

# DOVER TIDINGS

Fall 2021



Volume XXI, No. 2

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

## *Passing the Torch ...*

Anyone with an interest in history and at least an average life span must at some point confront the concept of time. As a child, time was purely an abstract concept- the steady tick of a grandfather's pocket watch, or a glass case filled with the artifacts of a bygone era. Time and, by extension, history, was essentially that portion of the human experience that happened before my own arrival.

As an adult, time became everything that happened while our lives were taken up with families and careers. My view of history expanded to include the ever-increasing number of significant moments permanently etched in my own memory...the phone call informing us of President Kennedy's assassination, Neil Armstrong's giant leap for mankind, and the destruction of the World Trade Center. Eventually, however, I began to see that history wasn't just a matter of moments, but of all that had transpired while we were focused on more immediate concerns. In my sixth decade, I find myself acutely conscious of the speed at which time passes. More of my own allotted years are now "history" than remain to be experienced. Perhaps the fate of the historian is to become that which he or she has studied for so long. In any case, I would be a poor student of history if I had nothing to say about all that accumulated time.

It is hard for those who are not historically minded to fully appreciate the importance of historical societies. As Dover all too quickly tears itself down and rebuilds in emulation of our larger, more densely settled surroundings, popular wisdom dismisses the past as irrelevant, and historical societies as closed little groups of ancestor-worshippers decrying "change" and trying vainly to stop "progress". It's true that we

aren't working to cure cancer, fighting urban poverty, or preserving open space. We are, however, actively preserving the institutional memory of the town and, as such, we are an essential part of the fabric that makes this or any other town a community. The people with whom I have been so fortunate as to work over the past 35 years have been as interesting, knowledgeable, and fun as any group with which I've been involved.

In an age that does not seem to value volunteerism, it is our local organizations – the Historical Society, the Library, the Dover Foundation, and many others of equal worth, that make this town what it is. While they may exist without our efforts, they prosper only through our continued involvement and support. Without them, Dover becomes nothing more than a vast expanse of affluent, overbuilt suburban banality.

In 2008 I agreed to serve as President of the Dover Historical Society for a period of two years. Thirteen years later, I am at last, to borrow from one whose Presidency was shorter but of somewhat greater consequence, passing the torch to the next generation. While the details of the change are a work in progress, the Society itself is as active and fun as it has been at any point in my involvement. I hope that readers with an interest in the past will consider not just joining the Society but taking an active role in its activities.

*Elisha Lee  
President*

## **The Roll of the Dice and the American Revolution**



**A** couple of years ago Elisha Lee came by the Sawin Museum for a customary chat. After a while he rummaged in his pocket and held out his hand with the comment “what do you think of these?” There in his palm were two small dice which of course I

recognized immediately, but they were unusually crude, looked old with a good patina and warranted closer inspection.



They were hand-made of bone, irregular in shape and also displayed intriguing faint red stamps resembling a crown. With the help of a magnifying glass the letters G R could be seen beneath the crown which suggested that these were royal dice belonging to an English King named George (of which there have been five since the 1750s), but how had Elisha come to possess such rough dice once owned by one of these kings?

I was baffled, and it was then that he told me of finding them in a drawer containing things belonging to the parents of his in-laws and had no idea how they had acquired the dice. But he now knew exactly what they were, and yes, they indeed bore the British royal cypher, a crown above G R standing for George Rex. They were a byproduct of the “Stamp Act”, something I had never heard of previously. For those whose memory might need refreshing, “The Stamp Act of 1765”, signed by King George III in March of that year required that many printed materials in the colonies be produced on stamped paper manufactured in London. This was good for the English economy; it was additionally a devious way of taxing and controlling the press and much more. And to add insult to injury, it also included a high tax on playing cards and dice. This was serious stuff for the colonists who viewed it as a case of taxation without representation and it resulted in street protests in Boston which led to hanging the effigy of the major distributor of stamps in Massachusetts and the looting and burning of his property. The next day he resigned his post! New York and other cities saw often violent protests too and the rise of “The Sons of Liberty”, the movement that played a major role in the unfolding events during the years to follow. So significant were these upheavals that the British Government abolished the tax after exactly twelve months.

***these two small dice with their Crown Tax marks  
proving that the owner had paid his dues 256 years ago are very  
much part of this history***

Just next door in Dedham stands a little-known relic of these momentous events. To celebrate the repeal of the Stamp Act, the Dedham Sons of Liberty erected a “Pillar of Liberty” with an appropriately inscribed

granite base that still stands on the Little Common, but is now protected by an unfortunate conical cement cap.

*The Pillar of  
Liberty on  
the Little  
Common,  
Dedham  
Mass.*



*Original  
appearance of  
the Dedham  
Pillar of  
Liberty in  
1776*

Originally it supported a wooden column surmounted by a bust of William Pitt, the Prime Minister responsible for abrogating the Act. It is interesting to note that the artist who drew the published view of the monument had obviously never seen the original since the shape of the stone base is quite different!

The colonist's reaction to the Stamp Act imposed on them without due consultation had unforeseen consequences and indeed hastened the American Revolution. And these two small dice with their Crown Tax marks proving that the owner had paid his dues 256 years ago are very much part of this history. They are now going on display in the Sawin Museum along with other meaningful items from this decisive period of American history.

*Stuart Swiny  
Sawin Museum Curator*

*Nota Bene: The die in the close-up photograph is 0.41 inches (10.8 mm) square. The other, larger, die measures 0.47 inches (12 mm) square.*

## **Family Lore Turns Out to Be True**

**T**he Volstead Act, or the 18th Amendment, more commonly known as “Prohibition” was enacted by the U.S Congress in July of 1919. The purpose of the new law was to stop the production, distribution, and consumption of alcoholic beverages throughout the United States.

Concerned citizens, activist groups, clergy and Republican Congressmen were convinced the “Devil” alcohol was destroying family ties, productivity, and the moral character of our nation. It was assumed that if

the production of alcohol was outlawed and bars were shut down, law-abiding citizens would go home, hug their wives and kids, and be more alert and productive the next day at work.

We all know how that resulted: Speakeasies! Organized Crime was first to realize the huge profits to be made from supplying illicit spirits and beer to a thirsty nation. Restaurants, private clubs and bars also saw the opportunity to supply alcohol. Even mom and pop operations got into the profitable business.



*93 Dedham St. American 4-square*

That is where 93 Dedham Street, Dover comes into the story. Back in 1937 my step grandfather Delphin Lee Young, President of Brookline Bank, thought it would be nice to move to the country atmosphere of Dover, especially since many of his top clients at the bank were living there already, including the Cabots, Forbes, Saltonstalls and Amelia Peabody.

Delphin and Isabel Young settled at 93 Dedham Street with their daughter Jane in what was a simple American 4-square home of modest proportions set on 12 acres in the center of Dover. Plenty of room for Jane to have the horse she always dreamed of. Many an afternoon Jane would ride through the abutting woods belonging to Amelia Peabody, now known as Noanet Woodlands, after being so generously gifted by her estate to the Trustees of Reservations.

Jane Lee Young Smith, my stepmother, would tell stories of her childhood here in Dover, fun happy memories, anecdotes, a little gossip and some family lore. Family lore recorded that just prior to being purchased in 1937 the house and property had been used as an illicit speakeasy, a place to obtain and consume alcohol. This was quite shocking since Jane's father was an upstanding citizen and well-respected banker. Why on earth would he buy such a place? Well, it turns out that after being shut down by the authorities the place was put up for sale and the deal was too good to pass up. So, Delphin bought it, sordid past and all. Prior to moving in they had to clean up the property and that meant, amongst other things, getting rid of the old Ford Model T with the false floorboards with storage underneath to transport the "hooch".

Even the old hen house had a secret. Underneath it was a concealed 12 x 16-foot concrete bunker for storing the contraband alcohol which exists to this day beneath the new barn. In the finished basement of the house was a pub room complete with paneling, wall sconces, fireplace, a walk-in refrigerator, and a bathroom. Pretty unusual for the time period in a private home.



*The bunker is under the barn*

I now know the family lore to be true. When the family home was passed down to me, the third generation, I removed from the basement the 6 x 10-foot walk-in refrigerator made of a wooden bead board exterior with 6-inch-thick natural cork insulation a tin lined interior and a very heavy door and latch. I also found the basement door and doorbell as well as the bathroom off the pub. I have also dug up over the years many a whiskey bottle and pocket flask of prohibition date, but most interesting to me was finding the hidden underground bunker in the back yard where the hen house once stood. This was a truly exciting discovery almost a century after it had been covered over. Possibly to “whitewash” the property’s dubious past!

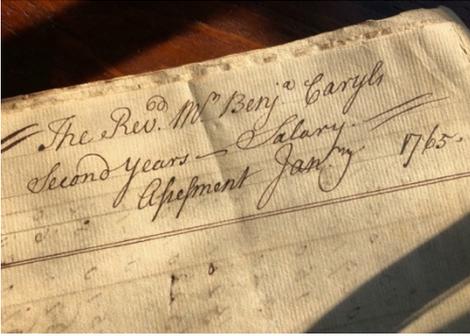
Apparently, the gentlemen and presumably a few ladies would drive down a dirt road at the side of the property and pull around to the back of the house. Once there, they would ring the doorbell on the basement door and head downstairs into the speakeasy.



*Four Aces American rye whiskey & Golden Wedding pure rye whiskey*

*Douglas Cole Smith Jr.  
Vice President, Dover Historical Society*

## Poll Tax Acquisition



*Title page from 1765*

The Dover Historical Society recently acquired a rare folio of Poll Tax records for Dedham's 4<sup>th</sup> Precinct which were raised to cover the Salary of Rev. Benjamin Caryl from his ordination in 1762 through 1778. This accounting is a unique peek into the lives of the early Dover residents, their fortunes, and their failures.

Each year, the parish would elect a commissioner to assess the assets held by each family in the town in order to raise the salary of the new minister. Each family was assessed a tax based on three measures. The Poll was a per head tax levied on each male over the age of 16. In addition, the commissioner would assess the value of the family's real estate, and personal income. In later years the town added an additional poll tax to raise and support a schoolhouse. These folios reveal the financial status of all the parish families, some quite successful while others barely made ends meet.

***public accounts were calculated in English Pound Sterling,  
the more common transactions were paid  
using a variety of currencies including livestock and foodstuffs***

The decision to form their own parish had begun years before Caryl's ordination. Prior to that the people had to travel to Dedham, Medfield and Natick to attend religious services. After several unsuccessful attempts, Dedham's 4<sup>th</sup> precinct was finally granted permission to form their own parish, known as Springfield Parish, in 1748.

The town labored to find a Minister who matched the values of the community and interviewed several candidates before settling on Benjamin Caryl. The appointment of a minister was a lifetime commitment and, Caryl would serve for nearly the next 50 years at a fixed annual salary of 66 Pounds 13 Shillings and 4 pence. There were no cost-of-living increases.

So how much would £66 Pounds 13 Shillings and 4 pence be worth today? That turns out to be a bit of a moving target and difficult to decipher as £66 was not worth the same in every colony. There was not a lot of “Coin of the Realm” in general circulation during the 18<sup>th</sup> century as the colonies lacked a local supply of gold and silver to mint coins. Also, the King was

in the habit of taking money from the colonies, not sending it to them, making British currency a less common form of street currency. Although public accounts were calculated in English Pound Sterling, the more common transactions were paid using a variety of currencies including livestock and foodstuffs. In

Names	Paid	Received	Debt	Bills	Real	Personal
Capt. M. Allen	21.3.19.2	0	0	0.5.10	0.11.10.1	0.10.9.0
Maj. Allen	2.9.3.12.0	21.2.0	11.8	0.5.2.3	0.8.7.1	
Elias Allen	2.12.4.14.0	28.4.0	11.5	0.6.7.1	0.7.8.2	
Elijah Allen	0	0	0	0.4.5.0		
Samuel Allen	1.5.3.5	10.3	0.5.10	0.3.2.0	0.2.9.0	
Nathl. Battle	1.24.0.45	69.0	0.5.10	0.13.2.2	1.4.9.2	
John Battle	2.24.0.20	17.0	0.11.8	0.13.2.2	0.11.0.1	
			0.5.10		0.4.1.2	
			27.2.0	0.17.6	0.7.5.1	0.7.8.2

Massachusetts, a wealthy trading colony, the far more common coin was the Spanish piece of eight, known as the “dollar”. It was the currency of ordinary transactions. Making the conversion from 18<sup>th</sup> century Pound Sterling to 21<sup>st</sup> century US Dollar requires comparing the troy weights of both 18<sup>th</sup> century currencies (which fluctuated from colony to colony) and comparing those weights to their 21<sup>st</sup> century counterpart, (allowing of course for regional fluctuation). Using the more modern, “back of the envelope” calculation, his salary would likely be comparable to about \$45,000.00 today, give or take a shilling or two. In addition, he had income from his farm on Dedham Street which was not taxable.

Benjamin Caryl Died on November 14<sup>th</sup>, 1811, at the age of 80.

*Kevin Shale  
Curator, Caryl Farm*

Editor, Ted Knowles

**Contributors:** *Elisha Lee, Stuart Swiny, Douglas Cole Smith Jr., Kevin Shale*

**Photography Credits:** *Pages 2 and 3 Stuart Swiny, Page 4 (left) Internet, Photoshopped by Stuart Swiny. Page 4 (right) From The Images of Dedham, p. 104. Dedham Historical Society, Arcadia Publishing NC, 2001. Pages 5 and 6 Doug Smith, Pages 7 and 8 Kevin Shale*



FOLLOW US  
ON FACEBOOK  
(Dover Historical Society)



FOLLOW US  
ON INSTAGRAM  
(Dover Historical Society)

www.doverhistoricalsociety.org | www.sawinmuseum.com  
*Please note that our museums are temporarily closed due to COVID-19*