

DOVER TIDINGS

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Editor

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The President's Letter

In the last edition of *Dover Tidings* I remarked upon the fun that can be had in researching the more obscure items acquired by an Historical Society in the course of 120 years. There is much that can be learned from our more significant possessions as well. The portrait shown at right is that of an early Dover resident, Ruggles Whiting. It was donated to the Society by a Mrs. Frank Willey in 1961 and hangs in the Sawin Museum. While unsigned, the portrait was attributed to the celebrated American portrait artist, Gilbert Stuart (1755-1827).



Ruggles Whiting (1779 – 1827)

Ruggles Whiting was born in Dover on December 29, 1779 to Aaron Whiting and Mehitable Smith. Aaron Whiting was the younger brother of Captain Daniel Whiting, the town's first tavern keeper and a Revolutionary War hero. A prosperous farmer and businessman in his own right, Aaron Whiting was one of the

partners who, in 1789, acquired the fourth mill privilege on Mother Brook in Dedham and established a mill for the blocking of copper coinage.

The Boston Taking List for 1800 lists Ruggles Whiting, then 21 years old, as living in Boston and employed as a clerk in the office of Jonathan Ellis, a manufacturer of paper and iron nail rods, at 41 State Street. Five years earlier, Jonathan Ellis and partners Josiah Newell, Jr., George Fisher, and George Bird, had purchased a site on the Charles River at what is known today as Charles River Village and erected a dam that would power an iron mill on the Dover side of the river and a paper mill on the Needham side. The partners were closely tied by blood, marriage, and other business ventures. Josiah Newell's sister was Jonathan Ellis' mother, and his wife was a sister of Aaron Whiting. On July 2, 1806 Jonathan Ellis sold Ruggles an undivided one third interest in the Boston Iron & Nail Factory at Charles River Village, for which he would function as Agent from 1811 to 1816. Jonathan Ellis was also closely tied to Jacob Perkins of Newburyport who, in 1790, had invented a machine reportedly capable of cutting and heading 500 nails per minute.

On August 4, 1805 Ruggles married Sarah Bullen, daughter of Elizabeth (Hartshorn) and Bela Bullen, a livestock trader and one-time owner of the Whiting-Williams Tavern. The couple took up residence at 4 Pinkney Street in Boston and had three children before Sarah's death from consumption on February 12, 1812 at 26 years of age. In 1807 Ruggles and partners John Welles and Ralph Inman Reed purchased Bird's Wire Mill on Mother Brook in Dedham. The seller, George Bird, also a partner in the Boston Iron & Nail Factory at Charles River Village, had acquired the wire mill from a partnership which included Ruggles' father Aaron.

In 1811 Ruggles and a partner, William Stackpole, established a nail mill in Pittsburgh utilizing Jacob Perkins' machine. David Thomas, who visited the city in 1816, wrote ...*the slitting and*

rolling mill, together with the nail factory of Stackpole & Whiting, is moved by a steam engine of seventy-horse power. These we visited with much satisfaction. On entering the south-west door, the eye catches the majestic swing of the beam; and at the same instant, nine nailing machines, all in rapid motion, burst into view. Bewildered by the varying velocity of so many new objects, we stand astonished at this sublime effort of human ingenuity."¹

While in Pittsburgh the two entrepreneurs purchased several steamboats at foreclosure and ultimately began building boats on their own, with the *General Jackson* and the *James Ross* completed in 1818. The nail factory failed in 1819, ostensibly due to the British government dumping excess iron on the international market in the aftermath of the War of 1812. At about this time Stackpole and Whiting removed to Louisville, Kentucky where they continued to operate their steamboats in the burgeoning Mississippi, Missouri, and Ohio River trade. While in Louisville, Ruggles also became an investor in the ill-fated Hope Distillery, essentially the first attempt to mass produce whiskey on a large scale.

Ruggles' last years in Louisville appear to have been marked by a series of personal and financial losses. The Hope Distillery had failed by 1820. Both William Stackpole and his wife died of fever in 1822 and the steamboat *General Jackson* was lost on the Cumberland River that same year. The *James Ross* was holed by ice at St. Louis a year later. At some point after 1823 Ruggles returned to Dover, where he died on February 28, 1827 at age 47. He was buried with his wife in the Reed Tomb at Trinity Church on Summer Street in Boston. Trinity Church was destroyed in the Great Boston Fire of November 9, 1872 and in December of that year their remains were re-interred in a common lot with other Trinity Church members at Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge. His will, written at the peak of his prosperity in 1816, states ...*I give and bequeath to my beloved son Lucius R. Whiting*

¹ David Thomas *Travels Through the Western Country in the Summer of 1816*, David Rumsey, Auburn, New York, 1819, p. 51.

*my library, charts, globes, my wardrobe including my watch and all wearing apparel, my chess board and best set of chess men, my portrait of myself taken by Gilbert Stuart, Esq., my portrait of Ralph I. Reed taken by the same artist before his death, and all my sporting apparatus of every kind. The will further states ...I give and bequeath to the government of the United States, my original portrait of Jacob Perkins, Esquire of Newburyport, the great mechanical inventor, taken by Gilbert Stuart, Esq. the celebrated American artist, to be placed in such part of the national buildings, in the City of Washington, as the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the United States for the time being shall order and direct.*²

The portrait thus appears to have passed from Ruggles by bequest to his only son, Lucius R. Whiting, who died without issue prior to 1839 and from Lucius to his sister Paulina Whiting Allen (1806-1895) of Medfield, grandmother of the donor, Helen Zenobia (Daniels) Willey. It is difficult to precisely date the portrait.

However we note that Ruggles' partner Ralph I. Reed died in 1812. While in no way definitive, we may speculate that the two good friends had their portraits "taken" at approximately the same time, likely around 1810 when Ruggles was 31 years old. We have been unable as yet to determine the whereabouts of the Gilbert Stuart portraits of Ralph Reed and Jacob Perkins.

Elisha Lee
President

Special Thanks!

To all the volunteers who work as docents at the Caryl House, Fisher Barn and Sawin Memorial Building on Saturday afternoons and on special occasions. Your efforts are greatly appreciated.

If you would like to become a docent, contact the appropriate Curator for specific information. It is a very rewarding experience!

² *Whiting, Ruggles, Last Will and Testament of Ruggles Whiting*, proved July 3, 1827. Massachusetts, Norfolk County Probate Records, Vol. 50, p. 587, page 3 of will.

Historic Preservation Award

The Dover Historical Society celebrates the preservation of houses and land. We are delighted to recognize Becky and Doug Gladstone's home at 46 Farm Street with the Sixth Annual Historic Preservation Award. Known as the Asa Talbot (1816-1910) house, the farm has an illustrious history. Thomas Burridge of Newton purchased land in 1759 and settled the 31 acre farm in 1765. The Burridge homestead was sold to Simeon and James Mann in 1810 and nine years later Simeon became the sole owner. His property was divided between his two sons, Leland keeping the original homestead, and Willard building a house in 1831, which in 1853 became Asa Talbot's farm. Asa, a cabinetmaker, operated a successful milk business, served as Town sexton, was elected Selectman nine times, and was a Deacon of the First Parish Church. He was the first Dover recipient of the Boston Post Cane, now on display at the Dover Library.

After purchasing the house, three barns, and the only surviving wooden silo in Town in 1999, the Gladstones have made steady progress in renovating their home situated on 2.5 acres. Initial projects included a well, and electrical and septic systems in addition to stabilizing the barn. In 2003 construction transformed the first barn and space above the stables in the second barn into living space. A year later the third barn, which was leaning against the second barn, was raised and the silo received windows and a door. The original house was renovated.



The Gladstone House, 46 Farm Street

Especially noteworthy is the extent of reuse of materials. Tongue and groove boards and bead board from the first barn were relocated. Beams from the third barn were reused as beams and repurposed as a fireplace mantle and handrails on a new stairway. One of the beams has the marking, *Dick White, Dover MA 1887*. Joists from the barn ceiling served as stair treads. Antique glass windowpanes found new life in kitchen cabinets. Wallboards became floors and floorboards were transformed into a kitchen table.

Six years ago, the stables' transformation resulted in exercise and entertainment areas. A terrace was built where the pig stall was thereby keeping a ramp to the back yard and bullpen. Landscaping continues.

For a list of prior Award recipients, please check our website, doverhistoricalsociety.org. It is a pleasure for the Historic Preservation Award Committee, consisting of Jill French, Priscilla Jones, chair, Sara Molyneaux, and Charlotte Surgenor, to consider nominations from the community each year. The Award is presented at the Society's Annual Meeting in March.

Priscilla Pitt Jones
Committee Chair

Save The Date

Sunday, June 5, 2016

**Annual Garden Party
Caryl House and Fisher Barn
107 Dedham Street**

**Period Refreshments will be served
Admission Free**

The Sawin Safe

There is a large walk-in combination safe at the Sawin Memorial Building. It was clearly installed when the Sawin was built in 1906-07 and has some beautiful brickwork forming the interior walls and ceiling. The safe door has a date of 1906 and was purchased (probably in that year) from the Morris-Ireland Safe Company of Boston. The firm was located at 64 Sudbury Street, a site now occupied by the JFK Federal Building. Morris-Ireland has been out of business for ninety years but it had a colorful history.

The Morris & Ireland Safe Company (note the ampersand) was founded in Boston in 1870 and manufactured high-quality safes and locks. Mr. Ireland (first name unknown) retired in 1890 and E. C. Morris changed the name to the Morris Safe Company and moved the factory to Readville. By late 1896, the company was failing and finally closed in December. Morris then vanished, shortly after being charged with fraud and embezzlement. His creditors seem to have been left empty handed.



The safes still had a good reputation and in 1904 a gentleman named William Andrew Luce decided to capitalize on the name. He created a completely new company, Morris-Ireland (this time with a hyphen) and set up his business on Sudbury Street. He was

also treasurer (and perhaps part owner) of the National Fireworks Company, located in the same building. If you lost the combination of your safe and couldn't crack it, I suppose Luce could provide the necessary firepower to blow it open. This new enterprise did not manufacture their own safes, but merely distributed those built by other companies, with the Morris - Ireland name inscribed. The Dover Historical owns one of these. Its actual maker is unknown, but it's a fine specimen in excellent condition and fully functional.



Luce seems to have been a bit of a playboy and after scandalizing Boston society, departed for Newton in 1924. He died in 1938 and is buried in Mount Auburn Cemetery. His company did not survive him but our safe could easily last as long as the Sawin building stands.

Richard White
Curator, Fisher Barn

In Memoriam

We note with sadness the passing of two of our long time, dedicated volunteers, Ellen Little and Janet MacKenzie. In varied and innumerable ways, both large and small, they contributed greatly to our ability to accomplish our mission. Theirs is a legacy that will live long in our memories.

We extend our condolences and deepest sympathy to their families. We too will miss them greatly.

Photography Credits

Stuart Swiny, page 1, 7, 8

Doug and Becky Gladstone, page 5

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John F. Sugden III
Campbell Yaw
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Every effort is made to assure the accuracy of these lists. If there are errors, we apologize in advance. Please let us know via phone, email or website so we can correct our records for next time!

Volunteers

The heart and soul of any successful non-profit organization is its corps of volunteers and the Dover Historical Society is no exception. With no paid staff, everything we undertake depends on our ready and eager volunteers. To the outsider, it may seem that this team knows exactly what it is doing -- from knowing what needs to get done in the first place to knowing just how to go about getting it done. Actually nothing could be farther from the truth. We all began somewhere, many of us with little or no knowledge of anything specific, just a general interest in history and a love of our Town. Together we learn and we more or less make it up as we go along, based on team work, individual ingenuity and general principles of good museum practices which are easy to look up.

We have a long list of things that must be accomplished if we are to achieve our mission; interest and willingness to be involved are the key components. If you think you might be interested, we urge you to contact our Curators, officers or indeed any Board member. Stop in and visit one or all of the museum buildings and express an interest. That is really is all there is to it. We are always eager for new people, new ideas and the renewed energy they provide.

General Information

Please note that our museums are open to the public, free of charge, in the fall (September – November) and spring (April – June). All visitors are welcome. The basement of the Sawin Museum is especially enjoyable for children as there are many artifacts which they are welcome to try out.

Both museums are also available by special appointment. Contact the curators directly or leave a voicemail message of your request on the phone: 508-785-1832.

The Historical Society also has an exhibit of Richard H. Vara's watercolors on display at the Caryl Community Center, just off the lobby at the Springdale Avenue entrance. It too can be viewed, free of charge, whenever the Community Center is open (times vary).

Copies of the final edition of *Dover Days Gone By* by Richard Hart Vara are available for \$25.00 at both museums or by phone at the main Society number, 508-785-1832. There are also a limited number of hardbound copies still available for \$100.00. Call 508-785-0567 for further information and to order.

Two companion guide books are also available as above for \$3.00 each. They are: *Exploring the Center* and *Exploring: By Car, Boat, on Foot*.

Check out our website: www.doverhistoricalsociety.org and



FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK

The Dover Historical Society is a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization supported by members, grants and donations.

Dover Tidings is published three times a year and is sent primarily to members. If you have not renewed your membership, please do so to avoid being dropped from the list. If you have already renewed, THANK YOU. If you would like to become a new member you can obtain a membership application at one of the museums or by calling the main number (508-785-1832) and leaving a voice mail message. Please be sure to leave your name and contact information.

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