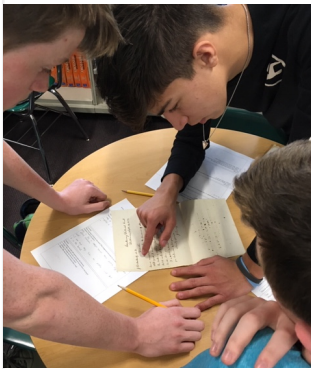


Summer 2019

Mendon Historical Society Newsletter

Civil War Artifacts Inspire Students at Nipmuc Regional High School



In May 2019 Nipmuc Regional High School students had the opportunity to analyze and investigate authentic Civil War artifacts and letters provided by the Mendon Historical Society. Examining artifacts gave the students an opportunity to better imagine and understand how difficult the war was for the ordinary citizens of this community during this tragic time in US history. As part of their studies students were asked to recreate or reimagine this difficult time though letters of their own depicting the horrors of war as they wrote home to their “families” of Mendon and Upton. This program was part of the Community Partnership Project supported by Nipmuc Regional High School. The Society was pleased to have the opportunity to work with History Teacher Brian Maloney on this project and we look forward to future projects.



DISCOVERIES AT THE MUSEUM

The move to our new museum has resulted in exciting discoveries, some of which came to our attention during the process of packing for the move. So far, the discoveries include the original records from the Mendon Bank owned by Seth Hastings, town reports from the late 1600s and early to mid 1700s, three letters from Civil War soldiers, two of which were written to William Metcalf the original owner of the house in which the Museum is now located and several handwritten notebooks by Dr. John Metcalf including the physical exams he did on young men enlisting in the Civil War.

Discovered in a Hastings file folder were several land deeds, the earliest 1737, and two hand drawn plot plans, one for Seth Hastings' house on the corner of Route 16 and North Avenue (1792), the other surveyed in 1799, labeled Plan of Post place (so called) Both plans were drawn by Andrew Peters Sawyer, surveyor. These hand-written early documents will be scheduled for restoration and it is our hope to display them in the future.

Presidents Message

As the fall months move quickly upon us our fundraising programs will be in full swing. September and October will keep the Society busy with the Annual Members Meeting September 16, 2019 and the Apple Pie Fundraiser at the Mendon Country Fair on October 12th. We will wrap up the year by hosting a Halloween Festival at Memorial Ball Field on October 26th.

As always we appreciate the volunteers who help to keep our organization moving. Now more than ever we are in need of help to make these fundraising events a success. There are many ways you can help so we hope you will consider donating some of your time and talent.

UPCOMING PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

OCTOBER 3-4, 2019

The Society has been invited to set up a display at the Daniels Farmstead Revolutionary War Reenactment celebrating the 250th Anniversary of the Revolutionary War.

OCTOBER 12, 2019

The Society will be selling homemade apple pies at the Lion's Club Country Fair. Members Susan Ober, Ruth Cassinelli and Arlene Reed are organizing the event.

OCTOBER 26, 2019

Planning is underway for the Halloween Festival to be held at Memorial Park. This is a major fundraising effort and the Society is asking members and friends to volunteer via email or phone.

NOVEMBER 2019

There will be a special Veterans Exhibit in November. The Society is asking for donations of artifacts and letters relating to local servicemen and women either for the time of the exhibit or for the permanent collection.

In 2020 the Historical Society will host speaker Brad Green from Colonial Restorations. The society will also join in to help celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Unitarian Church and we are looking forward to the next installment of the Mendon History Series presented by John Trainor and Richard Grady.

ANNUAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETING MONDAY SEPT. 16TH AT 7PM MENDON SENIOR CENTER ELECTION OF OFFICERS

We hope that you will consider running for a position on our board for 2020. It is beneficial to the Society to have new energy and ideas to guide us and we have several vacancies we hope to fill at our upcoming meeting. Those include President and Vice President.

PIE MAKERS NEEDED

October 10-12

The Society will be selling homemade apple pies again at the Lion's Club Country Fair and we are looking for volunteers. We will be preparing crusts on Thursday October 10th at 9am at 15 Hastings Street. Friday October 11th we will be peeling, assembling and baking at the Unitarian Church starting at 9am. Saturday October 12th transport and sell pies. Call us at 508-488-9620 if you can donate a few hours – Thanks!

Theater Group Vacations

Mendon 1856

-Richard Grady-



Have you ever wondered about the stage in the Mendon Town Hall? It was not part of the original building design. Here Richard Grady shares a glimpse of Mendon life in the summer of 1856 and how the stage came to be.

James Cunnabell's invitation to his cousins to spend some vacation time in Mendon in the summer of 1856 seemed like a great idea. George Cunnabell Howard, his family, and a few friends were performers in a Boston based theater group, and they welcomed the opportunity to spend some quiet time in the countryside to visit with their colorful relative, who lived at 7 Maple Street. James was well known for his outgoing personality and sense of humor, so it was no surprise when he began to tease his houseguests about their line of work. His teasing continued, and after a while, it became evident that he wanted the members of the group to put on a play in the Town Hall to give Mendon people a sampling of their work. Surely, the theatrical cousins had to wonder if the summer of 1856 would be as relaxing as promised. George agreed to "give a show," so the group built a stage and painted scenery in the upper Town Hall. James invited his family and friends to an evening of entertainment.

The performance that evening was quite memorable. The "show" was Uncle Tom's Cabin based on the controversial book by Harriet Beecher Stowe. George Howard's theatrical group had recently performed the play to 326 sold out audiences at the National Theater in New York City, and most recently to many sold out audiences at the Boston Museum Stock Company. Superb professional actors treated the locals to a first class play. The book and the play focused on the issue of slavery, the divisive theme of the 1850's. Mrs. Stowe was originally against the idea of allowing the dramatization of her book, but after watching Howard's play; she was pleased that her powerful message was being spread about the evils of slavery. The stage production had become a tool of enlightenment. Howard's production of Uncle Tom's Cabin filled capacity seating in city theaters throughout the Northeast, but on a summer evening in 1856, in the Mendon Town Hall, James Cunnabell's family and friends enjoyed a stage presentation that awoke the nation's conscience.

Donations

The Historical Society would like to thank the following individuals for their generous donations to the Museum Collection

- Alfred Gibson - Pins from the 300th Anniversary, Daughters of the Pioneers, Bi Centennial and Shaving Permit, a Wooden Nickel, Brothers of the Brush Tie, a United Steel Workers Pin and a Representative Moore Campaign Pin.
- Joe and Arlene Reed - Deerfoot: The Aristocrat of Farms book written by Paul Doucette.
- Sisters Debbie Moreau and Trudy LeClaire - Clothing, assorted pins from Mendon events and 4 Silver 300th Anniversary pins. Artifacts belonging to their father Lionel LeClaire including a WWII Gas Mask, Ammunition Bandolier, So Sew Sewing Kit and his Brothers of the Brush mementos.
- Alan Tetreault - A 1921 letter from C.P. Dickinson to Thomas Gray found in the Town Hall Parking lot.
- Patrice Doucette - Southwick Zoo souvenir spoon

Remembering Our Friends

The Mendon Historical Society would like to acknowledge those in our community who are no longer with us. As many of you know, Geneva Dudley, Daniel Barnes, Jessie Deacon and Elaine Malloy gave so much of their time and talent to our Mendon, Blackstone and Hopedale communities. They were great supporters of the society and shared their experiences and stories for all of us to enjoy. We will miss you all.



Deborah Sampson Presentation

In March 2019 Lady J of Historical Portrayals visited the Unitarian Church in Mendon to share the story of Massachusetts native Deborah Sampson titled Farm Girl on the Front Lines. Deborah is regarded as a pioneer and heroine who risked everything to follow her passion to become a soldier in the Continental Army in order to fight for her country.

Lady J took the captive audience on a journey following this poor farm girl from orphan to servant to her eventual 17-month enlistment under the name of Robert Shirtliff in the Light Infantry of the 4th Massachusetts Regiment. Deborah successfully remained in disguise until 1782 when she became ill and needed medical attention. She was honorably discharged in 1783.



Mencucci Presentation

In April 2019 Betty and Carlo Mencucci, members of the Association of Gravestone Conservators and the Burrillville Historical Society presented a slide show and Q&A to members of the Mendon Historical Society and community.

Betty and Carlo have dedicated their time to preserving the history of their community through preservation of cemeteries in Burrillville Rhode Island and beyond. What started as a hobby turned quickly to a passion and today the couple has led the charge to teach proper restoration techniques to surrounding communities.

Like many other towns Mendon houses 17 Cemeteries. The condition of these cemeteries varies. The Historical Society and Commission have worked together to update our inventory and access funding for restoration. The first restoration was completed at Old Cemetery in 2016. Betty and Carlo provide guidance to towns who wish to inventory their old cemeteries and work towards restoration.

The Society would like to thank Betty and Carlo for coming out to share their knowledge and expertise.

The Mendon Historical Society Mission Statement

Mission Statement:

The Mendon Historical Society was established in 1896. Under the direction of Marcus Aldrich a group of 150 people assembled on an overcast and snowy day at the Mendon Town Hall. Representatives from the Town of Mendon, Uxbridge, Upton, Hopedale, Milford, Blackstone, Bellingham and Northbridge voted to accept the Historical Society Constitution presented on this day.

Since it's inception 123 years ago, the Mendon Historical Society has worked to collect and preserve artifacts and documents that tell story of our community and of the people who helped build and shape our town.

The Society provides free historical research and genealogical assistance to family members both in town and beyond.

We have operated independently on donations and a small trust. With those funds we continue to host informational and historical programs that are open to the public and free of charge.

Mendon Historical Society

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Email: Mendonhistoricalsociety@gmail.com

Facebook: Mendon Historical Society @ Mendon History

OFFICERS

President: Kathy Schofield

Vice Presidents: Jane Lowell and Amy DeWitt

Secretary: Ruth Cassinelli

Collection Administrators: Lisa Lepore and Patrice Doucette

Treasurer: Rich Schofield

SUMMER MUSEUM HOURS CONTINUE

Tuesdays 11am-2pm. We will be closed on Sundays until October. The museum is also open by appointment. Please call if you would like to arrange a visit at 508-488-9620

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Mendon, MA 01756