the rock here was prized because it was stronger than that found at many other locations.

People have made use of soapstone from ancient times, at first fashioning implements for food preparation and personal adornment. More than 3000 years ago, according to Dudek, Native Americans made bowls of soapstone. At a soapstone quarry in Johnston, Rhode Island, he saw how they had fashioned these bowls out of rock as he found many bowls there in various stages of being made. He said there was no sign of such work by Native Americans found at this Groton formation, but we do know that they lived in the vicinity.

Evidence of Factory Site

Dudek stood next to the quarry itself and had his audience look in the direction he thinks the most significant factory building had once been located. The unknown photographer responsible for an 1860's era photo of that building, the third on that site, must have stood just where Dudek himself stood (see photo on page 6). The large wood building, completed in 1865 for the stock company Groton

Soapstone Company and operated by three brothers -- Daniel, David, and William McCaine -- had an attached building housing the steam-engine power source. Six gang saws powered by



Attentive crowd gathered around tour guide Marty Dudek as he conjured up quarrying operations of 150 years ago. Photo by Barbara Murray.

the engine could cut six soapstone slabs at the same time from a block that had been dug out from the quarry. With

Continued on page 6

Main Street View: Thankful for a Bright and Busy Year

As we move forward into the year 2013 we are most thankful for all we accomplished during 2012, even without having access to the Boutwell House as it undergoes renovation. Many individuals and organizations have lent a hand to keep us on course and before the public eye. The Boutwell House through the generous support of both the Town of Groton's CPA grant and the State of Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund grant is seeing improvements to its infrastructure daily. All this has been under the watchful care of Al Collins our talented project manager and his coterie of hard working contractors who have done an amazing job under less than ideal winter conditions, the most difficult being the lack of heat inside the building. But there have been no complaints--not from plumbers, electricians, carpenters, fire suppression specialists or Al. They just keep plugging ahead, knowing that in the end we will have a building that is safe, accessible, worthy of public patronage, and that they had a hand in our success.



Then there are our dedicated board members who continue to work on planning for the future--growing our collections, presenting interesting public programs and topical exhibits, and extending our public outreach by building up our membership. Our newsletter is now a joy to read and full of information and stories about our town. There was a well-attended lecture on the Shattuck family earlier this month, and visits from families with long ties to Groton like the Farnsworths and Tarbells have kept others busy doing local research and gathering materials for our ongoing exhibits at the Groton Public Library. The Society's active presence and booth at Grotonfest in September allowed us to recruit new members and to sell a variety of valuable publications on town history to those eager to learn more about our community's past.

The GHS participated in the Memorial Day Parade last May with flags and banner in hand and held two very successful outdoor programs organized by Tom Callahan, a walking tour of the Groton Soapstone Quarry in October and a bus tour in July of the forest and environmental lands given, protected or promoted by Groton's somewhat elusive



William Wharton. Both programs ran at capacity with the help of authorities on the subjects like Marty Dudek, Marion Stoddart, and Roy Johnson. And at the end of December our first Teddy Bear Tea, held at the Grange Hall, attracted families with both grandparents and small children whose joy was shared by everyone. Many thanks go to Linda Andelman and Anna Eliot for planning and organizing this fine event—a true collaboration between the Historical Society and students from the high school Drama Guild, the Groton Garden Club, Scott Wilson Design, local author Peter Macy, Bonnie Biocchi and several other individuals and businesses who contributed in a variety of ways. Last but not least, we thank the Groton Grange, which offered us the use of its refurbished hall.

The past year was more than bright and certainly busy, thanks to you our supporting members, volunteers and contributors. So as we begin 2013, I see an exciting future when even more will be accomplished, through new public programs, thoughtful new on-site exhibitions, and cultivation events celebrating the reopening of our renovated museum property in late summer. I hope you will remain a part of this bright future by renewing your membership when it comes due and by helping us to attract new members to share in the richness of our Town's past and its people.

Again, thank you for both your support and involvement. On behalf of the Board of Directors, I extend our very best wishes for the New Year.

*John H. Ott
President, GHS
January 2013*

**Issue sponsored by Kris Kramer, Realtor, EXIT Assurance Realty 978.807.7317
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Society Reviews Year, Votes Bylaws and Board

Liz Strachan, GHS Clerk

A pleasant, upbeat evening was experienced by all who attended the Groton Historical Society's Annual Meeting at the Legion Hall on October 30, 2012. While this ritual has been repeated for over a hundred years, this was likely the first time a report was made about extensive renovations to the Boutwell House. Also on the agenda: approving newly revised Bylaws, voting for officers and board members, and viewing a slideshow highlighting the house renovations.

Looking Back on Fiscal Year 2012

President John Ott gave a "year in review" report reflecting the many activities, programs, and exhibits the Society has engaged in this year despite the fact that the Boutwell House has been closed to the public for many months. John noted specifically the growing attendance at our popular programs, the displays in our exhibit case at the Groton Public Library, our quarterly newsletter, our collaboration with other town organizations such as the Historical Commission, and the successful interactive Grotonfest exhibit in September where Bonnie Carter's spinning and Peter Benedict's timber framing demonstrations were hugely popular. During the year, the Society has also facilitated the work of several people doing historical research, and we continue to award scholarships to worthy high school students.

The Boutwell House renovations are ongoing. Two substantial grants, the CPA Grant awarded by the Town of Groton and the Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Grant, together make this project possible. However, many people don't realize that we must raise \$60,000 in matching funds in order to receive all the money from the state grant.

Groundwork has begun for a capital campaign to raise the funds for this, to grow our Endowment Fund, and to be able to realize the mission and goals that have been laid out in the Society's Long-Range Strategic Plan approved by

the membership at the 2011 Annual Meeting. Other avenues of funding are also being pursued through our Annual Appeal and sales of upcoming publications. Looking to the future, John told us, we hope to expand collaboration with our schools and also to capture Groton's more recent history by gathering oral histories from Groton's older citizens. "There are many reasons to support the Society," he said.

Our treasurer, Mike Flynn, reported a healthy balance in our bank account, but noted that this is in no small part due to not having a paid employee currently. The Endowment Fund is holding its own, but will need to grow in order to properly carry out our mission. Our "bottom line" is also supported by a growing number of paid-up members—145 at last count. Our approximately 44 Life Members have been given the opportunity to make a yearly donation to help defray the rising costs of providing member benefits and many of them have. The Treasurer's Report was approved unanimously.

Society Bylaws Brought up to Date

Liz Strachan reported on the work of the new Governance Committee, which has revised the Society's bylaws to have them better reflect how we are currently operating. Above all, she said, the Society is striving to be more outward oriented and to make the treasures it holds in trust and the history of Groton more available to the citizens of Groton and beyond. Liz also presented the slate of nominees for Officers and Directors for 2013. Two officer slots (Vice President and Assistant Treasurer) and two standing committee positions (Education and Membership) are unfilled at this time. Volunteers, please step forward. Liz welcomed Patti Modzelewski (nominated for Director at Large) and

thanked David Gordon who served as Vice President for many years and has been nominated to chair the new Publications Committee. The revised bylaws and the slate of nominees were both approved unanimously by those present and voting.



GHS Board of Directors 2012-2013: (from left, standing) Peter Benedict, Patti Modzelewski, Mike Roberts, Mike Flynn, John Ott, Bonnie Carter, Anna Eliot, David Gordon, Kris Kramer; (seated) Barbara Murray, Bobbie Spiegelman, Liz Strachan. Missing from photo: Tom Callahan and Lili Ott.

Continued on page 5

Boutwell House Project Back on Track

*Alvin B. Collins, Project Manager
Boutwell House Rehabilitation Project*

After months of waiting for our grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund (a program of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in collaboration with MassDevelopment and the Massachusetts Cultural Council) to be administered, we are back on track with the installation of a new gas-fired heating system and a fire suppression system at the Governor Boutwell House. Until we actually gained access to the funds, completion of these project items was held up due to the construction process. I like to think of construction as a form of manufacturing even though it is not done within a manufacturing facility. As in manufacturing, there is a specific order that must be followed to ensure that the finished product comes together properly. Because of this specific order, work on some items covered by the earlier CPA grant from the Town of Groton had to be put on hold until we completed installation of the heating system and fire suppression system, both funded by the Cultural Facilities grant.

From Coal to Oil to Gas

Winter is upon us and a good heating system is essential for every New England home. The Boutwell House heating system has evolved over the years since 1851, with the first heating system most likely being a coal-fired convection hot-air system. The remains of what I believe to be this coal-fired furnace are still in the basement larger than life. As time progressed, I think the system was converted to a coal-fired steam radiator system and eventually to a more modern, oil-fired hot-water radiator system that has been keeping the house (and the apartment) warm up to the present. Within the past ten years the oil-fired boiler was replaced with a

larger-than-needed oil-fired boiler that could accommodate future expansion of the house. Unfortunately, this larger-than-needed boiler also consumed a larger-than-needed amount of oil so the Cultural Facilities grant money is paying for a conversion to a new gas-fired heating system.

The PK McGuane Plumbing and Heating Company of Ayer was awarded this part of the project based on system design and overall cost. They have installed highly efficient gas-fired Lochinvar boilers, a large one to provide multiple heating zones for the main house and a smaller one to provide heat to the apartment. We've also added a dedicated heating zone for the new office area on the second floor, which will allow Boutwell House volunteers and future administrative help to crank up the heat in the office space without raising the heat in the remainder of the house. With the apartment heat separated from the main house boiler, future tenants will be able to control and pay for their own heat, which will help in reducing and controlling the ongoing heating budget for the main part of the house. As of this date, the apartment heating system is up and running but the main house system is waiting for National Grid to upgrade the gas service in the basement to a large enough service to power the main house boiler.

Protection from Fire High Priority

Fire suppression is another essential component we are adding to the house through the Cultural Facilities grant. Protecting a major piece of Groton's historical legacy can only be done if the right tools, one of which is fire suppression, are used to do just that. Fire is one of the biggest threats to an older home, as we found out with the loss of the Groton Inn in August 2011, because of the construction methods used to create these structures. Boutwell House has what are called balloon-framed walls,



Installation of a water line for the new fire suppression system in Boutwell House began with jack hammering the street pavement. Photo by Al Collins.

Continued on page 5

Boutwell House Continued from page 4

where the wood studs typically run from the first floor sill up to the roof rafters, allowing the possibility for fire to travel from the basement to the attic within the outer walls before being detected. A properly designed fire suppression system will help to suppress a fire in any area of the house before it has a chance to get out of control.

Fire Sprinkler Services Inc. of Richmond, NH, was awarded the contract for the fire suppression system due to experience in working in museum structures, their design creativity and the cost for the system installation. Sprinkler piping is now complete in the main house, with work within the apartment and basement to be completed soon. We have tried to hide as much of the system piping as possible in closets and in areas where pipes might be less conspicuous. The only public area where the piping could not be concealed is in the main front hall. To do such would have required opening up plastered walls, but not only was that not in the budget, it would have impacted the historic value of the house. All of the main exhibit rooms have only a few

sprinkler heads protruding from walls and most people may not even notice them. Every part of the attic and basement has been covered, with sprinkler heads located where accidental breakage of the heads is unlikely. In the end, all of the exposed sprinkler pipes can be painted in the same manner as the existing exposed radiator heating pipes, minimizing their visual impact.

Bringing Water to the Sprinklers

Fire suppression systems are wonderful in protecting structures but cannot operate without the proper volume and pressure of water needed to suppress flames. The Boutwell House system is no exception, so some of the Cultural Facilities grant paid for a new 4-inch water main to tie in the house to the town water line that runs down Main Street. Our special thanks are given to the Groton Water Department and the Groton Fire Department for working with us to minimize the expense of the costly installation and testing of this water main. Robert C. Black Co. Inc. of Groton was awarded the excavation contract working in conjunction with Town officials to install the new service into the basement of the house (see photo on page 4). Fire Sprinkler Services Inc. will design and install a water manifold in the basement connecting all of the sprinkler risers to this new service, meeting the demands of sprinkler heads. Outside the house on the apartment side, you will notice a red official-looking standpipe, which is the water shut-off valve the Fire Department uses should there be need to extinguish a fire in the house (see photo at left).

All in all we are in good shape to move forward through the winter with the rest of the interior renovation work so that by springtime the house can be reoccupied and we can focus on the remaining funded exterior work. ■



Both standpipe and heating system vent on the east side of Boutwell House will soon be screened by new landscaping. Photo by Al Collins.

Year in Review Continued from page 3

Returning as GHS officers are John Ott, President; Liz Strachan, Clerk; and Michael Flynn, Treasurer. Directors are Peter Benedict, Tom Callahan, Bonnie Carter, Anna Eliot, C. David Gordon, Kristin Kramer, Patti Modzelewski, Barbara Murray, Michael Roberts, Lili Ott, and Bobbie Spiegelman (see photo on page 3).

The revised bylaws and the names of all Directors and Officers are posted on the Society's website, www.grotonhistoricalsociety.org – click on Visit, then Board and Bylaws. A full list of board members and their committee assignments appears on page 7.

Renovation Highlights

Annual Meeting business was followed by pleasure. Al Collins, Clerk of Works for the Boutwell House Rehabilitation Project, presented a slideshow and talk

about the ongoing work. Most of the work so far has been to install new heating, plumbing, and electrical infrastructure, Al said. In addition, a new fire suppression system is being installed, and the side porch is being brought back to its original look. The kitchen may well turn out to be the gem of the house, Al said, when the beautiful period cookstove and soapstone sink are put in place and the smell of cooking food wafts through the house. Insulating, plastering, and painting are yet to be done, but it was exciting to see the progress to date and to contemplate the time when the work will be completed and we can share it all with members and other townspeople. Following Al's excellent presentation, one attendee was heard to comment, "I never thought I would actually enjoy seeing photos of pipes and wires, but I did!" ■

Soapstone Quarry *Continued from page 1*

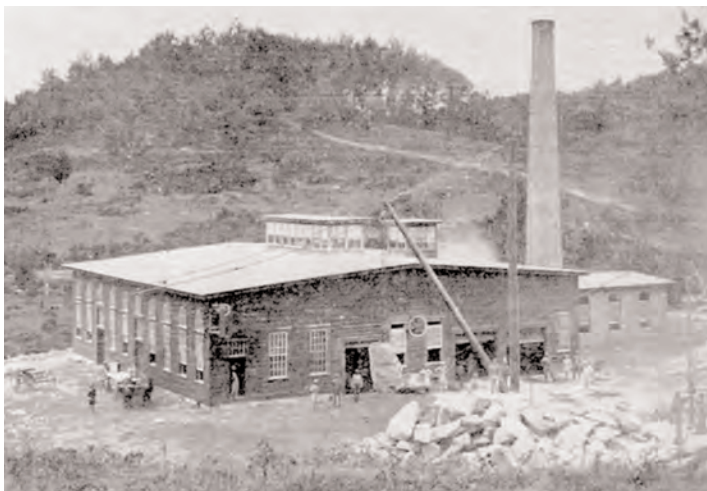
a factory touted as “the best-equipped and largest of its kind in the country,” as Dr. Samuel A. Green stated in his 1887 *History of the Town of Groton*, the company’s soapstone was being shipped as far away as China. It was valued by this time for its heat resistance, making it perfect for hearthstones, sinks, removable hotplates for stove tops, bed-warmers, ink wells, and in pumps.

In the foreground of the old photo is a loose pile of huge stone fragments, much larger than the modest pile still remaining. Pointing to the pile, Dudek called our attention to several foundation blocks for the factory building. Some still held metal staples to which building walls could have been attached. But no perfect rectangle of stones has been found, suggesting, he said, that some rocks had been taken away for use elsewhere or had become buried in the ground. Some of the boulders scattered about here may have been used to anchor and support the derrick, and others merely piled up to get them out of the way. Bricks in the pile may have come from the smokestack.

Water had to be pumped out of the quarry to allow for continuous removal of blocks to be dressed and honed in the factory. A soapstone plunger forced water up into wood pipes to carry water out of the quarry itself. Dudek told us he could find no evidence that blasting had occurred to break off separate blocks, but if that had been done blasting powder would have been used since dynamite had not yet been invented.

Early Signs of Quarrying

Our tour brought us to two depressions in the earth probably marking the cellar holes of earlier quarry buildings. First to build a working mill on the property had been John Fitch, who discovered a soapstone ledge back in 1828



Old photo of third and last factory on the site shows a tall square smokestack beside the building and, in front, a pile of stone fragments and the derrick used to hoist blocks up to ten tons in weight from the quarry. Source of photo not known.

when his ax got stuck in the soft stone while he was cutting down trees. For years Fitch sawed stone by hand and began milling it at a shop adjoining a neighbor’s house and then at workshop located near his home. Later he built a steam mill near the quarry. He employed two hired hands to help him. In 1835 the Needham family on land to the south of the quarry tried without success to find soapstone on their land.

In 1855 Fitch’s heirs sold the quarry to Samuel Adams of Townsend and Daniel McCaine of Groton. Adams managed the quarry until his death in 1858, and by 1861 his heirs sold the property to the three McCaine brothers, David and William having earlier moved to town to join Daniel in the venture. The trio then took charge, Daniel becoming quarry superintendent.

In 1859 and again in 1864 fire destroyed the mill building, but each time it was rebuilt, the third building being financed by the new owner, the Groton Soapstone Company. Two scant years into operation, the Groton Soapstone Co. signaled it was having financial difficulties, and the mine and plant were shut down in 1868. That was the end of soapstone quarrying in Groton. The business failed, Dudek thought, because of “a decreasing supply of stone coming out of the quarry here.” The plant may not have been able to keep up with demand; also the uses for soapstone were shifting. Stone and wood materials used to construct the factory were probably taken away and used for other projects.

The small path used to give the tour group access to the quarry, Dudek indicated, had been a much wider and smoother tote road used to take milled stones out to Common Street and to market. Perhaps most blocks were carted further down Common Street to be placed on trains of the Worcester & Nashua Railroad. There is no evidence, Dudek said, that quarrymen cut a more-direct road from the factory to the railroad tracks, even though they ran nearby. That area is now part of the Nashua River Rail Trail, opened in 2002.

Today soapstone is quarried primarily in Brazil, Finland, China, and India, though some is still quarried in New England and elsewhere in the US. For some time soapstone enjoyed commercial use as an electrical insulator due to its resistance to heat, electricity, and acids. This also made it useful as lab countertops, electrical switchboards, and in ceramics. Today there appears to be a resurgence of interest in the use of soapstone for kitchen sinks and countertops, as well as for works of art.

Dudek drew his walk into history to a close by noting that this quarry is “an industrial site reclaimed by Nature. Not a whole lot of evidence remains that is obvious.” He might have been quoting from Groton’s most

Continued on page 7

recent commemorative history book, *Groton at 350: The History of a Massachusetts Town, 1655—2005*, which, on page 68, offers this view of the soapstone quarry on Shepley Hill: “Though it is a relic of the industrial age, the quarry still makes a contribution to the residents of Groton by being a beautiful place in a peaceful setting accessible with little effort all year round.” ■

Digging Further into The Past

After our tour of the soapstone quarry we saw some examples of soapstone products as we enjoyed refreshments at the home of Norma and Everett Garvin at the other end of Common Street. Not a few of us wondered, though, what the process of milling this stone was like. How many were employed here? Who were they? Where did they live and how did they fit into the town? Did these workers contract lung diseases and suffer from other illnesses or types of industrial accidents that stonecutters and quarrymen working with other types of stone encountered?



Much history is hidden in this flooded quarry reclaimed by nature. Photo by C. David Gordon.

Is this old soapstone quarry to be considered nothing more today than a brief but interesting footnote along the path of the region’s encounter with the Industrial Age? Will the townspeople consider this section of the Groton Conservation Trust’s Shepley Hill Conservation Land

area just another place to walk through close to Nature? It could provide us with much more than that – a function hinted at in the name given to this GHS outdoor program: A Walk Through History. Archaeologist and GHS board member Michael Roberts has said he could envision key spots at this old factory site cleared of their covering of vegetation and supplied with signs placed at significant points to tell the story of the old quarry and its people for those who walk past. Interpretive signage, Roberts calls it.

His vision extends further to hope this site might in time become one of others in town to serve as the focus of some university study team’s efforts to literally dig into what took place over the centuries at these sites. Another promising site to explore is the overgrown area on GHS property at the back of Boutwell House, where there is evidence of three wells, a windmill, and a barn that burned in 1876. Local people – young and old – would have the opportunity to work with professionals on supervised “digs” to help unlock the past. They would see at first hand what the community’s shared heritage of history involves and be ready to help pass on this new knowledge of “where we’ve been” to others.

—C.D.G.

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Boutwell House is temporarily closed for renovations. Please call or contact us by email with any questions.

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Coming Up...

19th Century American Farm Implements and their Impact on Farming in Groton - An Illustrated Talk by John Ott

Saturday April 6

2:00-4:00 PM

Groton Grange Hall
80 Champney Street



Local farmers and gardeners are always interested in finding the right tools for the job, which often are simply new versions of 19th century labor-saving devices. GHS President John Ott will tell us about the American companies who produced the types of implements and machines found on a farm, the men who promoted and encouraged their use by trying to break old habits and prejudices, and about innovations in agriculture brought about by these efforts. Come see tools, trade catalogs, agricultural periodicals, and documents from John's personal collection, some of which are on display at the Concord Museum (www.concordmuseum.org) through March 17.

This program is cosponsored by Groton Grange #7. It is free and open to the public, thanks to a grant from the Groton Commissioners of Trust Funds. Refreshments will be served. Check the websites of both organizations, www.grotonhistoricalsociety.org and www.grotongrange.com, for more details.

Then and Now

Volume 15, Number 4

Fall 2014

Newsletter of the Groton Historical Society [Est. 1894]

GHS Joins Conversation on Historic Preservation in Groton

Bobbie Spiegelman, GHS Curator

Evanesence. All things worthy of restoration are so because we are seeing them as they pass, each in its own time. From years to eons---houses, waterfalls, trees, and the earth itself.

--Howard Mansfield

With all the discussion these days about what to do with several prominent old buildings in town, the Historical Society thought it might have an opportune moment to step into the action. Our motives were self-serving to the extent that with our newly renovated headquarters, the Governor Boutwell House, with exhibits installed and the 19th century kitchen sparkling with its “new” old stove and soapstone sink, we thought we needed to be one of the voices, especially since these town buildings have a history.

Our program committee landed on an idea borrowed from another historical society/library collaboration using Howard Mansfield’s books, *In the Memory House* and *The Same Ax, Twice: Restoration and Renewal in a Throwaway Age*. Once we lined up Groton Public Library as a partner, we invited interested readers to experience the ideas

presented in the books and invited the author, Howard Mansfield, to speak to our community with funding provided by the library through the town’s Lecture Funds. The theme of the two-part project was titled: How does history shape the character of Groton: A conversation about the future of our town seen through the lens of history.

Part one was a panel discussion held at Legion Hall on September 30, and it surpassed expectations. The audience, composed of many faces new to GHS events, responded to the perspectives provided by Selectman Stuart Schulman, furniture-builder Peter Benedict, GHS administrator Kara Fossey, and from the high school, history teacher Tammie Reynolds and junior Katie Ferro. Al Collins, GHS vice president and chair of the building and grounds committee, also former chair of the town Historical Commission, was both moderator and participant in the discussion. It was clear that there is great interest in deciding the future of the idle structures in town and many spoke about the need to make the best use of the buildings with community, character and history in mind. We concluded the evening with a plea to continue the conversation.

Our chosen author, gearing up for part two of this pioneering program, was impressed with the discussion so far, seen through the magic of technology (via videotape of the panel discussion available on The Groton Channel), and fashioned his talk at the library on October 14 to coincide with ideas expressed at the Legion Hall event. The crowd in the audience, including many students from the high school, tapped into his expertise about restoration. One question about the best argument for restoring a building instead of replacing it drew a response from the speaker to refer back to his 14 points at the end of *Same Ax, Twice*, which he called “Some Concluding Restoration Principles, Pleas, and Prayers.” He might have been thinking about point #2:

The Future. Good restoration schools us in the graces of the old ways, freeing us to build anew. When we bring our loving attention to that which is old, it is not the past we are restoring but the future. Good restoration saves the future.



GHS curator Bobbie Spiegelman shares thoughts with author Howard Mansfield at the close of the library book talk. Photo by C. David Gordon.

May we, the Groton Historical Society, continue to be part of the conversation. ☐

Main Street View: Participating, Sharing, Collaborating, and Celebrating -- The Work of GHS

These four words reflect the work of the Groton Historical Society in the last few months as we continue to reach out to the community.



Participating: Beginning with Riverfest in June, Al Collins, Mike Roberts and volunteers joined with the Groton Greenway Commission in producing interpretive signs to describe the history and archaeology still in evidence at the Petapawag Landing area. On

September 20, the Society again took part in Grotonfest, the town's annual fall festival, sharing its space with the Fort Devens Museum and offering hands-on apple peeling demonstrations for adults and children. Apples and fruit have played an important role in the agricultural history of our town.

Sharing: One of the real opportunities the GHS has through its mission to preserve and protect Groton's written and physical past is to make its artifact collection and archival records available to researchers, students, scholars and members. Almost every day of the week we receive calls for help with genealogical and historical queries about families, homes, or businesses that were once or are still here today. Often people just show up at the Boutwell House looking for help, folks from far-flung towns with family names like Tarbell, Farnsworth, Longley, and Shattuck. They are looking for information related to their roots or to do research on some aspect of someone's life who once lived here, made a name for himself and moved on. But each query is a window on some aspect of our town's multifaceted past, and we love helping to provide a clearer view to that past.

Collaborating: Another rewarding aspect of the work of the GHS is the opportunity to partner with other town entities to share meeting space and marketing resources as well as to promote ideas that help citizens appreciate the legacy they have in their buildings, history, and agrarian past. Just weeks ago, in conjunction with the Groton Public Library

hosted a panel discussion at Legion Hall around the question, "How does history shape the character of Groton?" It was an amazing interactive program with a diverse representation of residents, old and young, lifelong and relatively new, involving teachers, students, GHS members, and town officials. It generated insightful questions and answers, raised town issues that both old and young agreed were important and made it obvious that by sharing, collaborating, and working together we can define common elements that make us all Grotonians whether native or newly arrived. The fruitful discussion continued two weeks later when author and historian Howard Mansfield spoke on the same topics at the library (see page 1).

The Society also had the great fortune to have a new public garden created for the Governor Boutwell House through the generosity and shared efforts of the Groton Garden Club, the Groton Woman's Club, and the Friends of the Trees -- another example of community teamwork and shared interests for which the Society is most grateful.

Celebrating: The GHS was represented in style at two notable events in neighboring towns recently. To mark the 150th anniversary of the American Civil War, we arranged to lend a dozen objects from our permanent collection to the Leominster Public Library for its thought-provoking exhibit on the war's impact on the region. Among the GHS artifacts on display from August 23 to October 10 this year were a military cap, a pair of epaulettes, the carpet bag carried by Dr. Samuel A. Green when he was serving as a surgeon in the Civil War, a powder flask, and several documents from the time. And on a bright sunny day in September, the Historical Society's Town Hearse traveled to Littleton to join that town's 300th Anniversary parade where it was enjoyed by almost 10,000 people (see page 8). It was a fun and joyful occasion that tied our towns together, and it reminds me that we have a lot to celebrate every day because we live in a town whose rich history makes us proud and where citizens and students alike can share in the Society's work and help the town continue to make history.

*John H. Ott
GHS President
Fall 2014*

Production of *Then and Now* is made possible in part by generous donations from Middlesex Savings Bank and from Kris Kramer, Realtor, EXIT Assurance Realty, 161 Main Street, Groton, MA 01450 -- 978.807.7317 -- www.EXITassurance.com.

Highlights of the GHS 2014 Annual Meeting

Liz Strachan, Clerk

On Sunday afternoon, October 5, the day of the GHS Annual Meeting, Society President John Ott welcomed us to the front parlor of Boutwell House to hear a talk on the newly installed side garden from GHS member and Groton Garden Club past president Penny Hommeyer. But first on the agenda were several business items and reports.

In short order, the minutes of last year's Annual Meeting were accepted and the Treasurer's Report for the current year, delivered by Stuart Shuman, was unanimously approved. The Society is maintaining a balance of about \$18,000 in the checking account, and the Endowment Fund has grown to more than \$204,000 from a bit more than \$174,600 a year ago. Total income for the fiscal year was about \$19,700.

Officers and board members were approved (see full list of board members and their committee assignments on page 7), and John recognized three former board members who have stepped down from the Board but remain involved with the Society: Anna Eliot, Tom Callahan, and Kris Kramer. He also expressed the Society's appreciation to longtime member Audrey Bryce who for many years oversaw the awarding of the Sheedy Scholarships on the Society's behalf to worthy high school students.

Two standing committees, Education and Development, are still in need of chairmen, but other committees, especially the program committee, are increasingly active. Recent programs have included a panel discussion on how history shapes the character of Groton, a talk by Howard Mansfield at the Library on October 14, and a presentation by John Bunker, apple expert, at the First Parish Church of Westford on October 29. The apple talk was in conjunction with the Littleton and Westford historical societies.

In his President's Report, John summarized the Society's many accomplishments in the past year. Above all, the condition of the Boutwell House has been stabilized, made possible with support from the Town of Groton and the State of Massachusetts. The renovations have made it possible, in turn, to prepare exhibits for viewing and to open the house to visitors on a regular basis. Our consultant Kara Fossey, board members, and volunteers have done much work to identify more fully what is in our collection and to better organize our documents, photos, and objects. This work will be ongoing. Several authors and members of the public have made use of our documents and records to engage in research on their particular interests. John emphasized that to help the Society realize its full potential to tell the many stories of Groton as gleaned from our collection, we will need to engage in more formal fundraising.

Michael Roberts made two reports, the first on the

status of the Society's Long-Range Plan drawn up three years ago. We have successfully managed to keep the Society running while the rehabilitation work on Boutwell House was going on, he said, and now we are in the midst of determining how to more fully carry out our mission. He is recasting the remaining goals to include what committees would like to accomplish during the next five years and is asking the Board as a whole to express a wish list for the next 10 years. The revised plan will be a working document that can be adjusted as needed and be used to help us develop our annual budgets.

Michael also described the happy results of the Milestone Restoration Project of the Groton Historical Commission. Repairing or replacing all 27 of the mile markers originally installed by the GHS in 1902 and 1903 on all roads leading into Groton was a key component of the project, funded by a CPA grant. The stones gave the distance to Town Hall. Some of them had become illegible and most were hidden from view by overgrown brush that has now been cut down. Michael challenged us to see how many of the refurbished mile markers we could find as we drive around town.

With the Society's business accomplished, we were introduced to our featured speaker Penny Hommeyer, a hands-on participant in bringing a beautiful new garden to Boutwell House. Penny mentioned the many sites around town that the Garden Club maintains—the Constance Wharton Garden beside Town Hall, the Hollis Street traffic island, Prescott and Sawyer commons, and the former horse watering troughs in West Groton and Groton Center, and others. This is in keeping with the club's mission to beautify the town, she said. Then she described in detail the



Penny Hommeyer, featured speaker at the GHS Annual Meeting, described the collaborative efforts of the Garden Club, Woman's Club, and Friends of the Trees in creating a new garden at the side of the Boutwell House. Photo by C. David Gordon.

Continued on page 7

Historic Preservation on the Line in Groton: Saving Old Buildings a Tricky Balancing Act

By Deborah Johnson

GHS member and guest contributor Deborah Johnson is founding editor and publisher of The Groton Herald, our town's paper of record. As a journalist Deborah has observed and reported on many changes in the town over the last 30 years and poses this important question about the future of our historic buildings – are we as a town doing all we can to preserve our architectural heritage for future generations?

Longtime Groton residents may like to think that the look of the town remains a constant. Certainly, preserving Gibbet Hill from massive housing developments has protected the view along Main Street of the bucolic scene of Black Angus cows grazing on this most iconic setting. Groton, however, is not a museum and Main Street, as well as other older parts of town, undergoes renovation, redevelopment, and change all the time.

Groton is dotted with old buildings, both public and private, that have been restored, recycled and reused for current needs and purposes. Right now there are six properties—the Groton Inn, Blood Farm, Squannacook Hall, the old center fire station, and Tarbell and Prescott schools—that are on the cusp of new life and new futures, but they are certainly not the first or only buildings to go through such a metamorphosis. Earlier examples of new uses include the old Leatherboard building in West Groton (now RiverCourt Residences), Boutwell School on Hollis Street (now Groton's Early Childhood Center), and Williams Barn on Chicopee Row (now home to the town Farmers Market

and legacy of Groton's agricultural past).

Each of these instances has demonstrated that a future for old structures is possible by managing a delicate balance between changing needs vs. maintaining the past, cost of restoration vs. cost of demolition, and public vs. private interests.

These balancing acts are not always so easy to perform. Much of the time it is private owners who have to make the commitment to steward their property for future generations, and no one can predict how quickly circumstances can change. The August 2011 fire that destroyed the ancient Groton Inn was a very sudden change, as was the fire that destroyed the main building at Blood Farm in January 2014. In both these instances the buildings and businesses were private and therefore subject to the decisions of the owners. The Blood family has been working to rebuild and reopen their business which has a history going back five generations in West Groton. The building itself was not particularly important historically, but the business is and will continue to be not only for those employed there but also for the farm-to-table markets and restaurants which depend on this local enterprise to deliver high-quality meats for their businesses.

The loss of the Groton Inn is felt more keenly because the building, with its multiple additions of earlier structures, had historic significance beyond the business. It was a landmark on Main Street, but there again, it was privately owned and therefore, the future of the site, to a large degree, is in the hands of the new owners. Town Meeting voters may have an opportunity to vote on a concept plan for the site's development but final decisions will rest with the owners and their architects and with relevant town boards such as the Planning Board, Historic Districts Commission, and the Conservation Commission.

Town-Owned Buildings Present Different Challenge

The story is somewhat different for four buildings which are currently town-owned and whose future is only beginning to emerge. Tarbell and Prescott schools are no longer being used by the school district as classrooms. These buildings were rented for district use from the town. Construction of a new center fire station means the old building on Station Avenue needs to be repurposed, and Squannacook Hall is about to undergo its third incarnation since its original construction as the West Groton Firehouse in 1887. Each building in its time was a much-touted solution to a particular need.

Squannacook Hall: In 1886 a permanent fire company was established for West Groton and named Squannacook Engine Company. A year later the engine house, called "The Hall" was built to house one fire engine and to act as a meeting place for civic events. In 1958 The Hall was replaced as a firehouse by construction across the street of

Continued on page 5



*Squannacook Fire Station.
Photo from Groton at 350 archives.*

Historic Buildings *Continued from page 4*

the current Squannacook Engine and Hose Company #2 building. In the 1990s Squannacook Hall was used for programs under the auspices of the now defunct Recreation Department, but the lack of parking, low ceilings and general inaccessibility made the building not a good fit for those kinds of activities. The town-owned building has stood idle for a number of years and may turn out to be the first of the four to have a clearly laid out plan for its future.

Halsey Platt, principal of Platt Builders, a design and construction company specializing in renovation and restoration of antique buildings and houses, brought to the fall 2013 town meeting a plan to purchase Squannacook Hall and reconfigure it into residential apartments. The neighboring Christian Union Church community, which had been using Squannacook Hall land for church parking purposes, objected to the plan and it was defeated at town meeting. Demolition seemed imminent, but Groton is one of a number of towns in Massachusetts which has a bylaw to protect old buildings from possible demolition by postponing the action to see if there is any chance to repurpose the structure. The process starts when the property owner (private or public) applies to the building department to get a permit for razing. When the building department receives a request to raze an old building, it can turn over the request to the Historical Commission (not to be confused with the Historical Society or Historic Districts Commission), which holds a public hearing and tries to find ways to preserve the building. In the case of Squannacook Hall, Mr. Platt and church members were given a 180-day period to rethink demolition and work out a plan that both parties could accept.

parking needs while retaining the four one-bedroom rental apartments that were originally proposed.

Old Center Fire Station: No threat of demolition hangs over the old center fire station on Station Ave. but it too has a history of more than one use. The Odd Fellows, a fraternal organization, built Lodge No. 95 of the International Order of Odd Fellows (I.O.O.F) in 1915 as a meeting place, but eventually they moved out of town and in 1940 the building was sold to the town to be converted into Groton Engine and Hose Company #1. Today with the opening of a new center fire station on Farmers Row, the old building is in line for another makeover.

It is generally agreed that the building has aesthetic as well as historical merit and deserves to have a new future. Certainly the town believes so and thus Selectmen issued a RFP for plans to purchase and renovate the building. A Groton couple was one of six respondents and came up with the plan which received Selectmen's approval. The proposal is to rework the first-floor space to accommodate an area where prepared food can be purchased, another area for sale of local produce, and a third area for bicycle rentals/sales, and public bathrooms. The second floor would contain one or two small apartments.

This plan addresses several of the goals of the Town Center Overlay District, a zoning bylaw written to shape new construction on Station Avenue. It is mixed use, pedestrian-friendly, and complements the nearby Rail Trail. But approval of the proposal is only the first of many steps before work can begin on this renovation.

Groton Attorney Robert Collins has been guiding the



Odd Fellows Hall, built in the early 20th century, became the Center Fire Station in 1940.

Photos are from Groton at 350 archives

The intent of the Demolition Delay bylaw is to give people time to put together an alternate plan, and as Town Manager Mark Haddad commented, "It absolutely works." At spring 2014 town meeting voters supported the new plan which makes accommodations for the church's

couple through numerous town boards' reviews and hearings in order to obtain all necessary waivers and approvals to make the plan acceptable, a process not for the faint of heart. Collins says, "Successful rehabilitation of existing buildings requires economic viability of the proposed use

Continued on page 6

Historic Buildings *Continued from page 5*

[or uses], the vision and good sense to come up with a design which is appropriate and will work [and be approved], and the money and fortitude to navigate one's way through the approval process." Still to do: hearings for a Special Permit under the Overlay District Bylaw, and only with that approval, actual construction.

Tarbell School: To replace the aging Tarbell Schoolhouse on West Main Street, a new school, also named Tarbell, was opened in September 1914 to provide elementary school classrooms needed once Butler School (predecessor of Prescott School) became a high school only and Chaplin School (now Legion Hall) was deemed too unsafe for schoolroom use. This new, bright school building became the centerpiece of West Groton village which had grown up around the two manufacturing plants, the Leatherboard, and Hollingsworth & Vose. Generations of West Groton pupils walked to the neighborhood school before being bused to the high-school campus on Main Street. When the then school superintendent announced that Tarbell would have to close as a cost-cutting measure, West Groton parents were outraged and started private fundraising to keep the school open. In spite of their efforts the school classrooms were closed in 1991 and the children were sent to Florence Roche School on the Main Street campus. In 1994 the new superintendent moved school administration offices to Tarbell and it resumed useful service until about 2010 when the offices moved to Prescott School.



*Tarbell School (above) and Prescott School (below).
Photos by C. David Gordon.*



The school district released Tarbell back to the town, and Selectmen have pursued several RFP offerings with limited success. Tarbell's future is still uncertain depending on whether the latest prospective buyer's plans are well received by Selectmen and other interested town boards. Interest in preserving and repurposing this old school building seems limited at this time.

Prescott School: This is also the case with Prescott School which, of all the buildings mentioned here, has the most prominent place on Groton's Main Street, and therefore, draws the most attention from residents. Prescott School also has the longest history between concept and construction of any of the other buildings discussed. Prescott (known as Groton High School until 1975 when it was renamed for Colonel William Prescott) was built on the site of, and as a replacement for, Butler High School which had been erected in 1871, a watershed year for the town as the last section of the original town, Groton Junction, separated and became the town of Ayer. The need for a high school was predicated on the 1860 state law requiring all communities to provide a secondary education. Groton was not particularly interested in having its children go to school beyond the elementary grades and was not in the least interested in spending money on a new school building. It took concerted effort on the part of a few education advocates to purchase the land and build the Gothic Victorian, three-story, wooden school building.

Once built, however, Butler School, named for Groton's first historian Caleb Butler, became a source of town pride, until it was damaged by a fire and razed in 1927 to make room for a substantial brick structure that became Prescott School. It provided both elementary and high school classrooms until 1962 when a new high school opened further down Main Street (now Middle School North). When the school district regionalized with Dunstable in 1975, classroom overcrowding meant Prescott School continued to be needed to ease congestion in the elementary schools. Its classroom space became redundant only when the present new high school was built on Chicopee Row, the former high school was refitted as one half of the middle school complex now housing grades five to eight, and additions were made to Swallow Union School in Dunstable and Florence Roche School in Groton. Prescott is currently leased to the district for administrative offices, but the lease is up in August 2015.

With this deadline in mind and with the growing cost of heating and maintaining the building, Selectmen appointed a Prescott Reuse Committee to investigate possible uses for the building and to survey residents' views on the building's future. Survey results were emphatically opposed to

Continued on page 7

Annual Meeting *Continued from page 3*

special project the club undertook this year—to install a garden of historically accurate plantings at the side of the Boutwell House at the club’s own expense. The Garden Club collaborated with the Groton Woman’s Club and the Friends of the Trees in this installation, with the Woman’s Club contributing rose bushes to plant next to the Georgianna Boutwell memorial bench and the Friends of the Trees contributing several handsome trees along the driveway. The plantings were based on the landscape plans of Lorayne Black. Penny said it was a pleasure to work with the other groups and hoped that more collaborative projects would follow. The Garden Club is now working on a book to record all the plantings and to provide a guide to their care, with special attention to watering the new plants during their first year.

The balmy day was perfect for refreshments on the side porch following the meeting and a stroll through our new garden. Penny answered our questions about various plants—their upkeep, hardiness, and noninvasiveness. ■

Historic Buildings *Continued from page 6*

converting the space into any kind of housing. Concerns about the added traffic on Main Street were, perhaps, the chief reason for discounting residential conversion but there was also a desire to bring more commercial/business enterprises to the mix of residential and government buildings along Main Street.

The committee investigated a wide range of possibilities including conversion to a hotel (the building was considered too small to be a viable, profitable hotel), but no single plan achieved committee members’ unanimous support. Though not in full agreement, the committee brought forward a possible use for the building at spring 2014 town meeting, a plan which called for the building to be purchased by a local businessman who would invest considerable funds to update it and bring it up to code and in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (i.e., install an elevator) and move his own businesses into the space. While the commercial space possibility was described in detail with the buyer making a presentation at town meeting, another vision, that of a performing arts center drawing together disparate regional groups which would use the building as headquarters, and rehearsal and performance space, also received support from some committee members and town meeting voters. These two proposals divided the spring town meeting vote sufficiently that the businessman’s plan did not receive the necessary votes for approval. He agreed to try again at fall 2014 town meeting, and an article asking for approval to sell Prescott School rather than keep it in town hands was again put on the warrant.

At the fall 2014 town meeting on October 20, discussion was long and fervent on both sides. The prospect of “selling out” a piece of our historic heritage in exchange for economic gain was unsettling to many. The vote, handcounted to ensure an accurate reading of the will of the voters remaining at the meeting (fewer than 200), again failed, for lack of a 2/3rds majority.

What happens next is uncertain. At this time the futures for Prescott and Tarbell schools and the old center fire station are still works in progress. It may well be that all will be decided by year’s end or new issues will arise to put projects behind or plans will be scrapped all together. The question remains, however: are we as a town are doing all we can to preserve our architectural history in a way that carries over into the next generations? ■

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COMING UP: Tuesday January 13, 2015, at 7 pm at the Groton Public Library, a talk on Medical Practice in Early New England Small Towns, presented by Constance Putnam, Concord author and lecturer.

Groton Town Hearse Helps Littleton Celebrate 300th Year



The occasion was grand—Littleton’s Tricentennial Celebration—and the day, September 6, 2014, was perfect for a parade. Our old Town Hearse, owned by the GHS since 1936, rode in style down the entire parade route in Littleton behind two fine work horses named Bill and Cody. It was the last vehicle in the parade and carried a sign in the rear window that said, simply, “The End”—a delightful double entendre.

The inset photo shows Bruce Locke holding the reins and, beside him, waving to the crowd, is David Badger from the Badger Funeral Home. The photos were taken by David Whitcomb as the hearse passed by the Littleton Historical Society on King Street.

The old hearse is Groton’s fourth such vehicle. The

first was bought in 1803, said town historian Samuel A. Green, and was replaced in 1842, in 1870, and again in 1900. This is the hearse we have today. It cost the town \$641.70 back then and was in service until 1919 (or 1921), when it was stored in several different places until it found a more-or-less permanent home in 1965 in the “new” building behind Boutwell House. According to GHS records, it remains “in fine condition and needs only T.L.C. and dry weather conditions when used.” Fifty years ago, the old hearse appeared in Littleton’s 250th anniversary parade with William Badger (David’s father) on the bench seat. It also did itself proud in Groton’s 350th anniversary parade in 2005. ■

Then and Now

Volume 15, Number 2

Spring 2014

Newsletter of the Groton Historical Society [Est. 1894]

Cub Scouts Tour Boutwell House to Work Toward History Badge

Bobbie Spiegelman, GHS Curator

Over 100 years ago, Georgianna Boutwell regularly invited a few young Groton girls into the drawing room of 172 Main Street for an informal chat followed by cookies and milk in the dining room. Miss Boutwell and her guests might have been stiffly positioned on the black horsehair sofa, but the conversation was friendly and the anticipation of the proffered cookies made each occasion a valued one. Recently, the image of those century-old visits got revived in a different sort of way.

On Wednesday afternoon, February 26th, I welcomed a happy group of local Cub Scouts from Den 2, Pack 12, into that same drawing room try out the same horsehair sofa and hear about the history of the Boutwell House and Miss Boutwell's contributions to the town of Groton. Their visit was part of a badge requirement to visit a historic building in town. The boys enthusiastically offered their opinions about the comfort of the prickly sofa. They also examined the iron toy cart and horse that might have been driven by Francis Boutwell as a boy versus the modern-day Transformer creatures they might covet in their own toy collections.

A tour of the downstairs took the pack and their chaperones into the restored kitchen where the group marveled at its centerpiece, the classic cast iron Hub stove, and wondered about how the appliance might have been heated and what might have been prepared on it once stoked up.

The gleaming stove seemed to invite a tactile

Cub Scouts visiting Boutwell House were intrigued with the restored wood-burning cookstove in the old kitchen. Photo by Deborah Kennedy.

response from many of them as they fired question after question at me. They were very perceptive in recognizing the differences between the modern kitchens in their own homes and that of the original Boutwell House residents.



Attentive Cub Scouts heard GHS curator Bobbie Spiegelman (under the clock) explain the symbols on our state flag before trying out designs of their own. Photo by Deborah Kennedy.

Redesigning the State Flag

The second part of the visit took place in the newly restored workroom on the second floor where the scouts put on their vexillologists' hats [vexillology: the study of flags] in order to study the history of the Massachusetts state flag. We examined the different symbols on the flag and what each represented, and then discussed what elements might be used in a new design if one were required today. This got their creative juices flowing and they eagerly accepted the blank templates to get right to work on their assignment.



Latin words on the blue and white Massachusetts State Flag say By the Sword, We Seek Peace, but Peace Only Under Liberty. The design shows a Native American, Massachusetts, holding a bow in one hand and an arrow in the other, pointing downward to symbolize peace.

Georgianna would have been pleased to know that some of Groton's youngsters were once again being received at the Boutwell House and getting acquainted with her and all that she left to our community. ■



Main Street View: It Takes a Team to Raise a Historical Society

There is an old African proverb that says “It takes a Village to raise a Child,” and that is probably true in many places in the world. But what does it take to raise a town’s consciousness to the value of a historical society in its midst?



This is a question we are asking ourselves today so that we can develop an organization that will make a real difference to Groton in the future.

Outside of Boutwell House, you will have noticed changes we are making in the form of a visitor-friendly

walkway to the side entrance and new landscaping to enhance the historical society experience. The focus today within museums around the country is all about the visitor experience and customer service -- providing access to stories, collections and experiences that can’t be found anywhere else. For our Historical Society that means making Groton’s story and the Society’s collections the core of any visit.

How does one go about making this pledge a reality? Here is where “the team” replaces “the village” in making/raising a historical society.

In February, our Development Committee introduced Groton’s Town Clerk and several members of the Board of Selectmen and the Community Preservation Committee to the recent building improvements and to some of the special collections at Boutwell House. Documents, powder horns, paintings, maps and diaries are some of Groton’s powerful and impressive artifacts spanning more than three centuries.

Memorable in every way – “we want to see more,” one person said, and everyone will be able to when we hold another Open House in early summer. At this preview session for Town officials, Selectman Anna Eliot spoke wistfully of her first visit to the Historical Society walking there with her class from the Boutwell School and her vivid memory of all the wonderful objects in the dark cases. Others present remarked about the wealth of early materials in the Society’s possession and their good condition, expressing a desire to see more of the items recently found or rediscovered. We told our guests that our hope is to get everyone present to come back again and again for more Groton surprises.

Team GHS

The “Team” at the Historical Society is much more than just its board members, of course. It is made up of many citizen volunteers who work and invest their time on site helping to preserve and document the collections related to our town’s historic buildings, road markers, and events or to assist researchers in their studies of the same. One team member of long standing is Audrey Bryce who for 18 years has overseen the Society’s Sheedy Scholarship program within our local high school, encouraging college-bound students to write essays about town history in the hope of



Russell Burke (left) and Peter Cunningham look eagerly at treasured artifacts displayed at the February preview session for Town officials. Photo by David Gordon.

winning funds toward their college tuition. And what a job she and her committee have done over the years to attract young writers to explore new avenues of local history or to help launch the careers of future historians (see “A Hard Act to Follow,” page 3).

In short, GHS’s operation is due to a team of skilled curatorial, archival and outreach volunteers. They, along with our professional consultant Kara Fossey and guided by our Curator Bobbie Spiegelman, are preparing to greet our visitors and reintroduce our members to a well-refreshed and inviting Boutwell House, Groton’s own History Center. We invite you all to come home for a visit this summer and see it for yourself.

John Ott, President, GHS, May 2014

Production of *Then and Now* is made possible in part by generous donations from Middlesex Savings Bank and from Kris Kramer, Realtor, EXIT Assurance Realty, 161 Main Street, Groton, MA 01450 -- 978.807.7317 -- www.EXITassurance.com.

A Hard Act to Follow: GHS Scholarship Chair Steps Down

C. David Gordon

For many years the Groton Historical Society has sponsored the Michael L. Sheedy Educational Fund Scholarship, awarded to one or two college-bound high school seniors with an interest in history who need some financial assistance with their school bills. After 18 years of overseeing the award process, longtime GHS member Audrey Bryce has informed the Society that she is stepping down. David Gordon interviewed Audrey recently to learn how she managed her awesome job so well for so long.

Finding the right person or persons to receive the Society's help in financing their education was a ritual of spring for Audrey Bryce from 1995 to 2013. Each year there was much to be done. First of all, Audrey would have to see that a committee was in place to go through student applications and arrive at a fitting choice to receive aid. Over the years she continually had to seek out new committee members. She alone, she said, had 18 years of experience carrying out the committee's work. And because no other person on the committee could claim that much experience, she was a natural to qualify as committee chair. Also since there were "no direct instructions" provided for accomplishing the task, she had to develop the routine and criteria for choice.

With a committee in place by early April, Audrey would provide application forms to the guidance counselors who would then let high school seniors know that such a scholarship was available. By early May the interested seniors would mail applications and a required essay on a historical subject to Audrey, and the committee's work would begin.

The committee used to receive between 60 and 80 applications, Audrey said, but in recent years the number of applicants has shrunk to about 25. That drop puzzled her, since over those same years college education costs have increased significantly. Accordingly over the years, the size of her committee dwindled from its original six or so members to last year's effort managed, she said, by Audrey herself and Bonnie and Earl Carter.

Committee members divided up the applications so that all read an equal proportion. At meetings held at Audrey's home, they would review and share assessments of the applications, narrow down the total to six or so finalists, and then decide on one or two recipients, depending on how many scholarships the Society had agreed to fund in a given year.

One rule Audrey followed was to set aside from qualifying any "big honors" applicants – those at the top of the class scholastically. Those individuals, it was felt, could most easily attract aid from other sources. The committee

would "go for the really good but more-needy students," she said. Another consideration was an expectation that applicants would use history studies as the basis for a career, although that was a "request but not a requirement."

Audrey's work did not end with the committee's choice of a recipient and informing the Society and school about that. For many years, Audrey said, she presented the scholarship to the student at graduation and later at class day celebrations when many scholarships were to be presented. Her presentation included a "thumbnail sketch" of the Groton Historical Society and "a pitch for Boutwell House" or brief talk about George S. Boutwell. She would always invite the graduates to visit the Society's museum.

Audrey's final effort each year was to inform the local newspapers of the award of the Society's scholarship and write a letter to those awarded scholarships inviting them to a meeting of the Society in the next year at which they could tell about their college experience and activities. Parents were also invited.

Audrey's incentive to work on scholarship awards came, she said, from the work of her husband, the late Charles Bryce. While residing in Salem, NH, he had started a *Reader's Digest*-sponsored "Dollars for Scholars" program. He received an award for having the best organization of such a program in the state. In his career in the U.S. Army, Charles had worked through the ranks to become a major before retiring. For a time he served as sports director at Fort Devens.

Audrey said she first came to a Groton Historical Society program when she read in the local newspaper that a woman was coming to show how to spin wool into yarn. Her granddaughter said she too wanted to see that program. Audrey also said her friend the late Nellie Sargisson "recruited" her to become a member. For a decade before helping find scholarship recipients, Audrey chaired the Society's Hospitality Committee.

Audrey has an abiding interest in Groton and its history. "I just love the town," she said. She likes reading books about the town and lives in an old house here. While she leaves behind an important position with the Society, Audrey is today Membership Chair at the Groton Woman's Club. Meanwhile, her dedication and hard work for the Society make her a role model well worth emulating. ■



Audrey Bryce

Coping with the Poor and the Shiftless in Colonial Groton

Judy Adams

In the early, isolated villages of Massachusetts Bay, survival of the community dictated that all able-bodied persons must support themselves and comport themselves for the welfare of all, the “common wealth.” Those who didn’t hold up their end were dealt with. Those who couldn’t were cared for. It was expected that the community, acting as an extended family, would care for the ill, disabled, aged, widowed or orphaned.

The early settlers brought with them customs practiced in England under the Poor Laws. For 200 years various legislation had been enacted in England (and on the continent, as well) until a reformed and refined law was passed in 1601. The poor, who had been dependent on feudal lords or church authorities, were now entitled to assistance from the government. In England inhabitants were taxed according to the extent of the local needy population.

The Groton Historical Society has many handwritten documents attesting to payments made to citizens who provided services for the (deserving) poor, for example:

- in 1769 - a Groton resident bargained with the town for the maintenance of a poor widow “with victuals & clothing in sickness & in health & at her decease to bury her decently”;
- in 1800 - Groton paid a citizen for keeping one of the poor for six months, including nursing for three months and boarding of the nurse.

In some cases the payment was made to another town: in 1792, the town of Lunenburg demanded reimbursement from the town of Groton “for sundries supplied” to a pauper whom they believed came from Groton. Groton repeatedly refused to pay the bill until the Court of Common Pleas testified that Groton was the pauper’s legal residence.

Men were required to assume financial responsibility for their illegitimate children. The Society has 16 such documents dated between 1757 and 1810, presumably only a percentage of the contracts that took place. One such, from 1807, lists a resident of Orange, father of a child born to a “spinster” of Groton, who was bound to the town of Groton

for support of the child to age 18. The obligation also bound “his heirs, executors, or administrators.”

Apprenticeship was a solution for the support of boys who had no family to care for them. Though exploitation did take place, the town’s Overseer of the Poor was intended to prevent this. A document from 1802 tells of a Pepperell resident who took a Groton child as apprentice until he reached 21 years, allowing one month of schooling and contracting to keep him “decently” with two good suits of clothing and as “customary for an apprentice, if he proves well, give him a good pair of oxen.” The arrangement sounds generous, as the promise of oxen provides the young man with a means of support when the contract ends.

Proof of Residency Required

As can be imagined, if citizens were to be taxed for the care of the poor, they wanted to be sure these poor were legitimate residents. As early as 1662 the English had passed a Settlement Act which evolved until, by the late 18th century, it had become a complicated set of regulations based on the assumption that everyone had a home place to which they could be returned. Newcomers could be “warned out” if a charge was brought against them within 40 days; officials decided if these newcomers might be a threat to the community economically or morally.

The Historical Society collection includes 15 “warning out” examples between 1753 and 1804.

Continued on page 6

One Man’s Quest for Work

Concord March 5. 1812

Gentlemen permit an humble suppliant to approach you as on the bended knee of his soul which acknowledges the justness of your correction for I was in the broad road to destruction with out thought of the precious gift of time and my golden portion of life I feel now that I can go to work at any hour if calling you shall appoint the year round of my health admits and I will undertake to do all I can for the future and I pray therefore that I may be Liberated now from my confinement.

Humble Suppliant
Ezekiel Nutting Jr.

To the gentle men
overseers of the
poor of Groton

“Gentlemen permit an Humble Suppliant to approach you as on bended knee . . . I was on the broad road to destruction . . . I feel now that I can go to work

at any calling you shall appoint . . . I pray therefore that I may be Liberated now from my confinement.”

It would appear that Ezekiel Nutting, Jr. (b. 1750—d. 1830) had become a burden on the town of Groton and was imprisoned at Concord, not necessarily for breaking any law, but because he was a “ne’er do well,” had not supported himself or had behaved in other ways that were detrimental to the community. On March 5, 1812, he was ready to mend his ways and beseeched the Overseers of the Poor for release from prison.

Boutwell Champions High Schools, Libraries, and Trained Teachers

Brian L. Bixby, Guest Contributor

Brian Bixby, born and raised in Groton, is the son of Isabel and Rudolph Bixby, a former president of the Groton Historical Society. Brian attributes his love of history to his parents, and as a professional historian, he has taken a keen interest in the life of Groton's only governor, George S. Boutwell. Many of you will remember his impersonation of the governor at the GHS Open House last October. Here he writes of Boutwell's strong views on district schools, public high schools, public libraries, and the need for a state agricultural college, revealed during his term as Secretary to the State board of Education in the late 1850s.



In 1915, signaling the end of the district school system, the town built a new elementary school on Hollis Street. Named the Boutwell School in tribute to the town's revered governor, who died in 1905, it serves today as the regional school district's Early Childhood Center.

It seems hardly a year goes by without our school committee being embroiled in another contentious issue. We all agree there should be schools, but what they should teach, what sort of facilities and staff they will require, and how much it will cost are frequently subjects of controversy.

Things weren't so different in the nineteenth century. Oh, the specific issues have changed. But the townspeople of Groton argued over their schools as much then as they do today. And George S. Boutwell often found himself in the middle of these conflicts.

As far back as 1647, Massachusetts had required towns to maintain a school. Groton was often not forward in this; the town was fined several times for failing to do so. Many other towns were equally negligent. However, in the years following the Revolution, Americans became concerned that their children get the education they needed to be worthy citizens of a republic.

In that era, Groton adopted the district system of one-room schoolhouses, as did many other rural towns. Farmers liked the district schools. The system gave them close supervision over their children and provided a convenient gathering place for other functions. In the words of one prominent politician, they were "little democracies." This was the sort of school Boutwell himself attended. If one wanted an advanced education, there were private academies in many towns, if you could afford them.

But the system of district schools came under attack by one of the great educational reformers, Horace Mann, who served as the Commonwealth's first Secretary to the Board of Education from 1837 to 1848. Mann regarded the system of district schools and private academies as dangerously inadequate. Attendance was spotty, teachers were amateurs with no training, and higher education was unavailable to many children. Instead, Mann advocated centralized public common schools, where children from all walks of life would receive a nonsectarian education provided by professionally trained career teachers.

Rural communities such as Groton objected. This was

the state interfering with local control of schools. These reforms would cost money, which the farmers could ill afford. And why should their children need so much education? Not a few objected that Mann was a city boy and a Whig who simply didn't understand their community.

George Boutwell was no city boy, and he had been a Democrat so long as the Whig Party existed. But he came down on the same side as Horace Mann. Far from seeing the district schools as "little democracies," Boutwell castigated them as "little nurseries of selfishness and intrigue" for the petty politics around their staffing and upkeep. When he followed in Mann's footsteps as Secretary to the State Board of Education, from 1855 to 1860, he made reform and abolition of the district system among his priorities. In his published speeches as Secretary, he echoed the call for professional teachers and public high schools and added the need for public libraries in every town and a state agricultural college (which would be established in 1863 and eventually become the University of Massachusetts).

It would take years before all these goals were realized. Groton was a town of farmers, not wealthy at all, and they did not immediately see the need for the institutions Boutwell wanted. But Boutwell pushed, sometimes directly, sometimes behind the scenes. He would be one of the first trustees when the public library was established in 1855, and again in 1893 when a building was finally constructed for it. A state law was passed in 1860, the last year Boutwell served as Secretary, requiring Groton and other towns to establish a high school. It would be another eleven years before the town erected a building for it, the Butler School. And despite repeated attempts to close them all, some of the district schools would hang on into the early 20th century. ■

Cookbooks on the Governor's Bookshelves?

Liz Strachan

Governor Boutwell's bookcases are nearly empty now, the contents having been removed, catalogued, and stored in boxes until his office has been rehabilitated and made ready to be restocked. His book collection reflects what would no doubt have been useful references for a public official who served in several different capacities. There are law books, military history books, annals of the U.S. House of Representatives, books on the impeachment of Andrew Johnson (for which Boutwell was a major player), and many more.

But tucked out of sight between these weightier volumes were two handwritten recipe books. One belonged to Lucy Abbott of Groton. The other contains recipes collected by the Governor's wife, Sarah Adelia Boutwell, and their daughter, Georgianna, beginning in 1867. There are many cake and biscuit recipes, perhaps reflecting the fact that they often hosted visitors for tea, especially during their time in Washington, D.C. Others are more practical, such as recipes for pickles, jelly, and applesauce.

Here are two recipes from the Boutwell recipe book (as written). Perhaps you'd like to try them.

HARD PICKLES, 1871

1 gallon vinegar
1 oz cinnamon
1 oz All Spice
3/4 oz Clove
3/4 oz Red Pepper
3/4 oz mustard
1 Tablespoon salt
A piece of alum the size of a large butternut

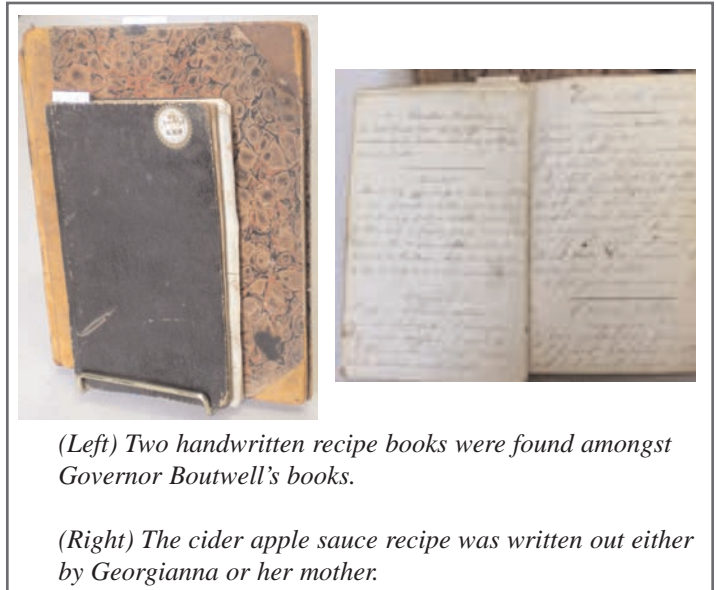
[*Note: there were no further instructions!*]

CIDER APPLE SAUCE

Seven pailsful cider boiled down to five
One gallon of molasses
One pailful of dried sweet apple to two pailsful of cider

After the cider is boiled soak the apple in it over night and boil the next morning until tender
If the apple is not dried take two pailsful to every pail of cider
A few quinces improve it.

[*Note: One imagines this was done in the winter after the cider was made and the apples were dried.*]



(Left) Two handwritten recipe books were found amongst Governor Boutwell's books.

(Right) The cider apple sauce recipe was written out either by Georgianna or her mother.

Poor and Shiftless *Continued from page 4*

"Warning out" served to tell people that they would get no town support. It could be followed by entering a "caution against" an individual or a family filed in the General Court. This was a legal mandate to leave town, as in this example: an 1804 certified copy of the September 1763 term of the Court of Sessions of Middlesex County indicates that the Selectmen of Groton entered such a caution against "One Samuel Corey and Elizabeth his wife with their two children, Chambers and Samuel who came each from Lincoln in the County of Middlesex."

These procedures came to an end with the Acts of Settlement of the 1790s. Some towns had been more lenient than others, leading to confusion and uncertainty. Some towns followed the inhumane practice, morally

reprehensible to many, of auctioning off paupers in an annual "vendue." Immigration and industrialization complicated the issue. The Industrial Revolution provided work opportunities early settlers had never dreamed of and the unemployed needed to be able to follow the jobs (see "One Man's Quest for Work," on page 4).

To take care of the deserving needy, workhouses and almshouses were tried in many towns, though without much success. This "indoor relief" required more organization and resources than most towns could provide, and the Town Poor Farm, where the poor could help support themselves, evolved. Groton bought land for a Poor Farm in 1822, thus bringing to an end the welfare system that colonial Groton had in place for nearly 200 years. ■

Old Artifacts, New Storage

Kara Fossey, GHS Exhibits Consultant

In June 1894, the fledgling Groton Historical Society accepted its first gift: a sword carried by Captain Asa Lawrence during the Revolution. During the following 120 years, the Society amassed a large collection of artifacts important and unique to the town of Groton, including a 1794 land deed for the Rocky Hill school house in East Groton, the key and lock from the jail in the old Town House where Job Shattuck was initially held for his participation in Shays' Rebellion, a brass candlestick used by Samuel A. Green, M.D. at Fort Wagner in 1863, the complete set of Boutwell family china, and a 1936 photograph of members of the Groton Garden Club planting lady slippers in the Town Forest.

For years, many of these pieces were housed in whatever containers were available: a crumbling cardboard box, a steamer trunk covered in labels, a locked painted tin box, and long-closed chests of drawers. Some years ago, the Society began to organize and consolidate these artifacts into archival storage. With an increasing number of items in the Society's collection, this continues to be an on-going task. As we rethink and repurpose the exhibits and rooms in the newly renovated Boutwell House, proper storage is essential to ensure that these treasures are protected and preserved.

In 1894, when the Society was established, there were no standards developed for museum storage and little knowledge about proper techniques and materials for preservation. Today, luckily, this is not the case and there are many products and references to guide us.

Delicate 18th and 19th century town documents are now being encased in museum-grade mylar sleeves and laid flat in archival document boxes. Old photographs are sorted by subject and slipped into polyester pockets, then placed in one of three different styles of archival photograph boxes. Our large collection of glass lantern slides are wrapped in four-flap enclosures before being arranged, on end, in reinforced metal-edged boxes. Fragile china and glass are nestled in acid-free tissue and gently placed in uniform storage cartons.

Before these artifacts are grouped in their appropriate boxes, they are carefully photographed by GHS volunteer Carolyn Perkins. These photographs are imported into our PastPerfect database to accompany their respective catalog records, which include description, provenance, dimensions, and condition of each item. By having a complete record of the society's holdings arranged neatly in proper containers, we will be in a better position to evaluate needs and priorities. Our archives and storage are becoming more navigable for volunteers and researchers alike. ■



(Left) An assortment of archival storage boxes.

(Right) Carolyn Perkins photographing artifacts for the GHS digital catalog.

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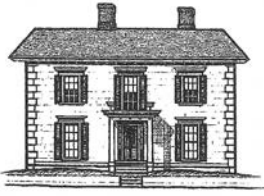
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Groton Historical Society

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COMING UP... SAVE THE DATE

GHS Annual Summer Ramble—Tuesday Evening July 15, 2014

This year the Summer Ramble takes us to the Groton Conservation Commission's Rocky Hill area (near but not the same as the Mass Audubon Wildlife Sanctuary of the same name). There we will view the remains of charcoal kilns from the early 1800s -- one of the colonial industries based on natural resources in Groton. Our walk will be led by archaeologist Marty Dudek, whom you will remember from past guided walks to the Nate Nutting sawmill site off Indian Hill Road and the old soapstone quarry off Common Street.

The evening will wrap up with strawberry shortcake and Tom Callahan's homemade ice cream at another historic site in town. At presstime, we were still firming up the logistics of this special outing for the townsfolk of Groton. Be sure to check the local papers and the GHS website for details on starting time, bus reservations, and all destinations.

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Marty Dudek

Then and Now

Volume 15, Number 3

Summer 2014

Newsletter of the Groton Historical Society [Est. 1894]

Boutwell House Reopens: First Day in the Life of the New GHS

Lili Ott

On June 21, Boutwell House was brought to life as nearly 100 people came to the Groton Historical Society's Open House from 11 am to 3 pm. As visitors arrived, they made their way to the new side entrance, walking through the recently installed garden, sponsored and planted by the Groton Garden Club, the Groton Woman's Club, and Friends of the Trees.



Visitors were drawn to artifacts displayed in the "red" room. Photo by John Ott.

New exhibitions were on display in the two front parlors (the "yellow" room, to the left of the main staircase, and the "red" room, across the hall to the right) as a part of the festivities.

The story of the Boutwell family — George and Sarah and their children, Georgianna and Francis — in the yellow room included the desk George Boutwell used at the Woods & Boutwell store, the dress uniform and hat he wore as Massachusetts youngest governor, and the sash he had as a pallbearer at President Grant's funeral in 1885. His wife, Sarah Thayer Boutwell, was a teacher before her marriage, and her school bell, her apron, and one of her hand-written recipe books provide clues to her life and interests.

Information on the building of the house in 1851, plans for an addition in 1893, wallpaper border samples, and even a section of ingrain carpet believed to be from the house help visitors to see what the Boutwells' home was like in the second half of the 19th century.

In the red room, the exhibits tell the story of the Groton Historical Society itself, founded in 1894 by Georgianna Boutwell, with her brother Francis Boutwell and Samuel Green and others assisting her. Travel was more difficult for the average person at that time, so many of the early acquisitions were curiosities picked up in foreign lands by

the few Groton residents who traveled. Many of these seem humorous today, for example the small pasteboard box containing a half-cup of very dried-out red lentils with a carefully written label "Lentils" on top. Early true treasures such as Native American arrowheads, a copy of the charter for the land which became Groton, and coffin plates for Job Shattuck and his wife are also on display along with letters, paintings, glassware, pewter, Shaker materials, embroideries, furniture and clothing — a sampling of the vast variety of material owned and preserved by the Society over the past 120 years.

Visitors enjoyed seeing the newly renovated kitchen with its wood-burning stove, soapstone sink, and early kitchen implements and the dining room with its period wallpaper and portrait of Governor Boutwell. After touring the house, refreshments were in order; homemade cookies baked by Judy Adams, Lee Burton, and Pat Woods were a tasty complement to lemonade and tea under the outside canopy. Many volunteers helped to get the house and exhibits ready and hosted on the day, including John Ott, Kara Fossey, Peter Benedict, Bobbie Spiegelman, Al Collins, Liz Strachan, Carolyn Perkins, Owen and Stu Shuman, Judy Adams, Mike Roberts, and Nancy Barringer.

First-time Visitors Impressed

The comments of the visitors were enlightening; many had lived in Groton for years and never before visited Boutwell House. Pat and Dave Woods were intrigued by the Woods



Pat and Dave Woods with the Woods and Boutwell store desk. Photo by Lili Ott.

Continued on page 4

Main Street View: A Time to Appreciate and Remember

The Open House on June 21 celebrated the rejuvenation and renovation of both the Governor Boutwell House and its primary steward, the Groton Historical Society. After more than two years and through the efforts of many,



including the Society's Board of Directors, volunteers, members, friends, neighbors and a variety of local and state agencies, the GHS is back in business as a major history resource center for Groton. To individually thank all the people who invested their time, ideas, financial

resources, and skills in this endeavor would take pages; suffice it to say that thousands of hours were donated to make this a truly widespread effort of philanthropic generosity.

Then there was the dedication of the new Boutwell Garden through the kindness and financial support of the Groton Garden Club, the Groton Woman's Club and the Friends of the Trees, three organizations that represent a cross section of those individuals vested in Groton's environmental well being, landscape preservation and beautification who helped to restore the Boutwell House's Main Street appearance. To all who helped in any way on this multifaceted effort of building and garden renovation, we offer our sincere thanks and gratitude.

Remembering Our Past

The other piece of this story is that of remembering what the role of the Society is in this community. Our goal is to preserve the stories, materials and connections that have given Groton its character and place in the history of Massachusetts. We want everyone to know who Governor Boutwell was and what he, through his family, public career and private life, meant to this town. From storekeeper to Governor and Secretary of the Treasury under President Ulysses S. Grant, his story is a remarkable one. And it did not end there: long after the Civil War, George Boutwell continued to serve his town, his state, and his country as a US Senator and international lawyer. Everyone in Groton should know this story and relish its impact on our state and country.

GHS also preserves mementos, pictures and documents of countless everyday citizens, former residents, visitors

and travelers who left records of their time in Groton that speak to its evolution from rural town to the suburban entity it is today. Letters, diaries, furniture, portraits, coffin plates, dresses, kitchen utensils are all to be found in the Society's holdings which celebrate and remember these people and their contributions to Groton's story.

And finally, as I noted recently while kayaking on the Squannacook River, there is the timeless beauty of the landscape of Groton. It has certainly evolved over the last 350 plus years, but at the same time remains beautiful, captivating, engaging and welcoming to any and all who seek it out. From the open fields of Surrenden Farm (a.k.a.



Dedication ceremony on June 11 honored collaborative effort of three Groton groups that organized, funded, and helped to install the new Boutwell House garden. From left, GHS president John Ott; Nancy Olson, president of Groton Woman's Club; Lee Burton and Lynne Kavanagh of Friends of the Trees; Penny Hommeyer, past president of Groton Garden Club; and Landscape Architect Lorayne Black. Photo by C. David Gordon.

General Field) to the many areas of conservation land, town forest and inviting trails that take you to places marked by history, we want to share these stories with you.

So if you are a citizen of Groton, or of any of the neighboring towns that once were a part of this plantation settlement, I encourage you to come by Boutwell House to see what we have done. We want to share our exhibits and collections that represent a spectrum of this region's history from colonial settlement to the present day. And I know you will be surprised at what you will find and learn about this ever-evolving Middlesex community.

John H. Ott, President, GHS, Summer 2014

Production of *Then and Now* is made possible in part by generous donations from Middlesex Savings Bank and from Kris Kramer, Realtor, EXIT Assurance Realty, 161 Main Street, Groton, MA 01450 -- 978.807.7317 -- www.EXITAssurance.com.

Boutwell House Becomes Groton's History Center

*Alvin B. Collins, Project Manager
Boutwell House Rehabilitation Project*

[Since the rehabilitation project began, in the Fall of 2011, Al Collins has overseen the work of renovation and repair to Boutwell House, made possible by a generous grant from the town's Community Preservation Committee, awarded at Town Meeting in April 2011, and another grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund. In addition to hiring and supervising all subcontractors needed for this enormous undertaking, Al has written about — and photographed — each stage of the work for the Society's quarterly newsletter, starting with the October 2011 issue. Now, with the completion of the ADA-approved walkway to the side porch, making the first floor of the Society's museum completely handicapped accessible, Al's job of Project Manager is done. With this article, he brings his series of reports on the renovations to a close, at least in this print version. The plan is to post the entire series online on our website (www.grotonhistoricalsociety.org) with many more photos, then to publish them as a pamphlet that graphically tells the story of the birth of the Groton History Center. — Barbara Murray, Newsletter Editor]

Since my last writing (*Then and Now Winter 2014*), spring has come and gone, the new entrance walkway has been completed, landscaping has been installed, and the Groton Historical Society has hosted a grand reopening of the Governor Boutwell House as Groton's History Center. A lot has happened between then and now, telling a great story of how people in Groton can come together in a collaborative effort to help each other in a common cause. With the support of townspeople through Community Preservation Act funding and a MassDevelopment's Cultural Facilities grant, the rehabilitation of Boutwell House has allowed an old historic structure to take on new life as the project comes to an end.



Walkway prepped by Cataldo Landscape crew for pouring cement apron and sidewalk. Photo by Barbara Murray.

Most of the ADA walkway hardscape work had been completed just before major snowfall last December, allowing for a good test of the workmanship of our subcontractor M.J. Cataldo Landscape and Construction Co. as winter frost set in. When snows melted in March, our new entrance appeared to have survived the cold quite well, but now walkway completion had to be attained before the scheduled reopening of Boutwell House in June. Cataldo Landscape enlisted the skills of a specialty crew well versed in concrete flat work, who laid the forms for the walkway connecting our new entrance to the Town's sidewalk at the street. Concrete was poured, troweled and fin-



On Open House Day June 21, 2014, Greg and Dori Fishbone and daughters Alexi and Jaida (in stroller) try out the new walkway after checking out exhibits in Boutwell House. Photo by Michael Roberts.

ished, creating the final piece of a complicated yet beautiful walkway, allowing a much-needed accessible entrance into the venerable house.

Now that the funded part of the walkway was finished it was time to seek help in landscaping that side of the house. As you remember, the Groton Woman's Club had purchased, installed and dedicated a granite bench in May 2013 in honor of Georgianna Boutwell for the 100th Anniversary of the Woman's Club. The bench, as well as the new entrance walkway needed to be tactfully complemented with plantings according to a plan Landscape Architect Lorayne Black had graciously put together. The only problem was the cost: nursery stock is expensive and none of our grant funding was earmarked to pay for landscaping. Society President John Ott spoke with the Groton Garden Club, Groton Woman's Club, and Friends of the Trees about our funding dilemma, which they all wholeheartedly embraced, coming up with a plan to furnish and install the plants needed.

Lorayne Black was able to order everything needed through Millican Nurseries, a wholesaler she deals with, allowing over 300 plants and shrubs to be delivered to

Continued on page 4

Boutwell House Reopens Continued from page 1

and Boutwell broadsides on display. Dave knew one of his forebears was Boutwell's partner — in fact, in 1835, Henry Woods hired young George to work in his general store (the “Brick Store,” now the Natural Market), later making him a partner in the business. Dave now wants to research his own family more deeply.

Children loved the old Lawrence pumper fire engine displayed in the driveway. Parents had to explain how it worked, and since the Fire House on Station Ave. was hosting its own open house prior to its move to new quarters on Farmers Row, it was a great opportunity to see the old and the new a half-block apart. Several people wanted to return and bring family members and friends, and they were glad to hear that Boutwell House is now open from 10 am to 1 pm every Monday and Wednesday, with a planned weekend day in the near future. The consensus of the volunteers at the end of the Open House was that it was a highly successful kick-off to the new and improved Groton History Center. ■



The Lawrence pumper, a treasured 19th century hand engine. Photo by Michael Roberts.

Groton's History Center Continued from page 3

Boutwell House at wholesale pricing. Once plants were on site, holes needed to be dug, fertilized loam inserted and plants carefully planted by knowledgeable people. Enter Penny Hommeyer, president of the Garden Club, who was able to pull together and coordinate support from the Woman's Club, Friends of the Trees, the Garden Club, and the Society to expertly plant all of the nursery stock over several days in May. Bark mulch was added to keep weeds from growing and give a finished look to the area while plants became established. Once in place, the plants would need to be watered faithfully at least for the first year of growth, so at Penny's behest, a watering schedule was put together to ensure the investment of money, time and physical labor would be rewarded with a flourishing landscape.

“If You Build It, They Will Come”

Open House day arrived in June only after the concerted efforts of many Society members and volunteers who, working with John Ott, pulled together wonderful artifact

displays throughout the first floor of Boutwell House. Almost 100 people toured the main house and carriage house that day with feedback suggesting that everyone was in awe of what we had accomplished through the rehabilitation project. Many thanks have to be given to Groton residents, local organizations, town committees, boards and officials, all who believed that preservation of Groton's history was important enough to help in the rehabilitation of the Groton Historical Society's headquarters and museum by funding the project and advising us as we moved along the way.

Thanks also to the many dedicated members and volunteers who assisted throughout this project by packing and moving artifacts from room to room as needed to protect them as workers performed their tasks. Not surprisingly, as large projects will do, this project expanded somewhat beyond its original parameters, but the job is now done. The Governor Boutwell House can more sustainably march into the future as Groton's History Center. ■



Making way for the new sidewalk. Photo by Barbara Murray.



Plants are in place in time for the Open House. Photo by C. David Gordon.

Summer Ramble Covers Early Groton Industries

Nancy Barringer, GHS Program Committee Cochair

The GHS 2014 Summer Ramble took place indoors at Boutwell House this year, on the very humid evening of Tuesday July 15 under threatening skies. GHS President John Ott opened the program at 7 p.m. with a welcome to approximately three dozen attendees. Judy Adams, Program Committee cochair, introduced our guest speaker, Martin G. Dudek, senior project manager and principal archeologist at John Milner Associates of Littleton. Marty has become a regular on the GHS Ramble circuit, having led a tour of the site of the Nate Nutting saw mill off Indian Hill Road on October 16, 2011, and the next year, on October 14, 2012, a walk to the soapstone quarry off Common Street discovered by John Fitch in 1828. Soapstone products — sinks, bed and foot warmers and parts for well pumps — had been manufactured there until 1868.

Tonight Marty told us about the early industries in Groton, beginning with a reminder that the Indian attacks of 1676 drove Groton's early settlers out of town for several years and sustained industrial growth did not start until 1684 when people felt it was safe to return. His list of Groton industries was impressive and surprising to many of us that such a variety of products could be made in a little country town. The most important industries were potash, charcoal, iron, brick, tanning, starch, pottery, pewter, soapstone, and even granite. The vast quantities of timber available and the reliable water supply both figured strongly in most of the manufacturing. Saw mills and grist mills were probably the first working structures built, he said.



Guest speaker Marty Dudek

Marty noted the location of each of the early industries and name of the proprietor of the business when known. Slides of old photographs and drawings, some from Old Sturbridge Village, of saw mills, pottery kilns, clay churns, brick works and iron furnaces that were common to the area and era, helped us to visualize what had been here in Groton. The Lawrence family ran a pewter works from 1808 into the 1850's on their farm on the far side of the Nashua River in what is now Pepperell. A small pewter cream pitcher found on that site was



Pewter cream pitcher, one of the earliest gifts to the Historical Society (Accession #42, August 1, 1894) was "ploughed up on Charles T. Lawrence's farm, Mt. Lebanon Road, Pepperell, Where at one time there was a manufactory of pewter ware." Photo by C. David Gordon.

presented to the GHS in 1894 by Jerome Lawrence and is currently on display at Boutwell House. Nearby there, William T. Lawrence made bricks from the clay on the farm. We learned that those bricks were used to build several Groton schoolhouses, including the Chaplin School now Legion Hall on Hollis Street and the "Brick Store" on Main Street now home to the Natural Market (and where George Boutwell had his first business).

Among other early industries, bog iron was dug in North Groton, and a tannery existed on Main Street. This was probably far out of the town center as the process of tanning was odorous and truly unpleasant as some of Marty's old photographs can attest to.

Potash and Charcoal Sites Remembered

The two industries that really intrigued us were the making of potash and charcoal. Unknown to most Groton residents, there is a plaque on the stone entrance gates to the Lawrence playground on Broadmeadow Road marking the place where Aaron Brown had a potash works from the 1780s. Dr. Samuel A. Green's journal notes that during Shays' Rebellion in 1786 the place was deliberately torched and burnt down but was rebuilt and used until 1820. Making potash was a laborious multistep process but did not seem as hazardous as that of charcoal making. Marty's descriptions and illustrations of this procedure wowed the audience.

To make charcoal, huge woodpiles were stacked then covered with layers of earth and leaves. A chimney was created in the center and the whole thing looked like a big tent with a vent in the middle. The collier had to keep it safely burning, regulating the oxygen and sometimes laying

Continued on page 6

Looking Back—When GHS Rambles Were Field Days

C. David Gordon

In recent years our Historical Society has organized very successful “summer rambles” for members and interested townspeople, each embarking by bus to selected historic sites around town, each following an itinerary illustrating a specific subject. But did you know that in its very early years, this 120-year-old organization offered its members much more ambitious rambles?

The first recorded “Field Day,” as they were then called, brought 22 participants on October 1, 1895, to Boston via train to view places associated with the Battles of Lexington and Concord and of Bunker Hill. After a side trip to Faneuil Hall, the travelers took a 1:40 p.m. train to Lexington where the Rev. P.A. Staples guided them to the local historic spots. Then, before returning to Groton, it was off to Concord retracing by carriage part of the road the British traveled along to the famous bridge. In his report of the excursion, the Society’s clerk, Colonel Thomas L. Motley, wrote, “We learned lessons on patriotism and felt a local pride for the part taken by the citizens of Groton.”

And for the next few years, the first Tuesday in October became known as the Society’s Field Day.

On October 6, 1896, Grotonians went by train to Salem, where guides from the Essex Institute showed them about in a carriage, and to Marblehead, where a Rev. Bell led them about. Motley wrote later about that trip, “Several backed out due to lack of sun, but those who went thought they didn’t need sunshine in order to have a pleasant trip.”

The third annual recorded Field Day — October 9, 1897 — involved transporting 43 people by carriage about Groton to rediscover the historical sites at home. Since the Society set about preserving the history of what was then Groton but also of all the communities that had once been part of the original Groton Plantation, this local ramble included stopping at historical places in Pepperell. The guide here was Francis M. Boutwell, Governor George S. Boutwell’s son and the vice president most often presiding over Society meetings in the early days.

These ambitious annual events failed to become a lasting tradition, however. The weather on the day of the fourth excursion, October 11, 1898, was cloudy, and only four hardy souls ventured to Dedham, where, Motley recorded, they were “most hospitably received by the Dedham Historical Society.” He wrote no further details of this trip.

There was talk of a Field Day trip to Quincy on September 18, 1899, but the date was in conflict with another activity and could not easily be rescheduled. Enthusiasm languished, and the trip did not take place. Field Days were no more for many years.

How nice that Summer Rambles are back sampling the local history of bygone days. ■

Early Industries *Continued from page 5*

a ladder up the side and stepping around the whole hot



Charcoal sample comes from 11/04 excavation on Rocky Hill, Groton.

mess as he checked for even burning. The colliers built their own accommodations nearby that looked much like teepees and lived in these temporary shelters for weeks until the woodpiles became charcoal. Evidence of an early charcoal site is at Smoke Hill in Rocky Hill Reservation, which lies near Robin Hill Road behind the Shaw’s supermarket at Four Corners. The name origin of the site is easy to

understand. When charcoal production was underway, so much smoke was produced that all of Groton center was enveloped in a gray haze. Forge Village, now part of Westford, had many blacksmiths and related businesses that made use of the charcoal produced conveniently nearby.

The evening continued with a visit to the Job Shattuck house at 573 Longley Road, built in 1782 and at present for sale. The current owner, Richard Csaplár, kindly led a tour of the first floor, with original wood beams and paneled walls, and of the unusual high-ceilinged cellar with a massive center chimney that accommodated five fireplaces. There is speculation that the Shattuck house had been on the Underground Railroad in the 19th century but there is no documentation for that, Csaplár said. After the tour, we adjourned to the barn out back and closed out the evening, in the tradition of GHS summer rambles, with servings of Tom Callahan’s homemade ice cream covered with strawberry sauce. ■

Steven Pei 2014 Sheedy Winner



Sheedy Scholarship winner Steven Pei shown with science teacher Steve Kleeman at GDRHS Class Night.

The Groton Historical Society is pleased to announce that GDRHS senior Steven Pei is this year's recipient of the Michael L. Sheedy Educational Fund Scholarship. The \$500 scholarship was presented to Steven by GHS Board member Patti Modzelewski at the Groton Dunstable Senior Class Night on May 28, 2014.

Steven has been an outstanding student with a strong interest in math and science, winning a National Merit \$2500 Scholarship this year along with the Four Year Science Award. But, Steven tells us, he "mysteriously began to appreciate the humanities" as he continued his studies. Steven also found time to pursue his hobbies — learning

guitar, weight lifting, and spending time with friends — discovering meditation along the way. This gives him a tangible means to feel balanced, he says. "It took time to adjust, but meditation made learning — and indeed everything else — all the more beautiful."

Steven will be attending Vanderbilt University in Nashville, TN, where he plans on taking a pre-med track. One of Steven's life goals to become a doctor. "The idealist within me would like to effect reforms and change in both policy and in healthcare practice," he says.

— Patti Modzelewski

Boutwell School Turns 100

On May 30 this year, Groton's Early Childhood Center, a.k.a. the Boutwell School, celebrated the building's 100th birthday. Pictured here, from left, are School Director Russell Hoyt; Nancy Stoops, a student at Boutwell years ago when it was an elementary school; and GHS President John Ott. Note the portrait of Governor George S. Boutwell, propped up behind the birthday cake.



The school was built on Hollis Street in 1914. By unanimous vote at the 1915 Town Meeting, the townspeople paid tribute to their revered governor, who died in 1905, by naming the handsome yellow-brick building the Boutwell School. Minutes of that meeting note that Michael Sheedy, then chairman of the Groton School Committee, proposed the resolution "to perpetuate his memory . . . in view of the distinction conferred upon

the Town of Groton by the character and public service of our late, eminent resident and citizen George Sewall Boutwell." At one point, the school was sold for commercial use, but the town repurchased it for school use in 1994.

—Barbara Murray

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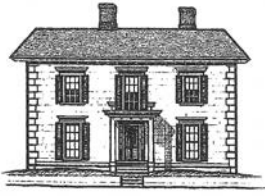
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COMING UP... SAVE THE DATES

Special Two-Part Program – free and open to the public

How Does History Shape the Character of Groton –

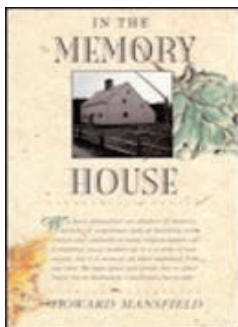
a Conversation about the Future of Our Town Seen Through the Lens of History

■ Tuesday September 30 at 7 pm at Legion Hall

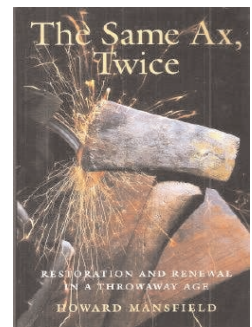
Panel Discussion by members of Groton community (Peter Benedict, Earl Carter, Al Collins, Katie Ferro, Kara Fossey, Lili Ott, Tammie Reynolds, and Stuart Schulman)

■ Tuesday October 14 at 7 pm at Groton Public Library

Meet Howard Mansfield, local author of *In the Memory House* and *The Same Ax, Twice: Restoration and Renewal in a Throwaway Age*



Both of these books can be borrowed from the library in advance of the programs. Check the GHS and the GPL websites for latest details on these timely informative programs and how to reserve your copy of either book.



Then and Now

Volume 15, Number 1

Winter 2014

Newsletter of the Groton Historical Society [Est. 1894]

Packing Up

Bobbie Spiegelman and Liz Strachan

The work of rehabilitating the infrastructure is done. The work of assessing the collection, visible and stored away, has begun, along with making plans to refurbish the display space in all parts of Boutwell House to bring it back to life as Groton's Museum. Two GHS board members, Bobbie Spiegelman and Liz Strachan, share personal highlights of their recent sorting and storing activities as the huge task of preparing to exhibit the Society's (and Town's) historical legacy gets underway.

Bobbie Spiegelman writes:

The Boutwell House rooms, largely unchanged for decades, became unrecognizable over the past two years as we stuffed every available space with artifacts, boxes and sometimes-unidentifiable pieces that were uncovered with the major overhaul of the interior. This rearrangement turned up scores of chairs, much to our dismay, and we realized that we needed to assess the collection to determine the condition, the provenance, the history and the relevance to Groton of each one in order to appreciate its value. I called on Doug Brown, archivist at Groton School,



master furniture craftsman and beloved shop teacher for generations of students, to help provide some background on the dozen chairs of varied style and size that I lined up along the wall of the upper hallway.

We examined the underside of the rush seats of several of the chairs, deciding whether or not they were in original or restored condition. Doug explained the finish on each and noted its



Board on bottom of this padded chair held by Kara Fossey probably covers an opening for a child-size potty.

rarity or commonality. We discovered the relationship between a 19th-century-era caned child's chair and the high chair, still sitting in the room once labeled the Toy Room; both were deemed in excellent condition with definite potential for display.

Our task is just beginning, as there are still many more chairs stashed in the attic waiting their turn to offer up some special detail or, perhaps a secret: the sweet little chair with the padded seat might have once serviced a young child in potty training.

Liz Strachan writes:

Lately, our cadre of volunteers—Carolyn Perkins, Nancy Barringer, Bobbie Spiegelman and I—have been packing up and removing all objects from the second-floor room formerly used as the Society's office. We hope to remake the room into "Governor Boutwell's Office" and open it to the public. The room has been filled (one might say crammed) with books, maps, boxes of photos, ephemera, old ledgers, and other assorted remnants of Groton's past.



The overstuffed former GHS office, once emptied, will be redecorated and furnished to look like the home office of Governor George S. Boutwell.

Before packing up our collection of 26 old leatherbound guest registers from the Groton Inn, we leafed through some of them and saw that visitors tended to come from nearby towns, greater Boston, or other New England states, though there were many from New York and a few from

Continued on page 3

Main Street View:

GHS at 120 Years - A True Main Street Initiative

When we consider the age of things, time takes on two aspects. At 120 years something seems old even to those of us who are half the age, but when one thinks of the year



1894, the date appears relatively recent considering the Town of Groton has been around since 1655. This year the Groton Historical Society celebrates its 120th anniversary as it ends the long period of renovation of its 1851 headquarters, the Gov. George S. Boutwell House, itself 163 years old.

To the Society, which acquired the house in 1933 from Georgianna Boutwell's estate and then opened it to the public in 1939, it has been a mere 75 years since the House assumed its central place on Main Street. But however one looks at time there is no question that this organization has been a proud, purpose-driven, and permanent fixture collecting, preserving and sharing Groton history with its citizens and the community.

In recent weeks the Society's volunteers and its curator have begun the work of putting the House back in order, reorganizing and reshelving the collections. They have made wonderful discoveries of items that old closets, deep drawers, dark spaces, and time itself had hidden (see Packing Up, page 1). Yes the attic is a treasure trove of records, marble busts, portraits, and furniture. Among the gifts of past generations and Groton families are a signed lithograph by American artist Albert Bierstadt, glass plate negatives by turn-of-the-century photographer Richard Wright, and signed military swords with insignia that highlight the role citizens played in our local militia. Also coming to light are autographed books by state leaders and Presidents, beautiful dresses and women's accoutrements that any costume society would die to own, and colonial paper script that, had they been interest bearing, would remove any financial worry in the Society's future.

Sharing the Town's Treasures

So the work that now has to be done is to find places and cases where all this material—the legacy of Groton's past—can be displayed, interpreted and made available. Fortunately for the GHS there are experts in the region,

well-known curators, collectors, specialists, and other museums willing to help us through this period of discovery and reflection on the future of these collection pieces. But however we proceed in trying to understand and steward what we have, it is going to take time, money and materials to do justice to it all.



Scanned property deeds and old maps, two old Groton history books, and digitized glass slides of old houses in Groton were on display at the latest GHS program hosted by the Groton Public Library (see page 7).

For 120 years people have entrusted the Society with things they valued and cherished, leaving us their treasures to be protected and shared with future generations. We have never had to buy anything with our limited funds, although as our collections grow, our need increases for conservation materials such as archival storage boxes and modern display cases. We are grateful for our many friends and families who understand that the GHS is Groton's Museum, is Groton's permanent Main Street Initiative focusing on saving Groton's past while celebrating the people and stories that make this town ours. Our thanks go out to all of you who have contributed to this long-standing preservation effort for Groton's treasures.

*John H. Ott
President, GHS
Winter 2014*

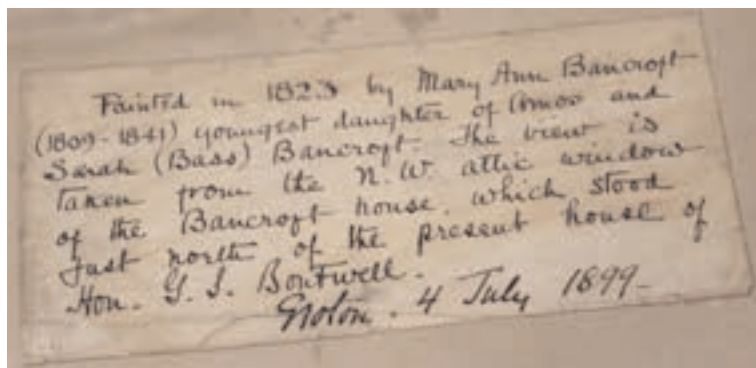
Production of *Then and Now* is made possible in part by generous donations from Middlesex Savings Bank and from Kris Kramer, Realtor, EXIT Assurance Realty, 161 Main Street, Groton, MA 01450 -- 978.807.7317 -- www.EXITAssurance.com.

Packing Up *Continued from page 1*

farther afield. Some well-known names appear: a few Roosevelts; William F. Pabst, the Milwaukee beer baron; Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Auchincloss of New York; and Mr. Lincoln Filene, owner of Filene's Department Store. There were many entries that showed the name of the guest "and chauffeur", usually nameless. A few had a chauffeur and a maid. One signature was written in Arabic, reflecting the range of visitors from far and wide.

In perusing old "Selectmen Reports" (now known as Annual Reports), we read that during the Civil War years, Groton boys and men going off to fight were provided with train tickets to Baltimore, with uniforms, including underwear and socks, and

with other related items, all paid for by the Town. Some of the families of these men were given stipends to help them survive during their breadwinners' absences.



Finding this young girl's painting of Groton in 1823—a true attic treasure—was an unexpected delight for our volunteer sorters and packers.

Among other recent findings is a charming old painting by fourteen-year-old Mary Ann Bancroft (1809-1841), daughter of Sarah and Amos Bancroft. The Bancrofts lived just

north of the present Boutwell House. The painting depicts the view in 1823 roughly toward what is now the Groton Market and Filho's Cucina and shows the agricultural nature of Groton even in the center of town. This is an important find which we will, at some point, certainly have on display for viewing by 21st century Groton citizens. ■

History Sleuthing

C. David Gordon

In the summer of 2013 the Groton Historical Society received a collection of 58 historical letters, notes, invoices, and deeds that longtime GHS member Eileen M. Friedrich of Groton had gathered before she died in July 2012. These items, along with a number of historical booklets, maps, typewritten notes from Friedrich's research in local history, and 33 old Groton Annual Reports were donated by Friedrich's family: Anita Louise Anderson, John R. Friedrich, Jr., Faye Eileen Friedrich, Claire Friedrich Ketelaar, Allan Thomas Friedrich, Christine Marion Grimshire, and Mary Kathleen Friedrich. John Friedrich's wife, Roberta Benson, brought in the materials.

Speaking for all the family members, Benson wrote, "When the family was clearing out her home after Eileen's passing, we discovered a number of items that we believe she would have wanted the Groton Historical Society to have." She added, "We hope these documents

and booklets will provide a value to the Groton Historical Society and help round out the other items that the society has already amassed over the years. We know that is what Eileen would have wanted."

Benson described Eileen Friedrich as "very interested in the history of Groton," one who was "an active member of the Historical Society." Benson said, "Some of her research was utilized in the historical books of Virginia May." [Note: Eileen Friedrich was on the GHS Book Publishing Committee formed in 1972 to edit and publish in two volumes May's extensive writings on town history: *A Plantation Called Petapawag* (1976) and *Groton Houses* (1978). Other members of the committee were Isabel C. Beal, Ruth T. Bennett, and Henry G. Hallowell, who served as chairman.]

As a member of the current GHS Publications Committee, I have had the privilege of transcribing the handwritten letters, notes, and deeds included in the

Continued on page 4

Friedrich bequest. To date I have typed out and computerized 35 of these documents. Yet to be transcribed are 23 more.

A singular example of the documents is a note from Groton historian Dr. Samuel A. Green, complete with his fine, flourishing signature (see photo). Green was making a small request of the publisher of the *Landmark* newspaper: “Dear Mr. Turner, Please send me copies . . . for April 8, and April 29, [1911]. There are two little items which I wish to scrap [sic].”

Most of the documents, though, revolve around the law practice and life of Asa Farnsworth Lawrence, Esquire, in the 1840s. [Lawrence was distantly related to the Friedrich family on their mother’s side. The Lawrence line

has been traced all the way back to 1191, according to Mary Friedrich.] Asa Lawrence was born February 7, 1790, and grew up in Groton. He had his law practice in Pepperell. For a time he served as judge in a court dealing with insolvency cases. In 1837 Lawrence married local girl Sarah Jane Bancroft, daughter of Dr. Amos and Sarah (Bass) Bancroft, who lived on Main Street just north of where George Boutwell was to build his house. Sarah Jane was born in 1808 and may have died in 1865.

Documents I have transcribed to date have come mostly from other lawyers contacting Lawrence by post. Some update Lawrence on cases or inform him about the need for him to meet with them or attend a court session. Others appear to relate to Lawrence’s dealing with business carried out for his father-in-law. A few encompass what Lawrence himself has agreed to purchase. None so far establish any back-and-forth correspondence having to do with a common case or situation. And most of the writers appear at this stage to be unknowns from Boston, Pepperell or Townsend, or Groton. A familiar name is that of Groton historian Caleb Butler, who signed his name as a witness to an agreed-upon transaction in one quitclaim deed.

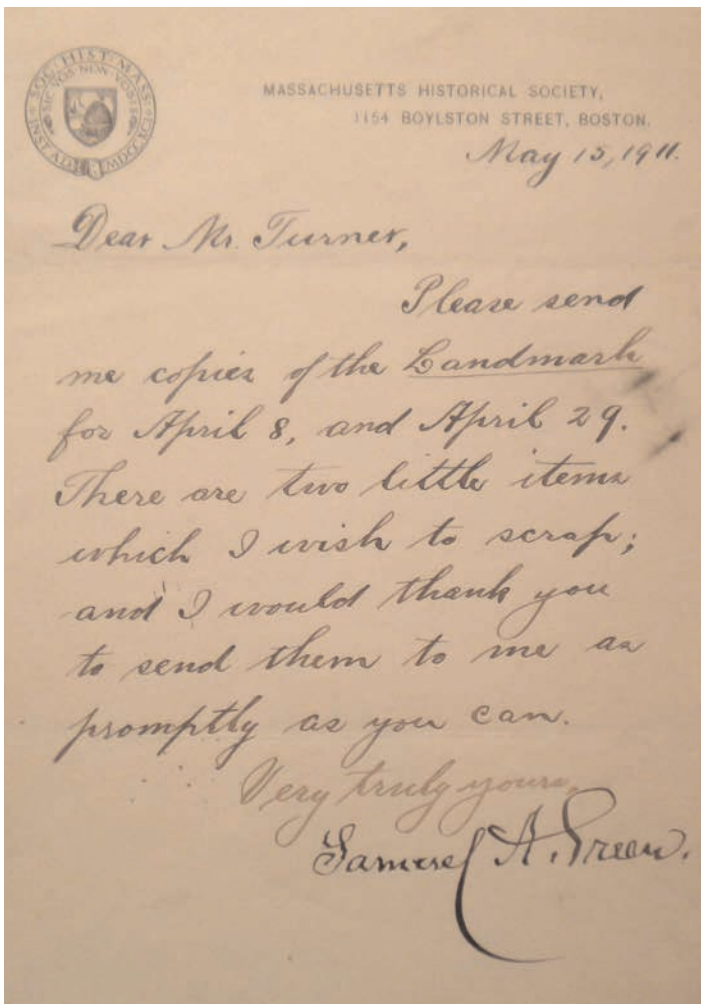
Tricky Business

Transcribing handwritten documents composed over a century and a half ago is tricky business. But that’s what makes the job interesting. I admit there are gaps in my transcription of some letters. Often handwritten letters are not formed carefully or the ink has faded. Certain letters may be formed in a way different from how we do it—if we do it—today. Even the most beautiful, carefully penned words on the page might be hard to decipher. Then too, those 19th century writers didn’t seem to be much bothered by punctuation marks.

Often passages need to be read and reread again and again. I’m always cheered when I discover what one unclear word in a sentence actually must for certain be. These are “Eureka!” moments, and they keep me going, though I am not averse to asking for help.

One long passage in a letter commenting on how properly to commemorate the Battle of Lexington and Concord I have farmed out. It’s a passage in which the English is shot through with Latin words evidently from Cicero. I’ve turned to my family’s Latin scholar to see if he can figure how the English and Latin fit together and what they all add up to.

Meanwhile, this effort is the very essence of history sleuthing, and I love it! ■



The stationery used by Dr. Green is from the Massachusetts Historical Society, which he served as librarian from 1868 until his death in 1918. Green regularly kept scrapbooks of Groton events, hence the request for back issues of the local newspaper. Curious readers can read both editions of the *Landmark* online via the Groton Public Library website (gpl.org), which contains digitized volumes of Turner’s Public Spirit.

Meet Our New Board Members

C. David Gordon

The three newest members of the Groton Historical Society's Board of Directors, elected at the GHS Annual Meeting on October 5, 2013, share a deep interest in history. The three—Judith M. Adams, Greg R. Fishbone, and Nancy F. Barringer—bring a diversity of talents and background to the Society.



Greg, Judy, Nancy.

Judy Adams says, “My interest in history was inspired by my grandmother who told stories of her late 19th century childhood in Vermont’s Northeast Kingdom. She left us a written account which I edited for publication in the journal of the Vermont Historical Society.” In addition, Judy speaks of her own childhood having been spent in “an Arts & Crafts house built in Woburn by my grandfather in 1911.”

Thus, “it was a natural thing for me to follow my interest in history when I moved to Groton 22 years ago,” she states. “I have been volunteering for the GHS for quite a few years—sorting and organizing documents and ephemera, writing for the newsletter, and helping with programs.”

At GHS Judy is cochair of the Program Committee. Both Nancy Barringer and Greg Fishbone are members at large on the Board.

“I am glad,” Nancy says, “to join the Board of the Groton Historical Society and help the work to preserve our wonderful Boutwell House on Main Street and to publicize our town’s history to the community.” Looking back, she notes, “I have always had an interest in history, art and architecture. The past several years, I have volunteered at local libraries and community groups including Friends of the Trees and spend a good deal of time working at my church, St. Andrew’s in Ayer, where I am the Parish Historian. I recently joined New England Archivists.”

Greg says he “cultivated an interest in local history on school visits to Boston, Plimouth Plantation, and Sturbridge Village.” A native of Newton, Greg tells us,

“There is a lot of history in Newton, but you have to hunt for it off the beaten path.” By contrast, in Groton he has found that “the history is front and center, right at the surface in old houses, working farms, and even right in the center of town. Things have been preserved here that are long gone from other places, and the town is so much more exciting and interesting because of it.” He “moved to Groton with his wife and daughter after the entire family fell in love with an antique house on Main Street. Researching the house and its prior residents has become a long-term project.”

Greg is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania and Temple University School of Law. He is “a practicing attorney and avid web designer who writes novels for young readers.” His most recent book, entitled *Galaxy Games*, has been published by Lee & Low Books.

Nancy was born in New Jersey and grew up in Framingham. She has earned a Bachelor’s degree from Framingham State with a major in European history and a Master’s degree in Library and Information Science from Simmons College. For one term, she says, she worked for the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (now Historic New England) at the Harrison Gray Otis House in Boston. There she was “surrounded by beautiful and interesting American artifacts.” Following



Judy, Greg, Nancy.

graduation, she “spent ten years working as a business and science librarian at various high technology companies,” work involving her in “a complete change in the research environment.” Nancy and her husband, George, moved to Groton in 1985. Their son, Ned, is in graduate school at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore.

Judy is a graduate of the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. She has “followed various careers over the years,” she says: “kindergarten teacher, pipe organ builder, church organist and music director, librarian, and the mother of two sons.” She claims love of “music, reading, writing, gardening and animals.”

We welcome Judy, Nancy, and Greg to the Society’s Board of Directors. Look for profiles of other board members in future issues of *Then and Now*. ■

A Grand New Entrance

*Alvin B. Collins, Project Manager
Boutwell House Rehabilitation Project*

Work is well underway on the Boutwell House ADA accessible walkway that will allow everyone access to the house via its grand new entrance. As of my last writing, bids for the project were being received from three local landscape construction companies, all of whom were capable of constructing our walkway system according to the beautiful design from Landscape Architect Lorayne Black. After reference checks and price negotiations were completed, M. J. Cataldo Landscape and Construction Inc. of Littleton, MA, was selected to do the work. Cataldo Landscape is a reputable local company with years of experience in the construction of hardscape projects utilizing an expert crew versed in granite and concrete paver installation.

Granite and paver selections had been specified in the design plan we brought before three different Groton Town Committees—the Commission on Accessibility, the Planning Board, and the Historic Districts Commission—for their approval. The HDC, which has final say as to the aesthetics of projects within the town's three historic districts, wanted to see the paver selection laid in a sample area correlating to the pattern Lorayne designed. Cataldo Landscape sent their installer to Boutwell House to set a design sample of the selected concrete pavers at the driveway side of the house for viewing by the HDC.

With HDC approval and a building permit from the town, we were off and running with the final phase of the Boutwell House rehabilitation project. The walkway required many pieces of select granite stone that had to be quarried and cut to specific sizes. Cataldo Landscape arranged for custom granite pieces to be quarried and cut by Swenson Granite of New Hampshire. Swenson is one of

production out longer than one would like. You guessed it—a delay in the production of our granite pushed the start of the walkway out into mid-November.

Days were getting shorter, temperatures were getting colder, and the threat of snow was in the forecast, but Cataldo Landscape insisted they could still do the majority of the walkway before winter was upon us and they did. Excavation started in November. Granite pieces were delivered and truckloads of appropriate soil needed to raise the grade in the walkway area were trucked in. Day after day and in between a couple of snowfalls, Cataldo's crews installed granite slabs along the house side and then filled, compacted, and sculpted the earth to create the walkway base. Every night the entire area was covered with thermal blankets, ensuring the sculpted soils did not get damaged by the freezing temperatures and the snow cover we encountered.

Once the sculpted soils were in place, Cataldo's expert installer, whose name is Tiago, started laying pavers in the complex pattern Lorayne Black had designed. Each day of the install, Lorayne and I would visit the site to ensure the finished product would be as specified. As in all projects, a few items had to be tweaked along the way to make everything come together in a unified way. No matter what we encountered or decided should be changed a bit, Tiago and Cataldo's Project Manager Barbara St. Onge happily complied without hesitation.

All of the pavers on the walkway as well as the magnificent granite steps are now in place, but Mother Nature's winter wrath has put a stop to the concrete walkway portion of the project until spring. When it is warm enough to work with concrete, Cataldo will install a concrete walkway from the street to the foot of the granite steps and paver walkway. When all is done, including the



Tiago (with rake) and crew compact and sculpt soil and sand dropped from the bucket of a front-end loader. Concrete pavers finish the surface of the new ADA accessible walkway at the side of Boutwell House.

the largest granite suppliers in New England, which in our case was both good and bad. The good is that they provide a high quality stone at a reasonable price but the bad is that the volume of granite they produce sometimes pushes

landscaping, we will have a true masterpiece of a walkway and grand entrance allowing all to visit, bringing new life to the beautifully rehabilitated Governor Boutwell House. ■

Researching Your House's History

On Tuesday February 4, the well-informed guest speaker Carl Flowers told a crowd of 55 people gathered in Sibley Hall at the Groton Public Library how he discovered the history of his Groton homestead and how much pleasure it gave him. In 1980 Flowers inherited a 1722 house and soon began to trace its roots. He became so enamored of its nearly 300-year history that he wrote a book about it. He called the book *Groton's Anonymous Mistress*, alluding to various roadblocks he encountered in his research efforts.



Carl Flowers (seated) autographing copies of his book *Groton's Anonymous Mistress* following his talk to a capacity crowd at Tuesday night's program.

But his difficulties, revealed in his book, did not diminish his delight in finding numerous connections with real people from Groton's past and his old family homestead. Each connection, he told us, was found by following up all leads, even the dead ends, which often led him to the most interesting, even "mind-boggling" information. He found references to the Longley Massacre, Shays' Rebellion, and even to the Underground Railroad.

Flowers urged us to do the same, to follow all leads, even dead ends, if we set out to research the history of an old house. The process he recommended was to start with title searches, delving into old deeds. Then comes genealogical research and searching town records of births, marriages, and deaths, tax assessor records, and probate records in the State Archives.

Flowers is a retired history teacher and well versed in the discipline of historical research. His book contains many illustrations and footnotes, as well as four appendices about former owners of the property and deeds of transfer from 1711 to present day. [The book can be ordered online for \$14.99 from The Book Patch at: <http://tinyurl.com/grotonmistress>]

How to Start Your House Research

GHS Program Committee member Tom Callahan arranged for Flowers to present this program. Judy Adams, Program Committee Co-chair, prepared a handout listing accessible resources for DIY historical research, both books and online links. The list will soon be posted on the GHS website. Meanwhile here are some of the key resources.

- Groton Public Library (www.gpl.org):
Historical Room and Groton Collection; Digital Collection
- State Library of Massachusetts: maps, etc.
- Massachusetts Registry of Deeds
- Groton Historical Society (www.grotonhistoricalsociety.org):
Maps, photos, and 17th and 18th century handwritten land records
- Groton Town Hall (www.townofgroton.org)

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Elizabeth Strachan *Clerk/Governance*

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Lili Ott *Hospitality*
Michael Roberts *Long-Range Planning*
Bobbie Spiegelman *Curator / Collections*

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Valerie Jenkins *Finance*
Ray Lyons *Legal Counsel*
Ed Strachan *Investments*

GHS MEMBERSHIP FORM

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Annual GHS Sponsor	\$75
Corporate Sponsor	\$250
Sustaining Member	\$1000
Additional contribution	\$_____

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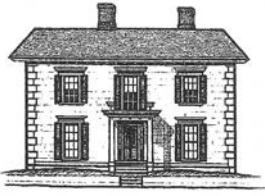
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GHS is Open for Research — Call for an Appointment

The Governor Boutwell House is currently closed for renovations and assessment of its collections. Meanwhile we are open by appointment for photo and genealogical research in our refurbished workroom. Please call or email us for more information. And check our website often for updates on our plans for reopening Boutwell House to the public.



Avid researchers Russ Harris (left) and Judy Adams sort through old photos and primary documents in the GHS workroom.



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Then and Now

Volume 16, Number 2

Spring 2015

Newsletter of the Groton Historical Society [Est. 1894]

Finishing the Job: Reconstructing Groton's Milestones

Michael Roberts, Chair GHS Long-Range Planning Committee

Project Manager of Milestone Preservation Initiative for Groton Historical Commission

Back when I served as chairman of the Groton Historical Commission I established an initiative to locate, assess the condition, rehabilitate, and reinstall Groton's many historic monuments. These monuments were close to the heart of the late Harlan Fitch, longtime Groton resident, surveyor, and preservationist, who agonized over their possible loss or disfigurement. As a friend of Harlan's I felt a clear sense of right and responsibility toward these somewhat neglected elements of Groton's past. So, in Harlan's memory, I urged the GHC to assess and document the 1902-1903

milestones and rehabilitate as necessary. Once that was done, we could tackle other monuments such as the slate colonial markers dating back to 1785 and the stone and metal monuments celebrating historic events in our town.

The Original 1902-1903 Milestones

Virginia May tells the story of the original 27 milestone markers and their placement in her book *Groton Plantation* (Groton Historical Society, 1976). They were cut from the "Chelmsford Grey" granite formation (an extremely hard

granite prized by highway departments for curbing) at the Fletcher Quarry in Westford, MA, and installed along the main roadways leading into Groton Center, fourteen in 1902 and thirteen more in 1903. This was undertaken, says May, following the town's vote in favor, on April 7, 1902, and

again in 1903. Coincidentally, this was also the year when Main Street and Farmer's Row were paved ("macadamized").

The placement of these stones started from a point directly in front of the Town Hall (mile 0). Three stones were placed north along Chicopee Row, three more along Longley Road, and another on Nashua Road. A one-mile stone was placed on North Main Street. Southward, two stones were placed along Old Ayer Road. Southward still, two stones were placed on Farmer's Row. Then, westward, three were placed down Long Hill Road, one as far as West Main Street. Going southeast, four stones were placed along Boston Road, and a four-mile stone was placed on Forge Village Road. Going northeast, four stones were placed along

--- Excerpt from the Groton Town Warrant for fiscal year ending March 31, 1903

The Selectmen have set fourteen milestones, as follows:*

Boston Road to Littleton line, four miles and 2717 feet, 4 stones.

Lowell Road to Westford line, four miles and 2064 feet, 4 stones.

Ayer Road via Farmers' row to Ayer line, two miles and 3600 feet, 2 stones.

Ayer Road via Main Street, two miles and 1473 feet, 2 stones.

Pepperell Road, east, three miles and 2800 feet to line, 2 stones.

If the sum of one hundred dollars was appropriated, we believe that all the roads leading from center of Groton to other towns could be marked with stone of the same kind and the cut letters in stones already set and those to be set could be drawn in black.

- WILLIAM T. BOYNTON, FRANK A. TORREY, FRANK F. WOODS

*[*13 more milestones were set the following year, for a total of 27]*



Garside Monument workers guide replacement milestone to its new home on Farmer's Row. All photos by Michael Roberts.

Continued on page 4

Main Street View: Transitions

The transition from Winter to Spring in Groton bespeaks of the miracle that befalls our beautiful landscape year after year, but no greater recovery has been seen in this town than from the past winter of cold and SNOW. How the



small newly planted Boutwell garden survived is nothing but amazing, let alone our gravel driveway and the flat roof of our porch with over three feet of snow. Yet this year has been better than some with no frozen pipes, only two minor ice dam

leaks, and a modest heating bill, thanks to our new high-efficiency gas-fired heating system. I wonder if old Gov. Boutwell and his dedicated daughter Georgianna had something to do with it, along with our determined volunteers who toiled away inside throughout the winter.

Transition is always about those who support and value the Society coming and going. Longtime former board member and restoration carpenter Peter Moller passed away in late March, still a young man, but having contributed both his time and talent to keeping whole the window systems in Boutwell House. He will be missed. At the same time longtime friend of the Society Carolyn Perkins has joined the Board of Directors, bringing a world of management and town planning experience to us along



*Scilla in bloom at the Boutwell House, May 2015.
Photo by Barbara Murray.*

with her love and skill in photography. Carolyn loves history and its sense of discovery, so Peter's loss is tempered by a new caretaker of Groton's history. We welcome Carolyn to the GHS Board.

Meanwhile our volunteers are working steadily on the major collection survey under our Curator's guidance with help from Society members like furniture specialists John Brooks and Doug Brown, who are helping us preserve, care for, and document our holdings. Work on groups of artifacts like trunks, textiles, and case pieces is now well underway.

Upcoming Exhibits

Look for new exhibits this summer that examine the world of the kitchen, its tools and utensils, the methods of food preparation, and recipes that made our museum a home to the Boutwell family. Today in Groton we have small farms, lots of CSA's, many fine cooks and evolving food ways and dining experiences from Gibbett Hill to church suppers that give our town a taste all its own. There will be lots of other programs as well to give our members and friends new insights to our town. Our Summer Ramble in July will be an outdoor adventure taking us to the residential, religious, and industrial treasures of West Groton, another important element in the story of Groton. Watch for more details on this trip and the ice cream social to follow.

To all our friends and members, please remember to renew your membership and think of new friends to invite to our programs and events. There is no better way to thank someone, welcome a new neighbor, or make a person feel a part of this wonderful town than to give them a \$35 initiation into Groton's past and a place to learn more about its citizens and their stories.

And I will close with a big thank you to the Board of Directors, our volunteers, and you our members for your continued involvement and investment in the work of the Society. Enjoy this most welcome spring weather. We look forward to you visiting the Boutwell House and its new exhibits in the months ahead.

*John H. Ott
GHS President
Spring 2015*

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Art Historian Reveals Town Link to Richard Brunton, Itinerant Engraver and Forger

Judy Adams, Co-Chair Program Committee

About 30 attentive listeners gathered on the evening of May 5 at Legion Hall to hear Deborah M. Child tell the checkered story of Richard Brunton, soldier, engraver, forger of bank notes, and finally pauper who died in 1832 in the Groton Poor House. Deb is an art historian, researcher, independent curator, author, and lecturer whose interest in Brunton began with an intriguing reference to him found in a note on the provenance of a portrait sold at a Skinner auction. When she discovered Brunton had Groton connections, she visited our Boutwell House where GHS Program Co-chair Nancy Barringer overheard enough of Deb's conversation with Kara Fossey to know she had something Groton history buffs would want to hear. Deb entertained us with a PowerPoint program that detailed the steps she followed in uncovering the life of Richard Brunton. Her years of research culminated in a book published this spring, *Soldier, Engraver, Forger: Richard Brunton's Life on the Fringe in America's New Republic* (New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2015).



A watercolor memento mori with the names of two of Job Shattuck's grandchildren, attributed to Richard Brunton, was given to the Historical Society in 1902 by Elizabeth (Lawrence) Davis, sister to the dead children and the last living member of the Lawrence family. Photo by Carolyn Perkins.

Richard Brunton was born in 1749 in Birmingham, England, where he was probably apprenticed to an engraver, Deb said. Reliable records were hard to come by. He came to our shores with His Majesty's 38th Regiment of Foot, Grenadiers, and fought in many battles on the British side in the Revolution before deserting in 1779. From that time on he tried to make a living as an artist, painting portraits, murals, and coats of arms, making medallions of metal, and engraving plates for printing family registers, among other things. He moved between Massachusetts and Pennsylvania trading his services for room and board, and lived in Groton for a while with the



After her presentation, guest speaker Deborah Child autographed copies of her book on Richard Brunton.

Farwell family. Probably a need for a better livelihood prompted him to get into forgery – of both coins and banknotes. It is supposed that the discovery of some valuable metals at Corey's Mine in Pepperell originally drew him to this area. After a number of arrests and imprisonments, some in Connecticut, he was apprehended in 1807 as head of a widespread counterfeiting ring centered in Pepperell and sentenced to life imprisonment at the Massachusetts State Prison in Charlestown. In 1811 he made a plea for his own pardon and was released.

Deb told us how each bit of information about this enterprising rogue became a clue to more, and curiosity kept her following the leads. She found that in 1783, on one of his earlier sojourns in Groton, Brunton and his wife, Mary, had been warned out of town, a common move to protect the townspeople from having to support strangers. Years later, after his release from prison in Charlestown, he

Continued on page 6

Restoring Milestones *Continued from page 1*

Lowell Road, with three more stones placed northward along Old Dunstable Road--where the farthest placed marker was put, at five miles out.

It is not clear from the town records or from Virginia May just why the stones were installed along Groton roads. It may be related to the railroad as an indicator of how much farther passengers or goods needed to travel to meet the train on Station Avenue. But if that were the case, why not mile 0 at the train station instead of in front of Town Hall? Additional research might reveal the answer but that is outside the scope of this project.

May notes that in the 1950s, the Groton Historical Society installed several historic monuments around town and was instrumental in having the town repair or replace some damaged milestones. Her account conjures up a different era in Groton, where life moved at a slower pace. “The two-milestone on the Lowell Road that had been reposing on a nearby stone wall for some time was set back where it belonged,” she says. “The four-milestone on the Forge Road was broken off and completely gone. This was found in use as a doorstep at a camp on an island in Knops Pond, was removed from there with the assistance of the Chief of Police and set up in its proper place. The one-milestone on the Lowell Road was broken off during the summer and was reset soon afterward.”

Now more than fifty years later, the milestones of Groton were again in need of repair. This has been undertaken by the Groton Historical Commission, established in 1963 for the express purpose of preserving the historic assets of the town. In 2013 Michael LaTerz and George



Resetting by hand and crane.

Wheatley of the GHC conducted a thorough inspection and documented all of the 27 milestone locations. They also completed a Massachusetts Historical Commission Form C (Object) for each stone and recommended three kinds of treatment. Seventeen of these milestones would require some form of restoration, ranging from resetting stones that have settled or were tipped due to some mechanical disturbance to re-engraving the original lettering that had worn away as a result of road salting and natural weathering. Some of these stones would need rebuilding and some replaced. Two new stones would be needed and a third stone, stored at the Groton Historical Society, could be returned to its proper location.

CPA Funds Make Restoration Possible

With inventory in hand, the Historical Commission submitted its initial Community Preservation Act proposal to the Groton Community Preservation Commission in 2014; it was approved by the CPC and voted in favor at the Spring Town Meeting of 2014. Restoration work began almost immediately. I had the honor and responsibility of serving as Project Manager for this undertaking, and Groton Historical Commission members Michael LaTerz and George Wheatley served as project liaisons.

The 27 milestones are located along public roads coming from other towns. Most of the stones have been set on the right side of the road coming into town except where local conditions preclude such setting. This facilitates visibility from a wagon or buggy coming into town. All are currently on public property so the Historical Commission and its contractors/consultants did not need to gain access to private property for any part of the proposed restoration work. In some cases the milestones have had the area



Reset milestone is re-engraved prior to being “drawn in black.”

Continued on page 5

Restoring Milestones Continued from page 4

surrounding them maintained by adjacent property owners. But many of the stones had an abundance of overgrowth around them, which required site preparation prior to any removal and resetting.

Each stone stands between 2 and 5 feet above ground; variations noted during the inventory were presumed due to settling. Each stone is approximately 20 inches wide and 6 inches deep. The upper, front face starting from the top edge extending downward by approximately 20 inches is roughly finished. In the center area of this finished surface there is a four-line engraved inscription like this:

**TO
GROTON
2 M.
1902**

The first phase of the project included clearing and cleaning the 13 milestone locations that only required resetting or new installation.

Landworks Landscaping of Groton, MA, cleared brush, weeds, saplings, leaves, sticks and other debris from an area with a minimum radius of 5 feet from each of the mile markers designated in the Project Work Plan.

In some cases site prep was not necessary. Stones were reset in accordance with vendor best practices. Garside Monuments of Westford, MA, used a flatbed truck with crane to

pull tension on the milestones needing resetting. Workers with hand tools excavated sufficient material to return the stones to their original upright position, then repacked material around them.

Some milestones required just re-engraving, and that was accomplished on site with special equipment.

The last phase included the remanufacture, site preparation, and installation of one broken and one missing milestone, also the return of a “lost” milestone formerly stored at the Groton Historical Society. Upon completion of the project, the Historical Commission Liaisons and Project Manager inspected each milestone to ensure all quoted work had been completed.

Yet to be done is to have the lettering made more visible—“drawn in black,” per the original Selectmen’s request in the Town Meeting Warrant of 1902. The GHS submitted a follow-up proposal this year for a CTA grant to secure

funding to do just that—to complete the remaining work on the milestones. Happily, at the Spring Town Meeting 2015, voters resoundingly approved the GHC request.

The Project Completion Report with images will soon be available at the Groton Public Library. Our challenge for the future will be to maintain visibility of these stones – any ideas? Your challenge is to try to find them all! ■



Can you find me?

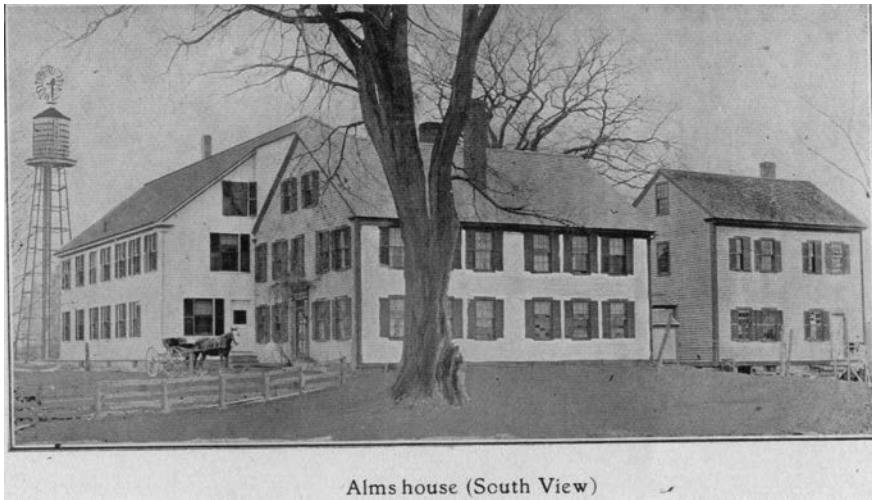
Eagle Scout Project in the Works

The Groton Historical Society is delighted that GDRHS student Brent Emerle has chosen the society as his Eagle Scout service project beneficiary. Brent has begun compiling information on historical markers and sites in town so that he can create a publicly accessible website that maps these locations, provides driving or walking directions, and offers additional historical information. The end product, tentatively scheduled to go live in the fall, will be a great resource for those interested in exploring Groton’s history. Thanks, Brent!

HOW TO REACH US:

By Phone: 978-448-0092 **By Email:** info@grotonhistoricalsociety.org

Online: www.grotonhistoricalsociety.org



The Groton almshouse, last resting place of Richard Brunton, was run by the Overseers of the Poor from 1822 to the end of the 1920s. This photo was taken in 1903. Photo courtesy of Leon Avey.

was designated a state pauper so the town, with state support, found him a place to board. He was housed in the Groton almshouse when it opened in 1822 and there he died ten years later. He was probably buried in the Poor Farm Cemetery, location now unknown.

Brunton's art works are scattered in many institutions. The Groton Historical Society has two objects attributed to him: a woodblock for stamping textiles gifted to the GHS in 1894 by Mary Williams Shattuck, a descendant of Job Shattuck, and a watercolor commemorating the death of two grandchildren of Job Shattuck, given in 1902 by Elizabeth Lawrence Davis.

To learn more about this fascinating life, read Deborah Child's book. ■

Sophie Modzelewski Completes Senior Internship with Film Honoring Marion Stoddart

A reception at Boutwell House on Wednesday April 29th marked the debut of a documentary film made by GDRHS senior Sophia Modzelewski called *Marion Stoddart: The Woman Who Saved the Nashua River*. The screening of the film was the culmination of a semester's work on Sophie's part to meet her high school requirement for a senior internship. Marion and Sophie spent hours in conversation with the video camera running, after which Sophie edited down the filmed segments into a 43-minute documentary. Before showing the film, Sophie thanked Marion, her mother, and GHS curator Bobbie Spiegelman for their help and support. The audience, which included Sophie's parents, Joe and Patti Modzelewski, several GHS board members, and Marion and Hugh Stoddart, was full of praise for Sophie's tribute to one of Groton's most notable residents. Sophie had consulted on several occasions with Bobbie Spiegelman and, at the reception, presented her with a CD of the film to add to the GHS collection of oral interviews. She will attend DePaul University in Chicago in the fall. – Carolyn Perkins



Left: Hugh and Marion Stoddart have front-row seats at the film debut.

Right: Sophie with GHS curator Bobbie Spiegelman. Photos by Carolyn Perkins.



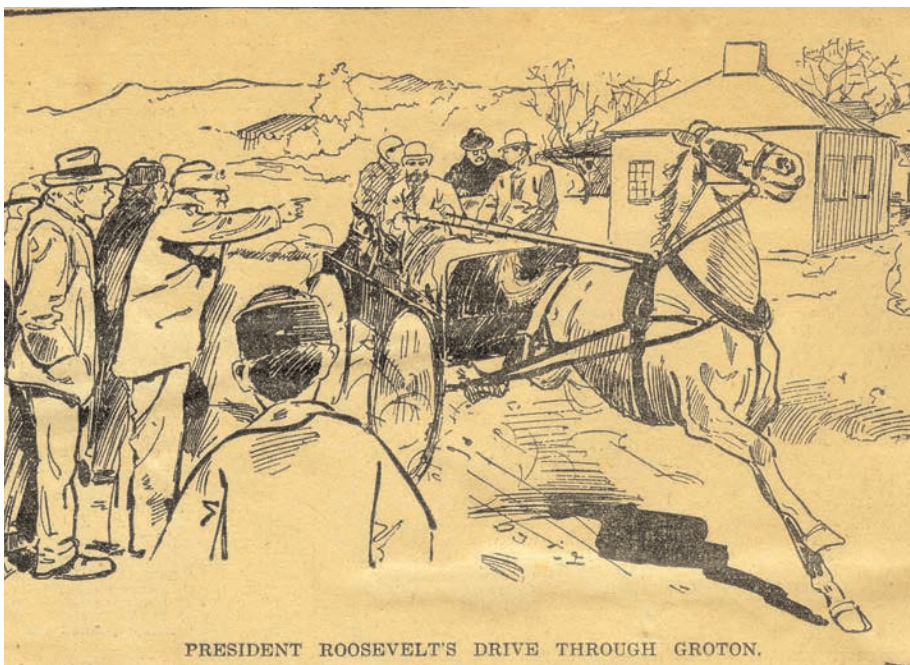
Did You Know...

that for four days during February 1902, the U.S. presidency was conducted from Groton, MA? When Teddy Roosevelt, Jr., then a Groton School student, fell ill with double pneumonia, President Theodore Roosevelt rushed to Groton to be by his son's bedside. Mrs. Roosevelt had arrived two days earlier. The President, his personal secretary, George Cortelyou, and two secret service agents left by train from Washington, D.C., at 12:24 a.m. on February 9 and arrived in Groton via Boston and Ayer in the early afternoon of February 10. A crowd of 1500 people had gathered in Ayer to catch a glimpse of the President, while barely 25 people met him at the Groton train station. From there, the traveling party was driven in a "democrat wagon" (the typical open-seated rig of rural New England) at top speed through the mud for a mile and a half to the school grounds.

The President consulted with the three doctors attending "Little Teddy." They were Dr. Alexander Lambert, the President's personal physician from New York; Dr. F.C. Shattuck of Boston; and Dr. William B. Warren of Groton. Based on what he heard, Roosevelt decided to remain in Groton until his son was out of danger. He and Mrs. Roosevelt stayed in the home of William Amory Gardner just outside the grounds of Groton School. The President's private railroad car -- "Rambler" -- stayed sidetracked at the Groton station with "steam up" in case the President decided at any moment to return to Washington. By February 13, Teddy was past the crisis stage of pneumonia and the President returned home.

– Liz Strachan

Note: This poignant story, gleaned from newspaper clippings found in the pages of a scrapbook belonging to Charles Shattuck of Groton, is one of many coming to light as our volunteers sort through the large collection of documents in the GHS archives.



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GHS MEMBERSHIP FORM

Annual Individual / Family	\$35
Annual GHS Sponsor	\$75
Corporate Sponsor	\$250
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7 Did You Know . . . Teddy Roosevelt in Groton 1902

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Coming Up....Save the Date

Tuesday July 21 at 6 pm: The GHS Annual Summer Ramble

This year's Summer Ramble will explore the landmarks and local industry in West Groton. We'll meet at 6 pm Tuesday evening at the Clover Farm General Store in West Groton Square. After a short introduction, we'll carpool up Townsend Road to the Hollingsworth & Vose papermaking plant for our first stop and then tour several other examples of the area's most notable and historic buildings. We'll cap off the evening with wonderful homemade ice cream made by Tom Callahan

For more information, please check the GHS website or call Program Committee member Lili Ott at 978-448-1192

***Check our website for more details:
www.grotonhistoricalsociety.org***

Then and Now

Volume 16, Number 3

Summer/Fall 2015

Newsletter of the Groton Historical Society [Est. 1894]

Celebrating West Groton -- The 2015 Summer Ramble

Lili Ott

Each summer, often on a steamy day in the middle of July, intrepid tour guides from the Historical Society escort curious groups of residents around sites of special relevance to Groton's history. This year was no exception. On Tuesday evening July 21 the 2015 Summer Ramble brought together a hardy group of 48 people to brave the heat and humidity to tour five historic sites in West Groton.

First stop on the Ramble was the Hollingsworth & Vose paper mill on Townsend Road. The company was established in 1852 and has been in operation since then, today part of a global conglomerate headquartered in Walpole, MA. Environmental and Safety Manager Kathy Puff passed around the current products produced by the 220 people working at the local plant, including air filters for cars and filters for respirators.

Next was a visit to St. James Church, built in 1929 by the West Groton parishioners with the leadership and help of their priest Rev. Edward Mitchell. Judy Adams, GHS board member and longtime church organist, played the Stevens pipe organ to welcome us into the lovely space and demonstrate its range of sound. The organ had been bought in 1929 from a Boston church and restored in the 1990s by the Andover Organ Company where Judy had once worked as an organ builder. Current parishioner Margaret Connolly told stories of the church, past and present.

The Carvers' Guild, housed in the former Thompson Mill buildings on Cannery Row, was the next stop.

Owner Carl Canner discussed the origins and history of the company he founded with his wife, Carol, in 1970. Carol talked about her designs for mirrors and showed examples of the

bird, plant and floral mirror frames made at Carvers' Guild. Participants were struck by the 400 frames in current production and the complexity of the frames and the shipping arrangements, as well as the impressive client list. One participant exclaimed, "Who knew this was all here in Groton?"

The rambles now crossed West Groton Square to the other side of the Rt. 225 bridge over the Squannacook River to take shelter in the shade of the old brick Leatherboard factory buildings that are now RiverCourt, a residential retirement community. Margaret Perras, Sr. Director of RiverCourt Community Relations, welcomed the group with a wine and cheese reception, and all admired the lovely view of the waterfall and saw both the trace for the water power as well as the 1916 building housing the large mechanisms that once powered the Leatherboard machinery. The site was listed on the



Visit to Hollingsworth and Vose.



Visit to Carvers' Guild. All photos by Carolyn Perkins.

National Register of Historic Places in 2002, the same year that RiverCourt opened.

The group's last stop was Christian Union Church on West Main Street, where member Carole Clark described the building of the church by subscription in 1885 and pointed out the stained glass windows given by .

Continued on page 5

Main Street View: Looking Back to the Road Ahead

It was once thought that the practice of “looking backward” could only bring bad luck or ill fortune, but as I look back and reflect on the last four years as President of the Groton Historical Society, the progress this small non-profit history organization has achieved is nothing short of amazing. The road to recovery seemed so far off that winter in 2010, when water pipes burst in the Boutwell House wreaking havoc and damage to the Society’s headquarters building and its collections. Now seeing that same structure carefully restored and functioning once again as the town’s history center underscores the value many citizens, Society members and preservationists placed on this organization and its work.



To try and thank all the people, organizations, town commissions, Selectmen and businesses and contractors who helped in this recovery effort would be impossible. What it points up, however, is that the citizens of Groton care about the town’s history both past and present. It’s also important to think about the partnerships that have formed out of all this reconstructive effort. We now have meaningful relationships with the Groton Woman’s Club, the Groton Garden Club, the Friends of the Trees, the Groton Public Library, Freedom’s Way National Heritage Area, and several local community foundations and Cultural Councils, all helping to support our educational and historical initiatives.

Besides making our building accessible to visitors in a physical sense, we are actively working on a number of on-going research projects to make our collections just as accessible by joining organizations like the Boston Public Library’s Digital Commonwealth Program, which has digitized 50 maps from the Boutwell Collection and put them online for public use. In addition the Society continues to generously lend artifacts and archival materials to other historical societies and libraries, offering Civil War relics, early documents, and photographic images for exhibition and publication. It is also worth noting that much of the Society-sponsored research is focused on making the extensive correspondence of the Boutwell family, much of which is centered on Groton, available to public historians and genealogists.

Impact of Long Range Planning

In looking at our success it is also clear to me that without the extensive Long Range Planning effort begun in 2012 and adopted by the Board of Directors shortly thereafter, we couldn’t have achieved all we have. Receiving a major Community Preservation Grant and a State Cultural Facilities grant were successful outcomes of the planning endeavor. Creating an inviting work environment for volunteers and a meeting space for members has made the Boutwell House a pleasant and comfortable place.

And then there are the programs, tours, lectures, and newsletters that have taken on an air of professionalism with engaging speakers or subjects that continue to attract new members and inform them about local history. Fortunately we also have a wonderful line of support through the Groton Commissioners of Trust Funds helping us maintain the caliber of those programs, for which we are exceedingly grateful.

As the Society moves forward under new leadership in the year ahead I give thanks to our volunteers for all their hours of work sorting, cleaning, cataloguing, researching and promoting the collections, archival resources and materials under our stewardship. They are an amazing group of men and women who have helped make over this historical society and made my job as President much easier. As I turn over the reins of this organization to a new team, I want to thank them and you, our members, for your generosity, your belief in our mission and your friendship. This summer’s series of Open Houses showed visitors some of the treasured possessions we hold in trust and the excitement they hold. I hope with Fall now upon us that the smell of food from the new kitchen and smoke from the chimney of the Boutwell House will be a reminder of what this well-managed home means and what we have accomplished with your support. I also hope it will be the window on what lies ahead for the Groton History Center. Take care and please accept Lili’s and my best wishes for the Society’s future success.

*John H. Ott, President, GHS, 2010-2015
October 2015*

Ed. Note: This is John Ott’s final Main Street View column for the newsletter. John and Lili are retiring to Maine this fall, where they will undoubtedly share their skills and love of historical preservation with other lucky organizations.

Production of *Then and Now* is made possible in part by generous donations from Middlesex Savings Bank and from Kris Kramer, Realtor, EXIT Assurance Realty, 161 Main Street, Groton, MA 01450 -- 978.807.7317 -- www.EXITassurance.com.

Living in West Groton Then and Now

Nancy Barringer

When I moved to Groton in 1981, I thought the town appeared as if it were still 1971 or even 1961. Driving down Main Street, there was a very old inn, a brick post office, two drugstores (one with a soda fountain!), lots of old houses and schools and churches. A little library and an Academy on a hill. Tractors drawing loads of hay in very little traffic. Small shops and businesses without a chain store for miles in any direction.

West Groton was even more of a time trip. Traveling down Long Hill Road and over the Nashua River into West Groton, I found within the space of two miles a turkey farm (Fantasy Acres), a butcher (Blood Farm), a fire station, two churches (Christian Union and St. James), two B&B's (Wheatley's and Wrangling Brook) a store (Clover Farm), a post office (zip code 01472 ?- imagine having two zip codes in Groton!), a tumbledown livery, the Carvers' Guild, two mills (one seriously busy ?- Hollingsworth & Vose -- and one closed and decrepit ?- the Leatherboard), another river (the Squannacook) with a waterfall, a bridge, railroad tracks, two playing fields (Cutler and H&V), a water department, an airfield and a conservation area (with a rope swing into the water) -? and so close to my first house it looked like mine, the Scully Auto Garage. On the wind, the bells of Groton School could be heard and the whistles blowing at H&V told us all when it was starting time, lunch time, and quitting time. A freight train slowly rumbled up to H&V weekly to unload then went back to Ayer. Streets signs were missing. When I telephoned my next door neighbor, I got the Groton School infirmary.



Sign on Clover Farm store reading CABOT, MASS. is part of the temporary makeover of West Groton Square for shooting a scene for the movie School Ties in 1991. Photo by Nancy Barringer.

There was no hiding from the neighbors since the houses were so close together you could see and hear quite a bit. I loved sitting in my dining room and watching George and Peggy Moore's horses in their paddock. Because of the closeness, it was a great neighborhood for trick or treating. You could make a lot of stops in one hour. It was the neighbors that made life interesting. On the snowy day that my husband, George, and I moved into our neglected 1890's house, we found the sidewalk shoveled. This was thanks to my next door neighbor, Gert Scully, already into her retirement years.

Gert's husband, Basil, was a character with a capital C. Basil was an auto mechanic who loved to regale you with stories about all things vehicular. He told about intentionally putting gasoline into the exhaust of a car and driving down Townsend Road producing stupendous explosions that could raise a person out of their porch swing. In his garage he had a 1934 Aston Martin Serial 4 which he later sold to the British millionaire who owned Mars candy, and it was shipped back across the Atlantic. There was an MG TC, a Citroen Traction, a 1930's Hispano Suiza limousine, and an old fire engine stored for the town.

The word went around the neighborhood when we moved in that we were "yuppies" that drove foreign cars (a VW Rabbit) but George was a country boy who had grown up working on farms and driving trucks so he sincerely connected with our hard-working/hands-working neighbors. We got to know more neighbors at the Clover Farm store, locally called Sherwin's (Lonnie, Win, Babe and Sis) and at our tiny post office. As I got out in front of the P.O. one day, Officer Irm Pierce observed me locking my car and said, "You're not from around here, are you?"

Even then, since George and I continued to commute for several years until I was home with my son Ned, we missed out on a lot of news. On our first Labor Day weekend in West Groton, we were gratefully lying abed one morning when it seemed every siren in the county started screaming. Panicking, I knew World War III had started and pulled the curtains open to see a line of fire trucks and emergency vehicles going up Townsend Road. But wait, the vehicle occupants were throwing candy to the crowds on the sidewalk! No global conflict but the annual Labor Day Muster was making its way up to H&V Field for festivities. I eventually regained my senses and have happily joined the crowds every year since.

In 1991, the post office, the store, and the entire intersection were transformed into a 1950's town called "Cabot, Massachusetts" for the filming of one scene in the movie School Ties, starring Brendan Fraser. Even traffic signs were changed. Extras driving period cars and pedaling an

Continued on page 6

Groton Butterflies Go To Harvard University

Bobbie Spiegelman, GHS Curator

Some of you will remember the stocky, oak butterfly case, once a property of the Groton Public Library, which sat in its own corner of what we call the Red Room at Boutwell House. Its presence rarely got acknowledged due to the lack of familiarity with its history and/or its contents. It contained some 250 butterflies collected locally, mounted individually, and fully identified by their collector, one Mr. William N. Souther. Once the GHS board started to covet the space occupied by said case, the quest was on to determine if the best fit for this collection was at Boutwell House or some other more suitable locale.

I began an investigation into how GHS became owners of the case and the value of its contents. We soon learned that there wasn't much information about the owner or his University's Department of Comparative Zoology was



Drawer of Denton-mounted specimens is just one of fifteen that fill the 26-inch-wide 18-inch-deep 42-inch high wooden cabinet holding the Souther butterfly collection.

Photos by Carolyn Perkins.



quite interested in examining the collection background except that he was a Groton resident in the late 19th and early part of the 20th century, a taxidermist by trade, and that Harvard University's Department of Comparative Zoology was quite interested in examining the collection.

On July 9, 2014, Rod Eastwood, an associate at the department, along with Naomi Pierce, The Sidney A. and John H. Hensel Professor of Biology and faculty-curator at the Museum of Comparative Zoology (MCZ), came to the Boutwell House and spent a few hours carefully reviewing the multiple specimens and throwing around language that only a lepidopterist would recognize. At the end of the session, they were clear that this collection was potentially valuable to Harvard once it was determined that many of the specimens were collected locally by Mr. Souther. I was able to find a document online from Psyche [a journal of entomology founded in 1874] that confirmed that many of the specimens in the collection were indeed from the Groton area and collected by William Souther. There was no question at this juncture that the case full of butterflies and moths, captured and mounted by Souther sometime in the early part of the 20th century, belonged in the elite group of approximately 200,000 butterflies housed at the MCZ.

Shortly thereafter, our board voted to donate the case, in relatively decent condition but requiring some repair, and the very well-preserved, Denton-mounted lepidopterae to the esteemed institution where they both would get the professional attention they deserved and would, most likely, join their online collection

(<http://mczbase.mcz.harvard.edu>) at some point in the future. Dr. Eastwood's comprehensive assessment, sent to GHS shortly after his visit to Boutwell House, satisfied our need to know that this collection, once a neglected item in our overall collection, would benefit a wider scientific audience. He said in his report: "The Museum of Comparative Zoology (MCZ) is certainly interested in the collection because of its scientific value. Data associated with the specimens are useful for researchers studying the effects of climate change, land use changes, and pollination, etc." Dr. Eastwood also said that the wooden cabinet and its contents "would make a nice MCZ exhibit, as part of a broader butterfly exhibit, showing one of the alternative methods of preparing and exhibiting specimens in the late 19th century."

Anyone interested in reading about how the collection at Harvard is digitized can check out our web site where Dr. Eastwood's article in Massachusetts Butterflies can be found.

Celebrating West Groton Continued from page 1

the Bixby, Shepley and Blood families. Then Carole played the small pump organ which filled the entire church with music. The group adjourned to the Parish Hall at the back of the church for delicious helpings of homemade blueberry cheesecake ice cream, a specialty of GHS member Tom Callahan. The Ramble ended with special thanks to all the

members of the hospitality and program committee as well as the hosts who made this such a successful evening.



Visit to St. James Church



Music at Christian Union Church.

The Village of West Groton

[From a Report prepared for the Massachusetts Historical Commission by Sanford Johnson, Consultant to Groton Historic Commission, October 2006. Photo of Thompson Mill Pond and Carvers' Guild by Barbara Murray.]

West Groton is an industrial and residential village which owes its existence to its water power and to the building of the Peterboro and Shirley railroad in 1847. . . . It is the town's principal village outside the larger Groton Center.

Prior to 1847, West Groton was sparsely settled. . . .

Industrial activity increased with the construction of the railroad. . . . Construction of the [paper] mills in the village as well as the railroad encouraged the establishment of the West Groton Post Office in 1850.

[For a long time] settlement of the village remained densely gathered around the mills and the junction of West Main Street, Pepperell and Townsend Roads. . . .

The intersection of streets in front of the [Clover Farm] store, the bridge over the Squannacook and the former leatherboard mill adjacent to the south are primarily responsible for the character of the village.



Living in West Groton Continued from page 3

old Schwinn rolled up and down Townsend Road until a bus arrived at the bridge and the school coach, played by Kevin Tighe, picked up the new student (Brendan Fraser) in his woodie station wagon and drove off to the prep school. Huge trailers were parked in front of my house and the extras sat on my stone wall. I have a photo album with snaps from that day, and Janet Shea, the present owner of Clover Farm, took a video.

Indeed, the decades have passed but West Groton is still a thriving home to even more people in new homes and a retirement residence. Long-time businesses and new ones (Chris Broughton runs his carpentry business from my old house) continue the tradition of a close-knit community between two rivers.

It's All About Food: Current Boutwell House Exhibit

Bobbie Spiegelman, GHS Curator

For our most-recent exhibit at the Historical Society, we wanted to capitalize on the current obsession with food in our culture these days and to highlight our beautifully restored kitchen at the same time. Boutwell House has always had a large number of kitchen-related odds and ends that were never really organized in an exhibit-ready fashion. After the severe water damage to the kitchen ceiling in 2010, those artifacts were carefully documented and stored away by board member Bonnie Carter while the kitchen area was restored.

It was this collection that we drew from to mount our current exhibit, designing it to reflect the foodstuffs that were—and are—common to our region. John Ott provided numerous objects from his own collection, and we gathered resource material from our local libraries. The end result gave us a new appreciation for our kitchen artifacts as well as the origin of the food that's grown locally on our farms and orchards and continue to be relished each time we sit down to a meal.

The exhibit was the star attraction at our four Open

Houses this summer. In the Yellow Room are artifacts that relate to foodstuffs that would have been prepared in kitchens through most of the Victorian era – breads, cheeses, apple pies, even beer from local hops. Highlights of the display are Shaker wares, implements used in the kitchen, scales, open-hearth tools, even a “tin kitchen” (a reflector oven set on the hearth).

One pass-through to the kitchen has period cookbooks on one side (featuring recipes for Indian pudding) and advice for dealing with “verminous creatures” on the other. A cabinet in the other pass-through contains the Boutwell china. The wonderfully restored kitchen has as its centerpiece an 1895 Smith and Anthony HUB Model wood-fired cookstove, marking the mid-century transition in American kitchens from cooking in large open fireplaces to cooking and baking in cast-iron stoves. The Boutwell House kitchen also has a “new” soapstone sink, a wooden ice chest, and an authentic wooden baby's highchair.

The exhibit on Victorian foodstuffs is ongoing. As a special treat, the HUB stove will be fired up to prepare mulled cider for all those lucky enough to be present at the GHS Annual Meeting on October 6.

An Invitation to the Exhibit

There are things we remember about people, places, and times--things that stay with us because they comforted us, challenged us, or changed us. Our food memories are no exception: a favorite family tradition, a stubborn recipe, and a return to locally sourced goods.

While this exhibit focuses heavily on the tools that were used in New England kitchens in the 19th century, it's actually much more about the food. In fact, it's all about the food: what was available, how it was prepared, how it was stored, how it dictated the design of the tools used to work it, and how its uses changed with advances in technology and increased commercialization. Despite these developments, the very action of sharing, communing, and connecting around food remains a constant.

--Kara Fossey, GHS Exhibits Consultant



*Foodstuffs exhibit in the Yellow Room.
Photo by C. David Gordon.*

HOW TO REACH US:

By Phone: 978-448-0092 **By Email:** info@grotonhistoricalsociety.org

Online: www.grotonhistoricalsociety.org

Did You Know...

that Gibbet Hill, where tradition has it that “in the olden days,” Indians were once hanged (probably a myth), where General William A. Bancroft built a stone bungalow for a summer residence, where a private hospital and later a government hospital for disabled veterans stood, and where once the KKK burned a cross, was also, for a few short years, the location for the Groton Hunt Club’s clubhouse?

During the late 1920s, after General Bancroft had died and the hospital had closed, Mrs. Richard Danielson, co-Master of the Groton Hunt along with her husband, who had founded the club, purchased about 35 acres of the land and leased it to the club to develop into a center of activities.

The old hospital was remodeled to become the clubhouse. It was completed and occupied in the fall of 1931. The complex had a steward, a kitchen, sleeping quarters, a long porch, and trails. It was used for post-hunt breakfasts, a meeting place, and for parties and dances. For several years, after the annual Thanksgiving hunt, a ball was held at the clubhouse and members and the owners of the land over which the riders rode danced until dawn.

-E. S



The photo, taken in the early 1930s, is of a very young Zoë (Comminos) Eleftherio seated on the clubhouse steps with her babysitter. Photo courtesy of Zoë Eleftherio.



The Groton Hunt on Thanksgiving Day in 1965 gathering in front of the Groton Inn before parading down Main Street.

[Learn more about the Groton Hunt at the Society’s upcoming program on Tuesday October 20 at Legion Hall.]

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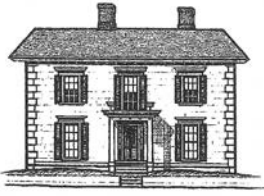
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Bobbie Spiegelman

6 It's All About Food: Current Boutwell House Exhibit

Bobbie Spiegelman and Kara Fossey

7 Did You Know . . . the Hunt Club Met on Gibbet Hill

Coming Up....Save the Date

Tuesday October 20th | 7:00 PM | Legion Hall

THE HUNT CLUB EXPERIENCE IN GROTON

Join us for a special program on the Hunt Club's activities in Groton from the early 1920s to the mid-1960s, presented by folks who rode in the Hunt. Give heed to the chase – “ride to the hounds” through a small portion of Groton history. Many photos on exhibit.

Refreshments to follow.

December 1: From Ginger to Jell-O: Unexpected Christmas History

Join us as food blogger and Community Engagement Manager at Historic Newton, Clara Silverstein, presents a program about the history of Christmas celebrations in Massachusetts through popular foods of the earlier centuries. Details to be announced.

Check our website for more details:

www.grotonhistoricalsociety.org

Earl Carter's Mission: Connecting People With Their History

C. David Gordon

Earl Carter, Groton Historical Society member for over 20 years and Curator for several years, has done a great deal to help townspeople make contact with physical pieces of Groton's history. He likes to think that this will help them learn something of the town's lengthy history.

The Cannon: Most recently it was the Revolutionary War era cannon he restored, which drew a multitude of viewers at Grotonfest in September and richly earned him a hero's consideration in area newspaper articles. The saga of the 1400-lb. cannon he restored is fascinating itself even with some puzzles he has encountered when studying its history. Four cannons were taken by the colonials from the foundering British gunboat *Diana* in the May 1775 Battle of Chelsea Creek and later quite possibly used against the British at Bunker Hill. One of the four eventually landed in Groton, the colonials having successfully kept it hidden from British sweeps inland to regain it and confiscate any other ordnance and ammunition. The story of how Earl came upon it, restored it, then painstakingly constructed a historically accurate gun carriage to replace the old deteriorated one makes for good reading. Earl estimates he had spent about 1,500 hours "on research and restoration."

The cannon with its carriage now resides temporarily in Earl's very nicely fitted out home machine shop. He has had requests from at least three museums to house it, given the good shape it is in. However, he said in a recent inter-



Earl Carter and Revolutionary War cannon he restored.
Photo by C. David Gordon.

view, "I'd like to see it in Groton." But it must be stored inside a building to protect it from the weather; it must be "secure and safe."

Meanwhile, in answer to calls for its appearance here and there, Earl takes it on the road. It may go as far as Concord next April.

He seems to relish projects that get him to carry out historical research and learn what he has to do to restore a complicated artifact or mechanism. To build a carriage for the cannon, he looked for appropriate wood and found not the white oak normally used, but the very wood left over from use on the *U.S.S. Constitution*, aged early-growth live oak. Then he had to create the forge and proper heating material so that he could make new metal fittings.

The Clock: Another project driving him to research and then patiently carrying out new skills had to do with restoring to working order the clock and bell ringing mechanism in the bell tower at First Parish Church of Groton, the Groton Meetinghouse. With a thorough study of the mechanism in hand, he pried loose a weight that had fallen and repaired damage, fabricated new parts, including forging a critical regulating cogwheel, added new



Earl and Mike Roberts in the Myseum in 2010. Photo by C. David Gordon.

Main Street View: New Look, New Ties to the Town

It's been a year since I stood in front of an enthusiastic audience at the Boutwell House accepting my nomination as president of the Groton Historical Society. What a year it has been! We embarked on our plan to restore the interior of the House and reach out to town by seeking funding, finding contractors and craftsmen, enlisting the support of our Board members, developing a calendar of events, working with community organizations and attending to other more-mundane tasks, all the while trying to keep our daily operation moving along.

Boutwell House is nearly finished with its makeover, and we're preparing to open the doors to the public as part of the Groton Community School Home Tour on November 19th. [Note: this is a ticketed event. Please go to www.grotoncommunityschool.org/home-tour/ for details.] Our presence on the Home Tour will be the first step in celebrating our new look, our new identity as the Groton History Center, and our renewed connection to our community.

Lots of work has gone into this revival besides the superficial changes. Much credit for a renewed sense of mission goes to a dedicated and hard-working Board of Directors. They endorsed the agenda and worked to implement the directives. We added Beverly Smith to the mix and she has been a source of energy and focus. She's heading our



On September 24, Grotonfest, our town's annual fall roundup of community groups, entertainment, and great food, brought many visitors to Legion Common, including State Rep. Sheila Harrington, seen here talking with GHS board member Nancy Barringer at the Society's booth. Our cider donuts disappeared almost as fast as they were put out. Photo by C. David Gordon.

volunteer efforts and development initiatives, two areas that have been neglected in the past. Kara Fossey, our dependable house consultant, contributed her creative and clear-thinking ideas to our planning in addition to carrying on with her other responsibilities.

Growing our membership enrollment demanded special attention this year, and Liz Strachan and Carolyn Perkins stepped up to assume the task. We have been adding new members steadily all year. Our quest to enlist more business sponsors is showing promise, and successful grant applications have helped to steer money in a meaningful direction.

I must also recognize the community organizations that have enthusiastically embraced collaboration and joined our in-house efforts. The Groton Garden Club has celebrated our restoration and is excited to decorate for the GCS Home Tour in November and our first official Open House in December. Vanessa Abraham and Susanne Olson at the Groton Public library worked with me to coordinate our organizations' resources to support visiting researchers, and Nancy Barringer has partnered with Lauren Sanchez, head of adult programming at the library, to develop programs that benefit both organizations. Tammie Reynolds, history teacher at GDRHS and local history enthusiast, has connected her curriculum work to the Groton History Center, and we continue to pursue plans to bring our youth into the picture in a more engaged way.

We've had a remarkable year attracting young people outside of the formal relationship formed through the high school. An Eagle Scout project in the spring gave us an opportunity to beautify our back garden. Architectural documents, unorganized and relatively inaccessible, found definition this summer through the work of a high school junior who followed his passion to our doors. And our textile collection, seemingly locked away in a trunk forever, came out of the dark and got a bit more organized thanks to a newly graduated library science-trained student.

Our new logo and name—the Groton History Center—reflects a freshness to our mission that is beginning to reverberate throughout the community. There is much to celebrate within our doors and beyond. We welcome you to join in the celebration and become more invested in our future, both near and distant.

*Bobbie Spiegelman
President, GHS
October 2016*

The End is Near as Boutwell House Gets Paint, Paper and Carpets

Al Collins

The End is Near! I'm not saying this as a Doomsday advocate, but as a very happy project manager seeing the major restoration project of Boutwell House come to an end. For about six months we have been constantly relocating artifacts from room to room as contractors move through the house plying their trade to bring Boutwell back to its original 1851 glory. A project that has been most exciting to everyone involved is now coming to a splendid end.

Interior painting throughout has been completed, and the dining room and the Grant bedroom have been prepared to accept special period wallpaper. Dan Lowney Painting of Groton has done a great job in meticulously prepping and painting each room in an authentic historic color. When we first started selecting a color palette for the project, we thought we should carry a consistent color scheme throughout the house. As we researched this thought, we discovered that in the late 1800's interior design was in a bit of turmoil. Quite often each room had a different theme and color scheme so we decided to follow what history has told us. Though the rooms have substantially different wall colors, we used the same trim color throughout in an effort to pull it all together.

Carpeting has been installed by S&R Carpet of Littleton who worked extra hard to help us select and coordinate



With consummate skill Dan Lowney applies custom wallpaper to the Boutwell House dining room walls. Photo by C. David Gordon.

the weaving of our very special historically accurate woolen carpeting. Woven abroad, the carpeting took additional time to receive but as of this writing, all carpeting has been installed and it looks spectacular. The main staircase carpet runner was a true challenge for the installers. Each step is unique in size and shape so the runner had to be cut and edge banded separately for each step. Next time you're touring

the house pay special attention to the beautiful staircase best

viewed from the upper hall. We are very lucky to have such an exceptional feature adorn the main hallway. The dining room area carpet is also special as it represents simplicity in an era of design chaos. It should go wonderfully with the new dining room table and extraordinary wall covering.

Waiting for the wallpaper for the dining room and the Grant bedroom caused me some stress, but it has finally arrived, and Dan Lowney will have installed it before the Groton Community School Home Tour in November. They are both patterns that could not be pulled off a warehouse shelf and were special-ordered through John Burrows of Rockland, MA, and printed in the UK exclusively for the Boutwell House project.

Lighting is being installed by Randy O'Grady Electric of Groton. Randy and his crew have done an outstanding job of adding electricity to areas of need in Boutwell House while respecting the historic nature of the house. Period lighting fixtures were selected from inventory of late 1800's fixtures at Yankee Craftsman Lighting of Wayland. Yankee disassembled, cleaned, repaired, polished, re-wired and re-assembled each of the fixtures ensuring safe operation and stunning appearance. Though most of our new period fixtures were originally gas powered, Yankee has been able to electrify them while retaining the appearance of gas fixtures. O'Grady Electric is carefully hanging each fixture trying to replicate the lighting that George



Beautiful wool carpeting covers the downstairs hallway, the entire staircase, and the upstairs hallway. Photo by Al Collins.

Continued on page 6

bushings, cleaned the entire mechanism, and replaced with metal cable a rope cable that he'd found had been positioned in backwards. He even placed steel supports under a set of stairs leading up to the clock. His estimate is a total of 600 hours spent on that project. This project puts citizens in contact with a mechanism they can count on for keeping accurate time and sounding the hours, provided it's properly wound up. Earl began his look into the history of the Old Meetinghouse while on the Building and Grounds Committee at the church.

The Schoolhouse: Earl also had a great deal to do with the project to restore the Chicopee Row Schoolhouse, which involved many different tasks. Through the efforts of several helpers, the building was raised up and all new fittings and a foundation added to replace the original piled-up stones. New sills were prepared in his workshop, he said. The woodshed and outhouses were rebuilt, with wide granite stepping stones added. A stone wall was constructed along the side and back of the property and a fence erected across the front along Chicopee Row. Earl also made safe the housing and restored the pump mechanism of the well located near the school building.

Before restoration, he said, "very little was left from the original school" either for furniture or schoolroom paraphernalia. As period student desks were acquired, he restored them. While cleaning the original wood floor he discovered how beautiful the wood was so he sanded and oiled the floor boards. In addition, he restored the wood stove and donated a bell from his collection.

Resourceful Curator and Caretaker

Earl has been a valued mentor of the Groton Historical Society and Boutwell House over the years. Early on he saw the need for installation of a security alarm system and of smoke and fire alarms, which happened during his tenure as Curator. Also while serving as curator he found the main storage area in the attic in chaos. He fashioned shelving for the quantity of collection items he searched through and organized. Among his findings were materials from Sarah Boutwell's family and a number of embroidered samplers done by girls in the community. He was able to sort out a few valuable artifacts with no connection at all to town or national history and, with Board permission to deaccession them, managed to realize considerable added funding important for the organization.

From the first, Earl had been oriented toward building and grounds upkeep, let alone programs and collections. In fact, he could say without boasting, that for a number of years, "everything that happened there I was involved in." He has seen to the maintenance of the Society's Torrent One, Groton's first fire apparatus, and to the stagecoach and other historical machinery in the Carriage House.

In 2010, it was Earl, the man on call to handle emergencies at Boutwell House, who was called in when a pipe

burst in an upstairs bathroom and water was leaking into the kitchen and other first-floor areas. He got there just after a plumber had found and shut off the water, and with his wife, Bonnie, now on the Board of Directors, he went to work immediately to strip the kitchen down and remove to a safe place collection pieces that would have been severely damaged. After using an industrial vacuum to suck up the water, he called in a work crew to dry the place out thoroughly. That incident served as the impetus to drive forward the effort to create the present-day splendid restoration of Boutwell House. Bonnie Carter, working with John Ott, Mike Roberts, and Al Collins, drafted the preliminary application for CPA funds to repair the house infrastructure, then a full presentation that resulted in a grant of \$176,525 awarded at Town Meeting in May 2011.

Saving Stuff for Tomorrow

Earl has spent much of his life in the service of History, the town of Groton, and his hope to connect people to their collective past. "I save stuff for tomorrow," he says of his formidable collection (he calls it his "Myseum") of Groton memorabilia, documents, letters, and other materials at his residence. His interest in Groton must have begun while he was a summer resident here with his family in the Lost Lake area in the late 1940s. Their summer home was situated on land, some of which had been given to his dad and some that the dad had purchased. His mother bought old items, and this impressed him. Once Earl and Bonnie moved year-round to Groton, he was led to collecting on his own by people in town like Leon Avey, who specializes in collecting old postcards.

Earl now has connections established with dealers throughout the country who contact him when they find items related to Groton. He also looks for historical items related to Groton put up for sale on the Internet. He's returning to Groton documents and letters that have been scattered widely. Often he becomes a detective looking into the story behind a certain item or finding a connection with another facet of local history.

The work he has done on historical machinery and other old physical objects relates quite closely to work observed and entered into as a youth. Earl's dad was a watchmaker and watch repairer who also sold jewelry. The dad's work broadened in scope to include making and repairing miniature precision machines. During World War II he manufactured control cams for bombsites in the cellar of

Continued on page 6

Highlights of GHS 122th Annual Meeting

C. David Gordon

Past and future came together nicely October 18, 2016, at Groton Historical Society's 122nd annual meeting, held at Legion Hall. It was a small but attentive gathering.

Looking toward the future, members present at the meeting passed unanimously changes to the organization's bylaws and elected a slate of officers and members of the Board of Directors. The major bylaw change was to establish a single uniform three-year term for all Board members, with terms to be staggered so only one-third of the Board would stand for election each year. Other changes aimed to streamline the bylaws, primarily by removing descriptions of standing committees, which will be gathered in a separate handbook of guidelines.

Election of officers and Board members followed. Elected to one-year terms: Judy Adams, Peter Benedict, Beverly Smith, and Elizabeth Strachan. Two-year terms: Nancy Barringer, Greg Fishbone, Al Collins (the Society's Vice President), Stuart Shuman (Treasurer), and Bobbie Spiegelman (President).

Three-year terms: Bonnie Carter, C. David Gordon, Barbara Murray, and Carolyn Perkins.

Society President Bobbie Spiegelman spoke of all that has been accomplished at GHS since the last Annual Meeting. "It has been a 'wow' year," she said, amazing both to her and to the organization. "The biggest feat of all is the beautifully restored Boutwell House," she said. Al Collins, project manager for all the renovation work, added that

the organization had "used local craftsmen for the entire project" and that they all were "dedicated to make sure the project was a success. And it is a success." He promised visitors would like the new carpeting, find the latest lighting installations "authentic and spectacular," and "fall in love with the wallpaper."

Nancy Barringer spoke of the variety of programs that her Program Committee had organized since last year's annual meeting, noting that each drew a strong audience. Eight programs were offered, some of them cosponsored by Groton Public Library.

House Consultant Kara Fossey agreed that "we have had a busy year." She summarized the work of three volunteers who have carried out projects for the Society: Eagle Scout Brent Emerly, who digitized descriptions and locations of Groton's monuments scattered about town; Eagle Scout candidate Edward Murray, who with help from members of his Boy Scout troop, cleared the brush and undergrowth from the rear of the Carriage House, set up a path to the rear of the building, and restored the wonderful view of Gibbet Hill that was probably enjoyed by George Boutwell himself; and Hedda Monaghan, who examined and cataloged our textile collection.

A fourth young volunteer, Joshua Vollmar, was present at the Annual Meeting and described the project he worked on as a summer intern at Boutwell House. He inventoried plans of the late Groton architect Anthony Hars had drawn up for various clients in Groton – plans that Hars family members had donated to the Society. Vollmar compiled a loose-leaf notebook of descriptions, including photos, of the work Hars had drawn up plans for.

President Spiegelman summed up the past year nicely by stating, "We are on a roll with lots more to come." ■



House Consultant Kara Fossey.
Photo by C. David Gordon

Breakfast, Anyone?

Nineteenth-century Groton was dotted with small industry. Mills and shops hammered, shaped, and carved various goods using soapstone, iron ore, pewter, clay, and tin. This small cream can (see photo) was made many years ago at Frank M. Blood's Tin Shop on Hollis Street. According to a note attached to the can – donated by Roy Johnson on August 30, 2016 – it was made on the property at 52 Hollis Street, the building now rebuilt and somewhat reconfigured. The note states that the tin shop operated on the property until 1938-1940. In *Groton Houses*, Virginia May writes that the tin shop originally stood on Main Street near the corner of Elm Street before it was moved in two parts. The writer of the note made sure to pass along another bit of information: "Frank Blood, an excellent tinsmith."

-- Kara Fossey



Boutwell House Changes Continued from page 3

Boutwell and his family once enjoyed.

Exterior painting is well underway by Don Haberman Painting of Groton. His crews have been scraping and caulking the house from top to bottom for over a month. John Kane Carpentry of Ayer has worked ahead of the painters repairing features of the house that have been affected by years of New England weather. Primer and finish painting were applied using the same period colors that were on the house but with a paint that utilizes the latest technology in paint longevity. The new paint should outlast all of the paint used on the house in the past.

The Charm of Old Houses

We are beginning to put furniture back in place with the help of many volunteers, cleaning and polishing each piece. John Brooks Fine Furniture of Groton has found a beautiful period dining room table to companion with dining room chairs we had in our collection. John earlier restored the dining room chairs as well as a few other collection pieces in need of professional restoration. We think you will be very pleased with the work John has done to give pieces of our collection the pride of place they held in years past.

My whole construction career I've loved working through projects on older homes because an older home tells a story of its own. It is not until craftsmen examine the fine details of a house that history can be unraveled and its story told, with Boutwell House being no different. As repair and restoration has taken place we've had the opportunity to work with many experts who have shed light on what we find at Boutwell. Built in 1851, this house is a true treasure and special icon in the town of Groton. It has been owned by the Historical Society since 1933 as a bequest from Gov. Boutwell's daughter, Georgianna, who helped found the Society in 1894. The Boutwells would surely be proud to see their wonderful home restored and transformed into the Groton History Center.

Special and spectacular are two words that continually come to mind when I talk about this project, and I believe you will agree once you see it finished. I want to thank you for your patience during the time that Boutwell House has been closed. The Historical Society exists purely on donations and volunteer efforts, and this project could not have happened without the collaborative efforts of generous donors and dedicated volunteers. Please join us in celebrating the new Groton History Center by uniting with us as a member, volunteer and/or donor. With your help we will continue to bring Groton's history into the future! ■



The chandelier in the Red Room is original to the house though would have used gas when it was first installed.

Photo by C. David Gordon.

Earl Carter Continued from page 4

the family home and later made parts for helicopters. In addition to a connection with small mechanisms involved in watches, Earl says he himself "grew up in a machine shop business."

He remembers living first in Waverly, Massachusetts, and later moving to Malden, where he attended high school. After graduating from Malden High and serving for a time in the U.S. Navy, Earl came home and worked for a man who manufactured miniature nuts, bolts, and screws. Later he would operate a machine shop of his own. He met his wife, Bonnie, in 1978 first through chatting with her over their CB radios. After establishing a home in Chelmsford, they moved to Groton in 1988. For years they have owned and operated Metric Screw & Tool Company in Wakefield, which Bonnie continues to run.

In addition to all his work with items of historical interest and continuing research to understand the working of mechanical devices and the background of historical documents, Earl shares history with others as well as making it and learning it. Each week he and Bonnie host at their home a group of Groton citizens also interested in local history.

Earl Carter richly deserves his place among the notable Historians of Groton, past and present. ■

Meet Our GHS Archaeologists

Barbara Murray

The Historical Society and the Public Library jointly celebrated Archaeology Month with a program on October 8th called “What’s in your Backyard?” The library provided the space and GHS provided its crack team of professional diggers and explorers of our historical past, Mike Roberts and Marty Dudek. Each man brought in some personal treasures, mostly bits of glass, projectile points, and ceramic fragments, to start the conversation rolling as visitors eagerly brought their findings up for analysis.

A beloved old bumper sticker, found in Mike’s kitchen, says “Archaeologists will date any old thing.” But in reality, we were told, it’s not so simple. “Reconstructing the past,” said Marty, is “like doing puzzles.” And both men find that eminently satisfying work, building off the habits of a lifetime, they said. Marty came to archaeology virtually in a straight line from when he was in kindergarten in Maryland and was given a book on dinosaurs. By 3rd grade he was expert enough on dinosaurs to give a talk to 6th graders about them. By 5th grade he was “digging for things” and by 9th grade he started excavating a farm site, becoming site supervisor two years later. College found him confirmed in his choice of profession (though Marty says one professor was not at all keen to hear that he already thought he knew how to excavate).

Mike, in contrast, was an aerospace engineer working on building missile silos on Native American sites in California. He had learned of Greek and Roman archaeology in high school but had no idea any archaeology happened on “this side of the Pond.” Serendipity set in when Mike signed up for a hands-on Earthwatch expedition to Scotland where he met Georgess McHargue, and in short order, they married, settled in Groton, established Timelines, a conservation-preservation firm in Littleton, and pursued the charms of dating old things.

Mike and Marty met more than 20 years ago working on the Central Artery/Tunnel Project in Boston, better known as the Big Dig. Marty came to work for Mike at Timelines and they’ve been a team ever since. Marty has presented three other programs for GHS besides the Backyard Q&A: on the Nate Nutting Sawmill (2011), the Soapstone Quarry (2012), and early industries in Groton (2014). Mike served for years on the GHS board and the town Historical Commission, Sustainability Commission, and the Community Preservation Committee. ■

Mike and Marty speculate on the provenance of a 6-foot-long iron rod with fittings that might have been an axle from some farm machinery. Sometimes all an archaeologist can say is “Beats me!”



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Kara Fossey *House Consultant*

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Donations welcome!



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GROTON HISTORY CENTER
Framing our story

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Did You Know...

. . . that Groton has a rich cultural and social tradition dating back to the 1700s at least? One needn't have had to stay home in the evening to read or play cards by candlelight in order to find distraction and relief from the toils of the day.

There were many ways to pursue one's talents or interests or to be entertained and enlightened in the company of friends and neighbors. For instance, the Groton Dramatic Club performed plays on the upper Town Hall stage. (Tickets were 15 cents, or 25 cents for reserved seats.) Lighting would have been from candles, or later, gas lamps, then electricity. Town Hall was also a venue for grand balls, concerts, lectures, comic operettas, travelogues, readings, whistling solos, and in later years, movies. Other venues in town were Liberty Hall, Squannacook Hall, Grange Hall, function rooms in the several hotels in town, and churches. Social organizations included the Groton Cornet Band, the Groton Reading Club, the Groton Literary Club, the Groton School Mandolin Club, the Village Improvement Society, and various singing groups. There were a number of 4-,

5-, or 6-piece "orchestras" in the area to provide dance music. The Groton History Center has many old programs, tickets, fliers, invitations, dance cards, etc. as evidence of a town that knows how to have fun.

—Liz Strachan



Then and Now

Volume 17, Number 2

Spring 2016

Newsletter of the Groton Historical Society [Est. 1894]

Meet John Brooks, Master Furniture Restorer

C. David Gordon

John Brooks, owner of John Brooks Fine Furniture in Groton, has recently provided professional consultation to the Groton Historical Society about the value and authenticity of the antique chairs in the Society's collection. Then, to enhance understanding and appreciation of these antiques, he presented at Boutwell House this past February a lecture on "design development, structure, finishes, and manufacturers of New England chairs," illustrating his well-attended talk with photos and a display of some chairs from the collection. Brooks is restoring Governor George S. Boutwell's desk and chair, which will be on permanent display in Boutwell House in a recreation of the Governor's home office and library.

As his connection with the Society solidifies with the prospect of his consulting further about other types of antique furniture the Society possesses, it is timely that we have an opportunity to get to know more about this man as a craftsman, whose home and workshop on Main Street are located close to Groton's History Center.

Brooks now operates an antique furniture restoration business with two assistants working under his instruction. His "working territory," as he calls it, "is all of New England and other points beyond," and he is "working for brokers, auction galleries, institutions, and private individuals." While he spends most of his work week in the workshop, he is often on the road keeping in touch with this



John Brooks's workshop, at the back of his home on Main Street in Groton, is an antique furniture restorer's dream. Photo by C. David Gordon.

tistic and business network.

Working Out His Artistic Calling

Growing up in Sewickley, Pennsylvania, outside Pittsburgh, Brooks appears to have early developed an abiding appreciation of the arts and seen the importance of lifelong learning about artworks' creation and care. His grandfather, he said, collected American antiques, and his dad picked up that interest. John Brooks had an inkling he might want to work with antique furniture, but his path to settle on such a career led him on a circuitous route involving exploration of other arts.

Following graduation from Quaker Valley High

School, Brooks studied at the Art Institute of Boston, where he earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 1994. At college he studied illustrating. A summer elective developed into "a sideline" at college for him as he served as a studio assistant at Vermont Carvers' Studio and Sculpture Center in West Rutland, Vermont, doing stonemasonry.



This damaged early American five-drawer chest (seen here upside down) is being meticulously repaired and re-finished by master craftsman John Brooks. Photo by C. David Gordon.

Brooks probably could not have chosen a better college for him than the AIB. Started in 1912 focusing on practical arts, the institution over the years widened its range of subjects to include the fine arts. Four years after Brooks graduated, it merged with Lesley College and formed Lesley University. AIB founder Roy Davidson had built his school on the principle stated by the 19th century champion

Main Street View: What's in a Name?

When I mention in conversation these days that the Groton Historical Society is considering rebranding itself as the Groton History Center, the response is always a very positive one: "That's a great idea!"

This idea to rethink our name has been rolling around for a while, but its current intent is meant to open wide the doors to the Boutwell House both literally and figuratively. While the Society has been around since 1894 and in Boutwell House since 1939, there are still many locals who have not crossed over the Boutwell House threshold to find out just what's been going on all these years. We hope that a new identity along with the new moniker will appeal to people's curiosity and spur their interest in our local history.

The GHS has so much to offer. Our collection of items related to Groton history now fills the spaces at Boutwell from top to bottom, with management of them always a challenge for the administration. The greatest part of that challenge is to tell a story about Groton's past and make it relevant to a community living in the 21st century. Our past forms the foundation of our town's character and contributes to its quality of life and values that underscore the decisions made today and in the future.

Some of our members have been instrumental in documenting our agricultural history through the centuries, which helps us appreciate the role of our local farmers in feeding ourselves today and beyond.

Our town, through the Lowthorpe School, offered the first landscaping program for women and likely influenced many careers that were originally deemed appropriate for

men only.

The Groton Hunt Club once attracted participants beyond our borders, and a recent program on its history drew a sizable crowd who relished reliving the experience and enlightened many others who had no memory of its existence at all.

Our recent program highlighting our chair collection offered an absorbing in-depth look at the construction and style of this common household item as it evolved over several centuries. And this month we'll be offering an expert's take on 18th and 19th century central Massachusetts architecture, the styles of which are revealed in many of our Main Street buildings.

This year's Summer Ramble, always a popular event, will provide a history of early schooling in a town that celebrates a prominent educational presence today.

A key element of our life as a History Center--collaboration with other town organizations--has connected us to local birders of the past and present, captured more details of the amazing life of Marian Stoddart, beautified our grounds with an award-winning garden, and provided other venues for presentation of our programs. An association with an impressive young man earning his Eagle Scout rank will bring us closer to creating Boutwell gardens in the near future.

These rich and rewarding relationships continue to flourish, bringing meaning to our Center and helping us promote our stories of the past. This spring we have embarked on an ambitious project to beautify, both inside and out, the physical structure that houses and safeguards our town's history. In the first of three project updates (see page 3), Al Collins describes the beginning of what he calls "a new wave of restoration" at the Governor Boutwell House. We hope it will heighten interest for those who've made the effort to cross the threshold and for those who will do so for the first time and, I hope, many times thereafter.

A new name, a new look and many new associations. Stay tuned.

*Bobbie Spiegelman
GHS President
April 2016*



It's all about sharing our history. Here, Chairs program speaker John Brooks identifies an heirloom chair from a cellphone photo brought in by enthusiastic attendee Louise Collins. Photo by C. David Gordon.

Production of *Then and Now* is made possible by a generous donation from Middlesex Savings Bank, 112 Boston Road, Groton, MA 01450

Bringing Boutwell House Back to the Future!

Al Collins

The Historical Society's new Groton History Center is becoming a reality with a very generous gift from an anonymous donor who cares deeply about creating a place worthy of preserving and presenting Groton's historic past. The Governor Boutwell House will be that place, once a new wave of restoration is complete.

Boutwell House is under siege again by workers who will continue work where we left off a few years ago. The past recent restoration project, funded through both town CPA funds and a Massachusetts Cultural Facilities grant, took care of much-needed infrastructure work that had outlived its useful life. Electric, heating, roofing and some interior plaster and painting work put Boutwell House back into great shape. It is now ready to receive the finishing touches, bringing the house back to a beautiful example of late 1800's architectural design and allowing it to move on into the future as the Groton History Center.

Though much work was accomplished through the previous restoration project, the front rooms of the house upstairs and downstairs were left visually untouched. The current project will alter that by painting and papering these areas, installing period carpeting throughout the house and adding lighting fixtures similar to those used in the late 1800's as electricity was introduced into wealthier homes. None of this would be impressive if it was inside a building that was not appealing on the outside, so the entire exterior will also receive a new paint job.

Excitement is building as this project unfolds but not without many hours of hard work from a dedicated group of volunteers picking and choosing what fits best within the walls of Boutwell. Meetings have been held to brainstorm decor, samples have been presented from various design professionals, and a road trip was undertaken in a quest for appropriate historic lighting fixtures. The sum of the total finished product will be made up of many arduous decisions.

Renovation Starts with Window Repair

John Kane, a Groton native, of Kane Construction has recently worked his way through the house to repair all window sashes. He has been replacing cracked glass, reglazing windows, and shaping windows to fit the out-of-square openings so that they function as originally designed. Doors within the house often fall out of plumb as a house settles so John has customized doors to fit almost every opening, and they can now operate as designed.

Electricity was not part of the original house, built in 1851, since power had not been introduced into Groton at the time of construction, so over the years electrical needs have been addressed. The previous project replaced the power service with new breaker panels in the basement, and some new outlets were added. Now it is time to upgrade the wiring in the front of the house to accommodate

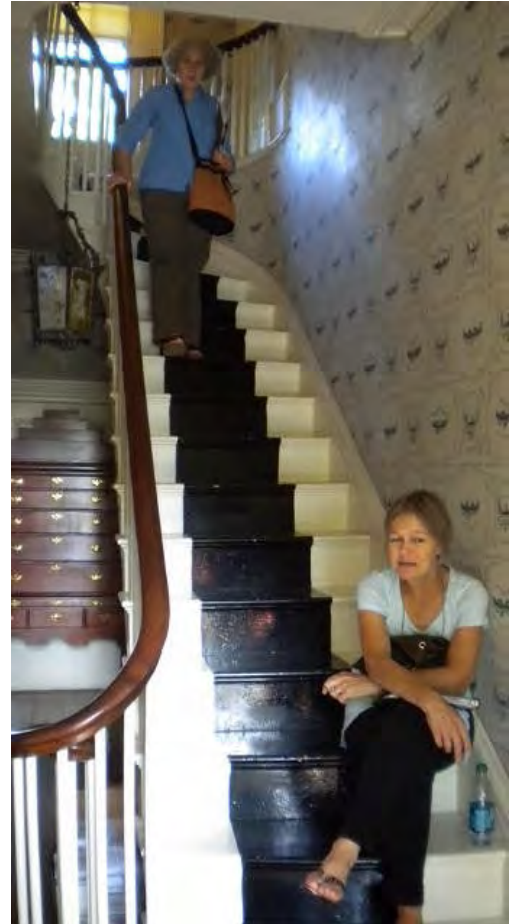
the needs of the new History Center. Randy O'Grady of O'Grady Electric in Groton is meticulously working his way through the house replacing and adding electrical components as needed.

Next on the project's agenda are ceiling and wall plaster repairs, wallpaper stripping and paint preparation which are slated to start at the end of April. Period paint colors are being chosen by the project committee in anticipation of bringing this old canvas back to a finished masterpiece. This work will be done by Dan Lowney of Lowney Interiors in Groton.

Look for another update on restoring Boutwell House in the Summer 2016 issue of *Then and Now*.

Paint colors, carpeting and wallpaper will be the topic, so stay tuned as the Historical Society's new History Center project continues to unfold.

■



The renovations now underway in Boutwell House will restore the original period charm of the interior, including the main staircase and entry hall, seen here in a "Before" photo taken in July 2012 by C. David Gordon. On the stairs are Bobbie Spiegelman (top) and Anna Eliot.

Era of One-Room Schoolhouses in Groton

Judy Adams

As early as 1642 the Mass Bay Colony passed a law requiring that children be taught to read and write. In 1647 all towns were required to establish and maintain public schools. One can imagine that the first settlers of Groton had a lot on their minds besides education, though many families did do the best they could in their own homes. This eventually evolved into neighborhood schools conducted in private homes. These were named after the home owner, for example, Mr. _____'s Squadron.

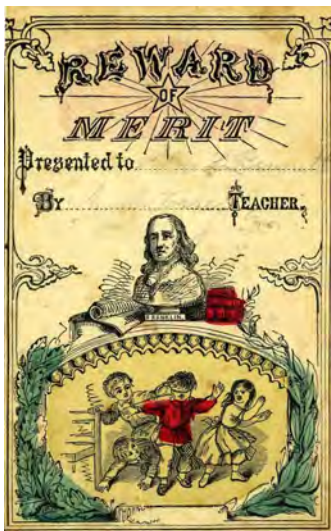
Town historian Caleb Butler wrote that "prior to 1754 the only school house was in the town center." In compliance with a law made by the Bay Colony, the town had voted the previous year to establish grammar schools in four places. Fifty years later in 1805, also in compliance with the now Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the town was divided into 12 districts (later 14, then 15). The state continued to regulate the education

of its children, requiring town school committees, district prudential committees, annual census and reports from each school, town truant officers, annual building inspections with recommendations, and the like. This was a clear reflection of the values of the original settlers. "The English Puritan who founded Massachusetts believed that the well-being of individuals, along with the success of the colony, depended on a people literate enough to read both the Bible and the laws of the land." (From *Mass Moments*, electronic almanac of Massachusetts history, Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities).

According to By-Laws of Groton in 1825, prudential committees were "to expend 2/3 of their apportionment for winter schools . . . to be taught by a Master and 1/3 for summer schools by a Mistress." (Older boys, needing the stricter control of a Master, were working on the farm during the summer months.)

An 1842 report of the School Committee regarding teachers stated that there were a few persons "who seem to think, because their schools are small and backward, that almost any Miss of sixteen . . . will do for them." Some schools were criticized for profane language and defaced seats and benches. However, the report noted that "teachers in general, were well qualified, and had that apt-

ness to teach, combined with a skill to govern which are the indispensable requisites of a good teacher." The object of good teachers "appeared to be to teach school not barely keep it"!



Interesting Facts from Documents in GHS Archives

1703 - Groton voted to hire its first teacher, John Applin of Watertown.

1792 - A school was held in the home of John Tarbell in West Groton.

1816 - James Prescott offered land for a schoolhouse for District #1 in the town center.

1863 - Adjacent land owners refused to sell land for a woodshed and a privy for District 5 School (Common Street). Land was taken and owners compensated.

District 13 (Chaplin School) was originally in Forge Village now part of Westford.

District 11 (Sandy Pond School) was originally in part of Groton, now Ayer.

District 14 (Winthrop School) was in Groton Junction now part of Ayer.

All of Groton's district schools were named in 1874, but eight years later ungraded schools were abolished. (It had previously been suggested that the union of two or three schools would allow early

grades to be taught by a woman and older scholars could be given "superior advantages.") Moors School in District 2 was one of the last to close, in 1919. The one-room school house gradually vanished into history. ■

The GHS Annual Summer Ramble, on July 17, will take visitors to two restored one-room schoolhouses, Sandy Pond School (in Ayer) and the Chicopee School (in Groton). Details on page 8.

Fighting Fires in Groton

Nancy Barringer

Nearly every day, we hear about a fire destroying a building somewhere nearby. Despite almost instant alarms and response with high-speed trucks and powerful streams of water, loss of property and life happens frequently. Imagine the days when there were only leather water buckets passed hand to hand to quell the blaze.

On Saturday, May 14, the Groton Historical Society's History Center at Boutwell House on Main Street will display the first piece of equipment used in Groton that was the next big thing after those buckets. A horse-drawn hand pump named the Torrent was built in 1802 by local inventor Loammi Baldwin, Jr. Baldwin, from a distinguished family of engineers, went on to design and build the Charlestown Navy Yard dry docks. *USS Constitution* Museum collections and exhibits manager Harrie Sloodbeck will give a talk at 1 pm about the man and his machine. The Torrent will stand proudly in the Boutwell House driveway while, for comparison, a modern truck from the Groton Fire Department will be parked in front with a member of the GFD in attendance.

Groton has experienced many fires since it was first settled in 1655. Virginia May's comprehensive town history, *A Plantation Called Petapawag* (GHS, 1976), and the Groton Town Diaries 1918-1971, available online through the Groton Public Library's digital library, reveal how we fought everything from chimney fires to three-day conflagrations. These sources tell us about the organization of several volunteer fire companies and the evolution of alarm methods, fire stations, and modern firefighting equipment.

Some Significant Fires in Our Town

1676 - Native Americans attack Groton on March 2nd, 9th, and 13th, burning all but four garrison houses along the main street. Residents flee to Concord, MA, where they wait two years before returning to rebuild.

1868 - Lawrence Academy main schoolhouse building burns down after being ignited by a carelessly tossed firecracker on July 4th.



New Center Fire Station opened June 18, 2014, on Farmers Row – a state-of-the-art facility ready to serve the citizens of Groton for years to come. Photo by C. David Gordon.

1911 - Mrs. Mary Wright, an elderly woman, dies in a fire at Dodge cottage on Pleasant Street.

1921 - William P. Wharton's barn at Five Oaks Farm on



The Old Groton Inn, listed on the National Register of Historic Places in July 1976, was burned beyond repair on August 2, 2011. Photo taken August 13, 2011, by C. David Gordon.

Broadmeadow Road burns when sparks from a hay pulley ignite. Fourteen-year-old Roland Sawyer saves 15 cows by leading them from barn. Forty tons of hay are consumed by the flames.

1923 - Moses Palmer block at the corner of Hollis Street and Willowdale Road burns. Snow on roofs of nearby buildings prevents them from going up in flames. The formerly three-story building is rebuilt as one floor.

1941 - "Great Fire" burns for three days (April 29-May 1) starting near the Dunstable line on Chicopee Row and moving from east of Baddacook Pond to Forge Village. Neighboring fire departments, soldiers from Fort Devens, boys from Lawrence Academy and Groton School, and CCC men turn out to help. Twenty-one square miles of pine and spruce are destroyed. Sightseers clog roads.

1956 - Lawrence Academy academic and administrative buildings catch fire during commencement exercises.

1956 - Earl Gilson's beard catches fire as he watches Lawrence Academy workers burning material.

1959 - Hollingsworth & Vose warehouse ignites from sparks from burning dump. B&M railroad sends an engine to pull three train cars out of a burning warehouse. Two firefighters are overcome by dense smoke but recover.

2011 - The Groton Inn, oldest continuously operating inn in the United States and the heart of Groton, burns in a four-alarm fire on Tuesday night, August 2. One hundred firefighters from 15 towns work for five hours trying to save the old stagecoach stop that had hosted patriots and presidents since 1678. ■

■

Meet John Brooks *Continued from page 1*

of the arts John Ruskin: It is “in art that the heart, the head, and the hand of man come together.” This viewpoint and Davidson’s own saying that “beauty comes from the use” could well be seen as mottos for Brooks and his work.

Brooks met his wife, Christine Brooks, at the college. Together over the years they have pursued their own independent art careers, she as a graphic designer.



One of the more unusual projects Brooks undertook was to repair this old-world wall plaque by carving replacement pieces to fill in missing parts. Photo by C. David Gordon.

Following graduation, Brooks, “young and full of energy,” as he put it, began an extended period of hands-on work, “getting into the trade.” He worked at shops with expert craftsmen. At the start his dream was cabinetmaking with an emphasis on reproducing antique furniture. Then he found work restoring already-built furniture at Belcastro Furniture Restoration, located in Westford at the time. Here he “learned the nuts and bolts of the trade.”

A first mentor was Dave LeFort, owner of LeFort Fine Furniture, located in Hanover, Massachusetts. The company specialized in handcrafting 18th century American country reproductions. Working with LeFort, Brooks became “very enthusiastic,” spending “many extra hours” at the shop. Having his own workbench there provided stability – a sense he was in a place right for him. Meanwhile, people gave him some furniture repair jobs to be done on his own at home, which was then in Groton. His first rented shop was on Willowdale Road.

Working next in Boston for Wayne Towle Master Finishing and Restoration, Inc., brought him back to the option of concentrating on furniture restoration and set him on the path he has continued to follow. Work at the Towle business broadened his application of restoration work to include not only furniture restoration but also architectural woodworking on building exteriors and interiors. Having gained experience and learned skills, Brooks decided about 20 years ago to make the move toward self-employment. He had “left furniture-making behind and concentrated on antique restoration,” the latter probably much more varied and challenging to him.

For a period he rented work space: in Littleton, at a mill building in West Acton, at Graniteville in Westford, in Pepperell. For a decade starting in 2000 he had his shop at his Groton home. Since 2010 he has lived on Main Street in Groton with an attached shop there.

As he works with furniture from a range of different centuries and styles and subjected to a variety of

conditions over a number of years, Brooks spends time carefully studying each piece. Beyond checking out the condition of a piece, he looks at design and materials used, checking with printed images and descriptions about a piece’s historical period and its manufacturer.

Fortunately, he said, a great deal has been written over the years about what has become antique furniture, and he is “an avid reader.” He made the point that a restoration craftsman cannot learn enough details just from today’s Internet entries.

The Craftman’s Shop

The Brookses’ home on Main Street dates back to 1830, making it a fitting location indeed for an antique furniture restorer’s workshop. He fashioned an interior doorway between shop and home. The shop is light, airy, and clean -- pleasant to be in.

Tools in the shop are well ordered. More room seems to be devoted to hand tools than to motor-driven tools. Visible are whole sets of clamps, a variety of old-fashioned planes, a set of chisels, and some handsaws. Easy to spot, of course, are a table saw, drill press, wood-turning lathe, and shop vac. But this is not going to be a very noisy shop.

In evidence is a small amount of raw wood with which to patch worn-out or broken furniture sections. But half the shop’s area is devoted to unusual pieces of furniture to be worked on. Here are glass-front china cabinets, bureaus, a desk-bookcase combination.

Brooks points to a simple early American five-drawer chest turned upside down so that he can reattach

Continued on page 7

How to Reach Us

978-448-0092

info@grotonhistoricalsociety.org

POB 202, Groton, MA 01450

From our Archives--

Here is one more charming excerpt discovered by Liz Strachan from an account of Groton's Town Meeting of 1918 found in an old scrapbook at Boutwell House. May Town Meeting always be such a source of amusement along with its serious side of taking care of the byways of our town.

* * * *

"A motion to extend the cement sidewalk on Hollis street was vigorously opposed by John Lawrence on the ground that the residents on Farmers Row were entitled to first consideration, as they had to be content with a very unsatisfactory gravel sidewalk. Frank A. Torrey retorted that some time ago he had offered to build a cement sidewalk on Farmers Row and that Mr. Lawrence had objected on the ground that cement would wear his shoes out. The motion was carried."

Meet John Brooks *Continued from page 6*

the feet, after fashioning a replacement piece. The feet will be fastened to a new footboard, already in place beneath the drawers, complete with molding along its outer edges. Also in place is a new crown piece with even more intricate molding. He must also create at least two replacement corners of drawers that have been banged off in the course of long use.

With the wood replaced or repaired, then Brooks will carry out "high-end surface restoration." No vat of old finish-stripping liquid will be found in this shop. In his "full dedication to restoration," Brooks completes a "sensitive surface restoration" following "delicate repair" with a careful saving of the finish and a "blending and matching of new work" to fit the existing finish.

Odd projects, he said, "feed my curiosity." He held up a wall plaque created by a Black Forest German woodcarver for which he has replaced pieces fitted to scale. He looks forward to restoring the case of an E. Ingraham & Company antique clock, making playable once again a banjo and a drum, restoring a unique European chair made entirely of bone and an elaborate plant stand, and putting back in place or creating new inlaid pieces on a fine, large wooden box.

Seeking to find something different to work on, Brooks spoke of delving into French and English – Continental -- antique furniture. As estate collections come in, the shop also can be a gathering spot for ceramic work, painting, and even jewelry. He and his wife plan to expand their "low-key contemporary art gallery," called the Source Gallery, located at the front of the house.

In a sense, Brooks's shop presents a perpetual spring. Here antique furniture receives a new lease on life, a new beginning. Check him out at www.jbfinefurniture.com. ■

GHS Directors 2016 Committee Assignments

Bobbie Spiegelman *President*
Curator / Collections
Al Collins *Vice President*
Buildings & Grounds / Finance
Liz Strachan *Clerk*
Nominating / Governance / Membership
Stuart Shuman *Treasurer*

Judy Adams *At Large*
Nancy Barringer *Program*
Peter Benedict *Security*
Bonnie Carter *Hospitality*
Gregory Fishbone *Webmaster*
C. David Gordon *Publications*
Barbara Murray *Newsletter Editor*
Carolyn Perkins *Publicity / Membership*
Beverly Smith *Development*

Kara Fossey *House Consultant*
Ray Lyons *Legal Advisor*

Send queries to any board member at info@grotonhistoricalsociety.org.

GHS Membership Form

Annual Individual/Family	\$35
Annual GHS Sponsor	\$75
Corporate Sponsor	\$250
Sustaining Member	\$1000
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Groton Historical Society
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Groton, MA 01450

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UPCOMING

ANNUAL SUMMER RAMBLE Sunday July 17th 2:00 PM



The one-room Chicopee School, on Chicopee Row in Groton, served boys and girls of all ages in the northern part of town until 1915. Photo from the GHS Archives.

Join us for a guided tour of the old one-room Sandy Pond School at the corner of Westford Road and Sandy Pond Road in Ayer, followed by a visit to the Chicopee School on Chicopee Row in Groton, which includes, as always, homemade ice cream.

Families with children will be interested to see what school was like in the early days of our town. Check our website for more details.

Then and Now

Volume 17, Number 3

Summer 2016

Newsletter of the Groton Historical Society [Est. 1894]

Awakening the Spirit of Boutwell House!

Al Collins

The new Groton History Center is becoming a reality as the work of refurbishment unfolds within Boutwell House. Our Building Committee has pored over color charts, wallpaper samples, and carpeting designs to craft a finished product that will make us all proud. Throughout the 35 years I've been in the construction industry, I've always told my customers not to focus on any one aspect of the overall design. The goal is to have someone walk into an attractive house and say, "Wow, this is beautiful" without being able to put his or her finger on exactly what it is that makes it so beautiful. The beauty is driven by the sum of all the pieces, which is what we are attempting to do.

Dan Lowney of Lowney Interiors in Groton has been working day by day meticulously scraping, sanding, filling and painting all rooms except the already beautiful kitchen. Window sashes have been carefully sanded, plaster ceilings and walls have been screwed back into place, and radiators have been resurfaced. Working within the historic framework of an 1851 house, we've attempted to make every room unique yet comfortable within the entire scheme. Dan Lowney has commented that because only one family--the Boutwells--lived in this house until the Historical Society was granted it in 1933, there isn't layer upon layer of paint on walls and trim. This is helping to

create a finished product radiating its original elegance.

The Right Wallpaper, Carpets, and Lighting

Choosing wallpaper can be overwhelming, but we have zeroed in on some choices we believe everyone will love. We are told one of the patterns to be hung in the dining room has been used at the White House in the Presidential living quarters. The wallpaper is now being custom printed for the Boutwell House project and should be delivered by the end of August. The carpeting we chose is being specially woven in patterns used during the later half of the 19th century and should be ready for installation in September. We found period lighting at Yankee Craftsman Lighting in Wayland, MA--authentic lighting fixtures from the late 1800s that exceeded all our expectations. Yankee Craftsman will be completely restoring each fixture, guaranteeing safe operation, proper room lighting, and stunning appearance. In the coming months, the exterior will be repainted in the same colors it wears today by Haberman & Son Painting of Groton.

I've always been a believer that everything in the universe has a spirit of some sort, not of ghostly nature but a spirit similar to karma. On a sunny day everyone feels a little better than on a gray day because of the sun's glowing spirit. People with what we call "good karma" are always more pleasant to be around than people with "bad Karma" because of the spirit they project. Boutwell House appears to have a spirit of its own, coming alive as the work progresses. One day our painter Dan asked me if the house had a ghost. I responded saying it's very possible but why are you asking? Dan said that he's spent a lot of time alone in the house over the past couple of months and has heard many strange noises. I said, "If there were a ghost, that would be fantastic!" I truly believe that Boutwell House does have a spirit of its own, one that is happy with all that we are doing to bring back the glory of this fine house. Every time I walk into the house, I can feel that spirit. I sense positive energy and happiness the house has lacked for decades. I can't wait until all of you have a chance to experience this new spirit of Boutwell House once it is transformed into the Groton History Center. ■



Stairwell and halls upstairs and down have been stripped of old wallpaper and carefully prepped for paint. Photo by Barbara Murray.

Main Street View: Revealing the Stories of Our Past

Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going? The title from a well-known Paul Gauguin 1897 painting inspired me to reflect on these questions as the GHS contemplates its newly imagined identity as the Groton History Center.

As you come into town from the east on Route 119, right away you sense the character and stateliness of the buildings on Main Street: Lawrence Academy, the Groton Public Library, Caleb Butler's former residence, First Parish Church, Prescott School, Town Hall, the fashionable homes neighboring the mid-19th century Boutwell House, even the gorgeous restored barn on Lowell Road that sits in the shadow of Gibbet Hill. It's easy for these structures to become invisible because of their familiarity to us. But if we pause to think about each of them, we might ask ourselves where they come from. What do they say about who we are among the many towns along the old highway from Boston? What makes Groton different and individual?

Our library meets the standards of a wired society while still serving as a community-gathering place. The First Parish church was the town's original Meeting House and still serves our community in many ways. Prescott School, no longer a schoolhouse, is in the process of being repurposed as another community attraction. And the Boutwell House contains the stuff that makes up those stories from the past that we are sharing today to inform the best decisions our descendants will make as they determine Groton's future.

Young People Joining Forces with GHS

There are promising signs that the Historical Society is attracting the attention of a new generation of Groton citizens. We've noted a steady presence of young people that are having an impact on our operations in a significant way. This breakthrough came a few years ago when a

popular history teacher reached out to GHS to help design a curriculum that incorporates local resources. She identified a young student, Katie



GDRHS senior Katherine (Katie) Ferro, this year's winner of the Michael L. Sheedy Memorial Scholarship, is headed for Marquette University in Milwaukee, WI, this fall. Courtesy photo.

Ferro, who enthusiastically volunteered to be part of our panel discussion in September 2014 on the relevance of our town's history in each participant's life. Katie, who received the GHS's Sheedy Scholarship this year, spoke eloquently, with a young person's idealism, about her fondness for the adopted town that raised her.

We're also benefitting from two Eagle Scout projects: Brent Emerle put together an online link to several historical sites in town with information and mapping about each; Edward Murray is currently clearing out the overgrown backyard of the Boutwell House to allow access to the rear of the carriage house and provide room for a garden area sometime in the near future. Couldn't come at a more opportune time.

Joshua Vollmar, a young visitor to the House last fall expressed an interest in architectural history. After attending Nick Langhart's lecture on New England architecture at the library last April, he reached out to us to continue his passion for this particular history, and we have put him in charge of sorting the voluminous records left behind by the architect Anthony Hars. To match a young man's interest with our need is the kind of pairing that helps us to realize much progress managing our collection.

Another task of collection management is cataloging stores of textiles that have accumulated over the years. We are fortunate to have the volunteer services of Hedda Monaghan, a recent library school graduate with an interest in textiles and textile history, to process the clothing worn by citizens of a past life. These items will soon be organized in a preserved and accessible way. Bit by bit we are revealing the stories of where we came from, who we are, and where we are going. Stay tuned and stay connected.



GHS summer intern Joshua Vollmar, a junior at GDRHS, is preparing an inventory of the building plans of the late Anthony Hars that relate to Groton. Photo by C. David Gordon.

*Bobbie Spiegelman
President, GHS
July 2016*

Transforming the Interior of Boutwell House

C. David Gordon

A huge amount of work has been undertaken to rejuvenate the interior of Boutwell House. Yet most of it -- electrical, plumbing and heating, wall and ceiling plaster replacement, etc. -- is not something a visitor can readily see in a walk-through. What first caught everyone's eye was the freshly painted kitchen and back hall area. Warm wall and woodwork colors and clear, unblemished ceilings and floors have been immediate attention-grabbers.

Now the rest of Boutwell House is fast being transformed to match in sparkle, elegance, and beauty what the new painting had introduced in the kitchen area. The task of making all the other rooms and the main stairwell shine with renewed splendor has been the work of one individual. He is Groton resident Daniel C. Lowney, the owner and sole employee in his interior custom painting and professional paperhanging business.

Lowney has lavished many a day since mid-April in painting afresh ceilings, walls, and woodwork, starting by making needed repairs to surfaces in multiple rooms as well as the central staircase and hallways. This work was completed early in July. When special wallpaper the Society has ordered comes in, he will return to hang it in two rooms: the dining room downstairs and the front bedroom upstairs, where President U.S. Grant slept on an overnight visit to Groton in 1869. Lowney also may paint floors that are not slated to receive carpeting.

His Way with Work

In a recent interview Lowney said he did not decide on paint color or proper tint; he simply advised. Once the choice was made, he ordered the paint from the firm he has come to rely on to provide the right top-of-the-line paint the project has required. On one occasion his son Chris helped move large items and materials from a room to expedite his getting to work in that space. Work has been carried out in association with GHS vice president Al Collins, who has acted as clerk-of-the-works for the entire Boutwell House renewal project. Lowney said Collins has been "an absolute pleasure to work with." He also spoke highly of working with GHS president Bobbie Spiegelman and Kara Fossey, administrative consultant to the Society.

The project has required a prodigious amount of work. The results demonstrate that he has worked carefully, thoroughly, yet with the fast-moving sureness of one long experienced in such work. Despite efficiency and sure movement forward, he said, "The older I get the less concerned I am with hurrying." He has very much enjoyed working at Boutwell House, has found the work "very gratifying."

In a field that has seen such a burst of technological

advances in recent years to create products that prevent or overcome problems a surface may present, Lowney stays abreast of developments through reading in trade journals and conferring with colleagues and his materials supplier. Anyone working in the field "needs someone who knows what they're doing," he said.

Careful preparation of surfaces to receive paint or wallpaper is all important. He starts at the ceiling, then moves to the walls and woodwork. A first step includes covering all floor surfaces with sheets of paper and installing paper strips between woodwork and plaster to keep paint from encroaching upon a surface for which it is not intended.

On walls and occasionally on ceilings where the original plaster has bulged outward, Lowney has had to screw the plaster tight to the lath. In the small room back of the Grant Bedroom he had to use over 300 screws to pin plaster back to the underpinning. Then he could tackle the cracks in the plaster. To rely on sealing cracks alone would have left a wall subject to further crack development as vibrations caused by people moving about the house would continue to disturb what has not been secured to a stable surface.

Lowney has stripped away wallpaper from the entire central staircase and upstairs and downstairs hallways and removed faded old wallpaper from the dining room and Grant bedroom. Here, he said, simply trying to strip off wallpaper leaves an uneven surface. He removes all traces of old wallpaper and residue glue using a scraper to obtain a flat surface. When he gets to wallpapering, Lowney will carry out this project by hand, trimming the edges of the paper at his home workshop, measuring each piece, then apply paste and carefully put each sheet in place. He estimates he will spend one day installing wallpaper in the dining room and another in the Grant bedroom.



Dan Lowney preparing wall surfaces in the Grant bedroom to receive wallpaper. Photo by C. David Gordon

Continued on page 4

Transforming Boutwell House *Continued from page 3*

Ceilings, walls, and woodwork must be smoothed, vacuumed, and washed clean, said Lowney. All these surfaces require three coats of paint. On ceilings Lowney starts with a body primer then applies two finishing coats. In areas where people are likely to touch woodwork Lowney uses a latex-based paint with polyurethane in it that prevents the finish from becoming too hard so that it is subject to chipping. When painting window sash he must make sure the paint is placed just on wood, avoiding contact with glass, upon which an invisible edge of protective material has been put in place.

Experience Extending Back to Childhood

Lowney, a native of Burlington, Massachusetts, began helping his dad, a Burlington firefighter, in the dad's part-time interior painting and paperhanging business as a youngster. By about the age of eight, he said, he was stripping off wallpaper. He continued working with his dad part time through high school.

Lowney's first full-time job involved work at a hotel in Bedford, where he painted days and served as a member of the wait staff evenings. There, he met his wife, Arleen, also on the hotel staff.

To hone skills at what he especially liked doing, paperhanging, he studied full-time at the U.S. School of Professional Paperhangers in Rutland, Vermont, in 1986. Back in Massachusetts he began work at the Harmony Supply Wallpaper and Paint concern in Medford, working primarily with wallpaper and plaster. Then, he struck off to work



Kara Fossey and Dan Lowney consider color choices. Photo by C. David Gordon

independently, at first hiring others to help but in time working more completely as a one-person team. He said he has enjoyed 30 years of work in the field, "working primarily for myself." He has been a



Some of the bold historic colors chosen for Boutwell House.

resident and business-owner in Groton since 1994. At his home on Martins Pond Road Lowney maintains a large workshop in which to do custom painting of cabinets.

In Groton Lowney has done extensive work in the older homes along Farmers Row. He has had his share of large-scale jobs: all 425 baths at the Burlington Marriott and wallpapering every room and many of the hallways and function rooms at the Westford Regency.

For seven or eight years he has been called to work from time to time at Peabody Essex Museum and in several of the mansions the Museum owns. He works with a team of experts preparing for new exhibits or freshening up a space. Lowney does all the wallpapering. He is especially challenged as he installs digitally enlarged photographs of art objects so big that sections of each picture have been printed on separate sheets of wallpaper. They must be placed on the wall with perfect registration and with seams invisible to the eye.



Board members Al Collins and Stuart Shuman stand in awe of comprehensive prep work done by Dan Lowney at Boutwell House. Photo by Barbara Murray.

The walls throughout Boutwell House now shine forth with beautiful, solid colors, and for the first time in many years, the ceilings are uniformly white without stains or sagging and the woodwork gleams in reflected glory. Dan Lowney has given new life to all these spaces in Groton's History Center. ■

Boutwell's Last Endeavor: the Short-Lived Anti-Imperialist League

Brian Bixby, Guest Contributor

An essay in a series celebrating the life of Groton's only governor, George S. Boutwell

Imagine a nation worried about foreigners committing atrocities. Or the idea that we should limit the rights of certain people because they are un-American. Or even debates over how much we should get involved in foreign affairs. Does this sound a bit like the 2016 presidential election campaign? Change the specifics of the issues a bit, and it could be American politics in 1898-1900! And Groton's own George S. Boutwell was caught in the middle of it, finding himself opposing the Republican Party he had belonged to for most of his life.

Spain had never been reconciled to losing its Latin American empire in the 1820s and was doggedly fighting to hold on to the last two American possessions it had, Cuba and Puerto Rico. Stories of Spanish atrocities against the rebellious natives of Cuba filtered into American newspapers, turning American public opinion against Spain. And then on February 15, 1898, the U.S. warship *Maine* was destroyed by an explosion in Havana harbor.

Without knowing all the facts about who blew up the *Maine* (historians still argue about it), the United States rushed into war with Spain to "free Cuba." Somehow along the way, the nation decided that freeing Cuba meant we could take Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines, which were also Spanish possessions, for ourselves as a reward. This came as a shock to the native Filipinos, who thought we were coming to free them. Once they realized we intended to administer them as a colony, they began fighting back.

George S. Boutwell was among those Americans who were horrified by the course of the war in 1898. He had opposed annexing foreign lands as far back as 1869, when he had refused to support President Grant's desire to annex the Dominican Republic. His recent years of work in international law made him dubious of the justice of the American occupation of the Philippines. Above all, he saw that extending American *rule* to the Philippines, without extending the American *Constitution*, meant that Filipinos would not have the same civil rights as were guaranteed Americans. Boutwell was already disillusioned about how poorly the nation had kept its promise of civil rights to the ex-slaves of the South. He did not want to see another subject people added to the American nation. Boutwell spoke out loud and forcefully. So did others, among them Mark Twain. And they eventually united later

in 1898 to form the Anti-Imperialist League to bring their views before the American public. Though he was now 80 years old, Boutwell was a distinguished statesman, and his fervor for the cause was second to none, so he was named as President of the new League.

It was a doomed effort. Military adventures and conquest were popular, and who cared for the rights of "little brown" foreigners? And Boutwell was not as effective as he might have been.

His speeches were good, but he kept harking back to the Civil War and Reconstruction as if they were living issues and not dead to the new generations. Finally, the Anti-Imperialists ran afoul of American party politics. The Republicans were ardently in favor of the new military expansionism. Anti-Imperialists such as Boutwell, who had been a Republican since the party had been founded, found themselves at odds with their own party. Yet they could not stomach the Democrats and their history of rebellion and support of racial segregation. So the Anti-Imperialists split over whether to back the Democrats or form a third party in 1900. Those favoring the new imperialism won the election, which spelled the end of the Anti-Imperialist League as an effective force in politics.

Boutwell persevered, even so, but he was old. His wife Sarah, to whom he had been married for over sixty years, died in 1903. Boutwell himself lingered another year and a half before dying of pneumonia on February 27, 1905, at the age of 87. He was spared the knowledge that the Philippine Insurrection was not completely quelled until 1913, or that, as a last, sad artifact of that war, the naval base at Guantanamo, Cuba, has since 2002 served to house prisoners taken in yet another foreign war. ■

Brian Bixby is a historian and Groton native with an abiding interest in the personal and political career of Gov. George S. Boutwell. His essays on Boutwell have appeared periodically in The Groton Herald.



The Honorable George S. Boutwell. Photo portrait by the Brady – Handy Studio c. 1870's.

From our Archives--

* * * *

Liz Strachan shares this charming reminiscence of stagecoaches coming to the Old Groton Inn in a letter to the innkeeper in 1912 from former Groton resident John K. Nutting, as reprinted in a local newspaper and found in an old scrapbook at Boutwell House. Nutting, a grandson of the first innkeeper Jonathan Keep, was a child in stagecoach days.

“In those days (writes Nutting) the old inn was in its first glory. Being on the High road of through travel from Boston to Montreal and always “the Stage Tavern,” it was usually full to its utmost capacity. . . . How well I remember the magnificent six-horse stages which many times a day came proudly circling up to the front of the inn, to the admiration of all small boys—who were very near heaven when allowed a short ride up the street by some kindly disposed Jehu [coach driver], especially if permitted to mount the box and sit beside Jehu himself. . . . But alas for the stages, and alas for the old inn—one day the whistle of the locomotive shrieked through the village and its bell tolled the knell for stage travel.”

Also found in the old GHS scrapbook is this anonymous contemporary account of stage travel in the mid-19th century.

“Some of you will remember the scenes of life and activity that were to be witnessed in the village on the arrival and departure of the stages. Some of you will remember, too, the loud snap of the whip which gave increased speed to the horses, as they dashed up in approved style to the stopping place, where the loungers were collected to see the travelers and listen to the gossip which fell from their lips. There were no telegraphs then, and but few railroads in the country. The papers did not gather the news so eagerly nor spread it abroad so promptly as they do now, and items of intelligence were carried largely by word of mouth. But those days have long since passed.”

* * * *

Tangible Memories

Kara Fossey, House Consultant

Throughout Boutwell House are documents, photographs, and artifacts that tell the story of Groton and its residents. These are items that have been donated to the Groton Historical Society during the last 120 years. And while many illustrate what life was like in the 18th and 19th centuries, it’s important to remember that the 20th and 21st centuries (and beyond!) are, and will be, our history as well.

Earlier this year we received a donation from the Kopec family that includes items that belonged to the late



Stanley J. Kopec, Sr. during his time with the US Army in World War II. Three posters illustrate the movements of the 79th Infantry Division in Europe with a series of arrows and colorful vignettes of marching troops, fortified foxholes, and steady convoys that almost trick you into forgetting you’re looking at battle movements that resulted in almost 15,000 casualties for the Division.

Also included in the grouping of items is Stanley’s “Ike” jacket (*left*) with insignia, ribbons, and stripes which tell us he served with both the 90th and 79th Infantry Divisions; he spent two years overseas; and he participated in four campaigns for the European-African-Middle Eastern Theater.

While all of these facts help us piece together Stanley’s military history, we can’t forget the reality of the person who came home in this jacket: a young man who, two years earlier, had jumped off a landing craft into waist-deep water, carrying a heavy pack on his back, and looking straight into the ghastly scene unfolding on the beaches of Normandy.

Thanks to the Kopec Family

Back to School on the GHS Summer Ramble



At the GHS Annual Summer Ramble on Sunday July 17, the mysteries of two old one-room schoolhouses were revealed to a small but eager crowd on a sunny, very hot afternoon. The first was on Sandy Pond Road in Ayer (#11). It was originally a Groton district school but lost to Ayer when the new town was incorporated in 1871. The second was on Chicopee Row in Groton (#7). The Ramble began at #11, where Irving Rockwood, of the Sandy Pond School Association, related the school's history, noting that the Association has applied for a listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The Ramble ended at the Chicopee School, already on the NRHP, with a tour of the beautifully restored interior and an ice cream reception on the lawn. Both schoolhouses are charming and evocative of a time long gone. Photos by Barbara Murray and C. David Gordon.

GHS Directors 2016 Committee Assignments

Bobbie Spiegelman *President*
Curator / Collections

Al Collins *Vice President*
Buildings & Grounds / Finance

Stuart Shuman *Treasurer*
Faith Little *Clerk*

Judy Adams *At Large*

Nancy Barringer *Program*

Peter Benedict *Security*

Bonnie Carter *Hospitality*

Gregory Fishbone *Webmaster*

C. David Gordon *Publications*

Barbara Murray *Newsletter Editor*

Carolyn Perkins *Publicity / Membership*

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Liz Strachan *Governance / Membership*

Kara Fossey *House Consultant*

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Encourage your friends to join!

Easy to sign up online

www.grotonhistoricalsociety.org

To reach us at Boutwell House:

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Donations welcome!



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172 Main Street, P.O. Box 202
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Save the Date

Walking Tour of Main Street



Sunday September 18 at 2 pm • starting at Boutwell House

Join Nicholas Langhart, a specialist in New England architecture, for a Walking Tour of Main Street to examine the variety of architectural styles of historic older homes and how they have changed over time. Free to all.

What's in Your Backyard?

Saturday October 8 from 2 – 4 pm • Groton Public Library

To celebrate Archaeology Month, the GPL and GHS jointly offer a special program called “What’s in Your Backyard” hosted by local archaeologists Marty Dudek and Michael Roberts. Bring in your locally found artifacts for analysis. Free to all.

Annual Meeting & Preview of Refurbished House

Tuesday October 18 at 7 pm • Boutwell House

Short business meeting followed by refreshments and a preview of the gloriously redecorated rooms of Boutwell House, Groton’s History Center.

Check our website for more details and program updates.

Then and Now

Volume 17, Number 1

Winter 2016

Newsletter of the Groton Historical Society [Est. 1894]

The Groton Hunt: A Bright Bit of Groton's History

Nancy Barringer

Back in October 2015, a large, engaged and appreciative audience crowded into Legion Hall on a Tuesday night to hear about the Groton Hunt Club that “rode to hounds” from 1922 to 1964, chasing a fox to its den amid the baying hounds and sounds of the hunting horn. Judy Adams, cochair of the GHS Program Committee, introduced four panelists: Zoë Eleftherio, Mary Curry, Anna Eliot and her sister Betsy Reeves, all former active members and riders in Groton fox hunts. Guy Alberghini, son of longtime Club Huntsman Louis Alberghini, joined the panel, bringing many stories of the Groton Hunt and the personalities and horses from the past.

Anna opened the program by describing the “stirrup cup” tradition of the hunt riders being offered a drink while in the saddle before the start of the hunt. She showed an example of the uniquely shaped cup, noting that young riders were given lemonade or something nonalcoholic.



Anna Eliot, program organizer and moderator, introduced the other panel members to the capacity audience in Legion Hall. Photos by Barbara Murray.

It was explained that hunting fox was not originally meant to be a sport but a necessary way to rid the countryside of an overpopulation of foxes attacking farm animals in England and Ireland. The tradition was introduced to the American colonies and practiced by founding fathers like George Washington and Thomas Jefferson.

Anna described a typical hunt day during the August through December season, the last month being weather dependent. An early start at 6 am was necessary because the scent of the fox was stronger in the morning. The territory covered was extensive including all of Groton and the neighboring towns. Each rider was given a map in case they got

lost. Wearing blue riding jackets rather than the typical British red (called “pinks”), the riders were led by the Master of Foxhounds. Other leaders of the hunt were the Huntsman in charge of the hounds and riders called Whipers-In, who assisted the Huntsman in controlling the hounds. We learned the terms casting, gone away, and rioting, describing the hounds’ actions. Observers of the hunt on horse, foot, or in vehicles were called Hilltoppers. The Huntsman used a horn to give commands to the



Betsy Reeves, handsomely dressed in full formal riding kit, described the significance of each element, from insignia on buttons to colors of jackets to helmets and hunting horns.

Continued on page 4

Main Street View: Becoming Groton's History Center

At the 121st annual meeting, in October 2015, I found myself being nominated and elected to the position of president of the Groton Historical Society. For some years I have been the GHS curator (and will remain so), working dutifully with our indispensable house consultant Kara Fossey, who covers the weekly demands of a busy office. We worked first from George Boutwell's own desk in an upstairs room we dubbed his library, eventually upgrading to the sparkling and bright office at the rear of the Boutwell House. Through professional guidance and instinct, we managed the vast and unwieldy collection of artifacts, documents, files of framed images, and other treasures.

This responsibility has given me a familiarity with the daily goings on and confidence to replace our retiring president, the very professional John Ott. Once I overcame the anxieties of heading up the GHS, I began to embrace the opportunities that were presented to me. My inspired juices started to percolate and, with the support of Al Collins, our energetic vice president, and an active and engaged board of directors, the to-do lists started to grow.

Answering Key Questions

John did much to give the GHS a stronger presence in the town. Two years ago, in this column, he declared it a "proud, purpose-driven, and permanent fixture collecting, preserving, and sharing Groton history...celebrating the people and stories that make this town ours." Now, as both president and curator, I have been asking questions of myself that would move John's vision forward. What is Boutwell House's place on Main Street? What should the future mission of the society be? What relationships should we cultivate and what resources should be maximized?



From the head of Station Avenue, Boutwell House as Groton's History Center. Photo by Barbara Murray.

These questions led to more questions. What are our needs, both immediate and in the future? Can we make the GHS sustainable going into the future? Three months into my term, I'm happy to report that we have already made important progress on addressing these critical issues.

We have dedicated board members who are working to keep memberships active and growing in numbers. A strong membership base will determine our financial success and inspire us to attract people to Boutwell House with new and appealing exhibits and programs.

Our period kitchen has been handsomely restored and refurbished as part of our recent CTA-funded rehabilitation project. Financial solvency will allow us to restore the remaining rooms, both upstairs and down, to their former elegance.

We plan to continue to improve our ability to survey our entire collection and store it safely and securely.

We want to strengthen our ties with other organizations and cultivate projects that attract broader audiences and extend our reach beyond the familiar boundaries of our town. All of these ambitious efforts, once on the way to being realized, would give Boutwell House a commanding presence on Main Street.

New Era Dawns

A driving force behind these goals is rebranding the Groton Historical Society as the Groton History Center. After all, that is what we are and have always been. We will always have the historical context of the GHS and its accrued collection stored over the generations in the house donated by the Boutwell family, but it's time to think about these assets in a new way. To do this we are talking with creative thinkers and doers -- brainstorming ways to bring vibrancy to the site and the society that will be commensurate with our new identity. Our history will still be on display but with an eye toward making new connections, especially with families and school children, the future of our community.

We welcome you to join us on this adventure and hope we'll meet and exceed your expectations as we become your local History Center.

*Bobbie Spiegelman, GHS President / Curator
February 2016*

Production of *Then and Now* is made possible by a generous donation from
Middlesex Savings Bank, 112 Boston Road, Groton, MA 01450

A Night to Remember: The GHS 2015 Annual Meeting

Liz Strachan, GHS Clerk

Boutwell House was buzzing on the night of October 6, 2015, as about 70 people filled the Red Room for the Society's 121st Annual Meeting. Outgoing president John Ott called the meeting to order, committee chairs summarized the year's activities, and a slate of nominees for office in 2016 was elected by unanimous vote. Bobbie Spiegelman was chosen to succeed John Ott as Society president (see the full list of officers and directors on page 7).

Among the notable activities in 2015 were the seven programs and open houses orchestrated by Judy Adams and Nancy Barringer and their committee. These included a program on the Groton Hunt, a Summer Ramble to see West Groton industries and churches, and a fascinating and educational exhibit on Victorian food and kitchens based on the Society's collection of kitchen tools and recipe books. Bobbie Spiegelman, John Ott, and Kara Fossey were the curators. Attendance at all programs is constantly growing.

Also noted in the summary of the year's achievements



Outgoing GHS president John Ott.
Photo by Carolyn Perkins.

were the improvements to Boutwell House. A wonderful collaboration between the Society, the Groton Garden Club, Friends of the Trees, and the Groton Woman's Club resulted in the installation of the beautiful side gardens in 2014, for which the Garden Club won awards from both the State and National Federation of Garden Clubs. Going forward, a group of volunteers from the

Garden Club along with Al Collins, Chair of the Building and Grounds committee, will care for the plantings. Indoors, new storm windows, largely funded by a Massachusetts Cultural Facilities grant, will decrease energy consumption and fuel costs.

Our collection of Groton's treasures--historical artifacts and documents--is being evaluated and better organized with the help of several experts under the leadership of

Bobbie Spiegelman. A videotaped oral history of Marion Stoddart carried out by high school student, Sophie Modzelewski, is now in our archives to be enjoyed by future generations.

Passing the Gavel

John Ott made his final report to the assembled membership, reflecting on the past five years under his leadership. The Society has raised the level of its operations in many spheres, he said, and established collaborative relationships with a growing number of other groups. It has applied for and received grants that helped fund much-needed infrastructure improvements to Boutwell House, and it has a dedicated board and a growing corps of volunteers and members. The future looks bright.

Incoming President Bobbie Spiegelman praised the leadership and expertise of John Ott under whose guidance (and always with the help of Lili Ott) the Society has be-



Incoming GHS president Bobbie Spiegelman.
Photo by C. David Gordon.

come more professional and better able to carry out its mission. The Board of Directors presented the Ott's a parting gift of a night out at a restaurant near where they will be living in Maine.

A festive celebration for the Ott's was held in the new kitchen and dining room where guests enjoyed mulled cider, wine, and fancy appetizers. The room was filled with positive energy. ■

Groton Hunt *Continued from page 1*

hounds. At the end of the Hunt, all participants would convene to the clubhouse or someone's home to eat a large meal called a "breakfast" even though it was served later in the day. The clubhouse was originally on Gibbet Hill, then it was moved to the Danielson property on Shirley Street near the Ayer town line. Mr. and Mrs. Richard Danielson founded the Groton Hunt in 1922.

Traditional Dress a Hallmark of the Hunt

Betsey Reeves, handsomely dressed in typical riding attire, gave more information about the hunt, the horses, and the hounds. She described the various colors of jackets, jacket collars, buttons and vests worn by the male and female riders. She pointed to her stock tie, which was held in place with a pin. The tie, Betsey explained, and demonstrated by unfolding another tie, was a bandage in waiting for an accident to horse, hound, or rider! And speaking of safety, she told us that modern helmets afford a good cushion against head injuries unlike the old top hats and derbies. The whip the riders carry has a crook on its end for opening and shutting of gates without getting off your horse.



On display around the room were many photos and hunt-related items, most from Earl Carter's extensive collection.

The object of the hunt is usually a red fox which tends to run in straight lines. Further south, riders chase a gray fox, known for circular running and even tree climbing. More recently, the prey has been a coyote, particularly in West-

ern hunts. The hounds chasing these wily prey are carefully bred and trained for the hunt. The heavier and boxier English hounds did not do well in the American terrain so American foxhounds have been bred to be taller and lighter. The young dogs start their training in spring by being paired with an older, more experienced dog. This is called "cubbing." A form of hunting called "drag hunting" dispenses entirely with the live fox, instead using a bag scented with fox urine which has previously been dragged around the countryside for the hounds to follow.

Pony Clubs Popular for Young Riders

These days children wishing to learn to ride usually start at the local pony club of which there is one in Groton. Besides technique, they learn horsemanship and riding etiquette, so important in maintaining the traditions of riding and the hunt. Though the Groton Hunt disbanded in 1964, the Nashoba Valley Hunt was founded that year in Pepperell and still rides.

Zoë Eleftherio started riding in 1933 at a very young age here in Groton where her father, Dr. Cyrus Comminos, was the town physician and an ardent horseman. Her pony was named Zorro. The author C. W. Anderson used Zoë as his model for the illustrations in the series of books he wrote for children. Some of the Anderson books were displayed on a table at the side of the room, along with various items related to hunting. Also on display was much of Earl Carter's extensive collection of newspaper clippings and photos about the Hunt over the decades.

During a question and answer period Mary Curry, who also began riding while very young, told us that she preferred riding side-saddle. We also learned that the Thanksgiving Day Hunt was more a social occasion than a long, serious hunt. Anna said the hounds were moved up Main Street to the front of the Groton Inn, then the riders followed the hounds along Broadmeadow to the Dumaine property on the corner of Farmers Row and Long Hill Road where the hunt commenced. It must have been a magnificent sight for the townsfolk to see handsomely garbed riders, stately horses, and baying hounds gathering in front of the old Inn. ■

[The evening's program was videotaped for the Groton Channel by John Ellenberger and can be accessed through the following link: <https://vimeo.com/144208826>.]

How to Reach Us

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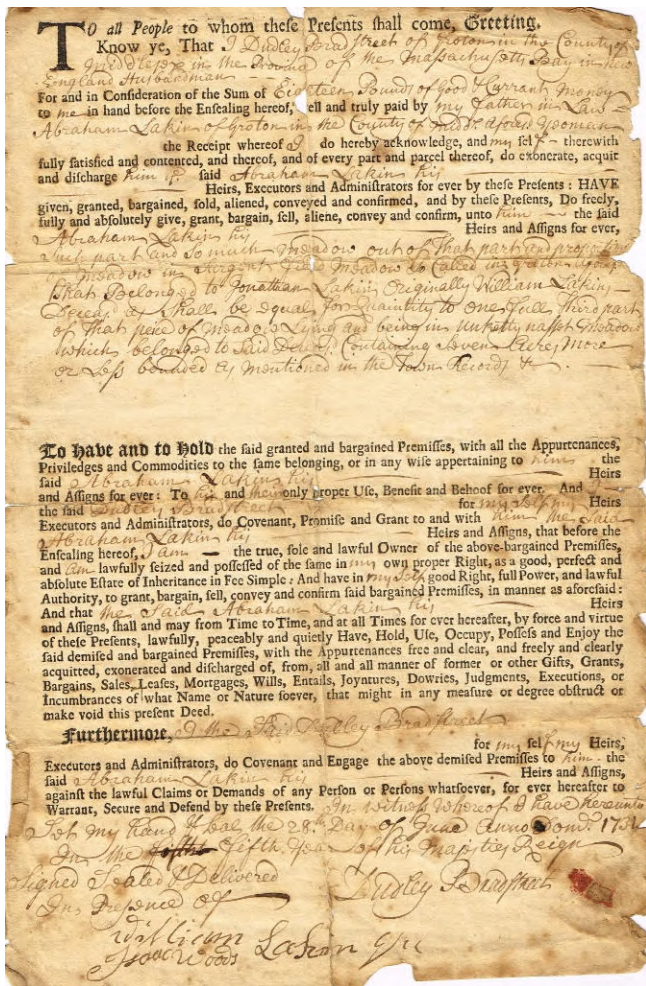
POB 202, Groton, MA 01450

Early Land Deeds Preserved at Boutwell House

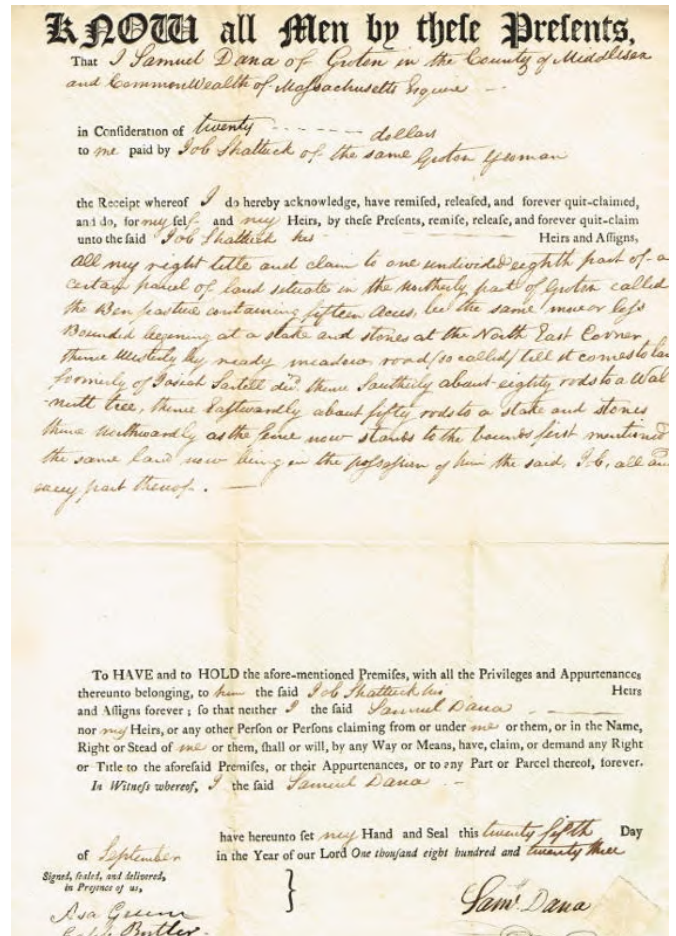
Judy Adams

The Groton Historical Society has a treasure of about 175 land deeds dated from 1682 to 1905. Though the earliest of these are certified copies, most are handwritten, some scribbled, and some in beautiful script. The majority are simple transactions, though some are lands sold in settlement of debts, estates, land disputes, and quit claims. One dated 1738 concerns a Narragansett lot granted to a soldier who was grandfather of a Groton citizen of the time. Among these deeds, Job Shattuck made the most land purchases during the 18th century and Asa Lawrence, the most in the 19th century.

It is interesting to note the terminology of the Pre-Revolution deeds, for example, location: "Province of Massachusetts Bay in New England" and date: "AD 1774, the fourteenth year off His Majesty's Reign."



Among the oldest deeds in the GHS collection is this one from 1731 testifying to a pre-Revolutionary property transfer from Dudley Bradstreet to Abraham Lakin for a purchase price of 18 pounds.



A later deed, dated September 25, 1823, records a transfer for \$20 of a small piece of property owned by Samuel Dana to Job Shattuck, presumably son of Captain Job Shattuck, once Groton's largest landowner, who died in 1819

Most descriptions of property boundaries included boulders, stone walls, streams, roadways, large notable trees and vague references to someone else's boundaries. When no such object was available at the corner of a lot, a stake and pile of stones were placed there.

Of special interest is a series of deeds tracing the ownership of a horse shed at Union Meeting House [today Union Congregational Church], originally sold by the Trustees in 1827 through six owners to 1895.

These deeds are all stored at Boutwell House, bound in chronological order in two volumes with a cross-reference index listing names of all buyers and sellers alphabetically. The information will eventually be entered into a GHS database searchable by all who might be interested. ■

Visitors to Boutwell House Are a Gift to GHS

Kara Fossey, House Consultant to GHS

The GHS is fortunate to have the services of a competent and resourceful museum consultant the likes of Kara Fossey, who comes to Boutwell House each day it is open to tend to a vast range of administrative details that keep the organization going from week to week. But perhaps the most useful, and certainly most visible, contribution that Kara makes is greeting and assisting our visitors. Here is her report on this part of her work, given in person at the Society's Annual Meeting last October.

On the days I'm in the office I have my hands in many different projects relating to marketing, membership, programs, collections, and exhibits. But what I'd like to focus on briefly are the visitors that come through that door--the people who really show us what our purpose is as a historical, cultural, and educational organization in town.

While we certainly receive local visitors who are wondering about the history of their antique home, inquiring as to what old photographs we have in our collection, and asking about well-known (and some little-known) town landmarks, I'm always amazed at how many out-of-state people come to see us. Just in the last

year we have welcomed visitors from Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Florida, California and even a couple all the way from Hawaii! Most are researching ancestors who came from Groton and hoping to be pointed in the direction of the old homestead or one of the two cemeteries.

Though we're providing much of the information, we as an organization are benefiting greatly from these visits as well. Many guests leave us with their own genealogical research which we gladly add to our files. Similarly some give us copies of old family photos that may fill in gaps in the story we tell. Another, a researcher from Minnesota who visited us twice, showed her appreciation by giving two generous donations and transcribing an entire Company Log Book from our Civil War Collection.

Not all who come to the Boutwell House are doing family research and some of their motivations are quite interesting! One visitor examined what materials we have on World War II to gather inspiration for a student play at Lawrence Academy. A PhD student in tax law came strictly because she is fascinated by George Boutwell and the role he played as the first Commissioner of Internal Revenue. Researchers and authors like Deb

Child have used photographs from our collection in recently published books. Brent Emerle is an eagle scout who has devoted time this year to working on a project for us which involves adding an interactive monument trail map to our website.

The more people that come through that door mean more interest and more participation and more success for this organization. A final note on exposure: we are the first and only "Groton Historical Society" that pops up when you do a web search. I know this because I'm always fielding questions from people looking for Groton, NY, Groton, VT, or Groton, CT.

Which I take to mean that we should always be looking for creative and unexpected ways to get our name and face out there and show off what a treasure and what a benefit we are to all the people who are looking to us to connect, re-connect, learn, create, and build the Groton Story. ■

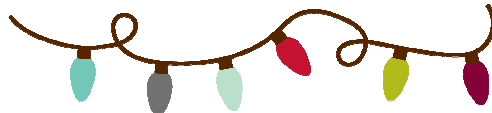


From our Archives--

With Spring Town Meeting not so far away, Liz Strachan offers for your amusement this excerpt from an account of Groton's Town Meeting of 1918 found in an old scrapbook at Boutwell House.

"The various articles in the town warrant were taken up and disposed of in routine manner, there being little debate on any except the motion of William Taylor to appropriate \$250 for the purchase of a Holstein bull. Mr. Taylor stated that while there were many Holstein cattle in the town there was no registered bull and that milk was almost wholly sold on a quantity basis and that the town ought to encourage the milk producers of the town by purchasing a bull for public use. R.M. Shaw seconded this motion. Mr. McKee, for the overseers of the poor, opposed the motion on the ground that the town already owned a Guernsey bull and that they doubted the wisdom of changing the breed. Moseley Hale spoke briefly and hoped the motion would pass. The motion was defeated."

Boutwell House Shines Through Holidays



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- Al Collins** *Vice President*
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Send queries to any board member at info@grotonhistoricalsociety.org.

GHS Membership Form

Annual Individual/Family	\$35
Annual GHS Sponsor	\$75
Corporate Sponsor	\$250
Sustaining Member	\$1000
Additional Contribution	\$_____

Name(s): _____

Mailing Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

*Mail check or
sign up online on our website.*

Clockwise from the top left:

The main staircase in the front hall of Boutwell House, decorated for the season by members of the Groton Garden Club, who also dressed fireplace mantles with festive greens, hung bows and ornaments on small trees in several rooms, and filled vases with flowers (photo by C. David Gordon).

Oldtime refreshments at the Open House featuring cider cake recreated from Sarah Boutwell's own recipe for this holiday favorite (photo by C. David Gordon).

Young flutists from Indian Hill Music School Erin O'Neill and Claudia Castro, playing holiday music with their instructor Sue Gleason in the Red Room at the December 6 Open House (photo by Carolyn Perkins).

Clara Silverstein describing holiday food popular in the 1770s, 1850s, and 1930s to a large audience gathered for her program on December 1 called "From Ginger to Jell-O" -- see Clara's blog on historical recipes at heritagerecipes.com (photo by Carolyn Perkins).



Groton Historical Society
172 Main Street, P.O. Box 202
Groton, MA 01450

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UPCOMING

Tuesday April 26 at 7 pm at Groton Public Library

Nicholas Langhart, expert in New England architecture, will speak on Central Massachusetts houses prior to 1870. Check the GHS website for details.

Saturday May 14 at 10 am to 3 pm at Boutwell House

GHS participates in Freedom's Way Hidden Treasures Week with our 1802 Torrent fire pump and firefighting exhibit on display and a 1 pm talk about Loammi Baldwin, engineer of the Torrent.

Sunday July 17 at 2 pm - Summer Ramble

Join us for a visit to the old Sandy Pond School on Sandy Pond Road in Ayer.
Details to be announced.

Then and Now

Vol. 18, No. 4

Newsletter of the Groton Historical Society

Fall 2017

Heyday of Trains in and out of Ayer and Groton

C. David Gordon

What a memorable train ride Carl Byron, founder and director of the Boston & Maine Railroad Historical Society, took Groton Historical Society members and guests on at Legion Hall on September 17, 2017! His passengers traveled through a visual and spoken-word journey covering 172 years – and all without stirring from the hall – as he told us about the railroad at “Groton, Groton Junction, and Ayer Junction 1845-2017.”

Byron displayed old photographs showing quite graphically the complexity of tracks carrying trains of six different railroads into and through the town of Ayer (known as Groton Junction until 1871). Trains moved east, west, north, and south from Ayer. By 1848 the Fitchburg Railroad main line through Ayer connected Fitchburg and, later, points north and west with the port of Boston. Crossing this rail line at right angles (and Ayer’s Main Street too) were the rails of what in time became combined as one line, the Worcester and Nashua Railroad, connecting through to New York City and in the other direction extending as far as the Maine Coast including Bar Harbor. In the process the line passed through Groton Center. Ayer historian the late Ralph H. Richardson declared in that town’s 1971 centennial booklet, “If there never had been a railroad junction here, this area might still be today a sparsely settled farming area.”

Running to the northwest from Ayer Junction was the Peterborough and Shirley Railroad, which never did connect with Shirley or reach Peterborough but took passengers and freight as far as Mason and Greenville, New Hampshire. Known later as the Greenville Branch of the Boston & Maine Railroad, this line passed through West Groton. Before the end of the nineteenth cen-

tury, a set of tracks led off this railroad at Squannacook Junction to connect Ayer Junction with Milford, New Hampshire, in winter transporting ice from Potanipo Pond in Brookline, New Hampshire, for people to use in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Meanwhile, the Stony Brook Railroad aimed east from Ayer Junction to connect with the city of Lowell.

“All Aboard!”

By way of introducing Byron and the subject of railroads in the area, Nancy Barringer, Groton Historical Society’s program chairperson, spoke of the historical development of Ayer as a community. Before the railroads came in the 1840s, the place was (as Richardson had depicted) “a small farming village situated amongst some ponds with a few sawmills and two district schools,” she said. It was a part of Groton, known as South Groton. Before railroads, she continued, the center of Groton itself “was a junction point to towns north, south, and west” via stagecoach. Horses and wagons moved “the produce of farm and field” in this rural town to markets, “returning with manufactured and imported items from the cities and seaports of New England.”

The coming of railroads shifted to the south the center of transportation, to what would be known as Groton Junction. That shift changed things in the area. “The railroads brought the men who worked on them, who needed food, shelter, and commodities,” Barringer said. “The stable employment encouraged the railroad men to bring their families, [and those families would need] houses, schools, shops, and churches. Various industries, wanting to take advantage of easy access to transport their raw materials and finished goods, clustered around



Program presenter Carl Byron. Photo by Barbara Murray.

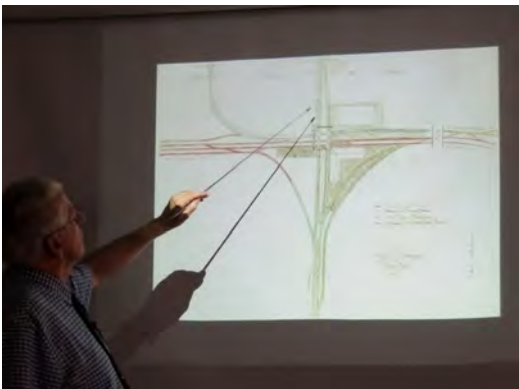


Diagram known as the “Ayer Diamond” shows how six different rail lines intersected in downtown Ayer. Photo by C. David Gordon.

Continued on page 4

Main Street View: Much to Celebrate and More to Come



GROTON HISTORY CENTER
Framing our story

As the Groton History Center approaches its October 2017 Annual Meeting, we are reflecting on what has been accomplished and what comes next. It's been a good year. Besides the usual offerings—programs and open houses that featured a newly restored Boutwell

House—we pulled off a very successful fundraiser last March partnering with Groton School and other community supporters. Through the valuable efforts on the part of our amazing summer interns, we now have even greater insight into undiscovered parts of our collection and the possibilities that lay before us in telling and retelling the tales of Groton.

George Boutwell has left us a rich legacy of writings and documents from his years in Congress in Washington, D.C. (we will be celebrating his 200th birthday this year so stay tuned for more information on that). In May we had an opportunity, thanks to these resources, to shine some light on what our founding fathers had in mind when they incorporated the possibility of impeachment in the early days of our Constitution's conception. Gov. Boutwell's daughter's vision in creating the Groton Historical Society in the late 19th century opened doors to acquiring artifacts that give context to our long history that continues to this day. It's easy to understand why we now call ourselves the Groton History Center.

Connecting with the Community

We have been on a quest to form lasting and meaningful relationships with other town organizations and beyond, and I am happy to report that we're scoring well on that

Groton Public Library—we are developing new associations that underscore our emergence as a viable partner in the rebooting of Groton's image.

The new owners of the **Groton Inn**, which is rapidly taking shape, have asked us to work with them to get the right historical ambience in their recreation of the historic inn. We have also been instrumental, along with **Indian Hill Music** and the owners of the Inn, in working to rescue the historic J. D. Poor murals from the Oliver Prescott/Donald Priest House, making them more accessible to the greater public than ever before once the Inn is opened in May of 2018.

Another project on the horizon that involves the Inn is focused on showcasing the **artists and artisans** in our town. This endeavor will also allow us to investigate some of our own art work that we hope will soon make its way to our exhibit space downstairs in Boutwell House from the slots in the attic where they've seemingly lived forever. Our Edmund Tarbell painting, coupled with the original painted by the itinerant artist back in the 18th century on loan from Tarbell's grandson, will be prominent in the exhibit once we acquire the funds to clean up our copy.

Continued interest in the Wharton legacy has landed us in the good graces of the **Massachusetts Historical Society**, which has offered us an opportunity to digitize the 30 diaries kept by William "Billy" Wharton while living at Five Oaks on Broadmeadow Road. MHS will perform the task and, once funding is sourced and the job is completed, we will be privy to Mr. Wharton's observations of the town in the early years of the 20th century in his very own handwriting.

And there's more! The **Groton Business Association** with the help of Bob Pine and Lorayne Black is exploring plans to create a welcoming garden space to the rear of the



Three photos show history in the making as new construction of the Groton Inn evokes the image of the pre-1900 Inn (left), which was destroyed by fire on August 2, 2011. Photo of old Inn appeared in Groton at 350, courtesy of Connie Sartini. The recent photos are by C. David Gordon.

goal. While we are keeping up our established connections—check out our new exhibit on Groton in WWI at

Boutwell House that will transform the overgrown mass of invasive trees and shrubs that currently defies any easy

Continued on page 3

Art Conservation Talk at GHS Annual Meeting

Barbara Murray

On Tuesday October 24, a cold rainy night in Groton, a small devoted group of members of Groton Historical Society, including most of its directors, gathered in the gym of Prescott School for the Society's 2017 Annual Meeting. A short business meeting preceded the main attraction of the evening, which was a presentation by Theresa Carmichael on the art of conserving old paintings. Carmichael, principal of her own firm, Carmichael Art Conservation in Bedford, MA, spoke of the joys and trials of assessing paintings that were damaged, dirty, overpainted, mis-



treated, carelessly stored, badly hung, and, perhaps most distressing, afflicted with mold. "You have to take mold seriously," she said. She illustrated her talk with many slides of conservation efforts done by her firm over many years.

Carmichael emphasized that her firm did not appraise the value of paintings brought to her attention – that would be unethical, she said. As conservators, she and her longtime colleague Geraldine

Brooks examine paintings and treat them as needed to bring them back to their original composition. Photos of many examples of their work were displayed in the room. A spirited Q&A period brought out advice such as, "Yes, you can put glass over a painting but it must have a significant pocket of air." Also, restoration generally "proves" the value of a painting – it doesn't change its value. After the Q&A, Carmichael spoke at some length with individuals attending the program.



The Annual Meeting began with the election of four directors, all incumbents, to 3-year terms on the Board: Peter Benedict, Beverly Smith, Liz Strachan, and Ginger Vollmar, who also holds the office of Clerk of the Society. (A full list of the Board of Directors and Officers is on page 7.) ■

Art Conservator Theresa Carmichael (top). Carmichael and colleague Geraldine Brooks (seated) with a photographic display of the process of conservation treatment of a portrait of a young girl. Photos by C. David Gordon.

Main Street View *Continued from page 2*

access. We've introduced ourselves to the new owners of the soon-to-open **Station Avenue Restaurant**. The NRWA wants to partner with us around some future projects. And we now have the beginnings of a **Groton History Club** at GDRHS!

We have much to celebrate and much more to achieve. Your support of our organization makes the challenge all the more satisfying.

Bobbie Spiegelman
GHS President
October 2017

GROTON HISTORY CENTER
Framing our story

the rail lines. The United States Army [in the Civil War and again starting in 1917] decided it was a good place to muster soldiers and move them out to war.”



*Nancy Barringer trying on an authentic B&M Railroad hat.
Photo by Barbara Murray.*

By 1870, she said, the population of Groton Junction had far exceeded the population of the center of Groton. Little wonder that Groton Junction residents sought control of their own local government. On February 14, 1871, the community became incorporated as the town of Ayer, taking its name from a benefactor, Dr. James Cook Ayer, a Lowell doctor “who had made his fortune in patent medicine.”

From Rail Junction to Modern Ayer

Byron outlined the progress of rail-roading in Ayer, explaining with photos projected on a screen how facilities at the Ayer railroad hub developed and changed over time.

To get to Groton from Boston, the rider in early days would have to travel on the Fitchburg line to Ayer and then transfer to the Worcester and Nashua line for the train ride to the Groton center station. (Or if you were Teddy Roosevelt on a visit in the winter of 1907 to Groton School, where his son Quentin was enrolled, you would be met by what Byron called

“Russian Sleighs,” used to transport people in winter time from the station up to the school. For Roosevelt’s visit the school had to send four such conveyances to accommodate the country’s President and his entourage.) At some point in time a “Y” track extension in Ayer allowed for rail cars from the old Worcester and Nashua line to be switched onto the Fitchburg line or vice versa.

A serious impediment to rail travel venturing west well beyond Ayer was the Hoosac mountain range, an extension of the Green Mountains of Vermont, just over 100 miles from Ayer. Solving this block to smooth rail travel was addressed with a tunnel well before Ayer became a township, but it took time and money. Byron called the Hoosac Tunnel project the equivalent of Boston’s “Big Dig” in its day. Started in 1851 at an estimated cost of \$2.1 million, the almost-five-mile-long tunnel was completed at a cost of \$21 million in 1875.

Byron screened the iconic late nineteenth century photo of the at-grade railroad crossing where East Main Street became Main Street near Ayer’s new Town Hall. Although the view across the tracks of what was at the time a quiet downtown Main Street with not a train in sight, the crossing guard in this photo has lowered the gates pending the arrival of a train. This crossing must have been extremely busy. The peak period for train traffic in and out of Ayer extended through much of the first half of the 20th century, tapering off only after World War II. Byron cited an October 1920 listing of 78 trains stopping at Ayer in one day. Added to this total, he said, could be second sections of a train, needed because the

first section had been filled to capacity. Along with work trains and seasonal or other special trains, the daily total might get as high as 100 trains passing through town.

The 1890 photo shows four tracks and at least one spur track with a freight platform and shed within the railroad’s right of way. In 1906 to save the muscle power of the crossing guards and prevent accidents with teams attempting to pull wagons across the tracks as a train approached, authorities had a bridge built over the railway at a 90-degree angle. Byron displayed a photo of this bridge. Gone was the picturesque view of the village as seen from the east road. He then showed views of today’s East Main Street bridge, constructed in 1950, which sends motor vehicles and pedestrians across above the railroad at a much less sharp angle, making less strenuous the descent into downtown Ayer.

The Greenville branch line (the old Peterborough and Shirley) was in time reconfigured to head north out of town across a railroad bridge erected over West Main Street. Further west of Ayer’s downtown, on West Main Street, a bridge over the railroad has also replaced a grade crossing.



Main Street grade crossing in 1890, with manually operated crossing gates. Courtesy photo.

Continued on page 5

Elsewhere within the township railroad tracks still retain their at-grade crossings.

However, with bridging over or driving under Main Street impossible for the Worcester and Nashua as a means for it to cross Main Street after crossing the Fitchburg line at grade, for years trains from Ayer taking the Hollis Branch stopped vehicular traffic in the center of town, dividing the town in two while they traveled on. By the turn of the 20th century the Boston & Maine Railroad had assumed ownership of the Fitchburg Railroad, making that line its Fitchburg Division. All the small lines feeding into Ayer became part of the B&M operation. In fact, over time the B&M extended its rail system to include 178 separate rail companies as part of its domain, Byron said.

From Two Stations to One

Ayer's train stations changed in shape and configuration over the years. Supplanting the initial small station two stations adjacent to each other were built, each with generous roofed-over platforms -- one for the north-south passenger trains, the other for east-west trains. Indeed, a photo from 1880 shows that one station provided



Double train station in downtown Ayer in 1880. Courtesy photo.

a wooden covered train shed within which passengers could be discharged from or enter trains. Eventually, with one railroad company controlling almost the entire maze of tracks, one station would suffice. Byron's photos also showed changes in devices and mechanisms for signaling and message-conveying to trains.

As rail service declined due to years of financial concerns and competition from trucking, Byron's pictures displayed trains moving past an Ayer depot falling into neglect. The remaining structure was finally taken down. We saw a photo of a last circus train on its way to Boston Garden and one of the last camp trains that took city kids to and from summer camps in New England.

Other photos showed early-model diesel locomotives that replaced steam engines, and sleek newer locomotives and passenger trains that have made the return of passenger service through Ayer thrive. Freight service through Ayer still runs along the Stony Brook line and on the railroad to Worcester as well as on the main line between Fitchburg and Boston.

But trains no longer head north across the Fitchburg tracks and across Main Street toward Hollis, Nashua, or Maine. And passenger train service to Groton stopped in 1934 and at West Groton in 1931. The last of the three successive stations at Groton center was destroyed by fire in 1932. In Ayer, train whistles continue to be heard as trains warn of nearing the remaining grade crossings there. In Groton,



One of the diesel engines that replaced the old steam engine. Photo from B&M Railroad Historical Society.

though, I – an inveterate train lover – strain to hear a train whistle that never sounds any more in the north part of Groton where I live now.

Adding depth and vividness to the program were display items from Ruth Rhonemus of the Ayer Historical Commission and many photos assembled by Earl Carter from his private collection. Groton Historical Society's Kara Fossey mounted some of the Society's photos too, including a map of B&M Railroad lines in New England and an assortment of print materials detailing railroading in Groton and West Groton.

Byron's fellow director at the Boston & Maine Railroad Historical Society, Rick Hurst, attended the program and talked with people viewing the collected materials. The B&M Society maintains its archives for research and general browsing at the Center for Lowell History, 40 French Street, Lowell, MA. It also has a large online collection of photographs. See www.bmrrhs.org for more details. ■



Brief Outing for GHS Rolling Stock



On Saturday September 23, a fine summery day in Groton, the History Center displayed in the driveway of Boutwell House two venerable vehicles from Groton's past, a bright red piece of horse-drawn fire apparatus and, behind it, the old black town hearse. The occasion was a new venture for GHS – an at-home-on-Main Street exhibit (with cider donuts and publications for sale) instead of our usual booth at Grotonfest on Legion Common. A number of interested visitors stopped by, including a young rider on horseback coming down the sidewalk. Photos by C. David Gordon and Peter Benedict.

Centuries-Old Weathervane Conjures Town's Past

Under the auspices of the Old Groton Meetinghouse Advisory Committee, whose members come from the Groton Historical Society and the town as well as First Parish Church, Groton's 1755 Meetinghouse is being stabilized and dressed up from its foundation to the weathervane on top of its iconic white steeple. On July 15 this year, the newly repaired and regilded 250-year-old rooster weathervane, known affectionately as Buddy, was hoisted on high where he could look out once more over Minuteman Common, where stalwart revolutionary minutemen assembled to go off to Lexington and Concord so many years ago. There were drumrolls and musket shots from four townsmen dressed as the early Groton Minutemen. The crowd of onlookers cheered and applauded as the shiny rooster, nearly 3 feet wide and 3 feet high, was settled firmly on his perch.

Buddy has become another visible symbol of the enduring ties of Groton's past to its present. Funding for his repair as part of a larger restoration of the Old Groton Meetinghouse came from several sources – a Groton CPA Grant, a Massachusetts Historical Commission grant, and donations from congregants of First Parish Church and from citizens of Groton. With Part 1 of the Renovation Project completed, the Old Meetinghouse Committee is moving on to Part 2, which is primarily concerned with exterior painting and repair to the clock tower and the bell striker. GHS members C. David Gordon and Michael Roberts serve on the committee. Former GHS president John Ott was a charter member. Remnants of the original bird are now part of the First Parish archives.

Photos by Barbara Murray.



Did You Know...

... (in this season of natural disasters) that Groton has had its own share of wind, fire, and flood events. The "Hurricane of '38," as it came to be called, was totally unexpected when it blew in one September day in 1938. The main effects in Groton of this storm were hundreds of downed trees (including the many apple trees in town) and the near total destruction of the electrical grid. Many roads were blocked and West Groton was cut off; some roofs were blown off, including that of the Legion Hall. The clean-up was done by local men and boys with axes and hand saws before the time of chain saws and front-end loaders. It was weeks before the power was completely restored as holes for light poles had to be dug with hand tools and the poles reset.



The cleaning up of the devastated Town Forest and other large forest areas took much longer, and while the Town was steadily taking steps to reduce any potential for fire from all the downed wood and debris, a huge fire, known as "The Wild Fire," did indeed occur over 5 days in April of 1941. It began on Chicopee

Row and before it was finally put out, it had burned 55 square miles according to newspaper accounts at the time. William Wharton's tree plantation, devastated by the hurricane and replanted, was once again destroyed by the fire. About 3000 firefighters were involved in fighting the blaze including boys from Groton School, Lawrence Academy, and the Groton High School. Also helping were firefighters from 20 towns and cities, soldiers from Ft. Devens, and men from the CCC. The women in town gathered all the bread in town and made sandwiches. The Red Cross also supplied food. A few homes and other structures were burned, but no lives were lost.

Finally, we all know that the Nashua River periodically floods. It is unknown which flood may have been the worst, but surely one of the



worst occurred in 1936 after a great deal of rain. In fact, much of the northeastern U.S. experienced flooding then. Both bridges to West Groton were damaged and unuseable. The only way to get to Pepperell was via a back road through Dunstable. Houses were washed away and mills were lifted off their

foundations from the rushing water. The water on north Main Street was 3 feet deep from the river to Mill Street. A great deal of sand was deposited on the roads and on land. The Red Cross asked for donations of food and clothing and although this was during the depression, Groton donated \$1208.25. Once again, it was local people who did the clean-up work. As the *Boston Herald* said at the time, local people exhibited "plain old fashioned Yankee gumption."

-- Liz Strachan

GHS Directors/Officers Committee Assignments

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Buildings & Grounds / Finance

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Newsletter Editor

Carolyn Perkins *Membership / Publicity*

Beverly Smith *Development /*
Volunteer Coordinator

Liz Strachan *Membership*

Kara Fossey *House Consultant*

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Groton, MA 01450

GROTON HISTORY CENTER
Framing our story

IN THE FALL 2017 ISSUE

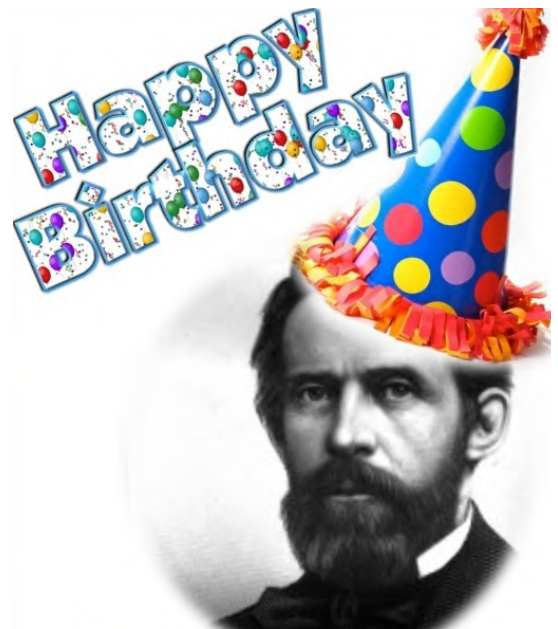
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Liz Strachan

Coming Up...Save the Date

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In 2018 GHS will celebrate the 200th anniversary of George Boutwell's birth. Look for special programming and exhibits on our renowned Governor, Senator, Treasury Secretary and more.



Then and Now

Vol. 18, No. 2

Newsletter of the Groton Historical Society

Spring 2017

Boutwell and Presidential Impeachment

Brian Bixby

Just as Republicans sometimes talked about impeaching President Obama, now Democrats are talking about impeaching President Trump. But what does it mean to impeach the President? How is it done? We can learn from the history of the process, and from the efforts of George S. Boutwell, who played a prominent role in the first impeachment of a President, Andrew Johnson in 1868.

Impeachment is a process that originally developed in Britain's government. It was the English Parliament's way of removing prominent office holders from their positions because they were abusing the powers of their offices.

About the Author

Brian L. Bixby is a historian living and writing in Cambridge, MA, and an occasional contributor to *Then & Now*, the newsletter of the Groton Historical Society. He has degrees from Harvard (AB) the New School for Social Research (MA), and UMass Amherst (Ph.D in History). Just as important, he was born and raised here in Groton, the most recent in a long line of Groton Bixbys. His father, Rudolph V. Bixby, was president of the Society in 1955. Going further back, the Society has posters from the old Farmers and Mechanics Club Fairs of the early 1860s listing Brian's great-grandfather, Varnum Bixby, as a judge of livestock. Bixby Hill in West Groton is named for the farm Varnum Bixby and his descendants worked for many years.

Brian says he traces his love of history, especially Groton history, to his parents. These days he has been making good use of the Society's archive of Boutwell papers to prepare his program on Governor Boutwell's involvement with the impeachment of President Andrew Johnson at the Grand Opening of Boutwell House Saturday May 20 at 1 pm.



The Founding Fathers attending the Constitutional Convention in 1787 were familiar with the British practice of impeachment. Indeed, the Parliamentary impeachment of Warren Hastings, the former Governor-General of British India, was just beginning as the convention met. So the Founding Fathers included an impeachment process in the Constitution, modeled on the British practice.

Per the Constitution, the House of Representatives has the privilege of impeaching the President, Vice President, and all other "civil officers" of the United States, in cases of treason, bribery, and other "High crimes and Misdemeanors." What this means is that the House makes up a list of formal charges against the officer in question, and votes on the list. If the charges pass by a majority, the Federal officer has been impeached.

But that impeachment by itself has no consequences. What happens next is that the House selects a team of "floor managers" to present their case to the Senate. The Senate's responsibility is to try the accused officer on the charges specified by the House. At the end of the trial, the Senate votes on a verdict for each charge. If a two-thirds majority votes for conviction on any charge, the officer in question is found guilty and removed from office. The Senate can in addition vote to bar the officer from ever assuming another Federal office, if it so desires. However, unlike in the British system, the Senate cannot impose any criminal punishments.

"Impeachment" is really *two* processes: the impeachment, the drawing up of formal charges by the House, and the trial in the Senate. It is both a judicial process, in that it involves charges and a trial, and a political process, carried out by elected officials over whether a person shall continue to hold a political office.

Politics Behind the Johnson Impeachment

The first Presidential impeachment grew out of the political environment after the end of the Civil War (1861 – 1865). The Republicans had supported the Union throughout the war and were in control of Congress. They were dominated by a "radical" faction that wanted to legislate extensive changes to the South, including full civil rights for the ex-slaves and the complete removal from political power of anyone who had sympathized with the Confederacy. And so they passed legislation to that effect in the years 1865 – 1868.

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Main Street View: Building a Corps of Volunteers

Spring has finally arrived and the folks connected to the Groton History Center are gearing up for lots of activity to capitalize on what's been an absolutely incredible year to date. Our wine tasting event in March (see photos here and on page 7) reached many generous members of our community, making it a hugely successful fundraiser that will, among other projects, enable us to establish funded internships for deserving high school students.

In April, we partnered with the Groton Public Library and its 2017 Groton READS program featuring *The Big Burn* by Timothy Egan. This allowed us to enlist a speaker from New England Forestry Foundation and highlight William P. Wharton's conservation efforts in Groton. Two longtime GHS members, Marion Stoddart and Roy Johnson, shared stories about their relationship with Billy Wharton, illuminating a charming history to the rapt audience.

The month of May brings our official Grand Opening of Boutwell House, along with participation in Freedom's Way Hidden Treasures program and a collaboration with GDRHS history classes that is of a scale not quite seen in these parts for a long time or maybe never (more about that later). We are making plans to open Boutwell House to the public on a more regular basis this summer, tentatively the third Saturday of June, July, and August. There will also be a Summer Ramble in early July. And in the fall, our calendar includes a strong presence at Grotonfest, our Society's Annual Meeting, our 3rd annual holiday gathering in December, and other programs that celebrate the rich history of our town.

These undertakings inspire us to comb through our growing Collection to find ways to reveal other hidden treasures and to design programs and exhibits that attract

the large crowds that we've been blessed to welcome these last several months. The tasks are challenging, even daunting, but not impossible as long as we continue to recruit interested and engaged volunteers who want to be involved with this newly revitalized organization. Our board members have been supportive and helpful in getting our venerable museum back into shape, but having additional hands to help explore and document our large library of books, textiles, ceramics, maps, documents and artifacts would really speed up the organizational process that started with the building restoration. With more volunteers we will soon get a better sense of our holdings and provide better access for all visitors coming through the doors. We are especially looking for volunteers to become tour guides, to staff our historic building during open houses and other special events.

Our recruitment efforts have been successful so far but we would love to add you to our list of armchair historians. Can you see yourself getting lost in the archives, even for just a little while? Wouldn't you like to spend some regular time hanging out with like-minded people who get caught up in letters, photos, papers, etc. that transport us all into another period of time, then sharing your excitement as a tour guide?

We'd love to hear from you. Please email us at info@grotonhistoricalsociety.org to tell us what you are interested in. Or call the office at 978-448-0092. We hope some of you will accept our invitation to join our corps of volunteers.

*Bobbie Spiegelman
President, GHS
April 2017*



*Scenes from the Groton History Center Wine Tasting Gala held in the Schoolhouse at Groton School March 11.
Photos by C. David Gordon.*

Groton's Foremost Conservationist, William P. Wharton

C. David Gordon

No one has left a more enduring footprint or indelible mark on the town of Groton than William Pickman Wharton (1880-1976), though few people are alive today who knew him during his 70 years as a Groton resident. Known to his friends as "Billy," he was deeply committed to forest conservation and preservation and to land use planning and management. He is remembered in town today more for the results he brought about in these areas of concern than as a figure about town. He was a rather private person.

The Groton Historical Society has devoted two programs to William P. Wharton in recent years – the most recent an outstanding illustrated talk by Frank Lowenstein, deputy director of the New England Forestry Foundation, given April 4, 2017, at Groton Public Library. Lowenstein spoke of the growing interest in nature that had started in the last half of the 19th century and of the individuals in this movement who influenced Wharton and with whom he would exchange ideas. Lowenstein reviewed Wharton's achievements and showed the audience contrasting photos of unrestricted cutting of timber and sustainable-woodland management taking place. Wharton developed his ideas in the company of other naturalist and conservationist thinkers, Lowenstein said, and he passed along his interests and pursuits to others. One individual with whom he shared ideas was Benton MacKaye, the forester and conservationist originator of the Appalachian Trail. MacKaye had graduated from Harvard around Wharton's time and earned a Master's degree at Harvard's School of Forestry in 1905. He lived in Shirley Center with his brothers, quite close to Groton. MacKaye eventually came to live in New York City, but he especially cherished life in rural Shirley Center.

Two longtime Groton conservationists, Marion Stoddart and Roy Johnson, spoke at the library program with warmth and affection about their encounters with Wharton.

An earlier GHS program was a Summer Ramble in July 2012 that brought participants to some of Wharton's Groton haunts. The first stop was the Groton Town Forest. Here may have been where sustainable forestry practices were first put into practice in Groton, under Wharton's direction. Town Meeting voters approved the formation of the forest in 1922, and Wharton served on the three-member Town Forest Committee. William Amory Gardner, an important master at Groton School, had given the town land he owned for the forest to which were added some acres from the town's poor farm. Additional acres

came with the closing of the poor farm itself so that by 1930 the forest encompassed 230 acres.

When formed, this forest was a memorial to those men from the town who lost their lives in combat during World War I. Although the poor farm's service as a refuge for those who were

indigent and elderly or permanently disabled became no longer so necessary, the Great Depression brought on hard times for many in the area. The town forest as a sustainable forest management project derived funding from the harvest of trees to help those town people in need.

The second stop in 2012 GHS summer ramble took participants to the Water Department's pumping station adjacent to Baddacook Pond. Here was a spot close to where Wharton had built a small hut in 1905, his place of retreat from daily events and concerns. Over the years he bought up farm properties thereabouts as parcels became available, eventually amounting to about 717 acres of forest and meadowland.

During a visit to Germany in 1913, Wharton had been very much impressed with seeing at first hand careful forest management techniques put into practice in the Black Forest and in parks. Rather than clear-cutting whole forest tracts, the foresters he saw worked out plans for



William P. "Billy" Wharton sets out for a walk. Photo courtesy of NEFF.

However, they ran into an unexpected obstacle: President Andrew Johnson. Johnson was a Southern Democrat who had stayed loyal even when his home state of Tennessee seceded early in the Civil War. This made him a minor hero in the North. The Republicans put him on their ticket for Vice President in 1864 to woo Northern Democrats. They never expected him to become President. Nevertheless, he became President in 1865 upon Abraham Lincoln's assassination. Being naturally sympathetic to the South, Johnson viewed many Radical Republican measures as unnecessarily harsh and vetoed several of them, while working to undermine others.

To many of those Radical Republicans, Johnson was harming the country by in effect undoing the results of the Civil War. Besides vetoing the bills they had passed, Johnson supported efforts by ex-Confederates to return to political office. George Boutwell even suspected that Johnson was conspiring with former Confederate leaders to destroy the Union once again!

Desperate for a way to rid themselves of Johnson's influence, the Radical Republicans decided to impeach the President. They could not prove that Johnson had committed treason, no matter what Boutwell believed, nor that he had taken bribes. So they offered 11 articles, 11 charges of "high crimes and misdemeanors" that Johnson had committed. Ten of those eleven articles concerned two laws that Johnson had violated, laws that the Radical Republicans had passed specifically to limit Johnson's powers. Johnson had thought those laws were unconstitutional,



Mathew B. Brady photographed in 1868 the seven-member Johnson Impeachment Committee drawn from the U.S. House of Representatives. From left to right, seated, are Benjamin F. Butler, Thaddeus Stevens, Thomas Williams, and John A. Bingham; standing, James F. Wilson, George S. Boutwell, and John A. Logan.

which is why he had violated them. He had expected their constitutionality to be decided by the Supreme Court, not the pretext for his impeachment!

It was the tenth article in particular that revealed the heart of the Republicans' case for impeaching Johnson. The tenth article claimed that Johnson, by his speech and actions, was trying to discredit the government of the United States and bring it into disrepute. The article charged Johnson with no violation of any existing law, just that he was acting improperly for a President.

This tenth article was Boutwell's favorite. Boutwell argued that "high crimes and misdemeanors" were not limited to breaking actual laws, but could involve *any* conduct by a Federal official that constituted an abuse of power. Since Boutwell believed Johnson was speaking against the United States Government to destroy it by reviving the Confederacy, Johnson's speech definitely constituted an abuse of power.

Once the House passed the eleven articles, they named several members as floor managers to present their case in the Senate, where President Johnson would stand trial. Boutwell, in his third term in Congress, was one of the floor managers, and forcefully advanced his views during the Senate trial. Several of the other floor managers, including Benjamin Butler and Thaddeus Stevens, made similar arguments.

Politically, the Republicans were in a good position. They expected all the Democrats to vote for Johnson's acquittal as a matter of course. Still, they had five more votes than they needed to convict with a two-thirds majority.

The judicial side was not so clear. Contrary to Boutwell's opinion, Johnson's lawyers argued that "high crimes and misdemeanors" had to involve actual acts of breaking the law. And they claimed that Johnson's actions in violating the two laws the Republicans had cited did not rise to a "high crime," and may not have been a crime at all.

Boutwell supplied some unintentional humor at the end of the trial. He noted that astronomers had recently found an area in the Southern hemisphere of the sky in which there were no stars, and he wished that President Johnson would fall into this "hole in the sky." Johnson's attorney, William S. Evarts, lampooned this image in his closing remarks, suggesting that Boutwell had taken the idea of "removal from office" to its logical extreme.

In the end, as expected, all the Democrats voted in favor of acquittal. Impeachments are definitely political. But so, too, did six Republicans. The reasons they gave

Continued on page 6

William Wharton *Continued from page 3*

selective cutting that maintained a perpetual source of hardwoods. Wharton would in time see that these practices were established in his woods.

In 1968 Wharton gave this land, since called Wharton Plantation, to the New England Forestry Foundation, which he had helped form back in 1944. The year 2018 will mark the Foundation's 50th anniversary of managing this woodland to keep the forest thriving while allowing for the marketing of saw logs, cords of wood, and wood chips and also providing a system of trails for the public to enjoy. Lowenstein called Wharton Plantation "a massive, beautiful property" with "a lot of water" on it (even though there is no frontage on Baddacook Pond now) within the 623 acres forming the property today.

Wharton saw the property through two devastating events. First, the hurricane of 1938 took down thousands of trees. Once recovered from the shock, he was able to harvest fallen timber on a grand scale, much of which became lumber used in building barracks buildings at Fort Devens as World War II was coming on. Second, a holocaustal fire in 1941 burning a great swath of forest land across Groton and as far as Chelmsford left only 100 acres of his woodland intact. A determined effort to plant seedlings brought eventual restoration.

William Wharton came from a background of privilege. He studied at Groton School while Franklin Delano Roosevelt was a student there, and earned a Bachelor's degree at Harvard College in 1903. He had a vocation in law, but he also was worth several million dollars by the time he took up residence in Groton. Rather than buy into a business, indulge in investing, or spend lavishly on exceedingly expensive goods or grandiose living accommodations, he put his money as well as his intellect to work seeking ways to protect and preserve nature.

Bedrock for his love of nature was his fascination in birds. He became a licensed bird bander, establishing a banding station at his home, Five Oaks Farm, on Broadmeadow Road. It was an easy step from attraction to birds to an appreciation of their habitat. At the age of 90 he declared he had "never found anything more interesting...than my work in conservation...or more satisfying."

The third stop of the 2012 summer ramble was at Five Oaks, right in front of Wharton's farmhouse. This modest home for a working farm was certainly different from the Frederic C. Dumaine mansion nearby at the corner of Farmers Row and Long Hill Road, the Lawrence house on the opposite corner of these two roads, or the mansion further down Farmers Row, The Elms, where Wharton's father, William Fisher Wharton, had lived during summers. By 2012 Five Oaks Farm, the large dairy and fruit-tree farm William P. Wharton had created and eventually hired managers to operate, was no longer intact, its land divided into separate house lots.

The ramble concluded at Town Hall, in the selectmen's chamber where Wharton had for a time served. Here people viewed a set of assessors' maps from 1940 prepared under Wharton's direction. This brought the rambles closer to the more intangible aspects of the Wharton legacy. Wharton helped set the climate and direction of future development in town as a member of Groton's first Planning Board in 1947. He was an incorporator of the Nashua River Watershed Association, a president of the National Parks Association, a director of Massachusetts Audubon, and a contributor to establishing the Appalachian Trail. In his will in 1976 were terms for creating the Wharton Trust Fund, which continues to make grants to organizations anywhere in the country to foster conservation projects.

Continued on page 6

Wharton Exhibit in New Case at GPL

A visible sign of the ongoing collaboration between the Groton History Center and the Groton Public Library is the new display case in the 3rd floor foyer (Main Street entrance) outside the library's History Room. It was built by Groton furniture maker Peter Benedict of glass and oak with mortise and tenon joinery and sized to sit smartly on an old oak desk formerly in the History Room. Peter says it took about 30 hours to design and build and has its own LED lights connected to a 7-day programmable timer. The inaugural exhibit in the display case is a tribute to William P. Wharton, Groton's pre-eminent conservationist and a pioneer in modern forestry management (see accompanying article). Artifacts from his many conservation efforts in Groton will be on display through the summer. Photo by Barbara Murray.



varied. Some thought the whole affair was too nakedly partisan. Some doubted whether Johnson had in fact violated any law. Some disliked article ten, arguing that the Constitutional right of free speech voided that charge. And yet, some of them agreed with Boutwell’s view that improper conduct even without violating a law could be grounds for impeachment and conviction; they just didn’t think the House floor managers had made a strong case. With those six voting for acquittal, the vote fell short of a two-thirds majority by one vote. Johnson remained in office and served out his term.

Boutwell himself felt his view of “high crimes and misdemeanors” as misconduct, not necessarily criminal, had been vindicated by the trial, even though Johnson was not convicted. And Boutwell remained firm in that belief to the end of his life.

Impeachment Always Controversial

There are two obvious lessons to be drawn from Johnson’s impeachment and Boutwell’s role in it. Politically, a Presidential impeachment demands that a supermajority in the Senate is willing to oppose the President. The Republicans had that in 1868, but lost for other reasons. On the other hand, the Republicans who impeached President Bill Clinton in 1997-98 did not have a supermajority and were unlikely to gain any Democratic votes; they had no real prospect of victory in the Senate.

Judicially, the phrase “high crimes and misdemeanors” remains controversial, and no impeachment will succeed unless the House floor managers can make a solid case for whatever interpretation they are using. While British Parliamentary practice clearly indicates that an office holder could be impeached and removed from office without breaking any law, in the United States there has been a significant reluctance to convict without identifying specific laws that have been broken. And, as

• • •
**What does it mean to impeach the President?
How is it done?**
• • •

the Clinton impeachment and trial demonstrated, the laws in question have to be relevant to the office. Bill Clinton had clearly committed perjury, but he had done so over a private matter, a sexual liaison that did not compromise his performance of his official duties. It was a crime, but it was not a high crime or misdemeanor.

To judge from the Johnson and Clinton impeachments, Boutwell was historically correct about “high crimes and misdemeanors,” but in practice wrong about how the phrase would be interpreted by United States Senators. History suggests that a President will be successfully impeached, convicted, and removed from office only if he violates a law relating to his official duties in such a way that Congress and the public believe he is abusing his office. The actions of Andrew Johnson and Bill Clinton did not meet that test. ■
(An earlier version of this article appeared in The Groton Herald in January 2015.)

Wharton was also important in the formation of the Massachusetts Forest and Park Association in the 1930s, since 1993 operating under the name Environmental League of Massachusetts. Causes important to Wharton are stated in a March 6, 1937, search for new members: To get everyone in the state “interested in protecting and improving the forests” and working for “the establishment and proper development and the preservation of natural scenery.” The organization was aiming to fight Dutch elm disease, fund economic and geological surveys of the state for farmers, work to prevent forest fires, maintain bridle paths, open more public beaches, and many more specific causes.



How best do we honor such an important person? Perhaps most fitting for our remembering this man, so modest about himself, is to walk in “his” stamping grounds as we remember his love of birds and nature, being mindful of his assistance in making us able still to see something of what he saw of wonder and beauty in this world. ■

Check our website for program updates and more about GHS.

A Night to Remember— March 11, 2017

Our Wine Tasting Gala exceeded all expectations -- a memorable fundraiser that celebrated wonderful community support and the shared efforts of GHS board members, Groton School, local chefs, musicians, wine merchants, auction lovers and donors of auction items, and many volunteers. Here's a sampling of the flavor and fervor of the evening.
Photos by C. David Gordon.



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GROTON HISTORY CENTER
Framing our story

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Save the Date: Grand Opening of Boutwell House May 20 from 11 to 3

Did You Know...

. . . . that our lovely, leafy town center was once nearly devoid of trees? The English settlers, who came here in 1655 to create a new town, encountered a forested area. They cut down nearly all the trees in the town center in order to build their houses and barns and to use for fuel. Only 10 years later though, the Selectmen decreed that “there shall be trees marked for shade for cattell in all common by ways,” and furthermore that “the mark shall be a great T.” Then in 1673, it was voted at town meeting that all trees of more than 6 inches at the butt, excepting walnut and pine, shall be reserved for public works and that the penalty for cutting them down without authority would be 10 shillings a tree.

When George Boutwell came to Groton in 1834, there were so few trees in the town center that he was able to list them all and state where they were. Then around 1835, Benjamin Prescott and John G. Park began to systematically improve the appearance of the town by planting shade and ornamental trees, notably a row of elms on each side of Main Street from Old Ayer Road to the First Parish Church (*see photo*).. As new streets were created, trees were planted along them as well. But tragedy struck around 1920 when the chestnut trees that grew profusely in the places out from town center became blighted, and by 1923 all had died. Around the same time, the elms that had grown tall and stately became afflicted by Dutch Elm Disease. Over time, they weakened and died. Brown moths and gypsy moths were also prevalent from the turn of the century. Because the town was spending so much money to control them, Mr. William Wharton petitioned the federal government to provide funds to save the elms, but to no avail. Today Groton has a Tree Warden who, with the advice of Friends of the Tree Warden, looks after our trees and plants new ones as needed to maintain the beauty of our town.

-Liz Strachan



Then and Now

Vol. 18, No. 3

Newsletter of the Groton Historical Society

Summer 2017

Lest We Forget: Groton Ties to World War I

Kara Fossey

The battlegrounds of World War I were hideous places. The trenches were wet and cold and filled with vermin. No Man's Land was littered with the breathless bodies of soldiers, abandoned equipment, and twisted wire. Gas clouds hung low, their worst victims destined for a slow and painful death. The burned out hollows of trees stood blackened against the scorched ground. Stone buildings crumbled into village streets, destroyed by firefight. Journals and letters home reveal landscapes of destruction and graffiti, the unmistakable sound of artillery shells slicing the air overhead, and the uncertainty of the next week, day, or hour.

More than 100 men from Groton entered the military for service during World War I. Their names are commemorated on a plaque at Sawyer Common between Hollis Street and Martins Pond Road. Nine names bear asterisks indicating that they died in service, either at training grounds in the United States or battlefields in France.

Two men are remembered in this article, one who died and one who came home.

Along with their friends George "Cedric" Moison and William Folkins, Laurence "Larry" Gay and Leroy E.

Johnson joined the Army in the summer of 1917. They took the train from Groton to Boston to enlist and were placed in the 26th "Yankee Division" which was made up mostly of men from New England. Gay was assigned to Headquarters Company, 101st Field Artillery while Johnson ended up in Company B, 101st Engineer Battalion.

Both men grew up in Groton and graduated within several years of one another, one from Groton High School and one from Lawrence Academy. At the time they enlisted, both worked in town: Johnson at the Groton

School and Gay on the family farm. Johnson, and the rest of the men in Company B, were sent to Camp Devens as it was being built in the summer of 1917. They were in charge of various construction and engineering projects at the camp including laying out roads and drainage ditches. Gay headed to a training camp in Boxford with the rest of the Yankee Division artillery regiments.

After training concluded, the friends suffered rough passage to Europe in the fall of 1917, days filled with rocky seas and unavoidable illness. Overseas in 1917 and 1918, both soldiers fought the same dreary homesickness and struggled through the same fierce fighting across the French landscape. Both wrote letters home, remaining hopeful in the face of unrelenting violence far from Groton. What set them apart in the end is that Johnson came home while Gay did not.



Groton's World War I memorial, on Sawyer Common, lists more than 100 names of local men, with asterisks beside the names of those soldiers who did not survive the war.

Laurence Gay's War Experience

On October 13, 1918, Sgt. Gay and four other men were sent to an observation post near the front line when they were thrown to the ground by the large explosion of a gas shell.

Gay, in charge of the post, ordered the other men to the nearby first aid station while he lay where he fell for the next seven hours. Gay remained in the hospital in Vichy, France, until his death at age 21 on October 30 from heart failure, a direct result of the gassing. His nurse wrote a letter home to the Gay family telling of



Leroy Johnson was among the first soldiers to be assigned to the new Camp Devens in 1917. Courtesy of Fort Devens Museum.

his courage and spirit of endurance and how even in his delirious moments he was always thinking of his home. He was even said to have once called out from his hospital bed: "We're winning, boys!"

Continued on page 4

Main Street View: Introducing Students to Town History



GROTON HISTORY CENTER
Framing our story

There is much in our culture these days that reminds me how much of a disposable society we've become. Nothing much avoids being sent to the landfill or recycling center, it seems.

We're being trained to separate ourselves from our precious belongings once their usefulness

is done whether or not there's an emotional attachment.

I have spent lots of time reflecting on this as I consider how we can build on a very successful past year at the Groton History Center, an organization committed to preserving our past and capturing our history for posterity as it unfolds in the present -- saving rather than disposing. At the GHC memberships are steady and growing; interest in our programs and open houses is high; visitors to Boutwell House have been enthusiastic. Our goal is to keep up the energy and engage more people in appreciating our treasures and to widen our community of interested consumers of local history to include the younger generations of Grotonians. Two positive efforts materialized this past year and this bodes well for the future.

Collaborating with Groton Dunstable Regional High School

Our longtime relationship with history teacher Tammie Reynolds and her department at the high school resulted in some real-time exchange of resources this past May with the "History is Local" field trip conceived, organized and implemented by Tammie and funded partially by the stu-



Summer interns at GHC: Sandra Roper and Joshua Vollmar

dents and by a grant from the Groton Dunstable Education Fund (GDEF) to pay for two expert speakers. The crowd of 100 students plus chaperones assembled at the Groton Grange Hall early one rainy Monday morning to hear a talk by Professor Brian Bixby on the history of the 1868 impeachment proceedings of President Andrew Johnson, with a focus on the part played by Groton's own George S. Boutwell, then a member of Congress and a floor manager of Andrew Johnson's trial.

The student group then broke up into three smaller units to rotate through a tour of the Groton Cemetery identifying Civil War tombstones, an architectural walking tour on Main Street led by Nick Langhart, and a visit to the Boutwell House. There we had a dedicated core of GHC volunteers to guide our visitors through the historic impeachment documents on display as well as through the remaining rooms upstairs and downstairs. One steadfast soul—David Gordon—took on the responsibility of documenting with his camera each locale visited on that dreary, gray day to preserve this "historic" event for our archives (see page 7). This field trip into local history had some glitches, naturally, as a first-time effort, but the potential for future collaborations between the Groton schools and the Historical Society looks very promising for all concerned.

Hiring Summer Interns

Earlier this year, we held an event at Groton School that had as part of its purpose raising funds so we could attract student volunteers for summer employment at Boutwell House. We are extremely fortunate to have landed two very talented and engaged students for this year's pilot summer intern program. Sandra Roper, a 2017 graduate of GDRHS, came prepared on her very first day to revamp our social media outreach. Joshua Vollmar, a senior-to-be, asked to be able to research the mystery of Dr. William Bancroft's exit from our town. Both of these requests complemented our list of suggested tasks that our interns willingly agreed to tackle; needless to say, we were pleased to know that they are eager to help us strengthen our History Center's organizing efforts as well as pave a way for future students to participate in a similar fashion.

We are off to a good start halfway through the year, and we will be exploring many ways we can keep the momentum going.

*Bobbie Spiegelman
President, GHS
July 2017*

When the Millerites Lived on Farmers Row: Edward Richardson's 1911 Perspective on "The Community"

C. David Gordon

The late Ralph H. Richardson, widely considered the foremost local historian for Ayer, Massachusetts, was for years an active member of the Groton Historical Society, though he was always a resident of Ayer. This membership in another town's historical society was a natural considering that, prior to 1871, Ayer had been part of Groton. Ralph wrote a number of historical articles published in the local weekly newspaper *The Public Spirit*. As a group, Ralph's historical sketches come as close as Ayer has yet come to having a definitive written history of the last town to be set off from the original bounds of Groton and established in its own right.

Richardson's father, Edward Adams Richardson, was also a historian, and this article is about the father's contribution to the written record of Groton's history. Edward in his youth had lived in Groton and later in Ayer. Given the overlap, it's not surprising that he wrote about places in Groton as well as Ayer. The Historical Society has copies of two booklets Richardson wrote in 1911 with a singular focus on Farmers Row, the section of town he grew up in, one called "The Community: The Story of a Neighborhood," and the other, "Moors School at Old District No. 2: The Story of a District School." Moors School, which young Edward attended from 1870 to 1875, was charged with the primary education of children from the Community and its vicinity.

The town of Groton has been well endowed with historians whose accounts are comprehensive and wide-

ranging. Edward's two small publications about Groton history focus attention on one section of town viewed from the turn of the nineteenth century to the year 1911 and are to be valued due to their very concentration on but a small area of town. They preserve something of ordinary-day life and those living it. They could serve as models of an approach to the past that every town and city might consider adopting to preserve its essence and capture what has been pointing the way to what it has become.

This article looks at the elder Richardson's description of a specific Groton neighborhood on Farmers Row. In a second article I'll cover what Edward wrote about the District No. 2 Moors School, which he attended for several years, and bring in for comparison the younger Richardson's description of what led to Ayer's becoming an independent town in 1871.

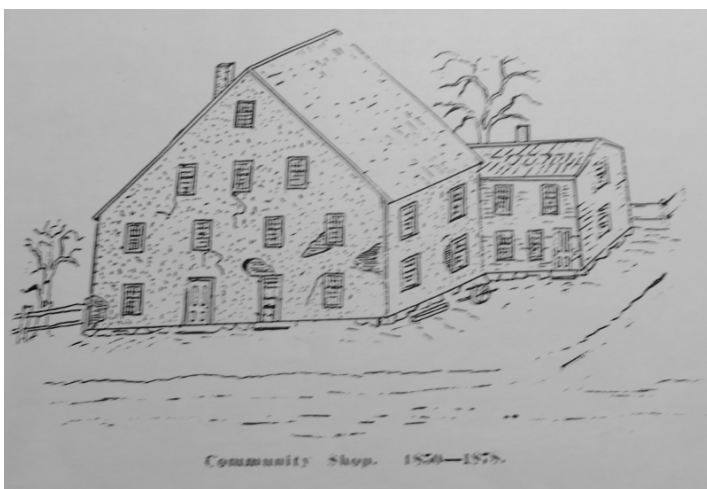
The Phenomenon of the Millerites

The Community Edward wrote about was made up of families sharing a common belief rejoicing that the second coming of Christ was quite close, at a date in 1843, later recalculated to take place in 1844. These Adventists had been deeply moved by the preachings of a Rev. William Miller.

Mention the term Millerites today in town and invariably many local residents associate them with that one vivid picture of people ecstatically climbing to a rooftop in the anticipation of being wafted heavenward as the world came to an end. When nothing happened, they faced the awful devastation of knowing that the prediction was false and they had to return to their real world.

Richardson tells us there is much, much more to the story, beyond that simple view of people acting foolishly. He can speak with some authority since his grandmother, Lucy Richardson, and his father, Joseph H. Richardson, had been part of the Community, although probably starting only in 1847. He himself had "lived for a number of years in that part of Groton." Yet, throughout he avoids giving the personal story of his family, mentioning relatives almost exclusively by name only.

Richardson opens stating that people nationwide were gripped by religious fervor during those years. A minor player in this concern about religious thought, the Rev. Miller seemed "a good man, sincere but under a delusion," Richardson said. There may have been few followers in Groton, but in a wide radius he had attracted 50,000. Those in Groton absorbing his message were "men of



The Millerite Community building, in use for only 10 years before being demolished in 1878, housed a two-story wood-working shop, a room for religious services on the third floor, and a reading room in an annex.

Continued on page 6

Gay was buried in France, his grave marked by a white cross and adorned with pink roses and ferns. He remained there until 1921 when his body was transferred back to his hometown of Groton. On June 6, 1921, services were held at the Congregational Church with schools and businesses closed to honor him, the last Groton soldier lost in World War I. His name had already been given to Groton's American Legion Post #55 in 1919. The service was a town affair: children lined the streets and waved the American Flag, and an Honor Guard from Camp Devens marched at the head of the funeral procession. Before *Taps* sounded on the bugle, Post Commander Daniel Needham heralded Gay as courageous, conscientious, and with great spirit of endurance.

Leroy Johnson Survived

Private Johnson spent the entire war slogging through the trenches with mud up to his knees and marching through devastated French villages. Johnson saw heavy action in the St. Mihiel, Marne, and Argonne offensives and was gassed in April 1918, an attack that left him with life-long respiratory problems. In July that year Johnson was camped in a barn at



Once the Chaplin School, the red brick building was repurposed in 1919 as Legion Hall, home of American Legion Post #55, and given the name of the last Groton soldier to die in the war, Laurence W. Gay. Photo by C. David Gordon.

Chateau Thierry and, without warning, a shell explosion sent him crashing through the door to the ground outside. He spent time in a French hospital for a resulting leg injury.

Johnson was back in the trenches when word of the Armistice arrived. His commanding officer ordered them to stop fighting on that day, November 11, 1918, at 11:00 AM and Johnson recounted to his family that the noise of explosions, shots, and yells ended immediately and the resulting silence was deafening in its own way: a sudden end to months of panicked fighting and never-ending casualties. When he finally arrived back in Massachusetts and was discharged at Camp Devens, Johnson had no means of contacting his family so he walked over seven miles to his home in North Groton, surprising his mother who believed he was still in the hospital receiving medical attention for his injuries.

As with all significant journeys, literal and figurative, it's impossible to come home without souvenirs, memories, or scars; imprints so deep that they may fade, but never wholly disappear. Leroy "Roy" Johnson, Jr., remembers that his father spoke only about the war in a technical matter-of-fact way. Stories swirled about the dark side of his service in France, but he chose to share memories of the French people and culture that he was exposed to which made a lasting impression on him. Roy also remembers his father using his war experiences as teaching moments. He showed Roy how to shoot a rifle expertly and helped him build a machine gun nest in the sandbox for his toy soldiers. Johnson shared with his family what was practical and interesting, taking human emotion out of the stories to spare his loved ones the true burden of war that he himself carried. Of course, failing to acknowledge is far from forgetting, and Roy remembers



Leroy Johnson's uniform on display at the Fort Devens Museum. Photo by C. David Gordon.

hearing of the nightmares his father suffered for the remainder of his life.

At 100 years old, World War I seems old enough to forget, far enough removed by time and distance that it loses its brutal sting. Towns were rebuilt, landscapes grew back and flourished, and the survivors are all gone, no longer able to remind us of what they endured. It is entirely up to us, then, to pick up these memories of camaraderie, loss, destruction, and hope; and shoulder the weight -- heavy as it is -- to hand it off to those who will come next. Because no matter how much time passes, war never ends, not really. ■

Author Kara Fossey, GHS House Consultant, is also Executive Director of the Fort Devens Museum, which has hosted commemorative events throughout this 100th anniversary observance of the establishment of Camp Devens (later Fort Devens) and the US entry into WWI. She spoke recently with Leroy Johnson's son "Roy" about his father's war experience. The museum contains many artifacts donated by veterans and their families, including Johnson's WWI uniform.

War Effort at Home in Groton

Somewhere in France April 14 [1918]

Dear Friend—Will write you a few lines before going to mess. I got your box Friday and believe me was some pleased with it. Ralph Lawrence says he is going to write you soon. We both thank you and all the Willing Workers for the good things in it. There is not much I can write, but we are having plenty of excitement now. The papers probably tell you more than we know of what is going on. Let's hope this is the beginning of the end and everything will soon be righted . . .

Yours sincerely,

Private Leroy Johnson

Co. B. 101st U.S.A.A.E.F.

[Part of letter written from Private Leroy Johnson to Miss Josie Gainey, President of the Willing Workers. Published in *Turners Public Spirit*, May 18, 1918.]

During World War I, while soldiers trained on American soil and went on to battle in Europe, the citizens left at home worked on their own war effort. The *Groton Town Diaries* reveal various organizations in town doing their part to support the United States in the war. A War Savings Stamp Committee urged people of Groton to purchase savings stamps, and Liberty Loan rallies were held at the Town Hall to motivate people to invest in government bonds. The Groton branch of the Red Cross sent socks, sweaters, and gauze strips by the thousands to France each month. The Groton Fuel Committee managed the rationing of coal in town. The Willing Workers, a club organized in October 1917, sent supplies to American soldiers as well as boxes containing tobacco, cigarettes, candy and other comforts.

This massive town-wide support even included school students in town. In the 1918 Groton Town Report, the School Superintendent, Edward P. Fitts, notes:

“One not in close touch with the schools can hardly realize what a number of calls are made upon the time and strength of the teachers and pupils for work outside of their regular school duties. They are asked to sell War Savings Stamps and keep record of the number who buy and the amount in dollars, to sell Liberty Bonds, to do Red Cross work, to make card catalogues of enlisted men and going to Ayer on Saturdays to do this service, to have Humane Day exercises, Bird and Arbor Day exercises, to canvass farmers for amount of food production, to enroll boys for farm labor during the summer, to encourage home gardens, to form pig clubs, to manufacture tables and chairs for camp use, to urge and encourage military drill, to carry out a Thanksgiving Peace program, to give and urge others to give for the United War Work campaign.

“In all these and other ways we have gladly responded so far as we have been able and so have helped on the cause dear to our hearts.” ■

From the Archives...

Summertime, and the living is easy Not. At least not in the 1800's in New England. Groton was primarily a farming community then, and farming practices had not changed for countless generations. Farmers knew that hard work (no summer vacations for them), benevolent weather, animal manure, compost, luck, and possibly a few tricks learned from their fathers could result in adequate crops. But when problems arose—bad weather, bugs, fertility issues—they were largely helpless. There were no pesticides, synthetic fertilizers, irrigation equipment, automated machinery or access to new scientific research to help them with their problems.

In the mid-1800s, though, a movement to share knowledge of best farming practices emerged. Groton established its own Farmers' and Mechanics Club (with George Boutwell as a founding member). This group organized Groton's first agricultural fair in 1855; members shared information with one another and with the public.

When Mr. Boutwell was U.S. Treasury Secretary, he received annual reports from the U.S. Department of Agriculture for the years 1867, '68, and '69. Data had been collected by some states from the local farmer's organizations, and these were reported to the USDA. The data revealed what was being grown, what farm products were profitable, and what problems were affecting production outcomes. In Groton, the crops were primarily hay, root vegetables grown to feed to livestock, and a variety of fruits, especially apples. Raising livestock was also a big part of farming then. The farmers sold their crops at market as well as chickens, turkeys, slaughtered pigs, milk, cheese, and eggs. They also sometimes sold manure and compost—both highly prized.

The Groton History Center has beautiful bound copies of the USDA reports that once belonged to George Boutwell.

-- Liz Strachan

strong mental attainments,” Richardson noted. “We can but feel they were sincere for the greater part and no more to be scoffed at than those other experimenters who took up with the dietetic schemes at Fruitlands and Brook Farm.”

By extension of his principle not to relate personal matters, Richardson does not make his essay the occasion of a psychological study. There is no detailing of how any of the Community members came to accept Miller’s doctrine or how to cope with the failure of its calculations to bring about the expected results. Over time faith in a second advent faded and the neighborhood on Farmers Row became more “a gathering place of kindred spirits who had become knitted together in bonds of friendship.” The change came to a head in 1860 when the Community collapsed.

For four years until November 1844 the Millerites had held religious meetings in Groton Center, at a meeting place dubbed Polliwog Chapel. Community leader Benjamin Hall and his followers had constructed this edifice at the corner of Hollis and Willowdale streets, now the site of a row of shops.

In 1847, as friendship slowly became an increasingly dominant factor, Hall conveyed a part of his farm property back at the neighborhood to Benjamin F. Hartwell, who became another Community leader. Hall also sold smaller lots to others and helped them in getting their residences built, and the Community became an actual neighborhood.

A Community building constructed in 1850 held what might be called a “second advent meeting house.” The hall was on the third floor, where religious services took place every evening and on Sundays for almost six years. At times neighborhood children attended school in this hall. The first floor

contained a horse-powered treadmill powering shop machinery for making wooden boxes, dippers, doors and windows; the second floor housed work benches for turning wooden bowls. This shop offered employment to neighborhood men out of work.

In 1855 residents built an annex. Here was established a reading room stocked with newspapers and books with an emphasis on advent thinking, a place aimed especially at attracting the 25 or so young people living in the Community neighborhood. After 1860 this place became “neglected for many years” and was finally dismantled in 1878.

The neighborhood was the site, too, of a blacksmith shop where smithy Henry Moody pounded out ship irons and jack screws to be finished at a Lowell mill. This shop was taken down in 1856. The Joseph Richards house was the site of a dry hop yeast business, which in time expanded into a separate yeast “factory,” as Richardson called it, located across the street. The Yeast House burned down in 1890.

Exodus to Wisconsin

Richardson traced factors leading to the break-up of the Community. Hall’s wife had died and his second wife introduced him to the prospect of trying his fortunes in a property she had inherited in Wisconsin. He and his family moved there in 1859. He attracted others to take up a parcel on his property there and starting anew. He never stopped seeking new business opportunities out there.

Hall’s “hypnotic influence” was lost to the Community. Those who preferred to stay on tried to “arouse flagging interests” in advent thinking, but they lacked Hall’s “power of attracting and holding his hearers,” according to Richardson. While a few joined a small Adventist sect in Rochester, New York, others were led to Wisconsin as glowing reports came

from the settlement there. What Richardson called a “general exodus” took place in March 1860 when 15 parcels of neighborhood dwellers’ lands and ten of their residences were sold at auction. Then in April 1860 about 25 individuals from the Community boarded a train West.

Another element Richardson found contributing to the break-up was that this community “differed from other communities in that [people] owned nothing in common except a common belief.”

Changes in the neighborhood, Richardson wrote, became “quite noticeable with the advent of Groton School in 1884.” As it developed, the school had “caused the removal of many of the old houses and fire has put its effacing hand on others.” Groton School introduced a “new” denomination to town and, indeed, the region around, the new/old Episcopalian faith rising in the wake of the older, failed Millerite Adventist faith. The legacy of the neighborhood described by Richardson is the knowledge that here in Groton, in the middle of the 19th century, there had been a deliberately formed community dedicated to the welfare of each of its constituent members and seeking a common good for all. It was not just a group of families who happened to be living in homes located quite by chance near each other.

Richardson’s career as real estate dealer and developer led him to include in his writings details of the owners of all the properties located in the Community area. Little wonder that, not five years after publishing his small booklets, he was the appropriate choice by the federal government to seek out landowners of property with which leases could be signed on land that would become another deliberately formed community, Camp Devens as World War I came on. ■

GDRHS Field Trip into Local History



GHS Directors/Officers Committee Assignments

- Bobbie Spiegelman** *President*
Curator / Collections
- Al Collins** *Vice President*
Buildings & Grounds / Finance
- Stuart Shuman** *Treasurer / Finance*
- Ginger Vollmar** *Clerk*
- Judy Adams** *At Large*
- Nancy Barringer** *Program*
- Peter Benedict** *Security*
- Bonnie Carter** *Hospitality*
- C. David Gordon** *Publications*
- Barbara Murray** *Governance /
Newsletter Editor*
- Carolyn Perkins** *Membership / Publicity*
- Beverly Smith** *Development /
Volunteer Coordinator*
- Liz Strachan** *Membership*
- Kara Fossey** *House Consultant*
- Ray Lyons** *Legal Advisor*

Sponsors/Partners



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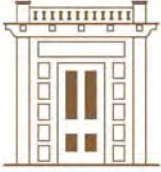
**indian hill
music**

Become a Member!

Easy to sign up online:
www.grotonhistoricalsociety.org

To reach us at Boutwell House:
P: 978-448-0092
E: info@grotonhistoricalsociety.org

It was a first-time collaboration between the Historical Society and the high school history department, but it won't be the last. Despite the weather – May 22nd was a gloomy, wet day for a mostly outdoors field trip – students seemed to enjoy learning about the impeachment trial of an early president, the old maps in the Boutwell House Map Room, the rich architectural heritage of some old houses on Main Street, and where several prominent old Grotonians are buried in the Groton Cemetery. Photos by C. David Gordon.



Groton History Center
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GROTON HISTORY CENTER
Framing our story

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Coming Up...Save the Date

Summer Open House • Saturday August 19 from 10 am to 12 noon at Boutwell House
Railroads in Groton and Ayer • Sunday September 17 at 2 pm at Legion Hall
Grotonfest at Boutwell House • Saturday September 23—outdoor display of historic vehicles and fire apparatus from our Carriage House -- stop by on your way to Legion Common
GHS Annual Meeting • Tuesday October 24 (program and venue TBD – stay tuned)

Keep on Scrubbing, Guys!



The Groton Historical Commission is cleaning house, or in this case, the town's large assortment of aging historic stone monuments, thanks to a CPA grant approved at Town Meeting in 2016 to power-wash and recaulk all 56 of the stones. In the photo, Garside Monuments owner J.T. Smith (left) and his brother-in-law David Allen are putting the finishing touches on a stone on Sawyer Common that commemorates the town's first Meeting House built in 1666 and "burned by the Indians 13 March 1676." Michael Roberts is project manager for the restoration work. Photo by Barbara Murray.



GROTON HISTORY CENTER
Framing our story

Then and Now

Volume 18, Number 1

Winter 2017

Newsletter of the Groton Historical Society

Five Handmade Quilts Found at Boutwell House

Kara Fossey, House Consultant

When you spend so much time in the same place with the same surroundings, you tend to become blind to what is right in front of your eyes. Last fall, as we prepared the Boutwell House for new wall and floor treatments, we moved furniture that hadn't been shifted in years and uncovered treasures that hadn't recently seen the light.

In the Grant Bedroom at the Boutwell House is a 19th century sleigh bed with as interesting a history as one could expect from a utilitarian piece of furniture. On June 16, 1869, President Ulysses S. Grant slept in the bed when he visited George Boutwell, his new Secretary of the Treasury. The bed was later used for decades by Georgiana Boutwell until her death in 1933. The faded mattress still bears the ghostly outline of its former owner.

Perhaps born out of a sense of preservation (some experts recommend laying quilts flat instead of folding them) or a sense of necessity (who needs expensive archival boxes?), someone had layered five quilts on the bed that were not seen until we peeled back the corners one by one. Oh, my!

Off to the Quilt Museum for Assessment

Intrigued by the possibility of new stories to uncover, we gathered up the old quilts and all pertinent information on them and arranged to bring the quilts to the New England

Quilt Museum in Lowell for evaluation through their MassQuilts Documentation Project. Well-versed volunteers at the museum received our quilts and began their evaluation by first hanging the quilts one by one, photographing them, then laying them out for further inspection.



Back at Boutwell House, two of the recently discovered quilts have pride of place on the sleigh bed in the newly refurbished Grant Bedroom. Photo by C. David Gordon.



Volunteers examine one of the five quilts brought to the New England Quilt Museum for evaluation last fall. Photo by Carolyn Perkins.

While examining the quilts, the volunteers recorded reams of technical information including technique, layout, fabric, patterns, and motif. An approximate construction date was provided for each quilt based on the findings. All of this information greatly enhanced the limited descriptions we had in our own database at the Boutwell House.

We learned that the five quilts we brought in for evaluation were made at various dates between 1830 and 1900. Patterns include Sawtooth Star, Center Medallion, and Broken Dishes. Valuable information such as fiber type and construction technique, which fell outside our own expertise, was clearly detailed for us on catalog sheets that we will add to our own Collections files.

Continued on page 4

Main Street View: New Ways to Showcase Our Collection

2017 has barely begun and we're ramping up for as busy a year as the one we just endured. This time the focus will be on much of the society's collection that remains sequestered in a couple of closed-off rooms and up the narrow staircase to the attic. While we have a general plan for sorting through our boxed-up treasures, there is still the overwhelming task of appraising these items and making decisions about how they best align with our collection policy and our program and exhibit plans for the near future and beyond.

The volumes of books, the vast number of boxes filled with ceramics and glassware, the textiles tucked away in any available space, the filled and stacked containers stored neatly in the attic—all these need to be examined and cataloged. A generous professional antique book dealer already appraised many of the books a few years ago but the plan for each box remains to be implemented. A similar approach was set up with our eclectic china collection with the same unfinished results. We have not even assessed the textile collection that is partially cataloged but was recently enlarged with additional items found stuffed in one of a dozen or more neglected trunks stored away a long time ago. Could a fashion show be in the works? Only if we can find models with tiny waistlines.

The restoration of Boutwell House, the home of our collection, has been a major step in bringing attention back to the house built over 150 years ago. Now it's time to bring forth what has been collected over those many years and to capitalize on the opportunities that allow for showcasing our holdings in a meaningful way. Our ties to the **Groton Public Library** are blossoming into a fruitful partnership. GPL's Director, Vanessa Abraham, invited us

a dedicated display case for our treasures to be built by board member and master furniture craftsman Peter Benedict, with materials funded by the library's endowment fund. We are also partnering with them around this year's Groton READS book selection, *The Big Burn*, by sponsoring a program in April with the **New England Forestry Foundation** and its association with Groton's own William P. "Billy" Wharton and conservation efforts in our town. Both of these activities tap into our ability to draw on materials that relate to our community's program offerings.

Our relationship with **Freedom's Way Heritage Association** and its 2017 Hidden Treasures event held throughout May, coupled with our official Grand Opening of Boutwell House on May 20th, has given us a reason to delve into the rich history that Gov. George S. Boutwell provided. His involvement in the Lincoln, Johnson and Grant administrations reveals pertinent associations with our political world today. At the Grand Opening, we will feature a speaker on one of the more tantalizing aspects of these relationships as part of the Hidden Treasures history celebrations. As we continue our relationship with Freedom's Way and establish a new one with the Forestry Foundation, we have been asking ourselves, "What do we own that matters in today's world and how can we educate our community about them?"

One of the most rewarding relationships comes out of the history department at **GDRHS**. We are working with



to set up Treasures currently stored in Boutwell House await sorting, appraising, cataloging, and consigning to more-accessible storage spaces with clear intentions in mind for sharing more of the town's history in future exhibits, both on-site and off-site. Photos by C. David Gordon.

Continued on page 3

Groton Artist Designs New GHS Logo

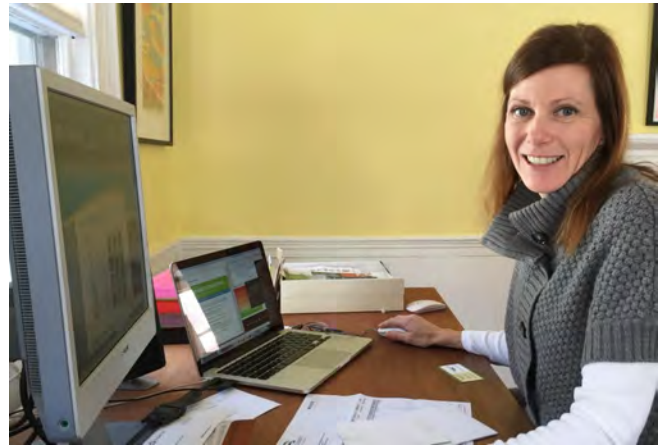
C. David Gordon

Did you notice the new logo on the front and back pages of this newsletter? This logo, intended as a symbol of the revitalization of the Groton Historical Society as the Groton History Center, replaces the previous black-ink sketch of the façade of Boutwell House with its many dark lines and shaded-in areas. Instead of an image that is formal and austere, here is a simpler, more direct, modern focus on the Center's home. In addition to zeroing in on the Boutwell House front door, the new logo identifies the organization and suggests that the place, its history, and what goes on within it are "framing our story."

The new logo is the creation of Christine Brooks, a graphic designer making her office and home at 248 Main Street in Groton. She heads her own firm, a group of design, production, and programming professionals, Christine Brooks Design [www.christinebrooksdesign.com]. She is married to John Brooks, antique furniture restorer, who was featured in the SPRING 2016 issue of this newsletter.

In a recent interview, Brooks told the story of the creation of this logo. GHS President Bobbie Spiegelman approached Brooks to create an upbeat, modern logo, something with a focus on Boutwell House but with fewer lines and shadows. Brooks studied the building, making notes and sketches. Then, using Adobe Illustrator graphic design software, she drew up three proposed sketches. Then, following discussion "back and forth," Brooks said, she took

the proposal through "six rounds of editing," using different color combinations. The result finally approved by the GHS board is a logo of artistic delight and clearly intended to evoke in the viewer thoughts of what this organization is all about.



Graphic designer Christine Brooks at work in her home office at 248 Main St., Groton.

Doubtful indeed is the idea that lay people involved in an organization could create anything like this fresh,

Continued on page 4

Main Street View *Continued from page 2*

history teacher Tammie Reynolds and other department members to plan a spring field trip that will enrich the students' understanding of local connections to the Civil War and after. There is much more in the works that will cement our collaboration in the future.

Raising Funds to Do the Job

We hope that there will be a huge turnout at the March 11th wine tasting at the Schoolhouse at Groton School. The event will be festive with great food presented by Chef Jed Coughlin and Great Road Kitchen's Chris Frothingham, wine tasting overseen by John Madigan of Groton Market, and auction items created by local artisans that are bound to be competitive amongst the bidders. The impetus behind this gaiety is a serious effort to raise funds to restore our valuable collection to its shiniest condition and to endow a fund that creates opportunities for deserving high school students to get familiar with Groton history through funded internships.

We are striving to make our collection secure, restored and relevant to our world. It will take support from the community at large, a committed board, and a corps of dedicated volunteers to make any inroads. We welcome all contributions to our next important phase.

*Bobbie Spiegelman
President, GHS*

Caring for Old Quilts

Perhaps just as valuable as the technical and design information is the care, storage, and cleaning guidelines we were given. Aside from the usual concerns for textiles (such as light, pests, and climate), we also learned about special considerations for storage and display. Long-term folds can be damaging to fibers, we were told, and stacking quilts can easily crush the fabric. Plastic, unsealed wood, and cardboard all pose threats due to off-gassing and moisture entrapment. Ideally quilts ought to be wrapped in a white sheet, interleaved with acid-free tissue, stored in archival-quality boxes, and taken out every six months to be aired out and refolded. Not your usual linen-closet routine.

The Massachusetts Quilt Documentation Project seeks to document the different examples of quilts that were produced in the state before 1950. With the inclusion of data on the five quilts we found in the Grant Bedroom, that as-

pect of Groton material and domestic culture is put into the context of the greater community. By bringing these quilts for evaluation we have done our duty to conserve and protect them, and by contributing knowledge to a grander statewide project, we are fulfilling our obligation to share the history of Groton. ■

MassQuilts Documentation Days are held at NEQM on the 2nd Thursday of each month (though not in July or August). There is a small fee. For more information about the New England Quilt Museum, its Documentation Project, and setting up a quilt evaluation, please visit: nequiltmuseum.org/massquilts-documentation.html or call 978-452-4207. The museum is at 18 Shattuck St., Lowell, MA.

New Logo *Continued from page 3*

pleasing-looking design. Asked what she brings to such a task that a group of board members might well not be able to provide, Brooks said she has the tools to help take people's ideas and turn them into a winning design. These tools give her the ability to shift lines and perspectives, try various colors and shades. Back of the tools is her own artistic talent and sense of creativity, and over 20 years of work with professional design at three agencies and in her own firm.

A native of Burlington, Massachusetts, Brooks first became seriously interested in art in high school art classes. She entered the Art Institute of Boston (now Lesley University) thinking she would make a career in photography. However, she ended up earning her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in graphic design in 1994. Later she studied information design with a nationally known authority in the field, Edward Tufte, and took critical writing at Harvard Extension School. She employs a whole palette of Adobe Creative Suite software -- InDesign, Photoshop, Acrobat and Illustrator -- as well as other programs.

Brooks began her career as an instructor at Art Institute of Boston, where she developed a course for pre-college students. From 1994 to 2007 she worked for design and advertising firms Collage Advertising and Design, Korn Design, and TR Design. What began as a freelance career in graphic design done in her spare time ended up becoming full-time working on her own and subsequently forming her own firm. She wrote of that business, "Our electronically based organization provides the best talent without the usual geographical constraints and high overhead."

Brooks creates print and online marketing materials for clients, materials that help identify and brand an organiza-

tion or institution. As her work continued as a freelance designer, she started receiving repeat business from clients. News of her work and that of her associates has been passed along to other clients especially by word of mouth.

A wide range of clients rely on work of Christine Brooks Design: In academia

Harvard Medical School, *MIT Sloan Management Review*, and Groton Community School; among non-profits Groton Public Library and Wellesley Free Library; with high tech firms Tera-dyne, GE, and Fuji; with clients in life sciences like HP Medical; among cultural institutions Fitchburg Art Museum and 3 Rivers Arts in Groton; and local professionals Platt Builders and Greg Premru Photography. Her work has brought her awards from Graphic Design USA and from The Summit; and she has published material in *Letterhead & Logo Design 6*.

When you look at Groton History Center's new logo, then, think of Christine Brooks and her work. ■



GROTON HISTORY CENTER
Framing our story

The new logo of the Groton History Center, designed by Christine Brooks.

Looking Back: How Groton Celebrated the 100th Anniversary of the Inauguration of George Washington

Barbara Murray

In this year of the inauguration of the 45th president of the United States, it's refreshing to look back on the first such event in our nation's history and consider its impact on the small town of Groton, Massachusetts – a town rich in its own history and with strong ties to the growth and flowering of our country. Groton was one of the first towns settled in the Massachusetts Bay Colony (1655) and among the first to send its militia to Concord in 1775 to fight the British in what became the Revolutionary War or War of Independence. That war, as every schoolchild knows, resulted in the establishment of the United States of America and the election by the nation's Congress of General George Washington as its first president. Washington served for eight years, from 1789 to 1797.

On April 30, 1889, one hundred years after Washington's inaugural, the town of Groton recalled the occasion with a Centennial Anniversary celebration held, fittingly enough, at First Parish Meetinghouse, itself older than the occasion being honored and the point of embarkation of the Groton militia to the opening battle of the Revolutionary War. The first speaker at this momentous event was Francis M. Boutwell, Esq., son of a famous son of Groton, George S. Boutwell, who was elected governor of the Commonwealth in 1851 and also served in the US House of Representatives, the US Senate, as Secretary of the Treasury under President Grant, and in numerous other ways on the national political scene.

What follows are excerpts from young Francis Boutwell's speech that day nearly 128 years ago, taken from a pamphlet called "The Proceedings of the Centennial Anniversary of Washington's Inauguration, First Parish Meeting-House, at Groton, Massachusetts, April 30, 1889." Boutwell called his remarks "Local Historic Events."

This house of worship was raised in 1754, and completed in the following year; it was therefore in existence twenty years before the Revolutionary War opened. For a long time it was the only meeting-house and the only public building in town, except the schoolhouses, which were too small to be of use for large gatherings of the people; so that all town-meetings and other assemblages were held here. Could these walls speak to us they would, no doubt, impart wonderfully interesting information.

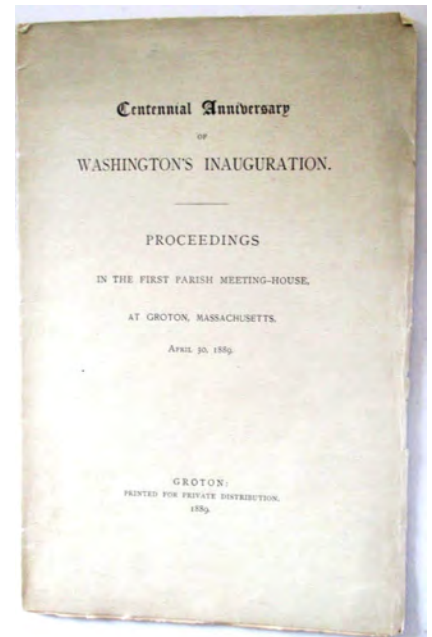
Early in the month of March, 1775, a few weeks before the battles of Lexington and Concord, the Rev. Samuel Dana, the minister of the town at that time, preached a sermon in this house, in which he advised his people not to attempt resistance of the mother country; for in his opinion such action

would result in defeat, in which event their situation would be much more unfortunate than it was then. The people were so irritated that they declined to permit him to preach the following Sunday, and this event practically closed his career as a minister of the gospel.

A committee was formed, with Dr. Oliver Prescott at its head; and after conference with the minister he signed a paper, in which he apologized for anything that he might have said in his sermon that had perchance wounded the feelings of any of his hearers, and also expressed regret that he was not able to entertain the political opinions held by the great majority of them. Mr. Dana continued to live in Groton for several years, studied law, and entered the practice of his new profession at Amherst, New Hampshire; and for a long time he was Judge of Probate of Hillsborough County in that State.

On the famous 19th of April, 1775, the alarm had reached Col. William Prescott at his home in Pepperell; and he had left his work, had called his men together from Pepperell and Hollis, and arrived here about the middle of the day. The men rested upon this Common, then an open field. In this building were our Board of Selectmen, assisted by other citizens, preparing and issuing arms and ammunition to the Groton soldiers who belonged to Colonel Prescott's regiment.

.....



Continued on page 6

Washington's Inauguration *Continued from page 5*

On the Fourth of July, 1776, a day which has since become famous, the Provincial Congress passed a resolution calling upon the people of this Province to remove the lead weights from the windows of their houses and public buildings, to be made into bullets, and the Commissary-General was authorized to pay the market price for all lead received. It is known that the lead weights were removed from [the Meetinghouse] windows during the Revolution to be made into bullets, and it is not unlikely that they were taken out in pursuance of that resolution.

.....
In closing, it may not be out of place for me to call your attention to some of the great changes that have occurred here during the last one hundred years. In the year 1790 the first census of the United States was taken, and it then appeared that Groton was the second town, in number of inhabitants and in importance, in the county of Middlesex, Cambridge being the only larger place. Groton then

contained about eighteen hundred inhabitants, and Cambridge about twenty-one hundred. And strange as it may seem, this, the second town in population and importance in this county, had never enjoyed the privilege of a public conveyance to any other place, although the town had been in existence one hundred and thirty-five years. A few years later a stage began to run between Groton and Boston, two or three times each week. It was a very primitive wagon, as you may readily imagine when I say that the thoroughbraces were iron chains.

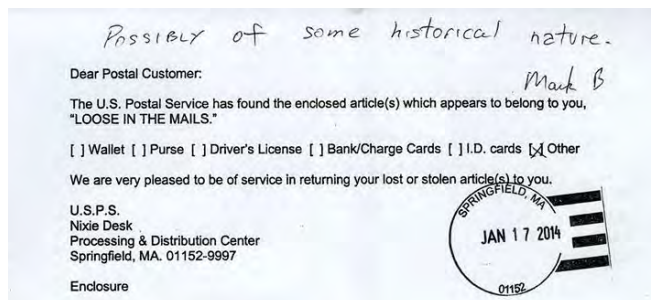
.....
Further along in this closing paragraph of his speech celebrating the Centennial of Washington's Inauguration, young Boutwell made reference to the advent of mail service to Groton, which began in 1800. [See box on this page for that story.] He then concluded with the hope that his audience might "realize the wonderful changes that have taken place in Groton since the first President of the United States was inaugurated." ■

Did You Know...

... that Groton first began to get United States mail only in 1800? Before then, mail for Groton and area residents would go to the Boston Post Office where it would be held until picked up. Boston newspapers would advertise that the mail was there, and whenever someone from Groton would have occasion to go to Boston, he would pick up the mail, bring it home in his saddlebags, and distribute it as he was able. Today Grotonians can almost instantly send and receive messages from people the world over, making it difficult to imagine what it must have been like to wait months to receive messages from family, friends, or the world beyond Groton.* The advent of a regular stage coach between Boston and Groton made it possible to establish the first Groton Post Office. The first postmaster was the Honorable Samuel Dana, a young lawyer and son of the former town minister, the Reverend Samuel Dana. The younger Dana kept the post office in his law office, which was in a small building on the site of the present Boutwell House. George S. Boutwell was himself briefly postmaster in 1841, when it was still a political appointment.

-- Liz Strachan

*A letter mailed from Groton October 17, 1911, found its way to Boutwell House in January 2014 with a note from the USPS saying it was found LOOSE IN THE MAILS.



Scenes from our Holiday Open House Dec. 11, 2016

It was all about food and music and sunshine streaming in at our annual Holiday celebration at Boutwell House last December. Seasonal decorations arranged throughout the house by the Groton Garden Club were especially festive against the busy (“beezy”) wallpaper in the dining room. Student musicians from Indian Hill Music performed all afternoon in the front parlor, known affectionately as the Red Room. On view this year for the first time in several years were two rooms on the second floor: Gov. Boutwell’s Study and the Grant Bedroom. Visitors young and old enjoyed homemade cookies and hot mulled cider served up by GHS board member Bonnie Carter in Colonial dress. Photos by C. David Gordon.



GHS Directors/Officers Committee Assignments

Bobbie Spiegelman *President*
Curator / Collections
Al Collins *Vice President*
Buildings & Grounds / Finance
Stuart Shuman *Treasurer / Finance*
Ginger Vollmar *Clerk*

Judy Adams *At Large*
Nancy Barringer *Program*
Peter Benedict *Security*
Bonnie Carter *Hospitality*
C. David Gordon *Publications*
Barbara Murray *Governance /*
Newsletter Editor
Carolyn Perkins *Membership / Publicity*
Beverly Smith *Development /*
Volunteer Coordinator
Liz Strachan *Membership*

Kara Fossey *House Consultant*

Ray Lyons *Legal Advisor*

Sponsors/Partners

Middlesex Savings Bank
Habitat Advisory Group
GDRHS History Department
Indian Hill Music
Groton Market/John Madigan
Groton School
Great Road Kitchen

Join the GHS!

Easy to sign up online:
www.grotonhistoricalsociety.org

To reach us at Boutwell House:
Call: 978-448-0092
Email: info@grotonhistoricalsociety.org



Groton History Center
172 Main Street, P.O. Box 202
Groton, MA 01450

GROTON HISTORY CENTER
Framing our story

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Save the Date

Wine Tasting Gala – fundraiser for the Groton History Center

Saturday March 11 from 7 to 10 pm • Schoolhouse, Groton School

Come join the fun – wine and craft beer tasting, good food, live auction, music by Indian Hill jazz musicians. Tickets at \$50 per person are available at Groton Market or can be ordered online at www.grotonhistoricalsociety.org. and paid for by credit card or by sending a check to Groton Historical Society, PO BOX 202, Groton, MA 01450.

Program on William P. “Billy” Wharton, Groton Forester

Tuesday April 4 at 7 pm • at the Groton Public Library

In collaboration with the Groton History Center, a speaker from the New England Forestry Foundation celebrates Groton's renowned forester and conservationist William Wharton – a Groton READS program. This year's book is *The Big Burn*, by Timothy Egan.

GRAND OPENING of Boutwell House

Saturday May 20 from 1 to 3 pm • Boutwell House, Groton History Center

Our special program, part of Freedom's Way's Hidden Treasures month-long event, will feature Brian Bixby, historian and native of Groton, speaking on the role of Gov. George Boutwell in the impeachment proceedings against President Andrew Johnson in 1868. Come tour the beautifully refurbished Boutwell House and view a new exhibit related to Bixby's presentation.

Check our website for more details and program updates.

Then and Now

Vol. 19, No. 4

Newsletter of the Groton Historical Society

Fall 2018

Farming in Groton in the Year 2018

C. David Gordon

A sense of open countryside and a rural charm continue to grace the town of Groton even in this modern age of spreading suburbia. A considerable contribution to this atmosphere comes from the community's several tracts of conservation land, while another source is its several farms. Among them is the Tolles family farm, located on Longley Road and for the past 18 years operated by Ramona Tolles.

This working farm is devoted to boarding horses. Stabled and cared for here at present are seven horses. In addition, Ramona has three horses of her own – all three thoroughbreds. From a start in 1970 she has boarded over 100 horses and owned 15 of her own horses. She rides one of her animals “almost every day,” she said in a recent interview.

The horse barn is a very attractive, homey place -- clean and light and sweet-smelling of hay. Horses exercise in an extensive paddock, and fields of grass to be cut and dried for hay stretch down from the ridge on which most of the farm buildings are located, dropping down and leveling off in back and sloping off more gently to one side. (In fact, a sign in the barn calls this place “Naumox Farm,” a Native American name Ramona translates as meaning “Land of Ridges.”)

Along the fringes of meadowland is forest. Of the 22 acres making up the farm about 10 acres are given over to forest. In the foreground in the meadow is a small farm pond, which her dad, Raymond Eliot Tolles, built in 1975 by damming up a brook.

She makes use of seven different tractors and a small army of special farm equipment – cutters, rake, tedder, bailer, etc., along with numerous hand-held tools – to carry out her work. Overall, she runs the farm herself, “a one-man band here,” she said, and she something of a “jack of all trades” like her dad.

Ramona has been farming almost all her life, devoted to horse-keeping rather than housekeeping.

Growing up she was a member of the Groton Pony Club. She delighted to see horseriders gathered at the Groton Inn for a Groton Hunt on Thanksgiving Day and helped out at horse trials held at neighboring Shepley Hill Farm. She attended Groton High School before the district joined its schools with those of Dunstable, noting that the president of her class was Dan Shaughnessy, well-known *Boston Globe* sports columnist.

In her youth when the family ran the farm, there was an opportunity for more diversity among kinds of crops to grow or kinds of animals to care for. She remembers the family had a cow. She generally milked the cow mornings during the period when her dad drove a school bus. He milked the cow each late afternoon. The cow had calves, there was a pig producing regularly a brood of piglets, and for years they had a flock of chickens.

Both her mother, Geraldine (Moore) Tolles, and her sister, Nan Quintin, now living in Pepperell, tended a vegetable garden. Her mom enjoyed growing flowers too, and often her dad would cultivate a large field of corn or potatoes. Later they became hayfields. At one time her dad set up a small sawmill operation, and in early 1989 he



Ramona Tolles runs her family's horse farm on Longley Road as “a labor of love.” All photos by C. David Gordon.



One of seven different tractors that Ramona uses on her farm.

Continued on page 4

Main Street View: Look at the Big Picture for Perspective



GROTON HISTORY CENTER
Framing our story

I have recently been reading about the value of history in today's world and how history-oriented organizations work to engage the public around current issues at the same time underscoring the historical relevance to the topic. Through the efforts of our very competent program coordinators and our

need to educate the community about the contributions of this very important conservationist who had a huge impact on the natural state of our town.

More in store for 2019

This coming spring we've invited a speaker to show how our democratic ideals these days stem from the ancient Greeks and their experiment with this political system.

We're working on a presentation entitled Declaring Independence in association with Freedom's Way and the Old Groton Meeting House organization.

Our attic is full of framed documents and works of art. It is our hope to do some sleuthing up those very narrow stairs and find some treasures that we can dust off and put on an art show of sorts. We'll also have a new exhibit at the library that has a Middle Eastern theme but still connects to Groton.

One work of art that is on display is a representation of Colonel Abel Tarbell. This painting, copied from the original done by an itinerant artist is done by Edmund Tarbell himself. Through the generosity of the Tarbell Trust and the Groton Cultural Council, we will be able to clean this work to bring the essence of the Colonel out of the dust and grime that has collected over the years.

I recently watched a Ted Talk by Kristen Gwinn-Becker on the future of history (check it out on our facebook page: facebook.com/grotonhistorycenter). She begins by comparing a loss of memory in individuals to a loss of our history—by neglecting our resources for the future—which defines us as a community. "Memory is to us as individuals what history is to us as a society." I hope we can all reflect on the importance that our history serves as the roots that strengthen us and give us

common bonds and that we will strive to preserve our past to secure our future.

*Bobbie Spiegelman
President GHS/GHC
November 2018*

relationships with other organizations in the region, we have tried to offer programs and exhibits that have that same motivation.

- This past year we were able to bring a professor from Ohio State to talk about the issue of slavery with a slant that's very different than the one most familiar to us.

- Our latest exhibit at the Boutwell House on historic Groton as a destination town has immediacy with all the current changes that are bringing visitors to our town these days.

- We have two years under our belt cultivating relationships with the high school connecting the town's history to the period of study in the classroom. This year we focused on Norman Smith, the town physician who also served as a surgeon in the first confrontation of the Civil War in Baltimore. This focus allowed us to think about how war changes the way medicine is practiced and the impact on the town with most of the young men off to battle, topics that still resonate today.

- Steve Kornacki, our native celebrity, talked to a crowd of about 200 about the historical role of the media in politics.

- In the late 19th century there were almost 200 varieties of trees documented in our town. The Tree Walk down Main Street last month, with a focus on our current species, allowed for a discussion about climate change and the impact it has had on the varieties that presently line the main thoroughfares.

- In August our successful merging of the history of the Massachusetts hops industry with a beer/ribs farm-to-brew with a little music thrown in met all the requirements of bringing the past to the present.

- Our quest to digitize the Wharton diaries satisfies a



*Seen on the Autumn Ramble Tree Walk on October 14, this glorious old American Elm tree, behind 8 School Street across from the Old Burying Ground, survived the Dutch Elm disease that destroyed many elms across the country.
Photo by C. David Gordon.*

New Treasurer Elected at GHS Annual Meeting

On Monday November 5, 2018 – once again a rainy evening as seems the fate of GHS annual meetings – a larger than usual gathering of GHS members attended the 124th Annual Meeting of the Groton Historical Society. The meeting opened with a full-year financial accounting from outgoing Treasurer Stuart Shuman and closed with an enthusiastic Year in Review assessment from President Bobbie Spiegelman.

The business portion of the meeting, sandwiched between the two summary reports, asked members to approve four clarifying amendments to the organization's Bylaws (last revised 10.18.16) and to vote on a slate of directors and officers nominated by the Governance Committee. Nancy Barringer was given another 3-year term as a Director, and the four Officer slots (all for 1-year terms) were filled as follows: Bobbie Spiegelman, President; Al Collins, Vice President; Michelle Collette, Treasurer; Ginger Vollmar, Clerk. All were incumbents except Michelle Collette, who was warmly welcomed to the Board as Stuart steps down from Board membership after a number of years as GHS's fiduciary guardian.

Bylaw changes were small additions to Article 4: Governing Body and Article 5: Duties of Governing Body. For clarity, it is now specified that Officers serve 1-year renewable terms, Directors serve 3-year terms, and, at the discretion of the Board, chairs of Standing Committees serve 1-year renewable terms. Also approved was a new Section under Article 4 providing for removal of a Director or Officer for cause, a provision inadvertently left out of the last revision cycle. A copy of the Revised Bylaws is available at the GHS office.

The evening was brought to a close with a celebratory round of wine and cheese in the resplendent newly decorated Boutwell House dining room. ■



New GHS Treasurer Michelle Collette (right) consults with outgoing Treasurer Stuart Shuman at the reception following the 124th Annual Meeting of the Historical Society. Michelle, now retired after 34 years of working for the Town of Groton in various positions, most recently as Land Use Director, brings valuable experience with budgeting and tracking expenses and writing grant applications to the Board of the Groton History Center. When asked why she is interested in joining the Board, Michelle said she appreciated "all the important work the GHS does to preserve the history of our community [as well as sponsoring] so many informative, educational programs ... relevant to what is going on in the country today." Photo by C. David Gordon.

A Short Newsletter Survey

You may have noticed – the Groton History Center is broadening its electronic presence in Groton and the outside world. We are finding more ways to get History Center news to you faster and to make it easier for you to get in touch with us.

- We have a brand new website – www.grotonhistory.org – and it offers you direct links to Facebook, Instagram, and 16 (repeat, 16!) separate Vimeo recordings of GHC programs and events (all done by John Ellenberger). Our website Blog gives you a fresh look at what's happening at Boutwell House.
- TripAdvisor – www.tripadvisor.com – now lists Groton as a destination with a "specialty museum" –that's us!
- We already have a strong incoming and outgoing email presence, through info@grotonhistory.org and through our large-group email announcements to all of you who have supplied email addresses to us.

Let Us Hear from You!

We hope to send out the GHC newsletter ELECTRONICALLY in the near future. Which would you prefer?

I PREFER TO RECEIVE MY GHS NEWSLETTER . . .

1. By email only
2. By regular mail only
3. Both ways, please

Please respond by email to info@grotonhistory.org, with *Newsletter Survey* in the Subject line.

And please include your full name with your email address so we can correlate both in our mailing database. Thank you very much.

reopened it to cut custom-order boards. Ramona said she occasionally helped at this mill.

Ramona learned her farming from her dad, she said, and she listened and observed closely. He gave her the opportunity and encouraged her to drive a tractor. It took time for her to learn to steer straight rows when mowing, and to this day she drives her tractors “very carefully.” Her father was active at farming, usually doing the tractor work himself until the time when he had to stop mowing the fields. Another part of her learning came, she said, from the “school of hard knocks.”

Keeping Horses and Cutting Hay

Although it may not look so, tending to a relatively small group of horses every day is no simple task. There is much to do each day and over the course of the farming year. She may not have the early and late hours of a dairy farmer or the crisis-meeting times when a single-crop farmer must harvest a crop in a great hurry or wor-



The horse barn is homey and bright -- and smelling of hay.

Check Out the Groton Farms Report

ONLINE: www.townofgroton.org – go to Historical Commission, Documents, History, Agricultural Report_2012

Print Version: at Groton Public Library – look for *Groton Farms: Understanding the past and planning for the future of agriculture in Groton, GC974.44GRO*.

Groton established an Agricultural Commission at Town Meeting October 23, 2006 “to address and represent agricultural issues and interests in the Town of Groton.” Six months later, at Town Meeting April 30, 2007, voters approved a Right to Farm bylaw for Groton, establishing Groton as a Right-to-Farm Community.

A few years later the Groton Historical Commission, the Williams Barn Committee, the Groton Historical Society, and the Groton Grange cosponsored a survey of Groton farms past and present. The result was the Groton Farms report, a comprehensive history of agriculture and farming in Groton, paid for with CPA funds and published in 2012. It includes a listing of present-day resources to help farmers answer many practical questions about farming.

Check it out!

ry about how weather might adversely affect growth.

However, each horse has to be fed and watered and led out of the barn to pasture. Each horse stall must be cleaned out and new bedding regularly supplied. The pasture has to be made secure and the animals periodically checked. Each evening involves another round of leading horses to their home stalls and feeding them once more. While Ramona might well groom the horses, she leaves their exercising and time with their owners up to them.

Each year she relies on hay cut from her own fields to feed the horses. This annual major crop she tends to from seeding and fertilizing to harvesting of two or three grass yields a growing season. And she has to bale, transport, and store the hay in the hay barn. At least she can rely on a tractor and does not have to drive work horses about to get this work done.

Also requiring continued attention is heating the farmhouse and providing fuel for the cookstove. Although the house has a fuel-oil burner, the

main source of heat is a venerable wood-burning furnace. And for cooking and perhaps added warmth in her large kitchen there’s a wood-burning cookstove. Each year Ramona must cut wood in her woodlots, haul cut wood to the house, and place it in the basement. A good five cords of wood, she estimates, is what these operations consume each year.

Taking into account the state of the fields and the woodland, Ramona considers herself “a steward of the land.” Her aim is to “make things better.” Actually, she is considered an assistant steward of the nearby Shepley Hill conservation area, owned by the Groton Conservation Trust. Ramona mows her own lawn, plows snow off her own driveway, and chainsaws her own wood. This farm may come close to being a self-sustaining farm. However, Ramona must rely on help from others in several ways. She can handle routine maintenance of farm equipment, but for serious breakdowns she calls in her brother-in-law, Peter Quintin. For the horses she might need to bring in

Continued on page 5

a veterinarian in an emergency. She does rely on a farrier from New Ipswich, New Hampshire, to shoe her horses. She must shop for grain for the horses and buy footstuffs and sundries for herself.

On the other hand, although this farm is a business, it's one not driven largely by a need to show a significant profit. Ramona said, "I live very cheaply." Unlike one stereotype of a farm wife, she does not live to eat (and therefore spend a great deal of time preparing food) but rather she eats to live. She has no need to purchase expensive farm equipment because what she has (often what her dad called his "toys") appears to be built well to last. And as the sole operator in this business she does not have to pay a hired hand or pay herself a salary.

A Labor of Love

What she does is "a labor of love." She said, "I like living right here," and that when she's away from the

place for some time she can hardly wait to get back home. She hears with pleasure the sounds of animals and birds at day or night and treasures her occasional encounters with field and forest creatures.

Asked what she likes best about farming, she said, "I like being outside." She is attuned to weather each day and lives in consonance with it, and she is well attuned to the annual cycle of the seasons. She has the individual personalities of ten large and lively animals to contend with and look after. Each day she is doing what she very much loves to do.

She can think with contentment of past family members who have been part of the backbone of the community. Her grandfather, Willard Proctor Tolles, and his wife, Nellie, were the first of the family to own this farm. Willard was a teamster who worked for May and Hally and, along with another teamster, Race Palmer, hauled stones from around Groton to build General William Bancroft's stone edi-



The old nameboard in the barn perpetuates the farm's original name: Naumox Farm.

ifice on Gibbet Hill.

Her mother was the sister of George V. Moore and, through the Moores, related to Levi Phelps, who established the first lumber mill in the part of Groton that became Ayer. George married Zelda Fitch, who lived across the road from the Tolleses. This drew a closer connection with the Fitch family in the Tolles' neighborhood. Ramona especially respects Harlan Fitch and all that he did for the town.

And then there's the connection back to Thomas Gilson, who owned the land before the Tolleses. Among the trees in her woodland she can see traces of the apple orchard he once nurtured there.

At Ramona's farm time seems to become a bit suspended, providing the opportunity to savor its atmosphere.

In my own youth growing up in Newton, a scant six miles from Boston, I dreamed of owning a farm in the country. My dad, ever the businessman, briefly came to envision me as a "gentleman farmer." In his view I would manage this farm property, running it as a business for profit. A cadre of farm workers would do the actual farming. As I heard from Ramona her story of the Tolles family farm and how and why she operates it, I realized that her approach was the one I would have been most comfortable with and happy at on a farm of my own. I'm glad that I never had the chance to imagine, even, following my dad's plan for farming. Ramona, by contrast, has thrived as she followed in her dad's footsteps. ■

A New/Old Face at Boutwell House



Lifelong Groton resident and member of the Groton Garden Club, Karen (Johnson) Brackett is lending her horticultural talents to the maintenance of the Boutwell House Gardens. The gardens were donated by the Groton Garden Club based on historic photographs of the Boutwell House and common plants used in the 19th century.

Coming full circle, Karen had her first paying job at twelve years old mowing the Boutwell House lawn!

Welcome back, Karen, and thank you!

Have Some Cake!

WHY – To celebrate the 200th anniversary of the birth of Gov. George S. Boutwell.

WHEN and WHERE – All year long -- April 29 at the Groton Public Library, May 6, November 5, and December 9 at Boutwell House.

Just who was George Boutwell? He was Groton's only governor of Massachusetts (1851-1852). But that's not all. He built the house at 172 Main Street (a.k.a. Boutwell House) and lived there with his family for more than fifty years. It is now home to the Groton History Center.



George Boutwell moved to Groton at age 17, worked in Henry Woods's general store, taking it over when Henry died. He studied to become a lawyer and served on various town boards before entering state and federal politics, spending many years in the nation's capital but remaining close to Groton, where he died in 1905, aged 87.

During these 70 years, he gave much of himself to both town and country (country in the sense of United States of America, though our George was also a farmer). We honor our most prominent citizen this year with birthday cake as a small token of our respect and gratitude for the legacy of service he left us.

Other Accolades to Gov. Boutwell

Two permanent markers in town pay tribute to Governor Boutwell. One is a bronze plaque in the sanctuary of First Parish Church, which he joined in 1841. Here it is in full:

In Memory of
George Sewall Boutwell
1818 – 1905
Seventy years a Citizen of Groton and an Active Member
And Officer of this Parish
Governor Congressman Senator Cabinet Minister
International Advocate
Promoter of Public Education Friend and Defender of Freedom
Universal Suffrage and Representative Government for all People
Of all Nations True Democrat Sincere Patriot Wise and Courageous Statesman
Place and Power Sought him
Found him Poor and Kept him so
Found him Worthy and Left him Unspotted

The other prominent marker is the (originally) white granite gravestone in the Groton Cemetery, erected May 15, 1908, by "Friends and Admirers" to honor the memory of both Governor Boutwell and his wife, Sarah Adelia Thayer, who predeceased him by two years. (Boutwell died in 1905, his wife in 1903.) The stone is badly discolored and almost unreadable but the text on it sums up his character in noble fashion. The engraving in its entirety says:



IN MEMORY OF
GEORGE SEWALL BOUTWELL
JAN 28 1818
FEB 27 1905
GOVERNOR OF MASSACHUSETTS
REPRESENTATIVE AND SENATOR
OF THE UNITED STATES
SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY

ILLUSTRIOUS
CITIZEN PATRIOT STATESMAN
CONSISTENT BRAVE AND DEVOTED FRIEND
OF HUMAN LIBERTY

Sadly, the gravestone is a fading piece of our town history, but a remedy is in the works. A CPA grant application has been filed to refurbish the severely weathered monuments in our town cemetery. Look for it on the Town Meeting Warrant next spring.

--Barbara Murray

How Groton Fought the Flu in 1918

It came quickly and without warning, but its impact was not to be forgotten. In late August of 1918 sailors at Boston's Commonwealth Pier began to fall sick and were transported to various hospitals in the city. Within two weeks the disease had spread 40 miles west to Camp Devens, an Army training camp overcrowded with close to 50,000 soldiers. Around the same time, civilian cases started to be reported. The virus was identified as influenza and was known as "The Spanish Flu." It was a new and deadly strain. The epidemic was marked not just by how ferociously it spread, but also that it afflicted mostly healthy and strong young people, killing them within days. When all was said and done, upwards of 50 million people died worldwide during this epidemic, and an estimated 500 million -- or one third of the earth's population -- had become infected with the virus.

Groton could have been very vulnerable because of its proximity to Camp Devens where approximately 15,000 soldiers were sick during the fall of 1918. Great measures were taken, however, to contain the disease as best as possible. Soldiers at Camp Devens were quarantined, and Groton recorded only seven deaths (of those from 20 to 40 years old) from September through December. Arthur G. Kilbourn, M.D., noted in his annual School Physician's report (year ending December 31, 1918) that "Except for influenza of mild type we have been fortunate in health."

The town of Groton also heeded state-wide warnings to close public places and events. Town Diarist Emma Blood wrote that on September 28, in compliance with an order from the local Board of Health "the halls, library and churches are closed until further notice." Celebrations for Columbus Day and Christmas were canceled for the well-being of the community. Dr. Kilbourn's hospital on Main Street was filled to capacity, and members of the Massachusetts State Guard organized to set up additional hospitals around the state.

Throughout the fall and winter, closing bans in Groton and West Groton were alternately put into place and lifted numerous times. Finally on February 3, 1919, schools and public buildings opened with the confidence that the epidemic had passed.

While Groton itself escaped the worst of the epidemic, the fear, uncertainty, and isolation of the time is discernible in the Town Diarist's recording for November 6, 1918: "Strange and quiet Sunday without the ringing of the church bells in the village."

--Kara Fossey

TREASURY DEPARTMENT
UNITED STATES PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

INFLUENZA

Spread by Droplets sprayed from Nose and Throat

Cover each COUGH and SNEEZE with handkerchief.

Spread by contact.

AVOID CROWDS.

If possible, WALK TO WORK.

Do not spit on floor or sidewalk.

Do not use common drinking cups and common towels.

Avoid excessive fatigue.

If taken ill, go to bed and send for a doctor.

The above applies also to colds, bronchitis, pneumonia, and tuberculosis.

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Curator / Collections
Al Collins *Vice President*
Buildings & Grounds / Finance
Michelle Collette *Treasurer / Finance*
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Nancy Barringer *Programs*
Peter Benedict *Security*
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GROTON HISTORY CENTER
Framing our story

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Coming Up...Save the Date

Holiday Open House : Sunday December 9 from 2 to 4 pm at Boutwell House

Another GHC Wine Tasting Fundraiser : Saturday March 16, 2019, at Groton School

From the Archives

These two photos from the History Center Collection remind us of Groton's changing landscape. One is a view of Lowell Road when it was still an unpaved country road sometime during the first quarter of the 1900's. It was taken in the vicinity of the intersection of Shattuck Street and Lowell Road. The apple orchards, shown in their springtime glory, were owned and managed by Howard Gilson who lived with his family in the house located at this intersection (and now owned by Dr. Susan Horowitz). The other photo shows Mr. Gilson tending to one of his trees.

--Liz Strachan



Then and Now

Vol. 19, No. 2

Newsletter of the Groton Historical Society

Spring 2018

Rest in Peace, Michael Roberts: A Tribute

Barbara Murray

Michael Eugene Roberts, longtime Groton resident, archaeologist by profession, exponent of historic preservation and, until recently, a valued member of the GHS Board of Directors, died on March 17, 2018. He was 80 years old. Family and friends paid tribute to Mike at his Memorial Service on March 24th, in the local newspaper, and in conversation here and there. I asked some of them to share their thoughts with me for a special tribute in this newsletter. What follows are highlights of the recollections I received.

Professionally Mike left his mark on a remarkable number of projects in New England and as far away as the South Pacific. For the Historical Society, Mike wrote newsletter articles, ran programs on archaeology and town history, and authored our first Long-Range Plan. For the town, Mike was active on the Community Preservation Committee, the Archives Committee, the Historical Commission, and the Sustainability Committee. His last work for the Historical Commission was to oversee an ongoing project to catalog, repair, clean and replace, as needed, all of Groton's historic milestones and monuments. Mike wrote about this project in the SPRING 2015 issue of this newsletter.

Mike was also a member of First Parish Church of Groton Unitarian. The first part of this tribute is from Elea Kemler, minister at First Parish, speaking at the Memorial Service:

It is hard to imagine this church or community without Michael . . . beloved husband of Georgess McHargue, who died seven years ago; father of Kelly Richardson, Traci Ann Roberts, and Mairi Elliott-



From the top, Mike with cane and camera, 2009 (photo Evan Hadingham); with sister Kathie, date unknown (photo courtesy of Traci Roberts); with daughters Mairi (left) and Traci on Memorial Day 2010 (photo Barbara Murray).

Saball; grandfather of Erin and Emilee Richardson and Colin and Griffin Elliott. He was big brother to his sister, Kathie Lindgren. His younger brother, John, died several years ago. He was an uncle, a colleague, a neighbor, a friend and community member in this town, whose past and future he cared about equally passionately. This is, I believe, a rare and wonderful quality, to care so much about both the past and the future of a place and its people.

Elea reminded us at the service that we can't fully tell the story of Mike's life because each of us knew him at a different time and in a different way – and this is especially true of his immediate family. Mike's middle daughter, Traci Ann, now lives in Oregon but spent several growing-up years in Groton with her father and Georgess. Her remarks at the service included a chorus of thank you's from a grateful daughter:

Thank you for being the kind of person that other people wanted to work for and with. Thank you for summer jobs scrubbing artifact after artifact with Barbara Donohue, Marty Dudek, and others. Thank you for the gift of my precious little sister Mairi, who grew up courageous, forged in the fire and flame of your mid-life and who came of age waiting (as we each did) for your time and attention, and who is today a most excellent parent.

Other Perspectives

John Ott, president of the Historical Society during Michael's tenure on the board, offered this view of Michael:

It isn't often that you meet a person

Continued on page 3

Main Street View: "Destination Groton"



GROTON HISTORY CENTER
Framing our story

I've been thinking about why historical collections should matter to young people, in particular, to Groton's high school students. The Groton History Center has been working with teachers and students at the high school for the last couple of years. This past year, the question has had even more reso-

nance for me with the completion of the Groton Inn.

The students at GDRHS traditionally wind up the school year studying the Civil War. Tammie Reynolds, history teacher, requires that her students appreciate the local connection to their studies, and she reaches out to GHC each spring for collaboration. We were also asked by the new innkeepers to plan our next exhibit around the history of the inns and taverns in town to coincide with the official opening of the new lodge this May.

Our first task was to create questions that drove the research that would materialize into details of the new exhibit or become part of the curriculum offered to the students. Why were there so many taverns opened in the quiet town of Groton over the past few centuries and why did the Groton Inn endure when so many failed? What aspects of Civil War history, seen through the Groton lens, will engage the students in 2018? And most important: do these two topics intersect?

At the History Center we spent the last two months pouring through writings of Caleb Butler, Samuel Green, Helen Sawyer, Virginia May, and Charles Emil Ruckstuhl looking for satisfying answers and hoping to open up other interesting paths of inquiry. We combed through the old inn's registers in our collection looking for compelling stories calling out to us through the written signatures as far back as a few hundred years ago.

We discovered that this quiet little town was in fact a



An unusual display at "Destination Groton" features three forms of transportation set off by a kid's model train running nonstop around an oval track. Photo by Barbara Murray.

major stopping point for travelers --regardless of modes of transportation -- from Boston and points west and north who required rest and replenishment before resuming their travels. The longest stretch of ownership of the Groton Inn, the one place of lodging that was constant through the centuries, began in 1855

under Joseph Hoar and stayed in this family until 1901 when his three daughters retired from the business. This half-century of ownership saw our town participate in the Civil War, the very link between the time period of study by the students and a chunk of history related to the new structure on Main Street that has deep roots in the past.

Our new exhibit, which opened on May 6 at Boutwell House, is called "Destination Groton." This feels appropriate as the future of our town anticipates activity that will prove this title to be prescient. But the compelling fact is that Groton was once a destination or at least a stop on the way to a final destination, and we're about to recreate that excitement once again. We'll make sure we share some stories of those days with the students along with our town's participation in the causes of the 1860s. Our goal is to give them a context in which to appreciate the present and view the future.

*Bobbie Spiegelman
President, GHS/GHC
May 2018*



A highlight of Opening Day of the new exhibit was the appearance of Leo Roberge in authentic coach driver regalia, seen here with Bobbie Spiegelman. Photo by Barbara Murray.

For more of the early tavern scene in Groton, see page 7.

Tribute to Michael Roberts *Continued from page 1*

like Mike Roberts, who is constantly looking to the future and how to make things better and yet has an unquenchable thirst to understand and protect the past. . . . Armed with his suspenders and trusty cane, this bearded archaeologist, scholar, historian and community activist made his presence felt. . . . He could try your patience at times, but I will forever be glad that our paths crossed and for the time we spent working together to better our community.

Dan Emerson, fellow member on Groton's CPC, said, in a recent letter to *The Groton Herald*:

[Mike] was a prime mover and shaker behind the passage of the Community Preservation Act in Groton in 2004. . . . He was a seeker, believer, and doer of what is good and fair. In company with other remarkable citizens before him, he leaves a rich, enduring legacy to the town, one that countless Grotonians and others will be enjoying and appreciating for decades to come, though many may not know how indebted they are, or will be, to him and his vision.

Richard Hewitt, longtime friend and worker in the vineyards of the CPC, spoke briefly before lighting the chalice at the Memorial Service:

Michael was an archaeologist by profession, a historian by nature, and a lover of the natural world. But he was greater than the sum of these parts. Though he would be far too humble to



Grandsons Griffin (left) and Colin Elliott at Mike's Memorial Service (photo Bob Lotz).

describe himself as such, I would add that he was also a visionary. . . . He had the foresight to see that we could not take [our town and its open spaces] for granted and needed to take steps to preserve these treasures for future generations. To that end, he was the driving force behind Groton's adoption of the Community Preservation Act. . . . He also, almost single-handedly, convinced the town to make Groton a "Right to Farm" community, which he hoped would preserve our agricultural heritage and rural landscapes well into the future. But he was not just focused on the past – he was equally concerned about the future, founding and chairing the Sustainability Committee. Yes, he was a visionary and Groton will not be the same without him.

More on Mike the visionary – and on the power of the Native American "talking stick" – these sentiments come from Al Collins, who notes that he met Mike about 20 years ago through the Historical Commission:

Mike helped initiate and guide the Commission through a series of CPA-funded projects. In 2006, 2007, and 2008, we embarked on the Community Wide Preservation Project surveying and documenting close to 250 historic homes and sites in Groton. In 2009 Mike encouraged us to seek more CPA funding to complete an Archaeological Survey of the Town. . . . In 2011, Mike led the way to again seek CPA funding to accomplish an Agricultural Survey of the Town. All of these survey reports are registered with the Massachusetts Historical Commission and are available as reference material to the general public.

Mike and I worked collaboratively and solicited our Selectmen to form the Sustainability Commission. We also worked together to get the Demolition Delay Bylaw passed at Town Meeting. Mike was quirky, but Mike's quirkiness was infectious and I couldn't help but love him for his commitment to doing what is right for histor-



With Georgess in 2011 (photo Barbara Murray).

ic preservation and our beautiful town. Mike had a vision that every place is special with its own spirit. . . . He was deeply rooted in Native American traditions right down to his talking stick [John Ott called it his "dreaded talking stick"] which allowed everyone to be heard without interruption and without people passing judgment. He always said everyone's opinions are important and necessary to come to a common good.

Mike and Al Collins also worked together on the board of the Historical Society, as did Liz Strachan and Bobbie Spiegelman. Bobbie's recollection is specific to a time and place that created a lasting bond between them:

Sometime after my husband and I moved to Groton in the 1970s, we made contact with Michael around our common experience with the native people near Smith Valley, Nevada. We lived on the Walker River Indian Reservation in Schurz, NV, and Michael grew up in Wellington, which was very close to the reservation. Discovering this connection bonded us forever and also brought Marion Stoddart into the mix because she grew up relatively nearby in Fernley, NV, a town on the highway leading to Reno.

Continued on page 4

Tribute to Michael Roberts *Continued from page 3*



Three key speakers at Mike's Memorial Service (from left): Richard Hewitt, Evan Hadingham, and Martin Dudek (photos Bob Lotz).

The comment from Liz Strachan embraces more than 40 years of connection:

I knew Michael from the time he and Georgess first came to Groton during the 70's. Michael was an idea person, envisioning any number of projects. He and Georgess secured the guest registers from the Groton Inn when they learned that they were to be disposed of and gave them to the Groton Historical Society. He also led the effort to create a 10-year plan for the History Center. His gentle manner reflected his strong connection to the spiritual beliefs of Native Americans who were all around him during his youth and with whom he maintained relationships throughout his life. I will miss him.

I might add at this point that I, too, had ties to Michael that go back at least 40 years, at first through his wife, Georgess. She and I were already friends when she persuaded Michael to hire me as freelance editor of archaeological reports around 1980, and I've been an editor ever since. Georgess and I had breakfast together once a week over the last two years before she died in 2011. Shortly after that, my husband, David, and I, both now GHS board members, resumed the custom but with Michael.

We hardly missed a week for six more years, up until Mike died. And it seems we weren't the only ones.

Fellow archaeologist and longtime colleague Martin Dudek shared many thoughts about Mike at his Memorial Service last March, among them that he and Mike had breakfast together most Fridays over the past six years. Marty had come to work for Mike in 1992 at Timelines Inc., the company Mike founded in 1986 dedicated to historic preservation and cultural resource management. At those breakfasts, Marty said, he heard "a lot of stories – the west coast, the south Pacific, the pirate ship, the ship in lower Manhattan, petroglyphs in Scotland, and so on."

Unless one is aware of Michael's past, they might be surprised to know he grew up on the west coast, was a devoted surfer and even short-term drummer to the Beach Boys before they made any serious waves. And he worked on Vandenburg Air Force base, building and blowing up missiles as an aeronautical engineer. All that changed as he became more and more interested in the shell middens on the base and he connected with the recently formed San Luis Obispo County Archaeological Society. His fascination with the Native American past would trigger a 40+ career in

archaeology preservation.

[After] moving to Massachusetts in the mid-1970s, Michael became one of the early pioneers in Cultural Resource Management in New England. At Harvard University's Peabody Museum he started the Institute for Conservation Archaeology, a front-runner of CRM firms that conducted a number of large-scale projects, including analysis of the outer continental shelf from the Bay of Fundy to Cape Hatteras. Many New England archaeologists that have now lived out full and devoted careers to New England archaeology had their start working for Michael in some capacity. . . .

Michael had a deep concern for the legacy we are leaving the generations who follow us. He was concerned about preserving our historical and natural places and about sustainability. It has been an honor to have been his friend and coworker all these years.

Another longtime colleague in Mike's chosen field of preservation archaeology is Barbara Donohue (Marty describes himself and Barbara as "Mike's work family"), who summed up the essence of Mike's professional life this way:

While some might categorize

Tribute to Michael Roberts *Continued from page 4*

Michael's choices as going backwards – leaving the Space Age to pursue the Stone Age – his mission was clear and his energy was ever devoted. . . . [His] first career choice was far different than today's. Originally a Minute Man Missile engineer, Michael got tired of working towards destroying the environment and decided to work towards preserving the environment.

In the early 1980s, one of Mike's projects took on a unique presence in Groton, one referenced earlier but described here on a more personal level by longtime Groton resident Michelle Collette.

I had the privilege of working for Michael Roberts in the early 1980s on a fascinating project. Michael had a contract with the General Services Administration, a federal agency, to perform an archaeological study of a site in lower Manhattan prior to construction of a federal office building. The study involved excavating a ship that was sunk and used as fill centuries ago. The artifacts were transported to Groton and stored in above-ground swimming pools in Walter Wiewel's barn at the top of the hill at Skyfields Farm off Boston Road. Experts came to evaluate and catalog the artifacts and reconstruct the historic events. I learned many interesting, valuable lessons about archaeol-



Mike in October 2016 (photo by Barbara Murray).

ogy, colonial history, and cultural values as a result. More importantly, Michael was a mentor who taught me about the human condition and choosing your own spiritual journey in life. He will be missed.

Another strong voice from Mike's working life that coincided with his personal life was longtime friend Evan Hadingham, archaeologist and Senior Science Editor, NOVA WGBH, who spoke these words at Michael's Memorial Service:

Michael Roberts and Georgess McHargue were my oldest friends and I was there when they met each other for the first time. It was the summer of 1973 and I was a newly graduated 22 year-old Brit . . . hired to help run an astronomical investigation of ancient standing stone sites on the west coast of Scotland. Michael and Georgess were among the paying volunteers who had signed up for the trip. With his California tan, aviator shades, engineer's watch, Navajo bracelet and hawk feather stuck behind his ear, he cut a colorful figure among the more staid volunteers.

Within a day or two of the trip's start, "Mike and G" were already an item, feeding off each other's high spirits and sharp wits. It was the start of their devoted relationship that would endure for nearly four decades. I was immediately drawn to them. . . . The next chapter of the story has an extraordinary symmetry, because Michael was there on the day my wife Janet and I first met, five years later. She was working for Michael as an editor at the Institute for Conservation Archaeology, the rescue unit he had started at the Peabody Museum. . . . Michael and Georgess were instrumental in making our eventual relationship and marriage happen, not to mention my decision to stay in the U.S.

Mike was a big thinker whose interests and passions ranged far beyond his expertise in archaeology. I

admired his commitment to advocating for the sustainability and happiness of communities, his involvement with Native American spirituality, and his concern that the value of historic heritage should be widely communicated and appreciated. Despite all the health challenges of his final years, he would complain only briefly and then the old enthusiasm would kick in. I have a happy memory of one of our last lunches at Johnson's, when he got on to some riff about heritage and the years dropped away – it seemed like I was talking to that same youthful guy I had met over 40 years ago.

In closing, here are selected parts of a poem from Barbara Rich, written a few days after Michael died. Barbara shared a church pew with Mike most Sundays and met him at Johnson's for lunch many Saturdays. She called the poem "Unexpected" because their friendship surprised them both:

On my way to take Michael out to lunch on the 17th / A neighbor called to say, "Emergency vehicles are in the driveway. I think Michael passed." / "No," I said, "We have a date for lunch!" / Michael was a feisty guy. / He didn't change his mind easily. . . . / Over lunch . . . he told me stories about Native American culture / And spoke of his gratitude to Georgess, who urged him / To go and get clean and sober, lo those many years ago. / Learning from AA, and the hawks, he brought that awareness / Into the church pew we shared, into his valuable work with the town, / Into the grants he was granted. / Our relationship grew . . . pew partners, lunch pals, / Turning into an unexpected and precious friendship.

I believe Mike thought much of his life was unexpected, to be cherished for its gifts. In turn his life was a gift to many of us. Rest in peace, Michael Roberts. ■

Lecture on Indian Slavery Draws Large Audience

C. David Gordon

Margaret Ellen Newell, history professor at Ohio State University, drew a near-capacity audience to Groton Public Library's Sibley Hall on April 29th to hear her talk about the subject of her award-winning book *Brethren by Nature: New England Indians, Colonists and the Origins of American Slavery*. Along with the many Groton residents in attendance were 20 from eight neighboring communities – Ayer, Concord, Fitchburg, Lunenburg, Pepperell, Shirley, Townsend, and Westford.

Little wonder that the subject drew listeners from a wide area. For most of us who grew up in mid-20th century or later, the American history we learned in school never made mention, even, of the colonists' enslavement of Native Americans as early as the 17th century. Dr. Newell offered concrete evidence that slavery in America had its roots in our back yard, too, and that it involved, early on, the people indigenous to our area.

Recent publications about King Philip's War have made us aware of slavery in American colonial life. Now here are Dr. Newell's findings directed toward slavery in early New England. Audience members seemed to accept that slavery was one other tragic and inhumane aspect of settlers' treatment of Native Americans across America when the two cultures clashed, but they brought with them a number of questions to ask the author.

Dr. Newell said that she stumbled upon the subject as she was carrying out research about the history of the colonial economy. She was dumbfounded and disturbed when she found a bill of sale listing the selling of several Native Americans into slavery.

As she dug deeper into this part of colonial history, she found widespread evidence of the practice. Massachusetts was evidently the first state to "make a legal framework" defining slavery. In a 1641 document she displayed, slavery was determined to be "lawful [for] captives taken in wars and strangers willing to sell themselves . . . to us." Back then, settlers were fighting against Native Americans caught up in the Indian Wars – the Pequot War in 1637,



Author, professor, and guest speaker Margaret Newell answered questions at a book signing after her lecture on Sunday April 29, which was sponsored jointly by the History Center and the Groton Public Library. Photo by Barbara Murray.

King Philip's War in 1675-1676, and conflicts with the Wabanaki going on as late as 1749. Captured Native Americans were forced to become slaves in New England households and workplaces or sent to Barbados or other Caribbean Island destinations where slaves were utilized and the slave trade flourished.

The desire among some colonists to rely on slaves flourished, and people sought ways to keep the practice alive. Their efforts affected the Indian wars, while for some New Englanders it brought Native American ways and customs into their domestic and work life. Dr. Newell discovered stories of some who had been forced into slavery and others who had sought to become free. She found that before 1700 there were more Native American slaves than African slaves, but after that Africans began to outnumber Native Americans. ■

Birthday Salute to George S. Boutwell



Countering the heavy tale Dr. Newell had to tell about New England's colonial past was the History Center's salute on this occasion to one of Groton's most distinguished historical figures, George S. Boutwell. Refreshments at the library program included a birthday cake marking the 200th anniversary of Boutwell's birth. The History Center will mark his birthday with another cake at each of its other public programs as the year progresses. It is most fitting that George Boutwell, a lifelong Abolitionist as well as cofounder of the Anti-Imperialist League near the end of his life, should be remembered at this particular program.

Photo by Bobbie Spiegelman.

-- C.D.G.

Did You Know...

. . . that at one time, there were seven taverns in Groton? Taverns then were quite different from taverns now. From the earliest days of settlement, towns were mandated by the provincial government in Boston to provide lodging, food, and drink to passing travelers free of charge. One household would be selected as the designated hostel and would be given some compensation by the town, usually a little extra land. Initially, these lodging places were called "Ordinaries", presumably because they were ordinary houses owned by ordinary citizens. This arrangement was in the common interest as there were no hotels or inns at that time.

Eventually, as the population increased and commerce and travel along with it, Ordinaries expanded into businesses and began to be called taverns and/or inns. New laws were written requiring that taverns be licensed, and they stipulated such things as providing food and shelter for the horses and oxen that pulled the wagons, having enough food and beverage for the travelers, and punishment for public drunkenness.

With the advent of stagecoach travel in the late 1700's, more and more travelers were on the road -- selling their wares, moving to new locales, visiting relatives, delivering the mail, etc. Taverns were gathering places for locals as well, becoming true community centers. Townspeople came to see one another, to get their mail, to hear the gossip from town and news from further away, to drink, to eat, to dance, to be entertained, and to hold meetings. Traveling judges held court and Selectmen held meetings in taverns. In Groton, of course, there was the First Parish Meeting House for such purposes. Groton didn't have a Town Hall until the mid-1800's.

Since as many as 40 stage coaches a day passed through Groton, it is easy to see that there was plenty of business to support our seven taverns.

-- Liz Strachan



To celebrate the opening of the new Groton Inn on Main Street, the History Center has mounted an exhibit at the Boutwell House called "Destination Groton." The exhibit, unveiled at our Spring Open House on May 6, includes this map of the tavern locations, as well as many old photos, old guest registers from the old Groton Inn, and much more. Boutwell House is open Mondays and Wednesdays from 10 am to 2 pm. A Summer Open House is planned for Sunday afternoon, July 15, from 2 to 4 pm. Come check it out.

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Coming Up...Save the Dates

Sunday June 10 from 2 to 4 pm-- Summer Ramble to Bancroft Castle on Gibbet Hill
Assemble at Boutwell House before hike to hear a talk about William Bancroft by Joshua Vollmar.

Sunday July 15 from 2 to 4 pm at Boutwell House
Summer Open House
Exhibit on Groton Inns and Taverns (Destination Groton) continues.



**Bonus Feature at all events all year at
Boutwell House: Birthday Cake to
celebrate the 200th anniversary of the
birth of Gov. George S. Boutwell!**

Check our website for more details.



Then and Now

Vol. 19, No. 3

Newsletter of the Groton Historical Society

Summer 2018

Summer Ramble 2018: Visiting Bancroft's Castle

Joshua Vollmar, Student Intern

[Note: the History Center's 2018 Summer Ramble began with an illustrated talk on Groton's General Bancroft and explored the ruins on Gibbet Hill (known as "Bancroft's Castle"). The Ramble was totally organized and led by our young summer intern Joshua Vollmar, who heads off to Bentley University this fall. Here in Joshua's own words is his account of what motivated him to make this Ramble happen.]

The idea of a Gilded Age Tycoon from Groton building a castle on top of Groton's Gibbet Hill has always been fascinating to me. When I was six or seven, I read over and over again about General Bancroft and his castle in *Groton at 350*, the town's history book published in 2005 for its 350th anniversary (pp. 130-131, *Groton at 350: The History of a Massachusetts Town 1655-2005*). Soon we had made it a family tradition to hike up to the castle ruins every year in the fall.

Nearly a decade later, I happened to pick up the book again and read through my favorite section on Bancroft. Only then did I notice this line regarding the castle that was never built: "The plans for the castle . . . were given to the Historical Society." When I saw that, I knew I had to go and see them.

In between my childhood adventures and this moment of discovery, I had become very interested in America's Gilded Age (1865-1914), and particularly the Great Hous-

es of the era, such as those in Newport RI. I consumed every scrap of information I could find on the topic. When I realized that a Gilded Age Mansion was almost built in the center of Groton, and that the plans for it still existed, I knew it was time to see them firsthand. I arranged to visit the Historical Society after school one day, and the plans amazed me.

This experience also gave me something else: interest in the Historical Society. I began attending Society events, and at one I inquired about working at the Society the coming summer. This led to a volunteer position in the summer of 2016, cataloging blueprints of the late Anthony Hars, a local architect. When I reported on this project at the Annual Meeting of the Society that October, I learned of my next opportunity: a paid internship in the summer of 2017 and a chance to research the topic of Bancroft and his castle. That summer I wrote a short biography of Bancroft, calling it "Major General William Amos Bancroft: Groton's Gilded Age Tycoon." At this point, I thought my journey with Bancroft had come to a close.

The Ramble Takes Shape

This past spring, the Society's Program chair Nancy Baringer suggested a Summer Ramble on Bancroft including a guided walk to the ruins on Gibbet Hill and I was asked to lead it. I was to give a talk first at Boutwell House before the walk so I got right to work.

I wrote my speech on index cards, practiced it time and



Inside ruins, the "Rambler" gather for commentary and questions. Photo by Barbara Murray.



Joshua Vollmar (center) welcomes walkers at the base of the path to the castle. Photo by Barbara Murray.

Continued on page 3

Main Street View: Our Take on Making Progress



GROTON HISTORY CENTER
Framing our story

The sign on the highway said: “Preservation is Progress.” I noticed the sign on my drive to the ferry in Rockland, Maine, that was to take me to the isle of North Haven for a short vacation. I was intrigued by the message as *progress* is not usually a word you connect directly to *preservation*. I was then re-

mindful of the visit I made to the North Haven Historical Society about eight years ago. The recently built facility was state-of-the-art with a large rectangular space filled with banks of Internet-accessible computers and many genealogical reference books available for any researcher’s quest for information. Across the hall was a large reception space that allowed for programming for at least one hundred attendees.

I was curious to understand two things: first, how a year-round island community of fewer than 400 people—one that grows to about 1,000 during the summer months—could afford to offer such a well-equipped space to preserve this island’s history, and second, what was it about the history that made it so precious that this little



Sarah Conner (left), a rising senior at Groton School, is enhancing our social media presence by posting old photos, historical information, and upcoming events on Facebook and Instagram. Joshua Vollmar (center), recent graduate of GDRHS, is compiling a history of what he calls the “Great Houses of Groton” and has been giving guided tours at Boutwell House. Kate Guerin (right), a rising senior at GDRHS, is working with our document collection and “learning how to decipher early American handwriting!” says Kara Fossey, supervisor of interns and photographer of same.

island provided such an impressive space. Turns out, it was all about community support and appreciation for the history of the first settlers to the area, many of the names of which would make the list of Who’s Who.

Reflecting on what makes a community get behind its historical repositories allowed me to think about all the “progress” we’ve made in the last two years right here in our town. Just like the joke about the dog dying, there’s a lot of backstory to our present state and it’s all good news. Our Open Houses are well attended with many new faces in the mix and with an enthusiasm that is palpable. Our programs are attracting sizable and very engaged crowds.

We even attracted a professor from Ohio State who traveled the skies to present a program on indigenous slavery in the New England states. Our knowledgeable audience peppered her with questions making her feel she wasn’t that far from her college classroom and maybe with a better-informed audience.

We are in the process of taking possession of the J. D. Poor murals and installing them, on long-term loan, in the lobby areas of the Groton Inn. We look forward to conservation work on the murals once they are in place providing us with a peek into how this mode of wall decoration works. The Inn folks assure us that they welcome visitors hanging out just to rock on the porch or take in the artwork displayed in the lobby. The murals will certainly complement the space and the experience.

Three Student Interns This Summer

One of the best moves we’ve made this year was to open up our internship program to students at Groton School and Lawrence Academy in addition to the juniors and seniors at GDRHS. We were pleased to receive five applications all of which were worthy of consideration, creating the dilemma of making choices. We chose the three top candidates, and we’ve already had several weeks of outstanding contributions from each of them. This, on top of the annual 10th-grade local history project, a collaboration between the History Center and GDRHS, cements a relationship with our youth that is critical to our future.

Preserving our history is a work in progress—literally and figuratively-- and I think we’re doing a pretty good job so far. Our future is bright, thanks to the support that’s spreading around.

*Bobbie Spiegelman
President GHS/GHC
August 2018*

This month, GHC introduces its new website to the world!

Turn to page 7 for details and go to www.grotonhistory.org for our story.

General Bancroft *Continued from page 1*

again, and set up an exhibit of old photos and floor plans from the Society's collection. On the day of the Ramble we had brilliant weather and a fine turnout (one count

clocked in at 42 for the talk). My childhood fascination had blossomed into a true interest, and I was able to share the information with a large group of people who seemed to be just as interested as I. What could be better, unless, of course, the General had actually finished building his castle!

Who was William Bancroft?

Major General William Amos Bancroft, a notable 19-century native of Groton, was born on April 26, 1855, and



"Old" and "new" versions of Bancroft's stone house. Left, photo from GHS Collection, right, photo by C. David Gordon.

love for his hometown and hoped to retire there. This led him to design a summer estate to be built on the very land where he was born, on Main Street next to the home and

farm of his friend and contemporary, Gov. George S. Boutwell. Bancroft bought back the family property and some adjoining farms on the side of Gibbet Hill, and in 1902 began building his dream house, starting with the gates and gatehouse for his estate on Main Street and the carriage house and stables high on the hill.

The gates and gatehouse are still on Main Street, next to Boutwell House. A plaque on the gates reads: "To the fond memory of [his parents] Charles Bancroft 1802-1873 and his wife Lydia Emeline (Spaulding) Bancroft 1822-1895."



This long-distance somewhat fuzzy photo taken at the Ramble by Bob Anderson looking southwest from the top of Gibbet Hill seems tailor-made to convey the feelings Gen. Bancroft ascribed to his hilltop aerie in a poem he wrote in July of 1903: ". . . nearby the peaceful landscape smiles—a dream of quiet rest; rounded hills and sloping pastures, here and there a farmhouse white; babbling brooks and leafy woodlands, flowery fields in summer light." Bob says the photo is not a panorama shot but a "cropped version of an 840mm-equivalent telephoto shot" taken with a Canon SX-40HS camera. A little research on Google proved the distant building to be the old Juvenile Detention Center just off Harvard Road by the Shirley-Lancaster border, approximately 7 miles away.

died on March 11, 1922). He achieved great success elsewhere in business, politics, and the army, but retained a

William Bancroft was descended from the first Bancroft to ever reach New England in the 1630s, and as such was a

Continued on page 4

General Bancroft *Continued from page 3*

scion of an old and prominent New England family. Gov. Boutwell once wrote that Bancroft was “a worthy member of a worthy family.”

Bancroft graduated from both Harvard College (1878) and Harvard Law School (1881) and was soon on the Cambridge Common Council (1882-1883) and in the Massachusetts House of Representatives (1883-1885). He then entered the field that would earn him his fortune: transportation. He served as superintendent of the Cambridge Street Railway, then roadmaster of the West End Street Railway (which became the Boston Elevated Railway), overseeing the implementation of electric trolleys during his tenure there. Bancroft returned to his law practice, as well as politics, serving on the Cambridge Board of Aldermen (1891-1892) and as Mayor of Cambridge (1893-1897).

Bancroft earned the title of Major General through his service in the Massachusetts militia, beginning in 1875 when as a freshman at Harvard he enlisted as a private. He served in the Spanish-American War, retiring in 1901 with the rank of Major General.

However, Bancroft’s true fortune came from the Boston Elevated Railway, of which he was president from 1899 until 1916. A friend once said of him, “He was quick to

rebuke, but equally quick to reward success. He possessed an almost unlimited capacity for detail and his name was a synonym for rugged honesty and a square deal.”

Though Bancroft lived in Cambridge, he retained his dream of retiring in Groton. He completed construction of a large stone house with a handsome tower and had plans drawn up for a massive mansion on the peak of Gibbet Hill, plans which still exist at Boutwell House. But it was not to be. In 1908, for unknown reasons, he stopped his building project.

Gen. Bancroft died in Cambridge in 1922 and is buried in Groton cemetery next to his parents. The castle had been sold in 1918 to Dr. Harold Ayres, who ran it as a long-term recovery hospital, and then in 1928 it was bought by the Groton Hunt Club. It burned on the evening of July 4, 1930, after trespassers on the property set off firecrackers. Stone walls and the hollow tower remain as evidence of his dream. ■

Note: The castle ruins are an easy walk up Gibbet Hill from either the upper parking lot of the Gibbet Hill Grill or from the stone gateway on Lowell Road a short distance to the east. The path is maintained by the Groton Trails Committee.

Groton Cannon on the Road

This venerable Revolutionary War Cannon, lovingly restored by Earl Carter, local historian and past curator of the Historical Society, is again in the news. From its unveiling at Grotonfest on September 24, 2016, to its most recent display at a fundraiser at Boston Harbor directly across from Noddles Island (aka Logan Airport) on June 27, 2018, the cannon has earned pride of place among Groton’s Revolutionary War artifacts.



Crowd views cannon at Grotonfest 2016; photo by C. David Gordon.

The gun, captured with three other guns from HMS *Diana* at the Battle of Chelsea Creek in 1775, was immediately turned against the British forces at the Battle of Bunker Hill by a Colonial militia led by Groton’s Captain Asa Lawrence. Then it mysteriously disappeared, only to surface right here in Groton.

It’s a long story, searchable online under Groton Cannon. In



Cannon on display in Boston 2018; photo by Bonnie Carter.

--Barbara Murray

Another View of a Groton Dream House

C. David Gordon

Three miles to the east along Lowell Road/Route 40 from the path up to the ruins of General William A. Bancroft's stone tower and the site of his dream castle atop Gibbett Hill, another Groton man constructed his dream home according to a completely different vision. Rex A. Roberts chose a fairly private site, located next to the roadway, close to neighbors yet screened from them by small hills.

Rex was born in Bonaparte, Iowa in 1913, became a machine designer and systems engineer after graduating from Parsons College and Iowa University. During the war years he worked for the government as an engineer in Chicago and at MIT's Radiation Laboratory. After working for other engineering firms in the east, he became a consulting engineer working out of the home he built in Groton on Lowell Road.

Rex approached house building from the standpoint of the practical scientist. He was also an experienced house-building carpenter, and most of the construction work on this house was probably his. He definitely did not employ a team of stonemasons, as did Bancroft a few decades earlier. He made his structure of wood. Rex had sometimes worked as a musician, actor, and writer. His dream of a home combined both engineering exactitude and a sense of beauty. And unlike Bancroft, he and his wife, Carolyn (Cal) D. Roberts, actually lived in the house he built. Rex died in 1968 but Cal remained there for another 20 years or so.

Today little remains of Bancroft's vision of a grandiose estate and nothing remains of Rex Roberts's original house. It was recently torn down to make room for a duplex condo structure erected on its site. However, his dream still exists in a book he wrote to encourage others to build sensibly and lastingly: *Your Engineered House*, published in 1964 by M. Ev-

ans / J. B. Lippincott. In 1987 the book was "reissued, revised, and updated" by Charlie Wing, the author of several books on home building and cofounder of "the first two owner-builder schools" in the country.

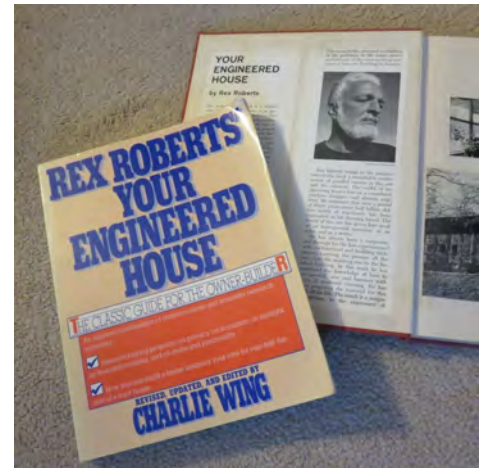
Both editions remain available for sale on Amazon. The 1987 edition has the advantage of Wing's ability "to interpret . . . technical advances and apply them to the goal of better houses for less money," as Rex's widow, Cal, pointed out in her introduction.

In that introduction she also wrote about "a veritable multitude of readers [who] communicated with me" to share how important they felt the book had been in guiding their endeavors. They wrote, she said, as "kindred spirits [seeming] to have come to me as a living legacy from Rex, to be cherished, nurtured, and developed."

I have a copy of this book, given to me by Cal Roberts, who was my neighbor on Lowell Road for a number of years, and I recently began to read through it. A secret delight in my reading was the discovery of Rex's description of what he had put together as his final home. For I had often visited at his home. My late wife, Susan Skinner Gordon, was a close friend of Cal Roberts. Rex had died years before I lived on Lowell Road on the other side of the street from his dream house.

Does the book still have relevance, even as technical advances have continued to rush in during those years between 1987 and now? That's what I asked as I reread my copy of the book.

My answer is yes. Rex covered a myriad of considerations involved in planning and construction of a house, probing for answers through the old basic journalists' questions for covering a story: What, where, when, why, who, and how. In addition to the "how," he ventured into topics related



to economics, contractors' interests, politics, and personal life goals; even light, heat, sound; building materials; and presenting sample plans for homes suitable for various locations. All that is new in materials and building know-how since Charles Wing revised Rex's book can be explored and assessed from this background. Rex wrote in a clear, conversational tone, never condescending. He was not afraid to state his own preferences, but he offered alternatives and left the door open for choice.

My Recollection of Rex's Dream House

One could not think of a place more different from that whole set of living quarters envisioned by Bancroft for his "castle" on Gibbet Hill than the house that Rex built on Lowell Road. At first you saw a stockade fence and a doorless garage. Nothing of an ostentatious house display there.

Rex and Cal's house had an open floor plan. Facing the south to catch sun all day long were the activity centers of this home, the bathroom, kitchen, and dining room, with light let in through many big windows. Divisions into various rooms were marked by shoulder-high partitions and cupboards with no floor-to-ceiling walls involved (yes, even the bathroom!).

Continued on page 6

As you came into the living room the openness broadened out even more. Extending from ceiling to floor was just the chimney with its fireplace. This was possible because the house was a single-story structure with a single roof line sloping down toward the back of the house, to the north; no support beams, let alone inner walls, were needed inside since the outside walls of the house bore all the weight of the roof.

It was a fine place in which to be alone or gather a whole group together for conversation and thought. Sleeping quarters were on the north side of the house. The view south from the front windows was of an expanse of lawn and shrubs and, beyond, a small pond made when Rex built a dam on a brook flowing along the edge of the property. The view around was of rising hillsides -- a view most pleasant, with a beauty of its own, even if not as spectacular as Bancroft's from atop

Gibbet Hill.

Rex Roberts's dream house has great appeal. I'd take that path rather than follow Bancroft in his fruitless effort to create a hilltop castle. ■

The lead article in the July 2012 issue of Then and Now, also by C. David Gordon, called "Modern-Day Pioneers in Groton" describes how three families collectively built vacation homes which became year-round homes on Lowell Road on 102.6 acres of land bought from Cal and Rex Roberts in 1954 across the street from his "dream" house. The original houses, the pond created on the land, and the unabashed love for its natural setting embodied Rex's views on house building. Gordon lived there for a dozen years.

Did You Know...

... that Groton was at one time the center of a hops growing and trading industry that involved most of the towns in the surrounding area? George Boutwell wrote about his memories of hops growing and trading in the first half of the 1800's. His grandfather, Jacob Marshall of Lunenburg, was a hops grower, and in fact was the inventor of the press for pressing hops.

According to Gov. Boutwell, growing hops in those times involved planting long poles (14'-15') in the ground about 5 feet apart. An acre of land might have about 1000 such poles. The hops plant, a perennial, would wind its stem (called a bine) around the poles clear to the top. The plant produced flowers that became cone-like fruits containing lupulin, the substance that gives beer its bitter taste and aroma.

At harvest time in August and September, workers would cut the bine near the ground and remove the poles with the bine still on them, laying them horizontally on long bins. Boys and girls would stand on either side of the bins and pick the cones. These would then be placed on a lattice structure for drying over a charcoal fire, and when dry enough, pressed into 200-pound bales. The bales were then sent to market for sale. Henry Woods of Groton was a major dealer in this area, and one year he bought and sold about 350 bales. [George Boutwell as a young man worked in Woods's general store on Main Street, became his partner, and eventually owned the store himself.]

By the mid-1800s, the hops industry had moved to New York state, thence to Wisconsin and eventually to the Northwest— Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. Wild hops can sometimes be seen growing in Groton.



--Liz Strachan

*Note: Come to our **Farm to Brew** fundraiser at Williams Barn on Saturday August 25th from 3-7pm, when John Ott talks about brewing beer and growing hops in 19th century Groton. See our website for details.*

New Website for GHC!

Streamlined and simplified -- clean and sharp: it's our new website!

In 2016 we chose to change our public name to Groton History Center. While the Groton Historical Society is still alive and well as our legal organization name and structure, we feel that the Groton History Center more accurately describes our role in town as a welcoming place to learn about Groton's past and the connections we can all make today.

With this name change, we adopted a new logo and found it was the perfect time for a website overhaul. Built by *MediaPower Inc.*, of Devens, our new site is designed to provide visitors with the basic information (who, what, where, how) they need to best utilize our collections, archives, and knowledge.

However, it's not all facts and no fun! We have also introduced a blog component to the site which will be a major part of our online presence. Here, visitors to the website can find in-depth articles about all the interesting bits and pieces that make up Groton's history, as well as a behind-the-scenes look at some of the great ideas coming out of the Boutwell House!

The ways we communicate with our friends and members are ever-changing and will grow with us. So visit our new website at **grotonhistory.org** to ensure that you won't miss anything we're doing. And here and now in the 21st century, the Groton History Center is doing a lot!

--Kara Fossey, Webmaster and House Consultant



GHS Officers/Directors Committee Assignments

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Curator / Collections
Al Collins *Vice President*
Buildings & Grounds / Finance
Stuart Shuman *Treasurer / Finance*
Ginger Vollmar *Clerk*

Nancy Barringer *Programs*
Peter Benedict *Security*
Bonnie Carter *Hospitality*
C. David Gordon *Publications*
Barbara Murray *Governance /*
Newsletter Editor
Carolyn Perkins *Membership / Publicity*
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GROTON HISTORY CENTER
Framing our story

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Coming Up...Save the Date

Holiday Open House

Sunday December 9 from 2 to 4 pm at Boutwell House

Another GHC Wine Tasting Fundraiser

Saturday March 16, 2019, at Groton School



Our new website (www.grotonhistory.org) links you directly to



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Go online and discover Groton's history in the making!

Then and Now

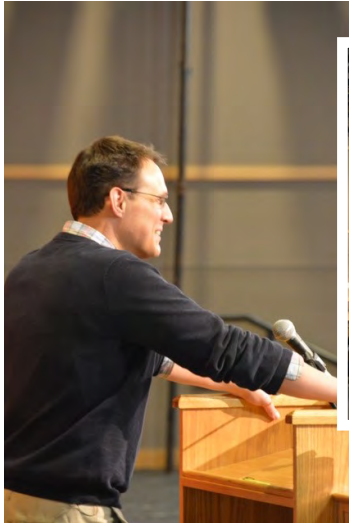
Vol. 19, No. 1

Newsletter of the Groton Historical Society

Winter 2018

Kudos to Steve Kornacki & Groton History Center

On Thursday January 25, the Groton History Center sponsored An Evening with Steve Kornacki, NBC news and MSNBC Correspondent. The topic of Steve's talk was Journalism and Politics, including a historical overview of the links between media and politics; the setting was the Richardson-Mees Performing Arts Center at Lawrence Academy, cohost of the event. Steve grew up in Groton and graduated from Groton Dunstable Regional High School before attending Boston University where he majored in journalism and launched his career as a political reporter. He was warmly welcomed by a large crowd of adults but, more tellingly, by a number of students from Groton's three high schools, GDRHS, Groton School, and Lawrence Academy. Introducing Steve to the audience was Keith Woods, head of the history department of GDRHS, who proudly remembered having Steve as a student not so many years ago. "I hate to say it," admitted Woods, "but Steve knew more about politics than I did when I had him in class." Woods's introduction and indeed the entire evening, including a Q&A session with Steve and the audience,



Photos show Steve Kornacki speaking at LA Performance Center and, at right, with Mary Jennings. Photos 1 and 2 by Peter Benedict; photo 3 by Carolyn Perkins; photo 4 by Becky Pine.

was videotaped by John Ellenberger and can be accessed from the Groton History Center website (www.grotonhistoricalsociety.org).

Mary Jennings, former GHRSD Superintendent of Schools, also remembered Steve Kornacki from years past and was eager to share this treasured memory with him after his talk. She said in an email: "I found myself a fan of the Saturday morning program "Up" on CNN with Chris Hayes about five years ago. When Chris moved on to a weekday news slot, Steve stepped in and continued doing a great job hosting this weekly roundtable show. I told Steve ... that I particularly appreciated the show

where he and his guests one June were reviewing the current season of graduation speeches. Most of the guests said they really never remembered what their graduation speaker said, but not Steve! He said the only graduation speech he ever remembered was his graduation from GDRHS. On that occasion the School Committee chairman [Eric Wickfield] told the graduates all to be sure to have a 'BHAG' ... a Big Hairy Audacious Goal. Steve always remembered this. I think this speech may have resonated with Steve because he has always had BHAGs ... as evidenced by his success as a nationally recognized journalist and a soon-to-be-published author. Thank you Groton History Center for bringing him home."

Becky Pine joined in with another email accolade: "[Steve] was so articulate, so personable, and so knowledgeable – and all without any written notes! It is reassuring to know that the next generation is paying such close attention and doing such good work to keep us informed about what is happening in our country and our government. I'm so proud to see

this graduate of our local public schools playing a major role in our national dialogue, at this time when the news media are under siege by the current administration."

More praise for the event was emailed to the GHC: "Thanks, it was an awesome experience. Kids are talking about it and there's a buzz in the school today." (Keith Woods); "Thursday night with Steve Kornacki was an amazing success!" (Carol Canner); "That was a very interesting and enjoyable presentation. It was great to be there for it." (Mark Bacon); "Great night. Thanks." (Susan Hughes); "It really was my pleasure. You did a terrific job

Continued on page 3

Main Street View: Welcoming Change at GHC



GROTON HISTORY CENTER
Framing our story

This year, 2018, marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of George S. Boutwell. I've been thinking about Governor Boutwell's legacy and what he might make of all the changes that have come to Groton since he lived here.

The governor's own book collection, on display at

Boutwell House, reflects much of what interested him during his lifetime, both professionally and personally. Two of the books have handwritten inscriptions to him by their famous authors, namely Ulysses S. Grant and John Bartlett. Searching through Mr. Bartlett's *Familiar Quotations* looking for an apt passage to capture ideas about the meaning/effect of change, I happened upon one that I think GSB might have pondered himself: *Nothing endures but change*, Heraclitus, A. D. 700.

If Governor Boutwell were to return to Groton today, he might recognize a few buildings still lining the street -- besides his own -- like Town Hall and the library and several residences, but what would he think of all the changes in town and, indeed, in his very own house all these years later?

When I first moved to town over 40 years ago, Boutwell House was open to visitors only for two hours on alternate Sunday afternoons during the summer months. As far as I know, the GHS board kept the contents of the house pretty much in place over the years with a few attempts to showcase the artifacts in more appealing ways. There wasn't much to take in after a one-time visit, and the interior of the house settled into a sad state of disrepair. Curators and board members naturally changed over the



Volunteer crew organized by the Groton Business Association removes invasive Norway maples behind Boutwell House, making way for a clear view of Gibbet Hill open to the public. Photo by Peter Benedict.

years, but the organizational structure stayed basically the same. Some plumbing repairs were made due to extensive water damage in 2010, and the exterior paint color has been restored to its original hues.

Long-Range Plan Looks Ahead

Michael Roberts, a visionary board member, developed a comprehensive 10-year long-range plan for us in 2011. It was a serious attempt to look at the state of things and to plan for a future that embraced a rapidly changing town culture as well. In November of that year, the board gathered for a retreat to build on the themes of this plan.

Writing about that retreat, board member C. David Gordon summed up what participants envisioned the GHS would look like five years down the road. After major renovations are completed, he reported, "Boutwell House will be in operation and 'look great' ... a community center, a beehive of activity, with new displays bringing people back again and again and interesting programs yielding large attendance." He wrote about connecting with the schools and other organizations in town around history, a volunteer coordinator, an accessible side entrance, a handicapped bathroom for visitors on the first floor ... and, of course, restoration of all the rooms in the house.

Today, less than 10 years after our visionary retreat, many of those dreams have materialized with more on the horizon. William Wharton's diaries, kept while he resided on Broadmeadow Rd., have resurfaced and will be digitized and made accessible to everyone, thanks to the Mass Historical Society. Two of Jonathan Poor's murals, gifted to us from Indian Hill Music, will be restored and installed at the new Groton Inn, visible to all. Our art collection will soon be appraised and put on display.

Latest Venture

The Groton Business Association has taken on the challenge of converting the overgrown backyard of the Boutwell House into an attractive and inviting public garden in the shadow of Gibbet Hill for all to enjoy. Lorayne Black, Bob Pine, the Groton Community Foundation, Josh Degan, and the Groton Garden Club have all joined with the GBA to help make this project a reality.

Surely Governor Boutwell, a community-minded citizen of the town, would have celebrated the growth of the organization and the contributions from the larger community even if so much in this modern era would be unrecognizable to him. I believe he would have applauded our use of the Society's collections in making new contexts for his legacy.

*Bobbie Spiegelman
President, GHS/GHC
February 2018*

organizing it and it was so great to see so many familiar faces from my past. I enjoyed the evening a lot and I'm



*Bobbie Spiegelman and Steve Kornacki offstage during introduction by Keith Woods (onstage).
Photo by Peter Benedict.*

very glad it all came together.” (Steve Kornacki himself); “The Groton History Center is on the map!!!” (Sue Lotz); “I feel fortunate to have had a chance to get off campus to enjoy such a great talk last night. Thanks for making it possible and for reaching out.” (John Lyons, Groton School faculty).

A Groton School student named Anna wrote in: “Thank you for having us to the talk last night. Steve was very impressive and engaging; I was particularly interested in his analysis of how the media has contributed to the polarization of the two parties. I have certainly given more thought to the evolution of journalism and broadcast media in the world of the Internet after hearing his talk. I am so grateful that I had the opportunity to hear him speak.”

And finally, see below for further comment on the Kornacki event, in a reflective personal essay by C. David Gordon, a former teacher and journalist. Gordon poses some questions for teaching today's students how to cope with the news, triggered by Steve's informed and trenchant take on how traditional news reporting has morphed into more-subjective mass media coverage.

-- Barbara Murray, Editor, Then and Now

Steve Kornacki Inspires Thought, Action

C. David Gordon

On January 25th, MSNBC newscaster Steve Kornacki gave a most impressive talk to a large crowd of adults and students gathered in the Performing Arts Center at Lawrence Academy about the state of American views on political matters. He showed decisively how those views have been shaped by political figures in the past so that whole groups among us have been led to challenge and shatter a prevailing viewpoint or attitude. While in the past both political parties represented a range of attitudes, today political views and attitudes have become polarized, tribalized, separating us into two mutually exclusive camps – blue or red, liberal or conservative. Other factors – some having to do with the media and others having to do with those receiving the news and analysis -- have helped bring about this schism. Kornacki pointed these out but within the time frame of a talk could not explore them. To his credit Kornacki spoke about the state of the media and its mixed messages from a historical perspective rather than political perspective – definitely the right approach to this subject and for this audience.

It is perfectly fascinating to hear the story of how one savvy or wily politician or another could historically gain attention to change the attitude or viewpoint of a whole group. But it's also, to me at least, a sad story, a tragedy of our time, that we have ended up driven apart from each other in attitude, to the point often of feeling we want to avoid at all costs talking with others about anything political and we can't as a people or a political body get together to solve problems and concerns.

I've been astonished to find that many people think they do not trust journalists. Yet every year journalists are killed as they risk their lives to record and share with the world what is happening in some danger spot in the world. We live in a world today in which more facts are at our fingertips than ever before and more are becoming known. And I wouldn't be surprised if there is more opportunity today than ever for people to become professional journalists with journalism schools insisting on standards of reporting honestly, accurately, and understandably.

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Legacy of Moors School: Groton District No. 2

C. David Gordon

In its collection the Groton History Center has a booklet printed in 1911 that describes in detail exactly what a history of a single school might at best present. Edward Adams Richardson, the father of the late Ayer historian and member of the Groton Historical Society Ralph H. Richardson, wrote this account, entitled *Moors School at Old District No. 2: The Story of a District School*. Moors had been his grammar school, where he attended as a pupil from 1870 to 1875 and served briefly in as a teacher.

His central purpose in writing this booklet was “to preserve the fugitive facts less easily obtainable as the years pass by.” Moors School was closed in 1919, which left only one other district school of what had been 14 in town in the 19th century. That last district school (No. 8, called Trowbridge or Rocky Hill School) closed in 1922, completing the consolidation of the student population into one central school. Thus, what Richardson’s tract gives us is a glimpse of a segment of community history, an institution now quite definitely part of our town’s and nation’s past. For about 130 years Moors School, named in 1874 after Major Joseph Moors, a veteran of two wars who had died by 1911, was devoted to the business of educating children from the ages of five to about 15.

“The good old fashioned district school has many friends and staunch supporters,” Richardson declared. Neighborhood schools offered certain positive benefits, he said. Younger students could benefit from immersion not only in what they were to learn but also what and how the older youths in the same room were engaged in learning. Older pupils could become good models of learning, thinking, and acting and could develop “friendliness and tenderness” toward those younger ones. In turn the youngsters might challenge the older, make them determined to be better, learn more. The teacher could exert “a kindly interest in the moral and intellectual welfare” of individuals enrolled in this one-room school. And because the teacher ordinarily boarded with parents of the children in the district, he or she could become “an intimate friend” of those families.

Richardson sketched some background of the setup and operation of such a district school. Each year young women (some as young as 16) who had attended or graduated from a local high school or academy taught school during summer term, starting the first Monday in June. A young man pursuing college level studies and perhaps seeking money to pay for his further tuition and board taught a winter term, starting the first Monday after Thanksgiving. Over time the district worked into hiring women as teachers for both terms, and the trend moved to hiring one individual for a number of years. Richardson did not cite numbers of students being taught at the school each year, but in 1790 he noted that No. 2 had 66 children enrolled.

Some form of neighborhood schooling existed well before district schools became required by state law in 1789 for towns with at least 50 families. Other changes in school law came in 1805, 1827, and 1837. The 1805 law included the requirement that passages from the Bible be read aloud two times a day.

By 1827 towns were expected to have school district parents name a clerk and a “prudential committee” to oversee goings on at their district school. The clerk was to check in on the school regularly and write an annual report. The committee was to hold an annual district meeting in addition to its own regular meetings. The town provided a fixed amount of money to help finance each district school and the district was expected to cover expenses beyond that, including routine maintenance. Major repairs or changes could be paid for by the town as approved by townspeople at town meeting. In 1837 towns were required to organize a town-wide school committee, and the state also instituted a Board of Education. Over the years changes took place too in delineating the boundaries of each district. Especially after 1837 teachers were required to keep a register listing pupils and their daily attendance.

Richardson used several sources to help him tell the story of Moors School. He had the clerk’s annual reports and teachers’ registers; town meeting articles, state law records, and notes from Groton historian Samuel Abbott Green. He also received letters from several individuals associated with Moors School and, of course, drew on his own personal knowledge of the school and recollections of the families in the district and their homes.

Students Had Wide Influence

Richardson included a great deal of information about people associated with the school. Added to his 32 pages of small-type text are 27 pages of photographs and one line drawing. There are portraits of over a dozen people. Most photos, though, are of houses in and about the district. After he described the district’s boundaries, he listed the homes and principal occupants of 57 places within the district from which the pupils came. Among the family names are many who contributed to the wellbeing of the town.

Referring to the town-wide school board, Richardson noted, “The town has been favored in having men and women on the school board who always had an intense interest in the advancement of learning.” Well-known individuals on this board included Caleb Butler, Daniel Needham, and George S. Boutwell, who had been both Governor of the state and secretary of the State Board of Education.

Turning to the students, Richardson compiled a partial list of 112 pupils in the earlier years of the school. Relying heavily on his knowledge of families in the district and

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letters from many families, he gave details of individuals in a few of the families. Then drawing on consecutive school registers, he was able to list the names and attendance dates of students since 1851 – roughly eight tightly printed columns of names.

Richardson highlighted the further education and career accomplishments of a number of individual students. In later life, he found, many became city or town officials, business people, educators, or lawyers. A few entered a variety of other occupations: a physician, missionary or minister, dentist, writer or lecturer or college professor, railroader, an archaeologist, a chemist, and, just one, a farmer.

Educators Many and Varied

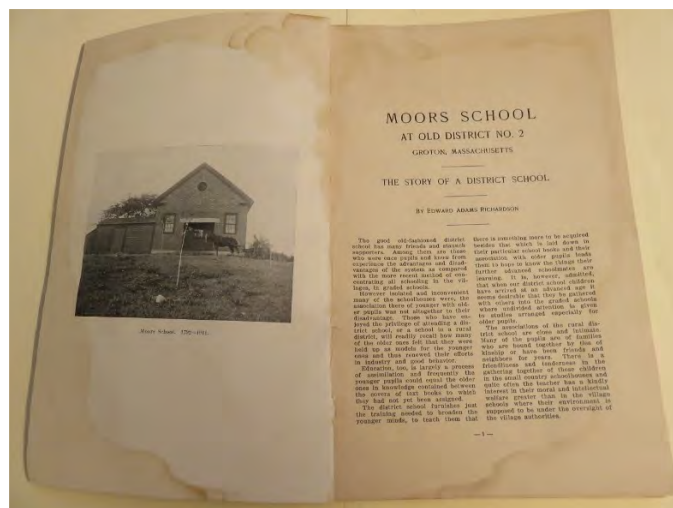
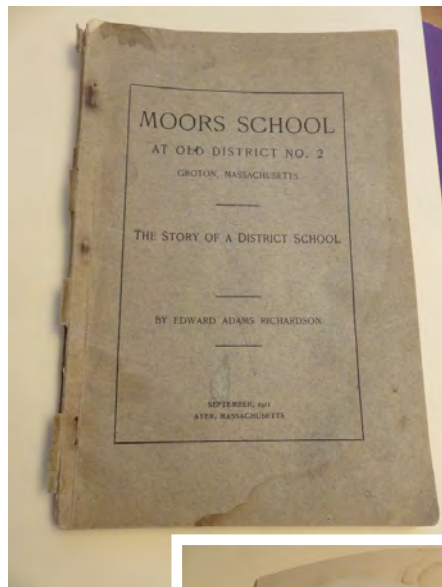
Richardson told in some detail of students at Moors School who ended up teaching school and noted where they taught. Of the 24 listed, six had returned to Moors and nine to other Groton public schools while 11 at some time taught at schools in other Massachusetts communities, and nine had taught in other states. Richardson named 58 teachers involved at Moors from 1802 to 1911. Among them Ellen Torrey Mason served 14 terms, but serving the most at 42 terms and still serving in 1911 was Sarah F. Longley. Sixteen of the teachers at the Moors School had been born in Groton while 35 could be traced as born elsewhere – many in other Massachusetts towns and cities but some from New Hampshire and Vermont.

In his section on individual teachers, Richardson used comments sent in about teachers, newspaper articles, and even obituaries to show what these educators had accomplished and how they were regarded. Richardson and all those commenting on teachers declared most of their instructors successful, although a couple of the men

might have been stern disciplinarians.

One letter about a teacher provided a glimpse of the look of the interior of Moors School. Seats were arranged on each side of a center aisle with boys sitting on one side, girls on the

other.



When asked to recite, a student went to stand in the center aisle. The stove to heat the room stood in the center of the room, and the teacher's desk stood in one corner in front of the students.

Clear from Richardson's descriptions is the sense that this school district was certainly not in a sleepy backwater town. People here were on the move. Groton children made their lives in any number of places besides Groton. Teachers at Moors School came from many different outside places and especially in the earlier

years they remained in the district but a short time. Moors School pupils got exposure to a number of different people in their average nine years of schooling in the district before going on to high school or work.

Richardson pursued one other line of inquiry concerning people from Moors School. He reported that 22 students and four teachers went on to serve in the armed services in the Civil War and one had served in the Spanish American War of 1898. Six served in the Groton company of the 6th Massachusetts Regiment and four in the 26th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment, organized at Camp Cameron in Cambridge. While none had served in the 53rd Volunteer Massachusetts Infantry Regiment, training so close by at Camp Stevens in Groton Junction, two had evidently served with the South's forces, one

had served in the Union Navy, and another went to Annapolis.

Moors school-house has long since disappeared. Only a few foundation blocks remain at the site, just off Smith Street,

with a marker at the edge of the property. But we still have Richardson's history of the school. No other district school in Groton has its heritage captured in this way. Thanks to Richardson's painstaking care, we have much of the essence of Moors School still with us. ■

Learning to Write about Life

As a former high school English teacher and former journalist, I find my thoughts drifting to what might be done back in the classroom with the students who attended Kornacki's presentation to try to get beyond the polarized or tribalized world we seem to be stuck with. Kornacki presented some valuable background material, and here's an opportunity to do more than just praise what he did and move on. As an English teacher interested in getting people to be comfortable writing, I have found that the journalist's approach to recording what's going on in the world around him or her so as to share what's observed with others is an excellent way of getting students interested in and capable of writing about life. At best this is not writing as advertising or for hype but just to tell it as it is or was.

For the sake of preparing students to become citizens in a democracy, let alone for living their own lives to the fullest, there is a crying need to get people to see the importance of finding out what's going on in the world beyond the merely flashy or dire. And there's the need to gain some skills in navigating the bombardment of facts, fictions, and sales pep talks let alone scams that a person might be exposed to. Helpful too would be a study of how journalism grew and developed over the years. Steve Kornacki presented some of this.

How about working on questions like the following: What constitutes a good, worth-reading newspaper? What are the strengths and weaknesses of print, television, Internet, and radio news and analysis? What is the place of blogs and use of social media

in adding to an understanding of the world? How can a person find out what is true or accurate? What is truth anyway?

Many tensions are being played out in society today. For example, individual freedom and self-interest versus concern for the effect on others of what the individual is doing or thinking. Or the tension between seeking to please the impatient and the short-of-attention-span versus seriously relating the news or views or facts with all relevant, important details. To me that ties in with the tension between those who believe there's a simple solution to everything and those who feel that problems, issues, and concerns are more often than not complex in nature.

More questions: What are the values of weekly news magazines and commercial news services? Kornacki did not dwell on the difference between daily newspapers and weekly, community newspapers. How do they differ and what would be good to find in a local-oriented newspaper? What effect has commercialism and advertising had on media?

The above could keep young students -- let alone life-long learners -- busy for an entire school year if not more.

GHS board member C. David Gordon was a high school English teacher for 25 years and a fulltime journalist for another 25 years covering the local scene for The Public Spirit, and other community papers. He is a regular contributor to Then and Now.

• • •
How can a
person find out
what is true
Or accurate?
What is truth
anyway?
• • •

Views of "The View"



After two work days (January 20th and 27th) with chain saws, Bobcats, trucks, and shredders, the future Boutwell garden emerges from the woodlot of invasive Norway maples with the help of hardy volunteers enlisted by the Groton Business Association. Photos by Peter Benedict and (bottom) C. David Gordon.

Did You Know...

... that during the 1800's, there were no fewer than 26 newspapers available to Groton and surrounding towns? Several, such as the *Groton Post and Advertiser*, the *Olive Branch*, and the *Centennial* published only one issue each. The original *Groton Herald* was issued every Saturday from December 1829 to September 1830. The *Groton Mercury*, a monthly "Political, Literary, Agricultural, and Business Newspaper" begun in 1851, lasted for two years before moving to Groton Junction (later Ayer) and becoming the *Railroad Mercury*. From 1869 on, the main local papers were *The Public Spirit* and *The Groton Landmark* (first published in 1884). Both were published by the Turner family and had similar content.



None of these were "newspapers" as we know them today, but rather vehicles for advertisements—commercial, political, and religious. In the first issue of *The Public Spirit*, the publisher promised advertisers 10,000 copies to be parceled out over a month's time to the many train passengers passing through Groton Junction on a daily basis from Fitchburg, Boston, Worcester, Lowell, and Mason, NH. He also promised at least "four columns of entertaining and useful reading matter" to entice people to actually look at the paper. Subsequent editions numbered 25,000 every week.

Initially, there were no "news" articles. *The Groton Landmark*, for example, featured items such as "The Tobacco Habit", "The Cholera in Naples", "The Perfumer's Art", and short fiction stories. Eventually, a paragraph or so of actual news from each of the towns in the area began to appear regularly. The news itself tended to be about individual citizens as opposed to town business. One issue reported that Mrs. Abram Miller was ill with laryngitis, that Henry Whiting was in bed with stomach trouble and a bad cough, and that Miss Alice Kelly of Fitchburg is the name of the operator at the central telephone station.

The advertisements were sometimes inadvertently entertaining (at least to the modern reader). One could purchase bicycles at Grey's Drug Store; or furniture at Wright and Son's Embalming/Undertaker business; or toilet paper in bulk at the publishing company. The advertisements over time also told a story of invention and progress. Ads for harnesses, horse nails, and carts and carriages gave way to ads for automobiles, and ads for seeds and plants in bulk were replaced by ads from grocery stores.

Today, as newspaper production steadily declines, we can only speculate how news and advertising will be disseminated 100 years from now, or if our current norms will seem quaint to future students of history.

-- Liz Strachan

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GROTON HISTORY CENTER
Framing our story

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Coming Up...Save the Dates

Sunday April 29 at 2 pm at Groton Public Library
Author Margaret Newell talks about her book *Brethren by Nature: New England Indians, Colonists, and the Origins of American Slavery*.
Cosponsored by GPL

Sunday May 6 from 2 to 4 pm at Boutwell House
Open House with new exhibit about the Groton Inn and Groton Taverns.

Sunday June 10 from 1 to 3 pm -- Summer Ramble to Bancroft Castle on Gibbet Hill
Talk about William Bancroft by Joshua Vollmar at Boutwell House before hike.

Sunday July 15 from 2 to 4 pm at Boutwell House
Summer Open House

Check our website for more details.

Then & Now

Where Art and Science Connect

C. David Gordon

I'll bet there are people in our town who, unknown to us, have made some special mark in the world at large. They have touched the lives of many other people, advanced understanding in a field of learning, or worked on things to make living easier, and in the process, have come to know much more than just a thing or two.

A case in point is one couple in town, poet Elizabeth Goldring, and her late husband, pioneer visual artist and teacher Otto Piene (1928-2014 -- whose name is pronounced PEE-nah). For over 30 years since 1983 they owned a farm, and Goldring continues residing there as owner. They transformed a once working farm into an art farm.

I learned about this couple from the unusual conjunction of three different resources. Groton History Center President Bobbie Spiegelman introduced me to Goldring to talk with her at her home. Quite by coincidence the Fitchburg Art Museum had recently opened a singular exhibit of examples of Piene's artwork (on view through June 2nd), and Groton Public Library happened to have available a copy of two of Goldring's books of poems.

Arts and Science

Born in Germany, Piene was reluctantly drafted into the army at a young age, becoming an anti-aircraft gunner in 1944, during World War II. Not only the violence and destruction of war but the fierce flashes of light invading the darkness remained indelibly fixed in his mind as an artist.

Following the war he studied painting and art education in Munich and Dusseldorf and philosophy at the University of Cologne. In the latter 1950s he founded Group ZERO with like-minded artists, seeking to expand the

Groton History Center

Spring 2019

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Main Street View: Gathering of Community



GROTON HISTORY CENTER
Framing our story

I recently read that many higher educational institutions are abandoning their history departments because these are not attracting big enough donors to the programs. I found that information troubling at a time when understanding the foundations of our country is

critical to keeping our democracy vibrant. The more our citizens know about our country's origins and history, the more informed they are in making decisions about the future direction we take as a nation.

In April we partnered with Freedom's Way and the Old Groton Meeting House Preservation Fund Committee to stage *Paths to the Patriots, 1765-1776*, at the very historic building where the real action took place over 250 years ago. Our audience members were able to feel the power of those moments when the townspeople struggled with their allegiances at the same time that the bonds that held the community together were being challenged. This reenactment brought our history to life and the experience was provocative and enlightening. One had to come away with a strong sense about the responsibilities that a citizenry carries.

Our organization strives to inspire young people to be able to reach out to us and we were very encouraged to see our local youth involved both in the production and in the audience. Our student internship program is another sign that we are making connections with this generation. We started this program four years ago with a young man who wanted to volunteer his time working on architectural archives we had in our collection. We are fortunate to have him still be involved with us undertaking some critical jobs that have made our operation more organized, more informative, and more accessible. In addition we attracted other bright and engaged juniors and seniors from GRDHS and Groton School over the past two years working in the summer months to further along some of our most immediate goals.

We are pleased to know that our community supports these efforts with its strong showing at our two wine tastings and through our annual appeals; and, we hope that support will remain intact and grow to greater depths. We continue to strive to find new ways to make our organization appealing to our citizens of all ages.

Bobbie Spiegelman
President
May 2019

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boundaries of artistic expression and utilize new media of expression. They linked with an international movement seeking new perspectives in visual arts, inspired by the new age of space exploration and striving to make human lives fuller, better. The new thinking was not driven by gloom and doom but full of hope for working toward a more perfect life. Although never stepping aside from his roots in Germany, Piene at the age of 36 in 1964 brought his ideas and desire to teach about art in the modern world to the United States, as a visiting professor at the University of Pennsylvania. In 1968 he became the first Fellow from outside Boston at the Center for Advanced Visual Studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Here came to fruition the approaches in art and art teaching. He became such an important figure in the art world and at the Center that he served as its director from 1974 to 1994. MIT, commonly viewed as an institution involved in science, engineering, and technology, had developed an interest in exploring and developing the links between science and the arts. The Center supported individuals and groups of artists working together to incorporate advances in science and technology into their artistic work. In all his work with others at the Center and individually, Piene furthered the goals of the Center's founder, Gyorgy Kepes, as summarized by Elizabeth Finch in her online history of the Center for the university's School of Architecture and Design. They encouraged "absorption of the new technology as an artistic medium; the interaction of artists, scientists, engineers and industry; the raising of the scale of work to the scale of the urban

setting; media geared to all sensory modalities; incorporation of natural processes, such as cloud play and weather; [and] acceptance of the participation of 'spectators' in such a way that art becomes confluence." Piene's artworks have been placed in more than 200 museums and public collections around the world.

Marriage and Move to Groton

Elizabeth Goldring said in our recent conversation that she met her future husband in 1975 when attending a class he taught at the MIT School of Architecture and Planning. There is a 17-year difference in their ages. They were married before the decade's end.

Born in Iowa, Goldring grew up in Lincoln, Nebraska, but she attended international schools, eventually becoming conversant in French and German. She graduated from Smith College in 1967, for a time wishing to join the Peace Corps. In college, though, came serious deterioration of her eyesight due to an illness, leaving her with "no useful sight in either eye." She earned a Master's degree in museum exhibition at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education and became an exhibit designer at the Smithsonian Institution's National Collection of Fine Arts in Washington, D.C. (now called the Smithsonian American Art Museum) and at the Boston Children's Museum in Boston. Later at MIT Goldring became active in the Center, first as exhibitions and projects director, for a time its co-director.

Goldring had written poetry starting at a young age. Vision and her experiences with extending limited sight to those with serious eye



*Elizabeth Goldring at her home.
Photo by C. David Gordon.*

impairment inform her works. Starting in 1983 she published four books of poems: *Laser Treatment* that year, *Without Warning: 49 Poems* (©1995), *ey-: poems & retina prints* (©2002) and, together with Otto Piene, *The Light Silo* (©2014). Goldring explains that the mysterious "ey-" in the title of her third book refers to the way she sees the word "eye," with only the faint outline of the circle that encompasses the horizontal line in the second vowel. In the printed book a faint circle of print around the dark horizontal line appears.

Throughout their life together, Goldring found Piene "a very good teacher" in art, science, and technology. He was her "mentor." They collaborated with each other and shared with each other their individual work. Piene himself "worked very hard"; she said. She could "feel the energy in his work." In his comments about

her or others' work, he could be "merciless" in his criticism if he thought it did not ring true. Together they directed five international Sky Art Conferences while at the Center and two MIT Arttransition Conferences.

On Valentine's Day in 1983, the day after her birthday, the couple bought the 32-acre property in Groton. When they arrived they found they also owned two horses, its buildings clustered close to the main road with acres of open meadowland lifting out behind.

Piene moved here "to be able to work undisturbed," she said. Over time, however, he found that like-minded people had either already moved into the area or would in time appear. One, Paul Matisse, whom they had become friends with in Cambridge, got to town ahead of him. Piene had first liked Groton for the farm's "big sky," Goldring said, but then it was more for colleagues

he could relate to here. A Paul Matisse cylindrical bell hangs in the farm's second silo.

While Groton was the home place they settled on, they were often "on the road," traveling to various art exhibitions and convocations or on vacation. Piene died in 2014 of a heart attack following the opening of his solo exhibition at the Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin.

Viewing Piene's Work

Drawing on work created at the art farm in Groton, the Fitchburg Art Museum has been able to realize a first: to claim "organization and presentation of Piene's largest American solo museum exhibit to date," as Nancye Tuttle stated in her review in the February 8, 2019 edition of the *Nashoba Valley Voice*. The exhibit is called "Fire and Light: Otto Piene in Groton, 1983-2014." It serves as a fascinating, enlightening, and entertaining introduction to one of the internationally known pioneers of contemporary art and of a Groton neighbor.

Once inside the Museum, the visitor notices a towering example of one of Piene's inflatable sculptures, a bright "red star flower." Stretching at least two stories high, it regularly shrinks in size with a sigh, its tree-like fronds or branches drooping, only to be rejuvenated by an air pump and straighten out once again.

A fine addition to this exhibit is a repeating series of videos. One sequence shows the raising of a number of semi-circular inflatable sculpture pieces to arch above an MIT quadrangle, its final piece an all-white star. Many participants were enlisted to install this spectacular while many others enjoyed the installation pro-

cess. To give onlookers a first-hand experience with these larger installations, the Museum plans a "Sky Event" on April 27th when an inflatable sculpture is to be "flown in an outdoor event" at Lowe Playground in Fitchburg.

The red color of the red star flower, suggesting fire, carries over into several Piene paintings on display at the Museum. They show Piene's use of fire and smoke to create vivid, even violent paintings which, although not kinetic art, assuredly suggest movement. These works are born of controlled fire. A book about his work on display with the videos features a cover photo showing the artist grasping the edges of a large canvass he has covered with oil paint and then struck a match to. There he is directing and controlling the fire and smoke as it scorches and burns. The results are fascinating, beautiful.

Other exhibits play with light and moving patterns of light. Examples of his fascination with light are two "Light Cubes," in which revolving lamps inside hollow metal cubes project an array of moving light patterns on blackened walls. There are also two light robots that can present light patterns interactively. Piene was evidently working on the likes of these instruments with artist John Powell, in 2013. The Museum has already held a "Light Robot performance" to display the robots' interaction.

Then in one large gallery there is the "Proliferation of the Sun" installation (1966/67, restaged Neue Nationalgalerie 2014). This multifaceted piece utilizes projectors, each screening hand-painted colored shapes from digitized slides on screens placed along walls, onto a gauzy screen hanging in the room, and on a



Flower sculpture by Otto Piene on exhibit at the Fitchburg Art Museum. Photo by C. David Gordon.

Continued on page 5

large, round white inflatable sculpture. A projector conveys Piene's directions for playing the work.

Accessory material focuses the visitor's attention on Groton. One video sequence shows the artist walking in the "barnyard" and creating light effects as he sprays oil through a pattern sheet onto canvass. The example of one of his colorful sketchbooks lies open to display an attractive picture of the home, studios, and one of the two silos.



Otto Piene sketchbook displayed at Fitchburg Art Museum. Photo by C. David Gordon.

The Poet as Seer

Groton Public Library's own collection of poetry books includes Goldring's second book, *Without Warning*. I found the library also by chance had on loan from another library a copy of her third work, *Ey-*, with its poems and retina prints.

Through talking with Goldring and reading on-line a 2002 interview by Karen I. Johnson, something of her approach to writing her poems came out. Disease has left her with sight of light and shadow only in one eye and she is able to take in no more than four letters at a time. She will set forth thoughts for a poem and then

start to strip away letters and words to get to the essence of what she wants to convey. It's a distilling process. She said she "tried recording [her] poems for quite awhile." Now she works on a computer.

Ending up using "the simplest words possible," she achieves a poetry that is "direct, concrete." Often it's poetry that "has to do with seeing," which she calls "eye poetry." Conveying a sense of sights and impressions through the use of words simply and directly may coax the reader to read and reread poems. Each rereading can reveal new, added meaning and some understanding of Goldring's "world."

As a back-cover description of her poetry has it, Goldring "writes with the wild vision of an unconventional visual artist for whom language is corporeal." She takes the reader traveling with her to her birth state of Iowa, to exotic Morocco, to Germany, California, and France, as well as Pennsylvania and Cambridge, Massachusetts. She writes her perception of an eye operation she experienced, the lives and deaths of those she has known, the taking down of the Berlin Wall, and other events in the world as well as small moments of the couple's life together.

Her *ey-* book is quite different. Here the visualizing-with-words writer adds a whole set of 29 highly unusual retina prints, each a work of modern art in themselves, each as she views them "visual poems." Each is the result of her work and that of others with a Scanning Laser Ophthalmoscope (SLO) with its inventor, Robert Webb. As she explains the working of this machine, "both the retina, with its optic nerve tendrils and what

the retina is seeing are pictured in the prints." The SLO is not only a diagnostic tool for examining a patient's eyes, but it can be used to allow the patient to view images that the SLO projects upon the retina. It's "a seeing machine" for blind people. The book's retina prints show the retina and also images of people, shapes, letters, and other objects.

Piene, then, worked to make visual arts less studio-, gallery-, and private collection-bound and more attractive to and involving people. Meanwhile, Elizabeth Goldring has long been devoted, with her Vision Group at the Center for Advanced Visual Studies, to developing a low-cost, easy-to-carry-about-and-use "seeing machine camera" to allow people without sight some view of the outside world. Goldring continues to write poetry. In fact, she has a new set of poems that she considers publishing next.

As for the future, she said, "I don't imagine living anywhere else" than in Groton. She finds she is "spending less and less time where I have places abroad ... I have lots of help to stay here, even if "many other places might be easier." Here she is a Fellow of the World Technology Network, whose mission is "to explore challenging, intellectually acquisitive, contemporary art making in all media" and the Lifeboat Foundation, "seeking to protect people from some seriously catastrophic technology-related events." And at her Groton home Goldring keeps alive the couple's dream to make their art farm a place where other artists can come to live and create artwork in peaceful, pleasant, and supportive surroundings.

Another bond with Groton comes from her daughter Jessica's review of

Continued on page 6

Wine Tasting Gala [March 16, 2019]



Thank you, vendors, volunteers, donors, and attendees for making our 2019 Wine Tasting Gala a resounding success!

Art and Science continued from page 5

family history. Goldring's family's roots may extend back to a Farrington family. Virginia May in her book *A Plantation Called Petapawag* makes mention of such a family among early residents.

I was very much impressed by all these works of art -- the more so from learning something about these two individuals. I'll bet we can find, by looking about, many more Groton people whose existence may not be widely known here but who have lived interesting, even fascinating lives for having added something to the world.



Elizabeth Goldring and Otto Piene celebrate Piene's 85th birthday in Groton in 2013. Photo by Ellen Sebring.

From the Archives: Notes from Virginia May

We have written often about Groton's notable men, i.e. "Town Fathers". There have actually been notable women in the history of our town as well. It could fairly be said that Virginia May was one of them. Her ancestors were among the earliest Groton families—Blood, Woods, Gilson, etc. and she saved, then bequeathed to the Groton Historical Society many precious old records of those families. When she was curator of the Groton Historical Society, many others provided to her their own family records such as deeds, family bibles, etc. She was a true student of Groton's history and wrote the books *Groton Houses* and *Groton Plantation*. She also kept a notebook, now in our archives, recording what, to her, were notable events of the time. What follows are a few of her entries, some edited for brevity.

- 1915:** 2 letters received at Groton Post Office via aerial mail service.
[The first aerial mail service in the U.S. was May 15, 1915.]
- 1919:** *June 28* The returned soldiers met in the Town Hall and formed a branch of the American Legion.
- 1920:** The Groton Private Hospital on Gibbet Hill, owned by Dr. Ayers, contracted to care for discharged soldiers who are suffering from disabilities received in the war, largely men who were gassed. By December, there were 65 patients. The Groton branch of the Red Cross went once a week to mend clothes for the soldiers. A vocational school was started there as well.
- 1921:** *Feb. 7* First election of town officers when women voted on equal terms with men.
- 1922:** Hospital on the hill was expanded to accommodate 100 men.
- 1924:** *Aug.* A great scheme for the development of acres of land that surround the ponds at the Ridges [Lost Lake] has opened up this month. The lots sold at \$75 each and are offered exclusively to readers of the *Boston Evening American* and the *Boston Daily and Sunday Advertiser*.
Dec. Silent policeman placed at corner of Main and Elm Streets. Electric light flashes at top.
- 1925:** *Aug. 19* Butler High School burned [where Prescott School now stands].
- 1930:** *July 4* General Bancroft's residence on Gibbet Hill burned.
Oct. Laying gas pipes for Boston Gas Co.
July 29 New road through Main Street to Baptist Church.
Dec. 29 Groton railroad depot burnt.
- 1933:** Georgianna Boutwell died.
April 14 Last passenger train over B&M railroad through Groton. Bus service inaugurated.
- 1940:** Elm tree beetle causing sorry sight.
- 1941:** Telephone dial system installed.
- 1946:** Planning Board organized.





GROTON HISTORY CENTER
Framing our story

Groton History Center
172 Main Street, P.O. Box 202
Groton, MA 01450

Coming Up

Guided House Tour

Boutwell House

Saturday June 8 & Saturday July 13, 11:00 AM

Learn about the Boutwell family and see artifacts relating to Groton's history.

Summer Ramble: Churches of Groton

Sunday, June 9, 2:00-4:00 PM

[rain date June 16]

Join us for a walking tour to visit some of Groton's churches and former churches.

For information on our upcoming programs and details on supporting the GHC, check out:

www.grotonhistory.org

Call: 978-448-0092

Email: info@grotonhistory.org

Mail: PO Box 202, Groton, MA 01450

Visit: 172 Main Street, Groton, MA 01450

Then & Now

A Snapshot of Groton: 100 Years Ago

C. David Gordon

Several months ago I purchased an old copy of Groton's *Annual Report*, for the year 1919. It was one of many surplus artifacts Earl Carter was offering for sale at his "Myseum," already richly steeped in Groton historical lore. Here are some glimpses this 151-page booklet gives of our town a whole century ago.

Listed up front are 35 different names of town boards, committees, and positions. They are filled by 58 different men and four women. Predictably, one woman served on the School Committee, the other three at the public library. These 62 town officers served in a town with the population of about 2,180 individuals (a figure not found in this publication). Given Groton's population today of over 11,000 souls, is the proportion of officeholders anywhere near as great?

Listings of births, deaths, and marriages recorded in town, next in order, left me wishing for additional demographic information. 1919 saw 42 births of an almost equal number of males and females. Listed among the living too, but without being identified, were two stillborn infants, three illegitimate babies, and two not yet named but whose parents were named.

One of the unnamed infants died within minutes of birth, and thus was also listed among the 41 deaths during the year, along with those stillborn. Death struck males and females in almost equal measure, by far the most of them having lived 65 years or more. Half as many died between the ages of 31 and 64, while there were only two in a 19-30 age category and five in a 0 to 18 grouping.

Stating the birthplace of those who died indicated how diverse Groton's population was even if a rural community a hundred years ago. Only six of those who died in Groton were born in the town. While many others came

Continued on page 3

Groton History Center

Summer 2019

V.20, #3

Main Street View: Many Changes and More to Come



GROTON HISTORY CENTER
Framing our story

Perhaps it's a bit early to celebrate, but this year for the GHC has been quite exhilarating to date. We started in February welcoming Gilbert and Harriet into the fold, twins born to our terrific consultant Kara. That event elevated our intern extraordinary—Joshua Vollmar--

to sit in for her while she was on maternity leave, an opportunity that worked well for both our organization and for Kara.

Joshua's interest in Groton's history and his commitment to GHC is manifested in many ways. He created a guide to the Boutwell House a few years ago, relabeled and updated items throughout the house around the same period of time, and best of all, he has led very well-attended monthly tours that just captivate all those in attendance. He is presently working on a scholarly book about the great houses of Groton that is eagerly anticipated by those of us who realize his passion for architecture in this town. He has also often been present to accommodate researchers and visitors through this year.

In March, we sponsored our second wine tasting with the help of many businesses in town, and an enthusiastic and generous community purchased tickets and celebrated with us at the beautiful Groton School Schoolhouse.

April and May certainly were busy for us as well. We have been in discussion over the past few years deciding how Boutwell House could open its doors to businesses that want a little different environment in which to hold their gatherings. In April, we were presented with our first chance when a biopharmaceutical group held its annual meeting in Groton and requested a tour and reception at the house. The success of this event encouraged us to consider exploring ways to get the word out about this extension of our services: learn Groton history and do business at the same time.

Around the same time, with the weather warming up a bit, the Groton Business Association energized its community of workers to replenish our cleared lot with new growth. Crowds of hard working citizens showed up with tools in hand to accompany the men working the heavy machinery to plant over one hundred trees and shrubs that now are starting to strut their stuff in the shadow of Gibbet Hill. Future tasks involve weeding some unwanted intruders, regular watering to ensure survival of the over-

all garden, completing Lorayne Black's design and adding finishing touches to the layout. Should be a spectacular public garden for all to enjoy.

Our association with the Old Groton Meeting House Preservation Fund committee and Freedom's Way resulted in a most amazing recreation of the town meetings that assembled to discuss a revolt against England in the 1770's in the very meeting house that is completing stages of restoration as I write. The cast of amateur players that rehearsed and delivered masterful performances under the direction of Steve Lieman and the full house that absorbed the history reinforced the idea that our early history matters.

We were very lucky to recruit talented interns this our fourth year doing this project. These talented students bring youthful perspectives to our operation all the while they help to uncover hidden treasures. Our success in attracting high school students to spend their summer days delving into our history is an encouraging sign for us all to appreciate.

The murals from the Oliver Prescott House finally reached their new setting, the lobby and hall of the Groton Inn. These final touches to the Inn's tasteful central design lend a historic touch to the space and a chance for visitors to learn about the itinerant artists that made their way through our region leaving evidence of their talents on the walls in the local homes. The Inn has arranged for a public reception on September 8th from 2-4 to view and learn more about this genre.

The 30 diaries of "Billy" Wharton, kept in the early 20th century while living at his beautiful Five Oaks Farm on Broadmeadow, are now available online thanks to the Mass Historical Society's digitization of these and the generous support of the community to make sure this happened.

Whew! Lots going on and more to come. The Groton Historical Society is 125 years old this year. It's a tribute to all our members who have supported our efforts to keep this organization as vibrant as it is. It's our goal to keep our membership growing and continue to keep our doors open and interest high. We are embarking on a campaign to recruit 125 new members to GHC to celebrate this anniversary. We ask your help to reach this goal and hope that by the time we gather for our holiday open house/cookie swap in December, we will be able to say we met our targeted numbers.

Bobbie Spiegelman, President, August 2019

from other Massachusetts towns, there were 11 born in other states, and six hailed from foreign lands: Canada, Ireland, Russia, and Scotland.

Among the 20 marriages recorded, diversity of place of residence also showed. Four marriages involved couples both of whom were Groton residents. Both male and female in another three marriages called other communities their homes. While the remaining 13 couples named Groton as home, their spouses were from many different northern Massachusetts and some New Hampshire communities, with one from Wyoming even.

Town Meetings, Receipts, and Expenditures

The 1919 annual town meeting took place February 3rd starting at 7:30 a.m. with but 11 articles to contend with. The operating budget approved for the year amounted to \$87,352.07. Passed by more than the required two-thirds vote was funding of \$75,000 to build "a macadam or permanent road on Farmers' Row Road (so-called) to the Ayer line."

Statements of receipts and expenditures of the departments and town service-providers took many pages in this town report. Most detailed listings concluded with report of a year-ending unexpended balance with very few exceptions. Funding was accounted for in some cases for activities or services that no longer are provided: operating the town poor farm and otherwise assisting the poor, fighting gypsy moth and elm beetle infestations, maintaining Squannacook Hall in West Groton, paying for Massachusetts State Guard activities, and taking care of town

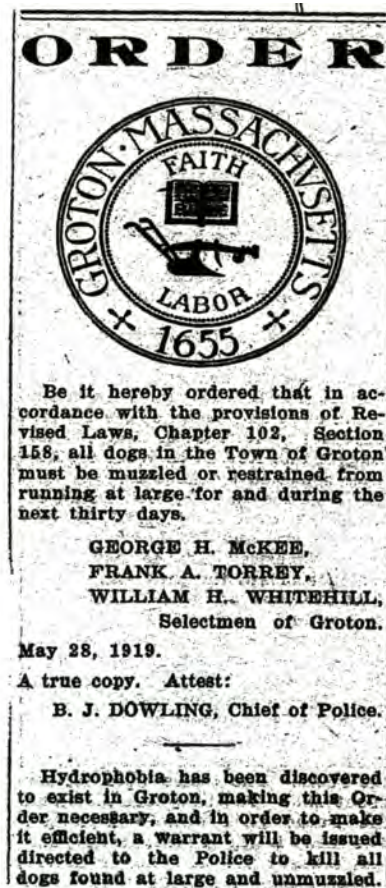
fountains. Expansive was the Highway Department's list of expenditures, with separate items for each time labor and a team of horses were required, and, separately, for the Farmers' Row paving project. The roading-building project had included purchase of a Buffalo Steam Roller Company roller for \$5,250 and a stone crushing engine for \$3,000. Added to these reports were detailed inventories of Highway Department and town poor farm equipment and supplies. During the year the farm reported boarding five "inmates."

Already set was the warrant for the 1920 annual town meeting, to be held February 2nd and involving 12 articles. Election of town officers was to take place the same day, with polls open at 7 a.m. and voting allowed until about 1 p.m. The ballot included one question for voters to answer: "Shall Licenses be granted for the sale of intoxicating liquors in this Town?" One warrant article sought \$1,500 to extend the street lighting system from where last installed to the Ayer town line. The Appropriations (now Finance) Committee proposed a total budget of \$90,190.13.

Departmental Activities

The publication cited results of the work of both the Police and Fire Departments. The Police Department reported 31 arrests – four for assault and one for assault to murder, four for larceny, and five for motor vehicle violations. Fire Department engineers wrote of responding to nine alarms – five for chimney fires, three at farm buildings, and one each at a store and at the hospital.

In its 11th annual report, the Groton Light Commission put in re-



A 1919 notice requiring all dogs to be restrained and muzzled due to concern of hydrophobia (rabies).

quests for funding for 1920 to light municipal buildings and extend lighting of streets and preparing for house connections. The largest request was for \$5,000 to build a new trunk line and install a new switchboard.

The Groton Public Library submitted its 66th annual report. Reported was circulation of 11,202 volumes and 2,148 people using the library for reading and study. By years end the library had 14,788 books in its collection and had purchased 26 different periodicals for the reading room. Most favored types of books were fiction (7,093 volumes), followed by juvenile books at 2,332. Townspeople

Continued on page 4

had borrowed 711 history books, 295 biographies, 217 in literature, 143 in the fine arts, and 111 in sociology. Added were stats for the West Groton branch, with its 2,577 circulation and collection of 993 volumes.

The last report in this booklet was that of the School Committee and of Superintendent of Schools Fannie E. Woods and other school officials. The public schools financial statement showed town funding of \$29,560 and Massachusetts General School Fund support of \$2380. The total enrollment for the year was 391 students, the preponderance of whom were 7 to 14 years old. The truant officer for Groton (Bartholomew J. Dowling, also police chief) reported no truants in his district that year. William Ganley, officer for West Groton, stated he had one case and, "I had no difficulty in securing the pupil's return." On the other hand, 12 students received honors for perfect attendance for the school year.

There were 22 women and three

men on the teaching and supervisory staff. Most were graduates of five different normal schools, with one each from Harvard, Radcliffe, Wellesley, and Simmons. Again reflecting diversity, seven gave home addresses in Groton, while 14 resided in other Massachusetts towns and one in New Hampshire.

Looking to the Future

At the end of the *Annual Report* came a serious look to shaping the future in light of the war just ended. It showed in Butler High School's graduation ceremony where one of the eight members of the Class of 1919 (its enrollment severely limited as young men had gone to war or work) gave the Salutatory address "The Effect of the War on Literature." Another class member spoke on "Roosevelt's Legacy," and the Valedictory address took up the subject "The Immigrant – In and After the War." Could seniors undertake to address such subjects at today's graduations?

In her first written report to the School Committee as a newcomer, Superintendent of Schools Woods, stated, "it will be my policy to keep in touch with the present-day educational movements, to study local conditions, and so to administer the affairs of the schools that they may continue to grow, expand, and hold a creditable place with the schools of other towns in the Commonwealth."

She continued, "We are facing a new world. The war has shown us wherein our public schools have failed. The great numbers of young men who were ignorant of the English language and of American ideals, the overwhelming percentage of physically unfit, the disregard of

thrift, the lack of knowledge of community sanitation and personal hygiene, of civic ideals and duties are some of the outstanding and sinister warnings of the war."

She made the point that, "The most important lesson that the war has taught us is that education is a matter of national concern and not merely a matter of local concern." On the national level, Woods spoke of a Congressional bill to establish a Cabinet-level Department of Education. It would address nationwide problems of illiteracy, adjustment of immigrants to American life, training teachers and funding their salaries, and promoting public education. It would engage states in contributing also to solving these problems. (Note: It would take another 60 years before such a department would become established.)

With World War I well in mind, she concluded, "We must emphasize as never before the teaching of patriotism and citizenship through action rather than through information alone. If patriotism is an ideal, to be of service it must be acted out in school. If good citizenship is a necessity to make it of more worth it must be a citizenship of action."

I have presented what caught my eye as I read this 151-page summary of the year 1919 in Groton. Displayed here is a community headed into the modern age of electricity and the motor vehicle and the ushering in of a more mobile, diverse, and busier life. It's fascinating to compare then with now, and yet we may well ponder how many of the same issues and concerns we share with people of those times and how much more we still might like to know about that time so close to the Great War. ■



Cover of the Souvenir Program of the Welcome Home to the Groton Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines in the United States Service 1917-1919, May 5, 1919.

William P. Wharton Rediscovered

Joshua Vollmar

A child of great wealth who used that wealth to preserve the environment, William Pickman Wharton is one of the most notable residents of Groton in the twentieth century. He was born in 1880, the son of William F. Wharton, who would be the Assistant Secretary of State during the Benjamin Harrison administration. Subsequently, the elder Wharton bought The Elms at the corner of Farmers Row and Pleasant Street, where his young family was visited on multiple occasions by his soon-to-be-famous sister-in-law, Edith Wharton.

William P., or "Billy" as he was called by his friends, was educated at Groton School and Harvard, before he returned to town and began buying up wooded land that would eventually become the 700 acre Wharton Plantation, now conservation land. Wharton also was a founder of the New England Forestry Foundation. He made his home for most of his life at Five Oaks Farm on Broadmeadow Road, and was, for a time, Groton's oldest citizen.

One would think that with all his achievements, the archives at the Groton History Center would be overflowing with material about him, but historically we have had few resources to offer. Two of Wharton's personal photograph albums were donated in 1990, at the time the Groton Historical Society (also known as the Groton History Center) co-sponsored an event that brought together a number of people who knew Wharton for a discussion of his life (a DVD of which is kept in the archives).

Recently, a large number of letters, as well as a plan for one of his yachts, were donated by the son of Wharton's late-life nurse. We also have a map of Five Oaks Farm eventually owned by Wharton and from which he operated a bird-banding station. In 2018, the History Center raised money to have William P. Wharton's diaries (kept in the collection of the Massachusetts Historical Society,) digitized - a project that has just been completed. Now, a plethora of information is available to anyone interested in this fascinating and accomplished Groton citizen.

Below is a list of William P. Wharton resources and how to access them:

Boutwell House:

- Personal Photograph Albums
- Personal Letters & Documents
- Map of Five Oaks Farm
- DVD "Life of William P. Wharton"
- Bird Banding Records
- Books from Wharton's Personal Library

Massachusetts Historical Society Digital Collection:

www.masshist.org/collection-guides/view/fa0448

- 30 Wharton Diaries (1910-1939)
- Account Books for Farm Expenses
- Record of Hens, Roosters, & Eggs

Other Sources:

New England Forestry Foundation

William P. Wharton Trust

If you have any photographs, materials, or stories relating to William P. Wharton, please share them with us so that we can continue to keep an updated list of archival resources.

GHS Officers/Directors

Bobbie Spiegelman *President*

Curator / Collections

Al Collins *Vice President*

Buildings & Grounds / Finance

Michelle Collette *Treasurer / Finance*

Ginger Vollmar *Clerk*

Nancy Barringer *Programs*

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Barbara Murray *Governance*

Carolyn Perkins *Membership / Publicity*

Beverly Smith *Development*

Kara Fossey *House Consultant / Webmaster*

Ray Lyons *Legal Advisor*

A Stone With a Story

Al Collins

In the late 1600s, Jonas Prescott had a farm on the northwestern side of today's Old Ayer Road. As most inhabitants did back in the early years of Groton, Jonas most likely cleared his fields of rocks & stones and used these stones to build boundary stonewalls. It is believed Jonas placed a stone in one of his walls with the inscription "I P 1680", most likely marking the date he constructed the wall. As years passed, ownership of Jonas' property transferred to his grandson Oliver Prescott. It's believed at some point Oliver rebuilt the wall and in doing so, updated Jonas' inscription by adding "Rebuilt by O P 1784". Further on in time, the property transferred to Stuart J. Park who must have carried on the tradition of maintaining this wall and rebuilt it. Once again the inscription was updated by adding "Rebuilt by S J Park 1841".

In 1875 the property was conveyed from the Park Family to Willard Giles. Willard decided to build a new barn on his property and in doing so needed many stones to build a foundation. There happened to be perfect stones close by in the above stonewall so Willard decided to use some of these stones, including the inscribed stone, to build the barn foundation. A noted Town Historian, Dr. Green, noticed the inscribed stone missing and investigated what Willard had done. It was determined, the stone was now part of the barn foundation so with the blessing of Willard Giles, Dr. Green enlisted the help of two masons who spent two days taking down foundation walls until they came across the Prescott stone.

Dr. Green wanted to preserve this piece of history, so it was given to the son of James Lawrence to be placed in a stone wall at the Lawrence Homestead at the corner of Farmer's Row and Long Hill Rd. Through the years trees grew along the wall. One tree in particular wrapped its roots around the stone forcing it to protrude outward from the wall. As the Farmer's Row sidewalks were improved, soil was placed along the sides to raise the grade, covering the bottom inscription on the stone. If nothing were to be done to save this stone, it would one day be face down, covered with dirt and be gone forever.

The Groton Historical Commission recently raised concern to the Lawrence Family Estate that this historic stone could be broken or lost as the forces of both man and nature take their toll. In working out a solution, the Lawrence Estate graciously gifted the Prescott stone to the Commission with the stipulation it be placed either at Town Hall or at the Groton Historical Society. It was decid-

ed the best place to archive this stone would be the Historical Society's History Center with the big remaining question being, how do we remove and transport it, without destroying this piece of history.



George Wheatley and Al Collins moving the Prescott Stone from Farmer's Row to its new home at the Boutwell House.

At the direction of George Wheatley and Michael LaTerz, both members of the Historical Commission, Peter Benedict and Al Collins embarked on extracting the stone from the wall. With much effort and 2 hours of hard work, they were able to remove the 600 pound stone and maneuver it onto a wooden pallet. This was a great milestone but now what? Peter happened to be in possession of a pallet jack, so it was decided Peter and Al would muscle their way up and down the sidewalks, along the 3/4 mile route to the History Center on Main Street. George and Michael stopped traffic as the stone made its way across the various intersections. Once in front of Town Hall, Peter and Al mustered up what little energy they had left, pulled the pallet jack as fast as they could across Main St and up onto the driveway, resting the pallet onto a grass area of the History Center.

As many may know, to the rear of the History Center's Boutwell House, the Groton Business Association, along with many volunteers, has been working hard to create a garden for the enjoyment of the general public. The infamous Prescott stone will likely find a permanent resting place within the public garden becoming part of a stonewall maze. Everyone is invited to volunteer in this public effort to create a serene place at the History Center where people can enjoy wildflowers with views of Gibbet Hill, as well as a Stone with a Story.

Prescott House Murals

A few years ago, after a conversation about the future of some of the painted walls in the Oliver Prescott house on Old Ayer Road, many discussions and connections and a transfer of ownership were carried out to secure the longevity of two of these murals so that they now live, on long-term loan, in the beautiful lobby and hallway at the new Groton Inn.

Knowing that the Boutwell House space limitations could not accommodate the generous offer of this gift of J. D. Poor murals from Indian Hill Music, we landed on the idea of having these murals installed in a public space where they could be enjoyed by a broader audience.

At this time, the new Groton Inn was in the early stages of construction and eager to adopt relevant elements of history to add to its authenticity.

After all parties agreed on a plan, the next steps involved hiring an expert in wall removal and art conservators to repair any damage. The generous citizens of Groton supported this work by approving our CPA funding at the Fall Town Meeting in 2018.

With winter coming on and the prospect of prohibitive weather conditions, our team bundled up, warmed the designated room with heaters, and set about the process of carefully extracting the two walls to prepare for stabilization before the actual transport to the Inn later in the year.

On a pleasant day this spring, a team of movers led by David Ottinger, our painted wall expert, carefully and delicately moved the murals into their new carved-out space at the Inn. Christine Thomson and her assistant arrived weeks later to add the finishing touches.

The former Groton Inn is said to have once displayed similar murals by Rufus Porter on some of its walls, its guests delighting in these decorations. Unfortunately these were lost between different building renovations and the devastating fire of 2011.

Through the generosity of Indian Hill Music, and the support of Groton citizens and our friends and members, the new Inn now connects to its history with the addition of these murals painted by J. D. Poor (an ardent follower of Porter's technique).

This opportunity to learn and appreciate more about this unique New England art form is on display for any visitor welcomed by the gracious hosts at the Inn.



(From top to bottom) Art Conservator, Wenda Kochinowski, works on stabilizing the murals in the Prescott House before they are carefully moved to the Groton Inn and installed in their final location. Photos by Carolyn Perkins.



GROTON HISTORY CENTER
Framing our story

Groton History Center
172 Main Street, P.O. Box 202
Groton, MA 01450

Coming Up

Guided House Tour

Boutwell House

Saturday Sept. 14 & Saturday Oct. 12, 11:00 AM

Autumn Ramble: Barns of Groton

Sunday, October 6, 2:00 PM

Annual Meeting & Program

Groton Inn

Sunday October 20, 2:00 PM



BARN TOUR
OCT. 2019

For information on our upcoming programs and details on supporting the GHC, check out:

www.grotonhistory.org

Call: 978-448-0092

Email: info@grotonhistory.org

Mail: PO Box 202, Groton, MA 01450

Visit: 172 Main Street, Groton, MA 01450

Then and Now

Vol. 20, No. 1

Newsletter of the Groton Historical Society

Winter 2019

A Note About This Issue

It's a new year which means it's time that we give ourselves a little kick to think outside the box!

This Winter 2019 issue of our newsletter is presented in a shortened format. While we re-imagine the layout and presentation of our beloved newsletter, this issue is a reminder that one of the reasons the Groton History Center has grown so much in the past few years is because of new creative outreach and the enthusiastic receptivity of our members and friends. We hope that our Spring 2019 issue will be back in a new format with the usual amount of content! As always, email us at info@grotonhistory.org or visit us on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays from 10-2.

Why Ayer Split off from Groton in 1871

C. David Gordon

We've chronicled in previous Groton Historical Society newsletters what Edward Adams Richardson wrote about the history of The Community flourishing in a section of Groton he grew up in, and we summarized his history of the Moors School at Old District No. 2 that he attended. Now we turn to this historian's son, Ralph H. Richardson, long the premier historian for Ayer and member of GHS for many years, to share his description of why and how the citizens of Groton Junction broke away to form their own township. He wrote on this subject as part of a history of Ayer he compiled for the Centennial Anniversary edition of the Public Spirit newspaper published on June 24, 1971. In his title he referred to Ayer as "Child of the Iron Horse."



Detail of an 1886 map of Ayer, formerly known as Groton Junction.

Agitation to seek independence from Groton surfaced as early as 1863. Concern centered on the town's failure to provide a high school and adequate fire protection equipment for a section of town grown larger in population than any other part of town.

Groton Junction citizens petitioned several times for a high school only to be turned down. In 1869 the town did spend \$75,000 for the Junction's East Main Street School, but a high school was what was required more. That same year the center of Groton built Chaplin School and then the next year erected Butler High School there.

The definitive call to action came in Junction citizen E. Dana Bancroft's letter printed in the August 5, 1869, *Public Spirit*. Here were two villages, he said, "not suited to each other." Junction people had to go four miles to vote and yet, despite their larger numbers, they were never represented by more than one selectman. When the town agreed to establish a committee to look into the Junction's

request for a new fire engine, four out of five committee members came from other parts of town, and the committee chairman never called a meeting anyway. Bancroft summed up his viewpoint stating, "Is there not enough *Public Spirit* in this village to set the ball in motion to secure our just rights or a final separation?"

In reaction the town voters agreed on April 27, 1870, to purchase what became called the Col. Daniel Needham hand tub for the Junction, and a new engine and hook-and-ladder house followed. That was insufficient, however: on November 10, 1870, a petition signed by 270 Junction voters asking for incorporation of a new town was presented to the state legislature. On January 24, 1871, a Groton town meeting vote approved a measure not to oppose the Junction's request. Since some land along the Nashua River was also involved -- land that had been ceded by Groton

Continued on reverse

Ayer Continued from previous page

to the town of Shirley in 1798 -- a Shirley town meeting had to be held, ending with approval of adding this tract to the new town, with its payment of \$500 as that tract's share of Shirley town debt.

The Massachusetts General Court approved the act of incorporation on February 14, 1871. At the new town's first town meeting on March 6th Bancroft was named moderator. Of the three men named to become selectmen, one (Ebenezer C. Willard) had served as a Groton selectman and a second (Lewis Blood) a Shirley selectman.

Groton people asked the Junctionites to consider naming the new town Groton Junction, but the newly independent citizens chose something completely different -- Ayer, named after Dr. James Cook Ayer, a patent medicine manufacturer in Lowell, whose gift of funds helped finance the building of the town hall.

As soon as possible Ayer voters founded Ayer High School. For 21 years it was situated on the second floor of the East Main Street School operating with 29 students its first year. ■

Mission(s) Accomplished!

Thanks to private donations (that's you!), Groton Cultural Council (part of MA CC), Tarbell Charitable Trust, and the William P. Wharton Trust we are in the final stages of two important projects:

- Restoration and cleaning of Edmund Tarbell's painting of Col. Abel Tarbell.
- Digitization of 30 William "Billy" Wharton diaries in the collection of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

THE WILLIAM P. WHARTON TRUST

TARBELL
CHARITABLE
TRUST

Mass
Cultural
Council

What on Earth is This?!



It's actually a clay model of a man (whose arms are missing) and his beast of burden (whose ears and horns are missing). The man appears to be trying to coax the beast forward. The animal is carrying leather pouches across its back. Perhaps they are farming. Or going to market. This object from the History Center's collection is one of several that were brought back from Palestine in 1858 by the Walter Dickson family of Groton. The Dicksons had suffered a harrowing experience in Jaffa, Palestine that made the national newspapers and was investigated by the U.S. Senate.

You may view these objects and learn the details of the story in the History Center's display case at the Groton Public Library on the 3rd floor.

--Liz Strachan

Coming Up...Save the Date

Boutwell House Guided Tour : Saturday February 9 at 11 AM at Boutwell House

Another GHC Wine Tasting Fundraiser : Saturday March 16 at Groton School, 7-10 PM
Tickets available at grotonhistory.org

Check our website for more events and details