

# News-Letter – July 2005

## NEW DIRECTORS ELECTED

At the Annual Meeting on April 4, the following new directors and officers were elected. William E. Flanagan was elected Treasurer for two years; Charlotte O’G. Saul, Recording Secretary for two years; Michael B. Grogan and Alexander K. Leith, Directors for three years. Flanagan is an attorney specializing in income and estate taxation. Grogan is the president of a firm specializing in fine art auctions and appraisals, Leith is senior vice president at a brokerage firm, and Saul is the founder of the Society’s Worthington Committee and Soirée.

## SOCIETY ACQUIRES IMPORTANT HALE PAINTING

The Society has received what is considered by one art authority, with a specialty in the Hales, as the finest child’s portrait by Dedham artist Lilian Westcott Hale. The oversized oil painting is of Motley Sawyer, whose family lived on Village Avenue at the time of the painting. The portrait was done in the Hale home on Highland Street and was exhibited at The Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C.

Lilian Hale was considered the best children’s portraitist in her lifetime, and a number of her paintings hang in museums throughout the country. Many of her portraits are of Dedham people. While the Society has several of her pencil sketches and charcoals, this is the first oil we have obtained. We currently have in our files an extensive collection of photographs of her paintings and, because many of the paintings have disappeared, these pictures are the only record that they existed. We are always grateful to have additional portraits by both Lilian Hale and her husband Philip Leslie Hale in our collections.

The Motley Sawyer painting was given to the Society by his three daughters because it would not fit in their homes due to its size. They wanted it to go to a museum where it would be displayed, but also one in which it would be most appropriate. After an extensive search via the internet and a number of communications with the Society’s director, all agreed that Dedham Historical Society was the best location for the painting.

Motley Sawyer was born in 1920 and died in 1982. The painting was generously donated by his daughters, Lisa Sawyer, Jean Sawyer Railton, and the Rev. Kathryn S. White.

## DEDHAM POTTERY SALE SATURDAY, AUGUST 13

In January we announced a most generous gift to the museum of 80 pieces of early Dedham Pottery from Mary Simmons of Maryland. Mrs. Simmons suggested that the Society keep only the pieces it wanted for its collection and sell the remainder to benefit the Collections Fund.

With that in mind, our Dedham Pottery curator, Jim Kaufman, after careful scrutiny, determined that we should keep 20 pieces for the collection and the remainder would be sold. Members in good standing will be eligible to purchase the remaining pieces at the usual 10% discount from fair market value.

The sale will take place in the Society’s museum, Saturday, August 13, from 9AM to 12 noon. Only members in-good-standing will be eligible to purchase, at that time, after which the pieces will be available to the general public at marked prices.

We expect many interested parties. Be early and you won’t be disappointed.

## OUR LINK TO DEDHAM, ENGLAND

By Ron Frazier

Several months ago, the Dedham Historical Society was contacted by a preservation group in Dedham, England, indicating an interest in reestablishing a link between the two towns. In May, my

wife and I had an unexpected opportunity to visit England and decided that Dedham had to be one of our targeted destinations.

When I informed Jacqui Freeman, Chairman of Friends of Dedham Church (my initial contact), that we would be coming, she planned a marvelous day for us. The Friends is an independent charity whose primary objectives are to maintain, enhance and restore the Dedham Parish Church, a major historic site.

We were picked up in London and driven to Dedham, a charming town about 75 miles northeast of London. We were taken to the estate of John and Jane Adams for tea, and then to Dedham Church to learn of the Dedham, Massachusetts, as well as other American connections. Lunch was at The Sun Inn, a delightful pub, parts of which date from the 16th century. It had become a tavern by 1667 and has been known by its current name since 1762. We then toured Dedham Village with Freddy Davies, a professor and architectural historian. I suspect that royalty would not have been treated better.

Dedham, England, is a town of local and national historical significance, and was made famous by the artist John Constable who lived in the area and attended Royal Grammar School in Dedham. He often painted pictures of Dedham Church and frequently put the tower of the church in his paintings, even if it could not be seen from where he painted. (We have four paintings of Dedham at the Society, one each by Constable, Charles Mills, Henry Hitchings, and Thomas Pyne.) The entire town is officially classified as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and a special conservation area. Some of its buildings date from the thirteenth century. In size, it is approximately three by two-and-one-half miles, and it is located in the Stour Valley.

The most important building in the town is Dedham Church, originally a Roman Catholic Church established in Saxon times. The name of the church is actually St. Mary the Virgin, commonly referred to as St. Mary's, and it's located on High Street in Dedham (sound familiar?). Many churches in the area are named for St. Mary, so ultimately people began to refer to it as simply "Dedham Church."

The clergy of the church can be traced back to 1322, and its famous tower was begun c. 1491 and completed c. 1520. It is the only church tower with an archway under the tower, called a *Galilee*. The tower, which is 131 feet high, was financed primarily by Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond, mother of Henry VII. It is completely faced with flint, which was used primarily because there was little other rock in the Dedham area.

After the Reformation the church became Anglican. The church was rebuilt, but the tower remained. While religious services continue to take place in the church and the vicar, Gerard Moate, lives next to the church, it is considered an important historic site in which people of other religions also hold weddings and other ceremonies. Sadly, during the Cromwellian era, an effort was made to eliminate all images on stone and wood and these were defaced, resulting in a lack of detail on many architectural features. The church contains many references to Dedham, MA, including carvings on wooden plaques and metal plaques with both the Arms of the State of Massachusetts and The Avery Oak, and even some symbols on the ceiling. One pew memorial reads, *This pew commemorates our indebtedness to the people of Dedham, Mass., U.S.A., who in the year 1967, contributed more than £1000 toward the restoration of this church.* Another pew shows a cross interlaced with two D's, symbolizing the religious bond between the two Dedhams. And there are a number of other symbolic references to Dedham and Massachusetts.

When we at the Society are asked the derivation of the name "Dedham," it's easy for us to say, "Dedham, England." When the people of Dedham, England are asked the same question, their response is, "The name derives from the Saxon 'Dyddas Ham' – the settlement of Dydda's people in the hamlet."

One of Dedham's early industries was wool and cloth which reached its peak in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, and much of the wealth generated by it was put back into the local economy. The magnificent Church of St. Mary, built 1492-1519, was financed almost entirely by the cloth merchants. The silk industry helped the economy of Dedham, England, as it did that of Dedham, MA under the Cobbs.

It is noted in one historical book on Dedham that in the 1600s, *the Puritan element in Dedham was so strong that it even extended overseas: Dedham inhabitants, including members of the Sherman family who were to become ancestors of the famous General W. T. Sherman, helped to found one of the first towns in the New World – Dedham, Massachusetts.*

Sherman Hall, directly across from the church, is one of Dedham's most outstanding eighteenth-century buildings, and it is considered by our architectural historian guide to be one of the best existing examples of the William and Mary period. While we haven't actually connected the Sherman name to Dedham, MA, we have connected several others, such as John Dwight and John Rodgers.

In the 1500s, Dedham had two important schools: The Grammar School, later known as the Royal Grammar School, and The English School, now known as Sherman's, which attracted many wealthy families. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the money they brought in helped the local economy and provided a thriving social and cultural scene. (Of course, Dedham, MA, had the first publicly funded school in America.)

One of the oldest and most interesting structures in Dedham is Southfields, a rare surviving residence dating from c. 1500 that is still used as a residence. It was originally a prosperous clothier's home and business premises. The oldest residence in town is next to the post office and dates to the year 1200. (In Dedham, MA, we have the oldest wood frame house in America, the Fairbanks House, c. 1636.)

By the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Dedham Vale had become a mecca for countless artists as well as large numbers of tourists. The pressure to develop Dedham was vigorously fought by local people. After many battles, Dedham Vale was declared an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) with significant restrictions on new development.

Though a very small town, with a population of approximately 2000, the residents claim that Dedham provides virtually every kind of shop and service they need, without having to go outside the borders of the town, and it is considered a very desirable place to live. It was interesting to note that in the local real estate window were shown a number of houses for sale, many ranging from £350,000 to £450,000. At the current exchange rate, that translates to approximately \$700,000 to \$900,000.

Dedham is a delightful, charming town, and everything one would expect on a picture-perfect movie set. It was as if we had stepped back in time, but it's alive and vibrant, facing the everyday problems of most modern communities. A sampling of issues noted in the parish magazine included the importance of voting, caring for the family, neighborhood watch, concern for the state of local bridges, skate-boarding, tax reductions, collecting box tops, coupons and used stamps, and upcoming lectures and concerts, to name just a few.

The people of Dedham, England, are interested in reestablishing a relationship with the people of Dedham, MA. Such an endeavor might lead to an enriching, rewarding and fascinating experience for all involved.

### **HIGH SCHOOL YEAR BOOKS NEEDED**

Recently Mrs. Dee Aldous Claffey generously donated a much-needed yearbook to the collection at the historical society. The Library needs your assistance. There are a number of Dedham High School yearbooks that we are still missing. We would welcome editions of "Reflections" from any year, but especially the following ones: 1925, 1927, 1928, 1933, 1934, 1936, 1941, 1942, 1943, 1946, 1949, 1952, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1960, 1961, 1965, 1966, 1968, and 1975.

### **SPECIAL THANKS TO THE DEDHAM WOMEN'S EXCHANGE**

As in the past, the Dedham Women's Exchange has been most generous in providing a grant to the Dedham Historical Society.

The Women's Exchange, located at 445 Washington Street, sells distinctive gifts and hand-crafted items. The net income is used to help non-profit organizations in the Dedham area.

Our sincere thanks to the Dedham Women's Exchange for this grant.

### **eBay PROJECT TO BENEFIT THE SOCIETY**

The Worthington Committee recently came up with a great project to benefit both the Society and its membership. The Society is teaming up with New Yankee Swap, an eBay auctioneer specializing in small items.

The idea is simple: Individuals donate something they no longer use (or maybe never used), and New Yankee Swap does the rest. They will arrange to pick up your item, evaluate

it, price it, sell it on eBay, ship it, write the check to Dedham Historical Society, and send you a receipt for your tax records.

Based on the letter that was sent to the membership in May, it appears that the project is being enthusiastically received.

To get rid of all of those little gems taking up space in your house -- too good to throw away, but no longer appreciated -- just contact Dana Cutter at New Yankee Swap. Call him at 617-686-4451 or email him at [dana@newyankeeswap.com](mailto:dana@newyankeeswap.com) with questions about items or to schedule a free evaluation and pick-up of your items. Or you may arrange to bring your items to the Society and meet Cutter there, if you would prefer to make contact outside your home.

This fundraiser promises to be easy as well as lucrative. If 100 members of the Society each donated \$100 worth of items, the Society would receive approximately \$7000 and the members would gain a lot of clutter-free closets! Several members have already successfully "tested" the system. If you have general questions, please call Ron Frazier at 781-326-1385.

### **DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOUR HOUSE PLAQUE IS?**

All those little green historical house plaques around town, with dates on them, are an ongoing project of the Historical Society. The objective of the program is to make people aware of the styles of architecture being built in the town at different periods in time. So even if your house was built last year, you're eligible to purchase a plaque.

We're frequently asked how people obtain the plaque. The answer is simple: Just ask us and we'll give you a form with instructions and a list of the information required. The completed form, photographs and fee should then be returned to the Society for processing.

Furthermore, there are many plaques out there that have deteriorated over the years. A house plaque paint job is as good as the paint job on your house -- it does have a life span. We can provide replacement plaques at a discount because no further research should be required. Just call the Historical Society office at 781-326-1385 for more information.

### **FROM OUR LIBRARIAN/ARCHIVIST**

When we think of the Library and Archives at the Dedham Historical Society, many people think of the historic past as it occurred three hundred years ago. We need to consider the recent past, and to be concerned about photographs, postcards, and other records from the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This particularly came to light when a visitor requested active sports photographs from the 1930's, 1940's and 1950's. If you have any of these items, we would welcome any donations. It is only through your generosity that these items will be here for posterity.

### **COMMITTEE OPPORTUNITIES**

We at the Society accomplish much of what we do through the volunteer committee structure. And we're always looking for new volunteers.

If you have recently retired, or have some time to put into a worthwhile endeavor, consider serving on one of the committees. We have a variety of interesting possibilities, from Collections and Exhibit, Development, Education, Historic Preservation, Library and Archives, and Membership, to the Worthington Committee (our chief fundraising events group).

We invite you to get involved with any of the above. We guarantee you'll find it most interesting.