

NEWS-LETTER

DEDHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

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Tel: 781-326-1385 – E-Mail: Society@DedhamHistorical.org – Web Site: www.DedhamHistorical.org

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

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

MARCH 2016

LECTURE SERIES CONTINUES WITH PRESENTATION ON UNIQUE CONSTRUCTION OF HARVARD STADIUM

On Thursday, March 31, Alicia Svenson, Senior Architectural Conservator with Building Conservation Associates, Inc. will present *Building Harvard Stadium: Early Concrete Design and Construction*. Built in 1903, Harvard Stadium was the first collegiate athletic stadium built in the United States, and it pioneered the use of reinforced concrete in the construction of large structures. Because of its early importance in these areas, and its influence on the design of later stadiums, it was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1987.

The series will close on April 21 with the Annual Meeting and the Ben Fisher Memorial Lecture featuring Arlyen A. Levee, landscape historian and preservation consultant. Levee will discuss *Frederick Law Olmsted and the Dedham Connection*.

All lectures begin at 7:30 p.m. at the Dedham Historical Society & Museum auditorium. Admission: DHS members free; \$5 for non-members. The 2015-16 lecture series is sponsored by David G. Newsom.

ANNUAL WINE EVENT A BIG SUCCESS!

A lull in winter weather brought out one hundred members and friends to the DHS annual wine event. Wonderful wines provided by Fine Estates from Spain, tasty hor d'oeuvres by the Worthington Committee, and great conversation by our guests kept the evening fun and interesting. Guests to the event were the first to view the new exhibit, *Historic Gardens in Dedham*. Our sincere thanks to everyone who supported this event.



A HISTORY OF *ROCKWELD*★THE MIT ENDICOTT HOUSE

This historic property has a prominent place in the new exhibit “Historic Gardens in Dedham.”

The story of the estate is so interesting that we wanted to share more of it with you.

Stephen Minot Weld, Jr., a wealthy cotton broker and former Civil War general, began designing the vast gardens at his estate on Haven Street during the 1880s. Today, Weld’s landscape is nationally known as an early and particularly fine example of the naturalistic style of landscape architecture.

Weld (1842-1920) called his estate *Rockweld*. When Henry Wendell Endicott bought the property in 1931, he renamed it *Rockwood*. Upon Endicott’s death in 1954, the estate passed to MIT and is today known as the *MIT Endicott House*.

As the name indicates, *Rockweld* contained a varied topography with rock outcroppings, a glacial bowl and steep hills. Weld took full advantage of this terrain as he created a series of ponds, waterfalls, open vistas and winding forest paths. His rock garden was described in 1884 as “the first great rock garden in North America.”

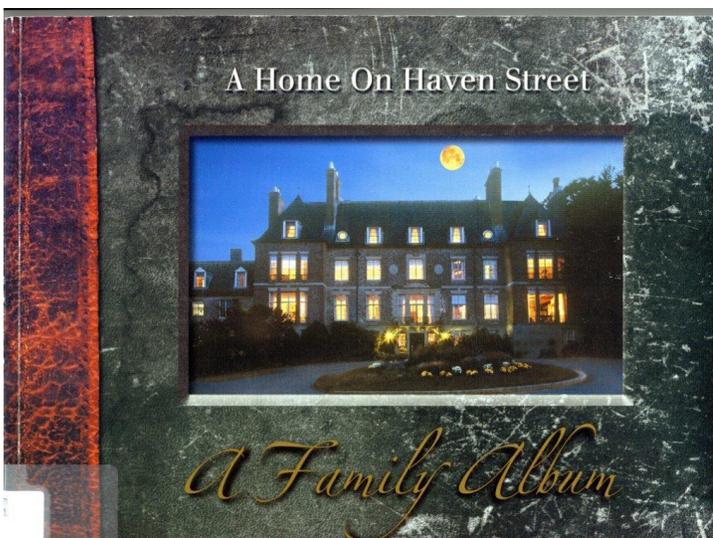
Weld favored mass plantings, especially of the azaleas and rhododendrons that he imported from southern states by the trainload. By the 1920s, *Rockweld* was described as a lush, mature garden containing an estimated 500 varieties of plants. It took eight gardeners and several greenhouses to keep everything in top condition. Weld loved flowers even as a young soldier in the Civil War. His letters home describe plants he noticed, and once he sent his sister a hyacinth bulb he’d dug near an encampment.

Weld hired the famed landscape firm of Frederick Law Olmsted to advise him on the site for his house and nearby gardens, but most of the landscaping was Weld’s own. The current steep, winding approach to the main house was an Olmsted design.

After Weld’s death, family members kept the estate until it was sold to Endicott (1880-1954). An industrialist, he grew up at the Endicott Estate on East Street, now owned by the Town of Dedham. Endicott made changes to *Rockweld*, most notably razing the Weld house to make way for the larger stone mansion that stands today, but he had a deep fondness for the naturalistic setting and retained much of the Weld landscaping. Endicott shared Weld’s love of spring-blooming trees and flowers, and was especially fond of daffodils. He opened his gardens to the public one Sunday each spring.

Following Endicott’s death, MIT opened the mansion as a conference center and retreat. The tradition of extensive gardens and respect for the landscape continues.

In a 2003 report on the MIT property, landscape historian Elizabeth Hope Cushing writes, “This is the story of a manmade space that has lasted, altered but unbroken, for over one hundred years, entering the twenty-first century with the potential to be the magical landscape of General Stephen M. Weld’s initial creation.”



The DHS Library/Archives has a copy of *A Home on Haven Street A Family Album* by Christopher M. Nahil and Joseph C. Nahil. Copyright 2006 Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

FINAL LIST OF 2015 ANNUAL APPEAL CONTRIBUTORS

Our sincere thanks to all who helped us meet our financial obligations for the year 2015. We couldn't have done it without you! It is important to note that many other individuals and organizations have made significant contributions throughout the year to specific projects of the Society. They have been gratefully acknowledged at the time of the gift. This listing completes all donations since our last newsletter through **December 31, 2015**. Please be sure to contact us if there are any errors.

(IMO = In Memory Of, IHO = In Honor Of)

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Peter & Camille Zahka & Family

LOCAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE MONTH

In the last several editions we have been listing local organizations to help you trace your family history. We continue our list with the town of Natick:

Natick Historical Society

58 Eliot Street

Natick, MA 01760

Natickhistoricalsociety.org

508-647-4841

Tuesday 4–8pm; Wednesday 10am–2pm; Saturday 10am–1pm, and by appointment

Admission is free but donations are appreciated.

The collection includes artifacts and personal and family records pertaining to Natick.



MEMBERSHIP UPDATE



Approximately half of our DHS members renewed their dues in the month of January. We appreciate your prompt response to our membership dues reminder. **THANK YOU!**

Have you ever wondered who our members are? The DHS membership list includes over 500 individuals and families from twenty-five states. Dedham residents comprise 68% of our active members, with the remaining 32% living outside of Dedham or out-of-state. Many of our members grew up in Dedham but later moved to nearby communities such as Norwood, Westwood, Needham, and Hyde Park. Traveling outside of Massachusetts, you will find DHS members in California and New Hampshire (six members in each state) followed by Florida, New York, and Virginia. Our member in Hawaii wins the prize for living the farthest from Dedham.

We also have eleven corporate/business members who support us at a higher financial level. They are listed in each newsletter, and we ask you to thank them for their support. Our membership rolls also include forty-eight active life-time members who have joined at the \$750 level to show their support. Finally, we also have 700 followers on our Facebook page for a total of over 1,200 people who are interested in Dedham history!

Your member benefits include free admission to the museum and archives, free or reduced admission to our lecture series and other programs, invitations to members' only events, and a 10% discount in our museum shop. As a way of supporting our work, we encourage you to invite friends and family to join the Society and help us grow. Contact the office for information regarding gift memberships.

If you have not renewed your 2016 membership, please help us avoid mailing additional notices by renewing as soon as possible. If you have questions regarding your membership, contact the office: society@dedhamhistorical.org or 781-326-1385.

OPEN SATURDAYS: The DHS Museum, Gift Shop, and Library/Archives are open on the following Saturdays from 1 pm – 4 pm: March 12 & 26 and April 2, 16, & 30.

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

WELCOME OUR NEW MEMBERS
We have no new members since our last newsletter-encourage your friends and neighbors to join the DHS and help us grow!

PLEASE THANK OUR CORPORATE SUPPORTERS

- Bay State Federal Savings
- Charitable Foundation
- Dedham Institution for Savings
- F. M. Walley Insurance Agency
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- MIT Endicott House
- Needham Bank
- Norfolk & Dedham Group
- Roscia's Plumbing & Heating
- Total Image Day Spa
- Vogt Realty Group

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