



NEWS-LETTER

DEDHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

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Library Hours: by appointment; Museum Hours: Tuesday – Friday 12 – 4 pm

Both are open even-dated Saturdays: 1 – 4 pm

SEPTEMBER 2015

DHS LECTURE SERIES KICKS OFF SEPTEMBER 24, 2015

The Dedham Historical Society & Museum 2015-16 lecture series kicks off on Thursday, September 24 with Robert Cheney presenting a lecture on “*Willard Eight-Day Clocks & the Mysterious English Connection.*” For over 100 years, Simon Willard and his family of clock makers have been viewed historically as traditional clock makers, meticulously making eight-day (or grandfather) clocks for wealthy buyers in our developing country. Cheney has spent a lifetime studying Willard clocks and has a much different story to tell, one filled with international commerce, a vast network of English specialists who made a multitude of the necessary components, and American merchants eager to utilize foreign components and finished products to supply quality timekeepers for the New Republic. Cheney is the Director of Clocks, Watches and Scientific Instruments at Skinner Inc.

On October 29 Professor Patricia J. Fanning of Bridgewater State University will present “*Influenza and Inequality: One Town’s Tragic Response to the Great Epidemic of 1918.*” Based on her book of the same title, Fanning’s analysis of one town’s struggle illuminates how well-intentioned groups may implement strategies that can exacerbate rather than relieve a medical crisis. On November 12 genealogist Michael Brophy presents a lecture on “*Genealogy Myths & Legends.*” He will discuss the truth or exaggeration behind statements such as “Our name was changed at Ellis Island” or “I am descended from an Indian.”

2016 lectures include: January 14, Jennifer Pustz, Historian for Historic New England, prepares fans for the final season of Downton Abbey with her presentation of “*Voices from the Back Stairs.*” Pustz will explore domestic conflicts between mistress and servant. On March 31 researcher Andrew Saxe will examine “*Dedham and Dorchester: Architects In Common*” comparing architectural designs in the two communities. The series will close on April 21 with the Annual Meeting and the Ben Fisher Memorial Lecture with Arlyen A. Levee, landscape historian and preservation consultant. Levee will discuss “*Frederick Law Olmsted and the Dedham Connection.*”

All lectures begin at 7:30 pm at the Dedham Historical Society & Museum auditorium. Admission: DHS members free; \$5 per person for non-members. Be sure to post the lecture series card inserted in this newsletter in a prominent place so you don’t miss any of these outstanding presentations. The 2015-16 lecture series is sponsored by David G. Newsom.

2015 ANNUAL APPEAL UNDERWAY

DHS President Andrea Gilmore has launched the Society’s 2015 Annual Appeal. Her letter and a contribution form will soon arrive in your mailbox. The Society contacts members twice each year for funding. In January the Membership Renewal notices are mailed to members and are followed in September by the Annual Appeal. The Society relies on both of these appeals for a significant portion of its operating budget.

This year, like many of our members, the Society faced unexpected expenses to protect our historic building during the severe winter storms. Because of our preventative maintenance, the building did not suffer any major problems from snow or ice dams, yet the expenses for this work exceeded our budget. Your Annual Appeal donation will help us pay for these unexpected expenses as well as support our operating budget. Thank you.

NEW EXHIBIT ON “HISTORIC GARDENS IN DEDHAM” OPENS IN OCTOBER

Gardens have been an important part of the town’s landscape since the early years. The original founding families planted gardens for food and medicinal herbs. By the 19th century ornamental gardens and professional landscaping were part of the larger estates. Our new exhibit, opening in October, will feature photographs of the gardens of these great estates, information on distinguished local landscape designers, and photos of Dedham residents enjoying their gardens.

As part of the research for this exhibit the Fairbanks Garden Club has generously donated three important books to the collection: “The Rhododendron and American Plants” (1871), “Flowers for the Parlor and Garden” (1863), and “Orchids: A Description of the Species and Varieties Grown at Glen Ridge, Near Boston”(1876) by Edward Sprague

Rand Jr. A botanist, Rand devoted himself to the study and cultivation of tropical plants in the greenhouse of his Glen Ridge property in Dedham. He made several botanical journeys to Brazil and wrote extensively on South American orchids.

SOCIETY RECEIVES GRANT FROM NOANETT GARDEN CLUB

Earlier this year the Society received a grant from the Noanett Garden Club to assist with replacing damaged and overgrown bushes surrounding the building. The last major re-landscaping occurred in the 1980s when local Master Gardener Mabel Herwig gave the DHS a significant contribution of hostas. This created a beautiful approach to the building and many of these plants remain healthy. But the passage of time and the brutal winter of 2015 took a toll on other parts of our landscape.

Phase One of the project, scheduled to take place in the fall of 2015, will replace bushes removed two years ago on a triangular section of land located along Church Street. These older bushes were over ten feet in height, were out of scale for the site, and obscured an architecturally significant window. The new plantings will include rhododendrons and hollies. Future phases will address plantings along the front of the building and additional bushes along Church Street. The Society is grateful to Robyn Garth, Laurie Rabe, and Mary Ellen Browne for their landscaping advice and assistance with preparing this grant application.

LOCAL HISTORICAL SOCIETIES AVAILABLE TO HELP WITH FAMILY RESEARCH

The land grant to establish Dedham in 1636 was comprised of some 200 square miles. Eventually sixteen communities (including Dedham) were created including: Bellingham, Dover, Franklin, Medfield, Medway, Millis, Natick, Needham, Norfolk, Norwood, Plainville, Walpole, Wellesley, Westwood, and Wrentham. Early settlers moved among these areas searching for land and business opportunities and this often presents a challenge for anyone tracing their family history. The DHS is fortunate to have a part-time paid librarian/archivist, Sandra Waxman, and several dedicated volunteers who answer approximately 300 questions each year related to family and local history. However, there is a limit as to what information resides in the Society archives.

If you are tracing your family history, and know (or even suspect) that they moved to any of these other communities, you might contact other local historical organizations for information. Over the next few Newsletters we will provide the contact information for some of these organizations to help you get started. Please be aware that many of these organizations do not have paid staff and rely on volunteers to help with research. We start with the town of Franklin:

Franklin Historical Museum

80 West Central Street, Franklin MA 02038

Franklinhistoricalmuseum.org

Open: Thursday 5-8pm; Saturday 10am – 1pm; Sunday 1pm-4pm

NEWS FROM THE ARCHIVES -

WHERE AND WHAT WAS TEMPERANCE HALL?

The building commonly known as Temperance Hall was originally the first court house in Norfolk County. Completed in 1796 the court house was built on land granted to the county by First Church near the corner of Court and High Streets (on the common in front of the current Unitarian Church). The plan was designed by Charles Bullfinch of Boston and built by Samuel and Isaac Doggett. It was a colonial style with shingling on the outside and a cupola which housed a bell forged by Paul Revere. Nathaniel Ames writes in his diary on May 15, 1795 "Lent S. Doggett 1 Bunch Shingles to finish the Ct. House." On May 17, 1795 Nat Davis sent a note of Sessions to "furnish a Plan of a Turret for Court house, who bro't word that Mr. Bullfinch will attend to it & write me."

The first session of the court was planned for August 16, 1795 and judicial proceedings continued to take place in the wooden structure until a new stone courthouse was constructed in 1827. The wooden building was purchased at public auction by Erastus Worthington and Harris Monroe who moved it across the street several buildings away from the corner of Court and Church Streets. At some point the cupola was either lost or removed, possibly during the move, and the Paul Revere bell was given to the Dedham Historical Society where it still resides.

Worthington and Harris sold the building in 1845 to the Temperance Association. This local group, formed around 1845, was part of a national movement to preach against "the evils of demon rum." The Temperance Association rented the hall to a variety of groups as well as for presentations. Two of the more notable speakers were Abraham Lincoln in 1848 who was a congressman from Illinois at the time and "Father Matthew" a well-known Irish advocate of temperance who spoke in 1849.

Around 1850 the Hall was bought by George Alden who opened a store in the building. It later passed into the hands of the heirs of the late Horace E. Browne, of New York City, who owned the building until it was destroyed by fire. On April 20, 1891 a fire broke out in the stable of Amory Fisher on Court Street and it spread quickly to neighboring Temperance Hall and a tenement house. All three buildings were destroyed; six horses were saved from the stable and another six perished.

Even though the Temperance Association owned the building for only a short period of time, the name continued to be used for many years.



View from Church Street. Temperance Hall is the blackened structure on the right and the tenement house is on the left.

SOCIETY RECEIVES COLLECTION OF WATERCOLORS ASSOCIATED WITH SKINNER ESTATE

The DHS has received 46 watercolors that were part of the Estate of Francis J. Skinner. In 1906 as a wedding gift to his bride Sarah Carr, Skinner replaced his house on Lowder Street, known as Federal Hill Farm, with a new grand country manor house designed by architect Guy Lowell. Skinner died in 1914 and Sarah re-married to Charles Shea in 1925. The couple lived in Dedham until his death in 1954. Sarah had no children, and upon her death the executor sold the estate to the Catholic Church. It is the current location of Ursuline Academy.

The watercolors are thought to be the work of a member of the family while on a European grand tour. Hand written notations on some of the watercolors provide a sample of their travels including: Algeria, Thebes, Portugal, Italy, Lebanon, and England. Many of the watercolors are stamped on the back "Francis J. Skinner Estate."

The watercolors are a gift of Thomas Walter Brahms who inherited them through his grandfa-

ther, Thomas Walter Rowe Robinson. Robinson was the steward of the Skinner estate and received them as a gift from the family.

The scene below is titled "Kuttub Minan Delhi."



***OPEN SATURDAYS: The DHS Museum, Gift Shop, and Library/Archives are open
on even dated Saturdays from 1pm – 4pm.***

***This newsletter is a benefit of DHS membership. For membership information call 781-326-1385 or visit
www.dedhamhistorical.org***

WELCOME OUR NEW MEMBERS

Barbara Berry
Gabrielle Costantino
Nancy England
Gavin & Whitney Fitts
Gary Gregory
John & Kim Koger
Darcy A. Lane

PLEASE THANK OUR CORPORATE SUPPORTERS

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