

DOVER TIDINGS

Holiday 2013



Volume XIII No. 3

Susanne M. Knowles
Editor

The Dover Historical Society, P.O. Box 534, Dover, Massachusetts 02030
www.doverhistoricalsociety.org

Come One! Come All!
To the Society's Annual Holiday Party
Sunday, December 8th from 2 to 4 p.m.

At the Caryl House,
festively decked out for the occasion.

Find joy in the fellowship of friends
and in the magic of music and carols.

Goodies to Eat and Drink.



The President's Letter



In this segment of our continuing look at Dover's oldest surviving homes, we shall consider the Nathaniel Chickering House at 85 Walpole Street. Local historian Frank Smith tells us that this house was built in 1781, however, a study by the Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory indicates that the actual construction date may have been closer to 1786.

Nathaniel Chickering was born in Dover (then the Springfield Parish of Dedham) on March 29, 1750 to Daniel Chickering and Kezia Ellis. On September 17, 1781 he was married to Esther Dewing and Smith probably utilized this marriage as the basis for dating the house. Nathaniel and Esther had 11 children, of whom only four survived to adulthood. Four of their children were lost to dysentery within a 16 day period in October of 1800. Smith notes that Nathaniel Chickering was a civil engineer and a veteran of the Revolutionary War, serving with Captain Ebenezer Battelle's Company of Springfield Minute Men at the Battle of Lexington and at Fort Ticonderoga. In addition, Nathaniel (whose farm encompassed the headwaters of Noanet Brook) held ownership interests in both the Dover Union Iron Company and a nail factory on Mill Brook in Medfield. Nathaniel died on February 5, 1837 and Esther on January 27, 1845.

With the death of Nathaniel Chickering, the property passed to his son, Deacon Daniel Chickering. Daniel was born on August 13, 1787. On November 23, 1810 he married as his first wife Caroline Clark, daughter of John and Silence Clark of Sherborn. Caroline died in 1817 and in April of 1819 he married as his second wife Orpha Burbank of Medfield. In his history of the Dover Union Iron Mill, the late Dick Vara writes that Daniel Chickering “played a prominent part in establishing the iron mill and had much to do with its equipment which, for those days was considered the very best. He was an inventive genius, the inventor of mud shoes, a machine for cutting and heading nails at the same time and a self-loading and unloading cart.” He was also a Deacon in the Evangelical Congregational Church. He died on January 17, 1872 and his wife on October 5, 1885.

With Daniel Chickering’s death in 1872, the property passed to his son James Chickering, born in Medfield in 1821. On May 7, 1844 James married Phoebe Ann Thompson, of Wales, MA. James Chickering was a Selectman and, like his father, a deacon in the Evangelical Congregational Church. He outlived his father by only a few years, dying October 20, 1875. His wife died on January 26, 1905.

On February 14, 1901 the heirs of James Chickering sold the farm, then encompassing 75 acres, to Mary Ziolkowski, widow of Joseph Ziolkowski. In all probability the Ziolkowski family had been renting the property from the Chickering family since the early 1880’s. In 1920 Joseph’s son Joseph Francis Ziolkowski took the name Joseph Ziolkowski Francis. His daughter Ruth Francis married Paul Fryer and the property was for many years the site of the Dover Water Company. We note that the property is currently being offered for sale and that the buyer will be only the third family to own the house since it was built.

Elisha F. Lee

The Caryl House

We had an exciting time on Old Home Day, October 8th, 2013 at the Caryl House when Barbara Provost did a weaving demonstration on the restored loom found at the Caryl House. The loom had been restored a few years ago by Barbara and her husband. We thank her for that as well as the educational presentation showing us how all the pulleys and mechanical parts work together without electrical power.

Currently being produced on the loom is a blue and white cotton cover for the kitchen bench. Table runners and place mats can also be made. Cloth is produced by threading fiber threads through the loom. Wool, cotton, or linen fibers from flax can be used; basically whatever grew

best in the local region. Early settlements of the colony were encouraged to grow flax for linen so as to become more self-sufficient and to avoid paying England's Stamp Tax. The task of producing fiber threads from the flax is an arduous one requiring prolonged soaking of the grain and intense milling and grinding.

This is the time of year the 18th century farmers of Dover would harvest the grains, hay, potatoes, carrots, squash and other goods/supplies to be placed in their barns and cold cellars, allowing them to survive the cold winter.

To get all the harvests in before the winter snows required all the farmers working together. This developed reliance on self and others within the community; good qualities that are still exhibited by the citizens of Dover. One sees this demonstrated by the school children and scouts helping our seniors with their lawns and leaves and at the several CSA farms as they bring in their produce for the winter.

The quality of helping each other has been passed down through the generations in Dover as demonstrated by the many contributions of the docents and volunteers of the Caryl House and the Historical Society.

Recently the Caryl House and Dover Historical Society lost a valuable person who clearly exhibited this quality when Bob Smith passed away. Bob, the caretaker for the Caryl House for 15 years, was a quiet, reserved gentleman who took his civic duty and responsibility seriously. He and his many contributions to the Caryl House and the Town of Dover are truly missed.

As you prepare for the approaching fall and winter, think about the citizens of the 1700's, the history of Dover, and how important it is to be part of this community.

Janet Comiskey-Giannini
Curator, The Caryl House

Sickle and Scythe

While the sickle goes back to the prehistoric origins of agriculture, the scythe appeared about 2500 years ago in the Middle East, and was in common use in Europe by the 1100s. The Romans knew it well before that, and Saturn is often depicted with a scythe. Father Time, the Old Year, and the Grim Reaper are probably descendants of this ancient motif. We, also, see the scythe in the astrological symbol for Saturn ♄. Kronos/Saturn used the sickle to overthrow his father, Uranus, and in doing so, established the plain of the ecliptic and modern measure of time (a somewhat free interpretation of the myth). The tool has a

vocabulary worthy of a crossword puzzle or Jeopardy category. The two ends of the blade are the toe and heel, situated at either end of the chine (an archaic word meaning backbone). The heel is attached to the snath (the long wooden pole) by means of the tang. The two grips attached to the snath are used to wield the scythe. The scythe in the Fisher Barn is a recent mass-produced version.



Given time and patience, you and your serfs can create a lovely manor-style lawn by scything. As one British gardener put it, plant good grassseed, mow, water, and roll once a week – for 500 years. For a good demonstration of technique, look for “Eastern Counties Scything Competition” on YouTube.

The elder brother of the scythe is the sickle, a tool from remote antiquity. The earliest examples, from the Middle East, consist of lapped flints embedded in antler or other curved bone. These were very sharp but did not provide a continuous curved edge, so the reaping technique was more a sawing action than a cutting one. This was still a tremendous advance, and along with the grinding stone, spurred the development of agriculture and later settlement of towns. With the Bronze Age (about 3000 BCE), the sickle started to reach its modern form.

We’re not doing a lot of hand harvesting in the United States these days, but the symbolic overtones of the scythe (Death) and sickle (the hammer-and-sickle flag of the Soviet Union) are still with us. And it may be noted that JRR Tolkien identified the Big Dipper with the Sickle of the Valar, set in the heavens as a warning to Morgoth, the Great Enemy.

Richard White

Curator, The Fisher Barn

Sawin Museum

Thanks for your support on Old Home Day!

Old Home Day returned again this year after a hiatus and we are very pleased at the amount of support we had, especially at the Sawin Museum. The Sawin Café was reopened for this special event, and we held the Historic Bake Sale again this year, serving coffee, tea, cold drinks, and snacks, along with selling our baked goods. While providing a respite location from the rather unpleasant weather, and despite nature’s attempt to undermine the day, we did very well. Thank you!

We just finished our annual marathon Chickering School visits last month. Over two days, Sawin hosted rotating groups of third graders, who alternate between the basement Scavenger Hunt (always a big hit!) and a speedy review of Dover's historical involvement and how it interfaces with history as learned by the students their classes. Students, also, visited The Caryl House. They were great! Questions abounded and, hopefully, they left with a budding appreciation for the beautiful town in which we live. We look forward to the next group in 2014!

The news at Sawin this season is that there is a Landscaping Committee working to come up with a plan, to be implemented over time, in order to address landscaping issues on our lovely wooded lot. We would like to see several improvements, and so, if you pass by and see related activities occurring, you can be assured that this is a long term plan to address improvements in our hilltop environs. If you would like to volunteer your time and energies for any landscaping assistance, please feel free to contact us, as we always welcome help in our efforts to improve our programs and properties.

As always, we encourage all Dover students to consider us as a possibility for their Community Hours. We have multiple projects available and will work with you if you have a specific idea, to see if it can be incorporated into our plans and needs.

Sawin Museum will be closing after Thanksgiving for the winter break. Whether you haven't been in this season, or even if you have, and are interested in some particular subject matter, have a specific research project, or just want to learn about Dover's history, we look forward to seeing you in the Spring! We will be re-opening Sawin Museum again in April. We will have some of the same exhibits, and, will be working on some new exhibits as well.

Fay Bacher
Curator, The Sawin Museum

Spotlight on Volunteers

Your positive response to this column in the Fall Tidings has encouraged me to share additional volunteer stories.

"In my day, women volunteered." Moving to Dover in 1953, Ellen Little was a consummate volunteer – in the city. About 20 years ago, she decided to spend some of her time locally and the Dover Historical Society was the lucky beneficiary.

In those days, Pat Hilpert was leading an intrepid group in cataloguing artifacts at the Sawin Museum and the Caryl House. She taught the intricacies of a numbering system which meets museum standards.

Ellen shared her vast knowledge of antiques and how to live with them. She was a fearless cleaner, yet always respectful of the needs of the treasure. Her attention to detail helped us make the Caryl House look lived in and cared for. While continuing to be an active docent, she served on the Board for many years as head of volunteers and Co-Curator, with Dorothy Boylan, of the Caryl House. Although now retired, she hopes young parents will take advantage of the many ways to learn about and support our local history.

When Sara Jo Marble moved to Dover in 1968, a Chickering School field trip took one of her children to the Caryl House. He was so delighted by the visit that he brought his entire family to the House to share what he had learned. Always interested in history and then living in an historic house, Sara Jo began her lengthy tenure as a docent. "Sometimes it was quiet and then a family would come in. I always came away feeling good and as if my time spent was worthwhile."

Ralph Day, a Deacon in the Reverend Benjamin Caryl's church, built Sara Jo's Dedham Street house as well as the Caryl House and others in Town. SaraJo shared her Ralph Day research, which enlarged our knowledge of his work. A collector of antiques and reproductions, she shared her tin kitchen for several Holiday Open Houses. The aroma of chicken roasting on the spit filled the House with cheer.

More recently, as part of the 250th Anniversary of the Dover Church, she has been cataloguing the historical collection at the Dover Church where Benjamin served as the first minister. She coordinated the loan from the Sawin Museum of Ralph Sanger's pulpit chair, paintings, and a communion service, serving the interests of the Church and the Society. The Society welcomes such collaborations.

Priscilla Pitt Jones

Books make excellent gifts.

Dick Vara's *Dover Days Gone By* is available at the Dover Market (on the magazine rack) for \$25 or from Pam Kunkemueller (508-785-0567). She has hard cover copies for a donation of \$100. Steve Marini's *The Religious World of Benjamin Caryl 111* may be obtained from Priscilla Jones (508-785-0236) for \$15. Money from this book's sale is shared with the Dover Historical Commission. Both books are available on our web site and at the Holiday Open House.

Mark Your Calendar

Sunday, December 8, 2013 from 2 to 4 PM Holiday Open House
At the Caryl House, 107 Dedham St. Please join us for a celebration of the holiday season. Enjoy festive decorations and seasonal music. Period refreshments will be served.

Saturday, January 11, 2014 at 11 AM Gropius House Tour
At the Gropius House, in Lincoln, MA. Guided one hour tour of this National Historic Landmark built by Walter Gropius, one of the most influential architects of the 20th century. Price \$10.00 per person payable at the door. Lunch following at AKA Bistro in Lincoln at 12:30pm. RSVP to Clare Burke at 508 785 -1357 or clareburke@comcast.net

Wednesday, February 26, 2014 at 7:30 PM. History of the George Fairbanks Stone House.
At the Dover Library, Lower Level. Paul LaCroix, President of the Millis Historical Society, will speak on the *History of the George Fairbanks Stone House at Bogastowe Farms*. Refreshments will be served.

Wednesday, March 26, 2014 at 7:30 PM. Annual Meeting
Location to be announced. Brian Donahue, Associate Professor of American Environmental Studies at Brandeis University, will speak on *Wildlife, Farms and Forest in Massachusetts: Living in a Changing Landscape*. Refreshments will be served.

Wednesday, April 30, 2014 at 7:30 PM. Daylilies of Elm Bank
At the Dover Library, Lower Level. Barbara Provest, master gardener and manger of the Daylilies Garden at Elm Bank which has 750 daylily varieties, will present a slideshow and talk on *The Daylilies of Elm Bank*. Refreshments will be served.

Sunday, June 8, 2014 from 2:00 to 4:00 PM Caryl House Garden Party

Fourth Annual Preservation Award

Help us promote awareness of the Town's historic houses. Nominate a house you admire by sending the name of the homeowner and the address by February 1, 2014 to the Dover Historical Society, Box 534 or doverhistoricalsociety.org.