

# News-Letter, July 2005

## SOCIETY INVENTORIES VILLAGE CEMETERY

Recently, the Dedham Historical Society received the final product of the work of a Worthington Committee sub-committee that was comprised of Sally Tully, Carol DeBlois, and the late Betsy Myer. These volunteers catalogued all of the names in the Dedham Village Cemetery. A grid was imposed on the layout of the cemetery to facilitate the location of individuals.

Tully started by using the known plot map of the cemetery, and divided it into six areas, lettered "A" to "F". Then within each "Area" she plotted "Sections" or "Ranges." These terms were applied interchangeably and every "Section" or "Range" received a Roman numeral. Within a single "Section" plots were assigned a number.

### Area "A"

This area of the cemetery had been catalogued in 1888 by Reverend Carlos Slafter, A.M. The booklet chronicled the gravesites and listed all of the epitaphs on each headstone. There is also a diagram of the graveyard. It is available in the library of the Historical Society. She copied line by line from the book and entered all of the data into a DOS program. About two years into the project, Peter Damon converted the files to a Windows program, but the original DOS columns were maintained.

### Areas "B" - "F"

For all of the other "Areas" the group needed to do research in the cemetery and register each name from individual tombstones. Carol DeBlois and Betsy Myer did the majority of this time-consuming and painstaking work. They completed sections "B," "C," "F," and the War Memorial. Tully finished the final areas from this field work, she completed the entry of the data into the computer.

Thanks to the work of these committee members, there is now detailed information about each area of the cemetery along with a corresponding map. And it is these maps that provide the necessary information to locate any particular gravesite. The catalogue has also been recorded onto a CD.

The Society is exceedingly grateful to these volunteers for the time and effort they gave to this endeavor. Their commitment to the project has produced a valuable resource.

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES IN THE LIBRARY/ARCHIVES

We need you! There are a number of volunteer opportunities that the Librarian, Sandra Waxman has identified in both the library and archives:

- The Photo Archivist, Joanie Conklin, needs assistance with the photographs.
- We are always in need of people to refile the images.
- Also, we are working to make a unified index of the school photos according to buildings, and then in chronological order. In it, we would list the photos related to each building that are housed in both the library and in the oversized boxes in the archives.
- There is a database that contains information about the photographs in our files in the library. The data that has been entered comprises about one third of the images. It would be very useful to have a complete listing of the holdings.
- There are newspaper articles that need to be copied onto acid-free paper and put into the appropriate files.
- The contents of artifact boxes, including items such as dance cards, should be sorted and placed in appropriate holders.
- Another task would be to develop a list of the names of those people buried at St. Mary's Cemetery using existing glass plate negatives. The list would then be updated by contacting the cemetery caretaker.
- Some of the collections in the archives, such as the Bullard Family Papers, need to be sorted in preparation for creating archival finding aids.

Later projects may include fall cleaning, rearranging the newspaper section, and making phase boxes to hold items in need of more support.

If you can devote some time to any of these projects, please contact Sandy Waxman as soon as possible. She looks forward to hearing from you.

## LOOKING BACK IN TIME:

### *A slice of life in Dedham in 1844*

The following is a letter that was recently purchased on eBay by one of our members, John Sigel. Knowing of our interest in it, Mr. Sigel has kindly donated the letter to the Society.

The letter is fascinating because it's one of those rare accounts that gives us a glimpse into the language and attitudes that prevailed in Dedham more than 160 years ago. The letter is transcribed exactly as it was written. In a couple of instances, we couldn't understand the written word. Maybe you can.

*Dedham sabbath eve July 13<sup>th</sup>, 44*

*My dear sister*

*You are already indebted to me for one letter, but as I have almost despaired of your ever answering it, I will write again hoping you will take more notice of this. I wanted to hear all about the wedding and everything else and Mary I expected you here before this time, why have you not been? Sophia Ann, promised to make us a visit this summer, but she has not been yet. Cousin Eveline was here yesterday with Warren Lindley, I was away to work and did not see them. I have worked very steady lately, so busily that I am all tired out, It is true it has not been but a short time, but a little kills me. I have cut and fitted one hundred and six drepes since the second week in april, beginning that week. I want very much to come up and see you this summer but cannot tell whether I can or not Twill depend upon how Louisa gets long and what she says about my going.*

*Where were you on the fourth? I went into Boston in the evening to see the fire-works They were beautiful, but I did not care for them having seen them so many times before, and they are pretty much the same thing from year to year, with sometimes a few improvements They had a naval engagement that was considered remarkably good, you could see the balls fly back and forth and the ships all on fire, it is a mystery how they do it. I did not see a person on the common that I knew, although it seemed as though all the world were there. There were sixteen long cars filled with passengers came out to Dedham that evening so you may imagine how many went in from here. We did not get home until one oclock.*

*Aunt Anna has been sick with the lung fever, she has recovered though there were two or three days that they almost despaired her life. The enjoyment between Sophia and Mr. Farwell is broken; people in concord seem to think it is for the best, they did not think much of him. If he was not worthy of her I am glad it is done with, and I hope "she'll learn to view*

*The past without regret,  
And be as calm and happy now  
As though they ne'er had met."*

*I went to a boat ride last evening. There were twenty of us, we sailed five miles down the river, landed on cow island, walked round a little while, and caught a few lightening bugs, for amusement (but mind ye we did not kill them). Then turned around and came home, it was a fine night to be on the water, so still and warm. There were some who had invitations that though they were a little too good to go with mechanics; Oh the Aristocracy of Dedham, it is the proudest place I ever knew or heard of. There are four classes of people here, beside the irish, those I do not reckon, I wish they were all home in to Ireland again, (though I hardly dare to breathe it for fear some of them will kill me they are growing so powerful,) and if you associate with one class, you can not with the others, formerly there were but three, but there has another come up, or rather come out of Boston, that is a little above any of the rest. Deliver me from living in such a place, I had rather be where I can feel as good as the rest, pity I cannot be independent and not care, but I feel jus so now, perhaps I am a little nervous or am in an Almira fit" or something of the kind*

*Monday afternoon I took sold at the boat ride and it was settled in my face. I have been trying all sorts of remedies, to get it well for tomorrow, for we are going to Squantum, all hands; wish you were here to go with us, as many as can conveniently will go in the furniture waggon with four horses, and the rest will go in waggons or chaises as they like. Tuesday morn I arose at half past four, it is a delightful morning, we have had a shower to lay the dust, but it is very warm indeed I am afraid we shall almost melt methinks some of us will come home with faces almost blistered.*

*Mr. Bufsell is not very well this week he has just returned from a journey and took cold coming home, Louisa is pretty well, we have no borders, Sally is here and will stay with us this summer if she is well and I do not know how much longer. You never have told me why you did not come here when we sent for you, do give a reason, I long to know whether it was what Mr Bufsell conjectured or not, writer very soon & tell me all the news, so not leave me to guefs at half. Do you get all the papers I send to you, are you not tired of them if you are tell me so. I have a very pretty one now which I will send with this letter. The poetry is so cunning I hope you will keep it. Friday morn. Prentice is here, came yesterday. I am going out to Reading with him to day, go in the cars at ten oclock. I shall come back tomorrow & he I believe thinks he shall retun to Spencer tomorrow I had a fine time at Squantum and came home in better humour than I felt the day before. Printice don't seem to know much more about your affairs than I do. Do write soon or I'll never forgive you.*

*Yours very affectionately,  
Hannah*

*[The letter was addressed to Mifs Mary M Stearns Coldbrook Mafs  
Postmarked DEDHAM MS. JUL 18]*

*NOTES: The river in Dedham is the Charles, Squantum is a section of Quincy.*

## **The Whiting Family in Dedham**

**By Eleanor Palma**

When Nathaniel Whiting arrived in Dedham in 1641, it was the beginning of a one hundred eighty-two year relationship of the Whiting family with the town of Dedham and the mills. He originally was given a site and privileges to grind corn on what was called Mother Brook, near the site of the Old Boston Envelope Company on Maverick Street. When a new corn mill was erected above the mill of Nathaniel Whiting in 1664 by Ezra Morse, it began a series of complaints to the town by Nathaniel of flooding damage to his mill. Some contentious years followed with accusations on both sides as well as law suits until Whiting agreed to abide by the town's decisions.

Nathaniel Whiting had been born in England about 1609. He was deeded ten acres of land in Lynn, Massachusetts in 1638. Subsequently he moved to Dedham, and on November 4, 1643, he married Hannah Dwight, the daughter of John Dwight, an upstanding member of the community. Over the years, fourteen children were born, ten of whom lived to maturity. Nathaniel Whiting was a prosperous man and owned land not only in Dedham but also in Roxbury and Wrentham. Shortly before his death in 1683, Nathaniel and James Draper received the third mill privilege upon Mother Brook to build a fulling mill, and the descendents of Nathaniel Whiting held this mill privilege for over one hundred eighty years.

Throughout the years, the descendents of Nathaniel Whiting continued to be an integral part of the town of Dedham. Calvin Whiting, the son of Isaac and Rebecca Fisher Whiting, was born in 1762 and married Elizabeth Fuller. Calvin was a merchant and an inventor. He formed a partnership with Eli Parsons, tinsmith, for the manufacture of tin ware and sold it in his store at what was called "Connecticut Corner." Their first machine patent for tin ware manufacture dates to 1806 and was granted to Whiting and Parsons. Calvin Whiting was also authorized by an Act of the Legislature to bring water in pine logs from a large spring in Federal Hill to residents in the Village in 1797.

Calvin was an inventive genius and invented much of the wool carding machinery for the Whiting mills. He received a U.S. patent on February 1, 1814 for a loom for warping or mounting the warp of the yarn bean in a wool mill. The original copy of the patent is signed by President James Madison with

the official raised seal. Calvin was also a civic minded individual and served a total of fourteen years as a selectman in the town as well as being licensed as a Justice of the Peace.

A series of journals authored by Isaac Whiting, the son of Moses and Sarah Gay Whiting who was born in 1776, gives much insight into the early nineteenth century. What began as work journals turned into commentaries about family affairs and aspects of daily life in a busy community. For example: "March 18. 1823 Mr. Holis Perry came to work for me on trial for 6 or 7 months and if he suits me, am to give 20 dollars per month. He finding his own board, washing and mending." "Self attended annual meeting of Horse Thief Society at Gregg's Tavern." "August 3, 1826 Self with Lemuel Whiting went to Mr. Birds in order to do something about settling for his flowing the water upon the gristmill." Almost one hundred fifty years after Nathaniel Whiting complained about flooding at his mill, the argument continues.

Much of the genealogy information present in the Society's archives was garnered by Caroline Whiting. Caroline, the oldest daughter of John and Lucinda French Whiting, was born in Dedham in 1810. She had been a schoolteacher in several towns in Rhode Island and worked for a time as an assistant teacher at the Academy at Kingston in Kingston, Rhode Island. For several years, about 1835, she taught a private school in her own home. In 1839, she was the Preceptress at Lawrence Academy in Groton, Massachusetts. She had many interests in addition to genealogy and kept careful journals of her day-to-day affairs. It is through her diligence that much of the family's lineage is preserved.

William Whiting, the son of Lemuel and Mary Gay Whiting who was born in 1830, was the last Whiting to own a mill. The mills had changed over time, and much of the family land had been sold. About 1871, Charles Sanderson began laying out the old Whiting Farm as Oakdale. The land was divided into house lots and only the name of Whiting Avenue remains.

*[There is a painting by Charles Mills in the furniture room at the Society showing the Whiting mills.]*