

# DOVER TIDINGS

Fall 2016  
Volume XVI, No. 2



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## *The President's Letter*



*Sawin Museum, September 2016*

upon the little building that has served as our headquarters for the past 110 years.

The Dover Historical and Natural History Society, as it was originally known, was organized in 1895 and incorporated on September 1, 1900. The Museum, however, owes its existence to a prominent local farmer and businessman, Benjamin Sawin (1823-1905) and his wife Eudora (1841-1900), whose bequest provided both the funding for its construction and the triangular lot upon which the building sits. Having no surviving children, Sawin's will bequeathed "all the residue of my money and estate of every description to said Dover Historical Society, provided it erects a

In recent issues of *Tidings* we have examined a number of Dover's oldest homes as well as items of particular interest in the Society's collection. With the completion of recent renovations and the general refurbishment of its interior and exterior, it is appropriate that we focus in this issue

building which is named “Sawin Memorial Building” and the name to be placed on the front of said building in an attractive and enduring manner.” Should the Society have failed to comply with these conditions within a two year period following Sawin’s death, the properties would have reverted to the Town to be held in trust for the worthy poor. Sawin’s will further stipulated those individuals whom he wished to oversee his memorial, a Building Committee consisting of Eben Higgins, George E. Chickering, and George L. Howe.

We do not know the scope of alternatives considered by Sawin’s committee; however, one intriguing clue remains in the form of an architectural rendering of a stone structure markedly different from the building that was ultimately constructed. We may speculate that this larger structure was not selected by virtue of size or perhaps cost.



*Drawing in Dover Historical Society Archives*

The Building Committee selected two architects, both Dover residents, Philip B. Howard and Walter P. Henderson. Howard was born in Roxbury in 1870 and graduated from Harvard College with the Class of 1893. He went into partnership with a classmate, Charles K. Cummings, and is perhaps best known for Codman House at McLean Hospital in Belmont. Cummings and Howard were also responsible for the Caryl School on Springdale Avenue, constructed in 1910. The school was heavily damaged by fire in 1970 and survives today in a much altered form. It may well be Philip Howard’s final work, as he died of ulcerative endocarditis in the same year it was completed.

Walter P. Henderson was born to British parents in Lima, Peru in 1869 and graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1891. A lifelong bachelor, his best known work is the Union Boat Club on Chestnut Street in Boston, which he

designed in association with the firm of Parker, Rice & Stearns. For the Sawin Memorial, Howard and Henderson chose a classic Federal style with low pitched roof of red slate, central entrance, and one story portico. While not a large structure, the quality of its construction is unusually high. Red slate is noted for being difficult both to quarry and to work by virtue of its extreme hardness. It is produced today in only two locations in Washington County, New York and Poultney, Vermont and was probably, even in 1906, the most expensive selection that the Building Committee could have made. White marble accents highlight the “attractive and enduring” memorial inscription which is carved in relief rather than incised in what would surely have been a less costly fashion. Completed in 1906, the Sawin Memorial Building was opened with considerable ceremony on May 14, 1907.

Perhaps the ultimate compliments to our little building are seen in the form of the Town House, designed by another Dover resident, James Cleveland Hopkins, and his partners Walter Kilham and William Greeley and built in 1922. Though larger, the Town House echoes the Sawin Memorial Building in its use of brick, its Federal style, and the rectangular wings flanking its main entrance. We are grateful to Ben and Eudora Sawin for their vision and to the architects and building committee whose foresight provided us with a building that is truly elegant in its understated simplicity. With the completion of recent landscaping and both interior and exterior renovations, the Sawin Memorial Building will continue to grace the center of our community for years to come.

Elisha Lee, Jr.

***Photography Credits:***

Richard Dalton, page 8

Bob Hillberg, page 5

Stuart Swiny, pages 1, 6

## ***SEVENTH ANNUAL PRESERVATION AWARD***

Houses tell stories and a careful observer can draw meaningful conclusions and important inferences. Dover's history is richer because of its inventory of older homes. If there is a house you admire, please consider nominating it for the Seventh Annual Historic Preservation Award. Send the name of the homeowner and address by February 1, 2017 to the Dover Historical Society, Box 534 or doverhistoricalsociety.org. A list of prior winners may be found on our website.

Priscilla Pitt Jones  
Preservation Committee Chair

### ***News from the Caryl House***

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the volunteers who have given so generously of their time being docents in the spring and fall, weeding in the gardens and for all of your suggestions and advice. I hope you will continue to work with us, especially for the upcoming Holiday Open House on December 4. If you can contribute in any way, please give me a call.

Janet Comiskey-Giannini  
Curator, Caryl House

### ***Upcoming Program***

**Thursday, November 10, 2016 at 7:30 p.m.**

Lecture by Peter V. Hauschka, Ph.D  
***Bees, Honey and the Important Role of Massachusetts in the  
History of Beekeeping***

Dover Town Library, Lower Level

Admission is free

Refreshments will be served

## *Sawin Grand Re-Opening: Curator's Remarks*

Thank you, Elisha, for your kind words! The Sawin project has been a joint effort contributed to by many Dover residents, and others, some from very far away, such as my 2½ year old grandson, Leonardo, who came from the island of Cyprus in the eastern Mediterranean with his mother. He shoveled dirt as only the grandson of archaeologists could!!



Those of you who know the Sawin Museum will note the changes outside, but there are many inside as well. First, some remarks about the outside. It all started a few months ago when my sister-in-law, Patty Wylde, a onetime Dover resident, came to see what we were doing to the displays inside, and as a landscape architect she put a flea in my ear concerning the surroundings of this handsome building. A few days later Patty sent me a photograph showing how a French chateau had arranged the gravel paths surrounding its elegant façade.

Now the Sawin is no 18<sup>th</sup> century French chateau, but its 19<sup>th</sup> century architects did design one of the most elegant buildings in Dover center with its red slate roof, reserved in those days for elite structures. I should point out that our Town House only has a gray slate roof...

So that flea set in motion the idea of leveling and enlarging the

area, first with the grinding of pesky tree stumps by Jay Crocker, which made room for 40 tons of stone and gravel.

I can't tell you how beholden I am to neighbor, Doug Smith, who skillfully leveled that huge pile of gravel with an old, borrowed Bobcat, since his own was undergoing repairs! Not only did he and two workers, Wilmer and Junior, deal with the



drive and gravel, they raised the window wells which would otherwise have been filled in due to the higher ground level. They also did many other things, all out of civic duty and in the memory of his late stepmother, Jane Young, another Dover resident, who will be remembered with a bench and plaque.

I think Eudora and Benjamin Sawin, who gave both this land and the funds for the museum to the Historical Society, would have approved of our desire to continue Priscilla Jones' efforts to develop the 1.4 acre Sawin Triangle into an arboretum. An arboretum, despite its name, is not just trees but herbaceous plants as well.

What estate gardeners would no doubt view as lowly weeds, Ben would have known only too well, with such iconic names as Horse Weed, Dog Bane, Cow Wheat, Pipsissewa, Indian Pipe, Lady Slippers and numerous others. One of these others is False Solomon's Seal, and you will perhaps be amused to know that many Native American tribes believed it was a contraceptive, if both parties drank a cup full of an infusion from its roots for a week!

These plants surrounding us are being labeled for our edification and that of our children and future generations! There is Poison

Ivy here as well, and that too will be labeled for obvious as well as educational reasons! Unlabeled Poison Ivy has been eradicated.

I am happy to acknowledge someone Ben Sawin, a farmer himself, would have liked to see here, as he continues the agricultural tradition in Dover with Community Supported Agriculture: Chris Yoder and some of his workers who have come straight from the fields off Haven Street, and will return there after a bite of food and little Champagne....

This aspect of the project has been overseen by my wife, Laina Wylde Swiny. We have always worked as a team, from archaeological site surveys in wild Afghanistan to trudging around cemeteries with a measuring tape to ensure that people were buried in the right spot, or cutting oak saplings in the Sawin Triangle. She grew up down the road in the house we live in now, so I'm in Dover because of her, and it is certainly an experience I deeply enjoy! With the help of Brooks Gerner, she drummed up support from a team of brush zappers such as Lisa Fuld, Sarah Wragge and Joan Kelly. But it is a big job to do properly, and Laina along with help from Anna Dunn has spent several days mostly completing the job.

I have already mentioned that this whole project has been a joint effort, and I am thus grateful to Craig Hughes of the Highway Department for this new, impressive two ton front step, (it is much thicker than what you see protruding in front of me!) which has returned to Dedham Street where it once served as a culvert; likewise to David MacTavish of Parks and Rec. for the tents, and to Karl Warnick at the Town House for the tables.

We should also thank Tom Valente and Ken Plageman of Dover Market and Michael Reardon from the soon-to-open Dover Wine Company for their support in ensuring that we are well watered and fed! What celebration would be complete without such things!

And now I turn to the inside of the building. It has indeed been re-imagined. The most striking addition to the main floor is the

completed Williams Tavern Corner which features a mural in the style of Rufus Porter, the 19<sup>th</sup> century itinerant, naïve artist, painted by Diane Ficcardi Gilson who grew up within sight of the Museum. It is a delightfully allegorical view of Dover in the past with many meaningful details such as the little white ancon sheep in the Caryl House field, the Williams Tavern sign, militia men training and much more. Diane, who is here today, offered it graciously as a token of her affection for the Town. In addition, of great significance in that corner is the Chippendale Chair rescued from the Tavern fire in 1908 and returned to Dover by the family of its rescuer last year. It has been restored and reupholstered by Mark Yesko of Natick, with assistance from Campbell Yaw of CSY Designs in Dover.



The same room now tells the story of the Dover area from when it was inhabited by Indigenous Peoples 4,000 to 5,000 years ago, through Early Contact, Revolution, Federal and so on with emphasis on domestic and local commercial enterprises including striking items from each period. Also of note is the remarkable A. C. Rice clock ticking away on the south wall after a century of rest, and now painstakingly repaired by Michael Poisson of Wayland.

Most Doverites know about the successful factory producing Hodgson Houses which once stood on the site of the Town Garage; we are fortunate to have a Hodgson House shed on the Sawin Triangle curated by Heather Hodgson DePaola. In the Main Room display case, there are a few of Ernest Hodgson's keybolts, which invention made possible the infinite configurations of building parts manufactured here and shipped all over the world.

In addition to the huge Hodgson Portable House factory in the center of Town, Dover also had another major commercial

manufacturing operation, namely Harvard Apparatus, started by Dr. William Porter at Harvard Medical School, then moved to a barn behind his Farm Street home and ultimately continues operation today as a division of Harvard Bioscience in Holliston. Thanks to Dover resident, David Green, we have on loan a descendant of one of Dr. Porter's medical equipment inventions.

If so much has changed in the Museum in the past two years it is primarily due to the unstinting efforts of Assistant Curator, Pam Kunkemueller. She has spent hundreds of hours from laying down floors, painting woodwork, holding ladders, to discussing, developing and moving displays, to fine-tuning labels. Without her good natured support much, much less would have been accomplished.

I also am indebted to Lori Carbone who totally re-imagined the Lower Level, creating out of a grimy storage basement an engaging story of old time domestic life and crafts, as well as school life. Not only has she thought out the displays but she has cleaned and oiled every item on view, a huge job. When the Chickering and Charles River School students visit the Museum, they delight in being able to handle the items on display there.

Here I might add that some large and heavy items such as a century old icebox and a massive terracotta sink have joined the domestic displays thanks to the efforts of two teams of "hamalis", a Turkish word for a stevedore *cum* porter of the toughest, strongest type! Thank you to those porters present here today.

Finally, the top floor has been reorganized by Eileen White, who unfortunately could not be here this afternoon. It features antique toys, including Amelia Peabody's doll house, period apparel, some intriguing books and watches, as well as three cases exhibiting items from wars in which the citizens of Dover have participated. The rearranged office on this floor is the domain of Patty Howe, a critical member of the team, for she, over the past few years, has professionally accessioned and catalogued articles received by the Museum.

What you see here then, both inside and out, with the exception of the repairs to the roof, is a true team effort, 99% of which was altruistically offered as a contribution to the greater good of the Town. The Dover Historical Society is deeply grateful for this interest and the financial support of many, including several generous anonymous donors, who made it all possible.

There are, not surprisingly, a few more projects that we would like to undertake in the future, such as edging the building and gravel with granite curbs, insulating the attic and upgrading the lighting in the Museum.

I think Benjamin and Eudora Sawin would be happy to see their building and its contents the center of such attention, 110 years after construction. Do look at their portraits in the main room and tell us if the old man in overalls next to what are surely their wedding portraits is indeed Ben -- or perhaps some other farmer!

Thank you all for coming this afternoon, but one last comment: Next year we are planning to commemorate the entry of the United States into World War I, the "War to end all Wars" 100 years ago. As you will see, we already have some material, but if any of you own or know of items connected to the War and would be willing to lend them for the exhibition, please do let me know.

Stuart Swiny, Sawin Curator

*(Edited for publication)*

## ***Save The Date***

### **Annual Holiday Open House**

The Benjamin Caryl House  
107 Dedham Street

**Sunday, December 4, 2016**

**2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.**

Featuring John Arcaro on the keyboard  
for a Holiday Music Sing-A-Long

2:30p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Admission is free

Refreshments will be served

***Fall 2016 Docent Schedule***  
***Saturdays, 1:00 4:00 p.m.***

<b>Date</b>	<b>Caryl House/Fisher Barn</b>	<b>Sawin Museum</b>
September 10	Janet Comiskey-Giannini	Closed
September 17	Closed	Grand Re-Opening
September 24	Nancy Ferguson	Stuart Swiny
October 1	Kay Guild, Priscilla Jones	Ellie Herd
October 8	Marilyn Smith	Priscilla Jones
October 15	Clare Burke	Pam Kunkemueller
October 22	Barbara Palmer	Clare Burke
October 29	Richard White	Bonnie Akins
November 5	Dorothy Boylan	Pam Kunkemueller
November 12	Amy Wilcox	Charlotte Surgenor
November 19	Janet Comiskey-Giannini	Stuart Swiny
November 26	Closed	Pam Kunkemueller

We wish to welcome Bonnie Akins, Ellie Herd, Marilyn Smith and Charlotte Surgenor as new docents. Volunteering is fun and new volunteers are received with great pleasure. Should you wish to volunteer in any capacity, please contact Janet Comiskey-Giannini, Curator of the Caryl House, Stuart Swiny, Curator at the Sawin Museum or Priscilla Jones, Secretary.

***Welcome New Members***

We are delighted to welcome nearly 50 new members to the Society this year. We hope you will join us for the program in November and the Holiday Open House in December. Please introduce yourselves to one another and to Board members.

We welcome your suggestions and support and above all, we value your participation in whatever capacity you are most comfortable. Education is the core of our mission whether it be for residents, school children, out-of-towners, or the public at large. Learning about this special place we call home is both interesting and fun. Thank you for your support, and again: *WELCOME!*

## ***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 Lower Level 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 at the main number: 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 a hardbound copy.

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.*** Many other interesting books are available at the Museums and online.

Check out our website: [www.doverhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.doverhistoricalsociety.org). and



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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. Membership applications are available at both Museums and by contacting the Society by phone or on our website: [doverhistoricalsociety.org](http://doverhistoricalsociety.org).

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