



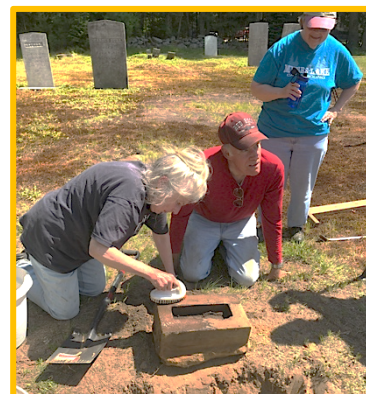
# Mendon Historical Society Newsletter

## Gravestone Restoration Workshop with Carlo and Betty Mencucci



*Andre Ribeiro and Rich Schofield assist as Betty and Carlo demonstrate the use of a tripod to lift large broken stone pieces into place.*

On any given day you most likely pass by a cemetery not giving it much thought but inside these walls are stories of the history of a community. Soldiers, community leaders, farmers, religious leaders, shopkeepers, housebuilders, victims of plagues and poverty and many more remain here forever in time. Driven by their own passion to preserve the history of these sacred sites Carlo and Betty Mencucci of Burrillville RI joined the Association for Gravestone Studies. Over the years they have learned all aspects of restoration and conservation. They also began teaching these methods to interested volunteers who share their passion in hopes of providing others with the same skills. Now in their 70's Betty and Carlo continue to work throughout New England teaching and helping communities plan and care for these sites.



*Janice Muldoon Moors and Ed Phillips work on a base as Lucinda Bellairs observes.*

On June 12<sup>th</sup> twenty-six volunteers met at the Bicknell Cemetery on Hartford Ave East in Mendon to learn about the history of the site and participate in a workshop on cemetery restoration. Organized by the Mendon Historical Commission and the Mendon Historical Society volunteers met with the Mencucci's. Participants learned everything from cleaning techniques to resetting fallen stones and repairing broken stones. The response from volunteers was extremely enthusiastic despite the rising temperatures of the afternoon.

The couple emphasized the importance of using proper methods and techniques. They have seen the use of bleach or power washing stones that, in the end, does more damage to the stones. Carlo and Betty use a special biological solvent developed here in Massachusetts that is safe for the stones and for the environment. This solvent works on contact as well as over time. As volunteers lugged water and gravel and sprayed and scrubbed the transformation of the stones began to take place. Once black and illegible, the markers began to lighten and reveal information once lost to natural elements. Emily Huber of the Mendon Historical Society has posted an article with before and after photographs and a list of Do's and Don'ts which can be found on the society website at [mendonhistoricalsociety.org](http://mendonhistoricalsociety.org).

Based on the overwhelming interest we expect to host another workshop in the spring of 2023. We hope that this interest will also help us find volunteers who would like to serve as stewards for each of our 17 cemeteries. The Historical Society is working on gathering the history of each cemetery. Building a comprehensive digital database will help with families who are doing ancestry research. It will also allow us to have photographic records of each of these sites so that we are better able to monitor the conditions of each.

For those who would like to participate please contact the Mendon Historical Commission at [historical@mendonma.gov](mailto:historical@mendonma.gov). It is important to note that not all of these cemeteries are accessible to the public and some may be on private property. Any interest in working on a project needs to go through the Historical Commission to ensure volunteers have the information and any training needed to help. Cleaning materials are available and can be signed out through the Commission.

### MENDON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

#### ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING OCTOBER 13th

As the society enters its 127<sup>th</sup> year we have been evaluating our Constitution and Bylaws first adopted in 1897. Like many other Historical Societies, we are working on our framework to better reflect our mission and goals so that we remain relevant and responsive in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. We hope that you will join us on Thursday October 13<sup>th</sup> at 7PM at the Mendon Senior Center.

#### Our Meeting Agenda

1. Welcome - 2021-2022 Year in Review
2. Financial Update
3. Vote on update to By-Laws/Constitution -Select New Annual Meeting Date
4. Elect 2022-2023 Board Members
5. Any Outstanding Business
6. Membership renewals by cash or check

## Textile Restoration

By Katy W. O'Donnell, textile conservator URI

Deemed America's national pastime, baseball has long been a part of our collective history, and items such as baseball uniforms can give insights into aspects of American life. This particular baseball uniform provides a rare look into the early years of the sport, when baseball was beginning to increase in popularity with the rise of professional leagues. Originating around the 1880s, this uniform is made of wool flannel and would have been worn with a set of underclothes, tall stockings, and a tie. The shield shaped chest placket and short pants (knickers) were typical of the uniform style that was being utilized during this time period, mimicking that worn by teams such as the Boston Red Stockings.

Arriving at the University of Rhode Island's Textile Conservation Lab in overall good condition for its age and usage. Although our modern sensibilities are drawn towards clean and new clothing, the sweat-stained cap and dirt within the seams of the pants provide evidence that the uniform was used in game play. It is easy to imagine a player standing in the outfield under the hot sun or sliding to reach the base after a fly ball. Keeping evidence of use is important to telling the story of early baseball.

While this evidence remains, the uniform needed a gentle cleaning to remove insect remnants and a few small repairs to prevent further damage from occurring. The most obvious area in need of repair was a tear along the chest placket which was stabilized with a color matched fabric. Additionally, a few seams were re sewn, and a patch was put in place to stabilize thin areas and holes near the left sleeve cuff. Interestingly, a few historic repairs were found in the sleeves, most likely mended after a game in which the player's uniform was damaged. These were documented and left in place as further evidence of its use over time.



Before and after images. The tear at the collar has been stabilized with color matched fabric.

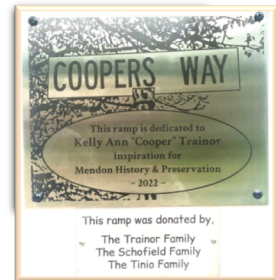
## Completion of **Coopers Way** the Museum Accessibility Deck

We are excited to announce that the Museum can now offer access to all. Thanks to the generosity of John Trainor, Lawney Tinio and Rich Schofield, anyone with mobility issues can enter the building from the rear. There is a plaque naming the access, Cooper's Way, in honor of the Trainors' daughter who would not be able to enter the Museum using the stairs. Most of you remember that John, along with Dick Grady, has presented the wonderful Power Point Presentations about Mendon's rich history.

Unfortunately, Covid interrupted our enjoyment of seeing the next episodes, ones which we are looking forward to experiencing soon. These, as well, John has dedicated in honor of Cooper.

We cannot thank Rich Schofield enough for his efforts. Not only did he contribute monetarily but he built the access, the construction of which took a significant amount of time and expertise. The result is a truly professional piece of work. Rich is on the Mendon Historical Society's Board and serves as Treasurer.

Lawney Tinio, member of Mendon's Select Board, also donated to this project. His generosity helped assure that all Mendon residents and visitors are able to view artifacts and research documents, thus bringing history to the present and into the future.



## *Reinventing the Historic House Museum* with Ken Turino of Historic New England



The Board Members met this August with consultant Ken Turino to evaluate our museum operations and provide recommendations on how to gain momentum. Ken's resume is extensive and includes work as a curator, director, producer and author. His award-winning film "Back to School: Lessons from Norwich's VT One Room Schoolhouses" has been featured on PBS. In addition, he teaches Museum Studies at Tufts University and is President of the House of Seven Gables. His most recent publication *Reinventing the Historic House Museum, New Approaches and Proven Solutions* is most fitting for our needs.

After meeting with us independently the Society invited our members and representatives from surrounding towns to join the live presentation and discussion. Mr. Turino explained that societies are moving from collecting and preserving historical documents and artifacts. Today most Historical Societies are placing a renewed emphasis on community engagement and partnerships. Shifting the focus to public benefit through educational programs and engagement is helping local history remain relevant.

Mr. Turino remarked that attendance and interest in local museums is on the rise and societies are stepping up to the challenge. Museums are achieving success by creating new experiences and social activities for visitors. With the benefit of a good location, spacious yard and facility the Mendon Historical Society has many assets to work with. Community engagement projects can raise our profile and create a more diverse audience. As we look to the future we are excited to see how we will evolve. We hope with this renewed direction we will be able to draw in more talented and enthusiastic volunteers to help us forge a new path.

## Remembrances

We extend sincere condolences to Arlene Reed and family for the passing of her husband Joe last April and her sister Rita (Paddock) this September. Arlene has been a long-time member of the Society and has served in many capacities, including President and Curator.

Rita Paddock and her husband Arthur were both active members of the society.

Arlene's sister, Norma Allard, lost her son Brian in Feb. 2021 and sister Rita (Paddock). Norma, with Ruth O'Grady, is responsible for the Mendon Cookbook which has been a significant fundraiser.

Shirley Barnes, a long-time member of the Mendon Historical Society, passed away in July of this year. She had organized a visit of the Mendon Unitarian Church Alliance to the Museum on the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Church in 2020. Unfortunately, the visit was postponed because of Covid. We are truly sorry for her family's loss.

## NEW PROJECTS ON TAP

The Society is embarking on a new project; a book of Mendon's Historic Homes. Admittedly, the idea came from a publication that the Auburn Historical Society produced.

The research involved is often simple, much of it being done when the state was involved in the process of creating an inventory of historic homes in Massachusetts (MACRIS). The accuracy of the information needs to be confirmed, however, because there have been some inaccuracies. We also want to emphasize the original owners of these homes. They are the ones who have contributed to the formation of the Town, the State and the Country.

We plan to reach out to the Mendon Upton Regional High School in hopes that some students will want to get involved. We, as well, ask Historical Society members if they are interested to contact us. It should be fun. Auburn's book was printed by Bay Path High School and we hope that Blackstone Valley Tech will be able to do the same for us.

## SPECIAL THANKS to our VOLUNTEERS!

We are lucky to have David Lowell, Larry Pearson and Rich Schofield volunteer to mow the lawn and trim unruly bushes. Their efforts have saved us a significant amount of money. Thank you!

A huge "thank you" to Lucinda Bellairs for her work toward completing the museum's inventory list. In past months, she finished working on the museum's photographs and now has taken on the daunting task of adding documents from the file cabinets to the list. Lucinda was coming weekly to work on this project but has been on "Grandmother Break" in Pittsburgh, PA. to be with her new grandchild. She plans to be returning soon. Congratulations, Lucinda!

## Historic Trolley Tours at the Rock the Block Party on September 10<sup>th</sup>



On Saturday September 10<sup>th</sup> Town Historian Richard Grady and Rich Schofield boarded a 21<sup>st</sup> century coach to host the Mendon Historic Trolley Tour program developed by John Trainor and Richard Grady.

Throughout the afternoon the coach driver escorted visitors on and off the coach to embark on a unique tour of Mendon. The Rock the Block Committee helped to organize and fund the transportation through sponsorship funds.

Four tours left Memorial Field and took passengers back in time to the town's early settlement. The program included the difficult start of the pioneers who arrived with little and were driven back to Braintree during the King Phillip War. Once the settlers returned the tour follows the Patriots of the Revolutionary War, Leaders and Political Figures in the Community, the Golden Age of Mendon, the Industrial Revolution and Lake Nipmuc Park.

Many excited trolley travelers remarked they learned so much more about their community and its rich and important history. If you were unable to attend but interested in learning more, Rich Schofield has created an interactive script based on the research and work of Richard Grady and John Trainor on the Mendon Historical Society website at [mendonhistoricalsociety.org](http://mendonhistoricalsociety.org).

## Fundraising and Volunteers in 2023

As we all reflect on the past years challenges we are most grateful to our members and supporters who helped us tow the funding line while our fundraising efforts were shut down. Admittedly we have some ground to make up in order to get back on our feet.

### Volunteers Needed:

As with any great endeavor, we are in search of volunteers and friends to assist us in our mission. If you can spare a few hours of your time please let us know and we will match your talents to our current projects.

A few hours can help with filing, scanning, Research, Digitizing Documents, Reading and Summarizing Documents and Light Housekeeping.

If interested Contact Us At: (508) 488-9620

[Mendonhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:Mendonhistoricalsociety@gmail.com)

Facebook: Mendon Historical Society @ Mendon History

## Mendon Historical Society will host its first Gingerbread House Contest

We invite you to bring your completed Gingerbread House to the Historical Society Museum at 15 Hastings Street before 12/1. Judging will take place on Saturday 12/3 at 2pm. Prizes are provided by local businesses



### PRIZE CATEGORIES:

Ages 8 and under  
Ages 9-12  
Ages 13-17  
Best Mendon Landmark  
Best Holiday Scene  
People's Choice

Come by the Historical Society Museum on 12/3 for voting, judging, and snacks!



### *Yard Sale 2022*

Thank you to all who contributed their time, energy and items to our June Yard Sale. It was a success and the funds raised have helped to offset some of our operational costs for the year.

### The Mendon Historical Society Statement of Intent

The first public meeting of the Mendon Historical Society was held on Tuesday, February 18, 1896 at the Mendon Town Hall. Its' purpose has been to:

- Encourage and promote historical research
- Preserve for future generations, documents and artifacts pertaining to Mendon and those towns which were once a part of Mendon
- To display these documents and artifacts in our museum
- To tell the stories about the displays

The Society continues to provide 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 when possible, free of charge.

### **Mendon Historical Society**

PO Box 196  
15 Hastings Street  
Mendon MA 01756  
(508) 488-9620

Website: [www.mendonhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.mendonhistoricalsociety.org)

Email: [Mendonhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:Mendonhistoricalsociety@gmail.com)

Facebook: Mendon Historical Society @ Mendon History

#### OFFICERS

President: Joe Bibeault

Vice Presidents: Ruth O'Grady and Kathy Schofield

Secretary: Ruth Cassinelli

Web Designer: Emily Huber

Collection Administrative Assistant: Open

Treasurer: Rich Schofield

#### **MUSEUM HOURS and PROGRAMS:**

Please call if you would like to arrange a visit at 508-488-9620. We are preparing to set up regular hours and will discuss this at the members meeting on **October 13th** along with upcoming programs. Stay tuned!

## Mendon Historical Society

15 Hastings Street P.O. Box 196  
Mendon, MA 01756