

DOVER TIDINGS

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The President's Letter

There's a small cellar hole on the north side of Powissett Street west of the entrance to Camp Grossman. Local historian Frank Smith tells us that this was the site of William King's blacksmith and cutlery shop and that it was first settled in 1763. King was said to possess a secret technique for the tempering of steel so as to make his blades particularly strong and flexible. The location is remote even by today's standard, and it must have been a good deal more so at the end of the 18th century when this rocky area was known locally as "Egypt".

Like so many of the early residents of Powissett Plain, the King family left few traces of their existence. Dover's Vital Records indicate only the birth of a son David to William and Anna King on October 21, 1778 and the marriages of Rebecca King to Jonathan Spear of Brookline on February 23, 1792 and Mary King to Joseph Spear on April 24, 1793. Town records further note that on May 30, 1789 William's son Solomon was paid a bounty of two shillings for three crow's heads. Dedham's records are more comprehensive and reveal that William and Anna King had nine children between 1764 and 1777 and all were baptized in the Episcopal Church. Given this affiliation it is likely that William and Anna are the William King and Anna Grove of Boston who were married at King's Chapel on August 5, 1760.

A review of property deeds reveals that William King was dead by 1798 when his son Edmund of Norwich, Vermont and daughters Nancy King and Rebecca Spear conveyed their interest in their late father's estate to their brothers William King of Boston and Solomon King of Dover. The younger William King's occupation is given variously as cutler and "raizor grinder" suggesting that he returned to Boston and followed his father's trade. On September 9, 1801 the younger William King conveyed 20 acres of the property to Eliphalet and George Colburn, owners of the abutting property to the southwest. Anna King appears to have survived her husband and continued to live on a portion of that property at least through 1815 when Joseph Kingsbury, Jr. of Dedham sold an additional three acres to William King of Dover "bound southerly by land of the said widow King." No record of Anna's death survives. William King Junior died in 1824 and is buried at Copps Hill in Boston. Solomon King married Susanna Lewis of Dedham and settled in Pomfret, Vermont, where he died in 1853.

The site has been heavily altered by many years of use as a Boy Scout campground and very little remains to be seen. In visualizing the site in its heyday the curious visitor should remember that it once encompassed roughly 30 acres and extended well north of Powissett Street into the property currently occupied by Camp Grossman.

Elisha F. Lee

A New Birthdate for the Caryl House

Do you suppose you would look with pleasure upon a proclamation that you were older than you thought--that the birth certificate upon which you'd depended all these years was an evil deceiver? Let's hope it is easier for historic structures to deal with such news because as of December 2012 our Caryl House has been obliged to cope with a new birthday -- the eventful year of 1774!

To tell this story properly I need to rewind to the year 1875. That's when Ellen Miller, one of Benjamin Caryl's great grand-daughters, wrote a perfectly awful poem in which she asserted that the house had been built 98 years earlier. She of course wasn't born until 1836 and her great-grandfather had died in 1811, so this all existed in the realm of legend for her. And legend, as we know, is notoriously unreliable. Still, for many years this was our only clue, so circa 1777 it was!

In March 2012, by virtue of a happy accident, the House became the subject of a dendrochronology study. Daniel Miles, a British

dendrochronologist, was going to be in Boston giving a professional talk. Thanks to historic preservationist Bill Finch, we suddenly found ourselves being offered a rare empty slot on Dan's schedule. We jumped at the chance. Miles spent two days with us, accompanied by Anne Grady from Lexington, an architectural historian whose promotion of dendrochronology in dating New England structures and her authorship of more than 100 historic structures reports on buildings in the Commonwealth have earned her a position of prominence in her own right.

Dendrochronology is the study of the growth rings of trees for purposes of understanding past climatic conditions and of dating historic buildings. In each year of its life a tree develops a growth ring that reflects the weather conditions to which it was exposed. So locked within a century old tree are 100 years of climate history for the area in which it grew as reflected in a unique pattern of growth rings. The methodology of dendrochronology is pattern matching -- the ring pattern found in an undated sample is compared to the ring pattern of trees whose age is known, all computer assisted of course. To have high confidence in the accuracy of the results, you need samples consisting of something approaching 100 years. If you are very lucky you may find timbers with a bark-edge; then you know the exact year the tree was felled and also the season.

At the Caryl House 25 samples were taken from 22 oak timbers, all of which "appeared to be primary first-use timbers, or any timbers which might have been re-used." Samples were harvested by using a 16 mm. hollow augur to bore through a timber, thus capturing its cross-sectional ring pattern. For us, "half of the sampled timbers dated, producing a 106-ring site master spanning the years 1668-1773. Five precise felling dates were obtained [from bark-edged samples], ranging from the spring of 1764 to the winter of 1773/4. . . The earliest date must represent a stock-piled or reused timber; hence the latest dates represent the actual construction date of the house. . . It was common practice to build timber-framed structures with green or unseasoned timber and that construction usually took place within twelve months of felling . . . Therefore it is most likely that the house was constructed during 1774 or very shortly thereafter. The dating, together with a visual analysis of the timber frame, suggests that the house was constructed in one phase of construction."

"The best matches were found with nearby Dover and Medfield structures (from earlier analyses performed by Dan on the Lowell-Mason House and the Dwight-Derby House, both of Medfield, and the Chickering-Francis Farm on Walpole St. in Dover), as well as with the South-East Massachusetts Regional Master. This region is particularly difficult to date due to the coastal influences in the weather, but with the good replication within the site master, a very high correlation was found."¹

Benjamin Caryl purchased the 65 acre Griggs farm in 1764, presumably having rented the existing house on the property upon his arrival in town in 1762. The recent dendrochronology findings that the house was constructed in one phase of construction would support the notion that he and his family continued to live in the earlier house during the construction of the new one and would seem to weaken an earlier hypothesis that the Caryl House was not built from scratch but instead “expanded and improved” from the earlier Ellis farmhouse “building in part on the old foundation and using oak and pine cut from the farm.”ⁱⁱ Had the entire 65 acres been cleared for farming by 1773, or did the timber for the Caryl House come from remaining wooded areas on his farm? Or did the timbers come from the 27+ acre woodlot on Walpole St. said to have been provided for Rev. Caryl by his congregation?ⁱⁱⁱ It was typical for a resident minister to reside in housing provided by the parishioners. Caryl bucked that norm in building a home of his own, but whether he availed himself of timber harvested from the woodlot established for his use remains unanswered.

But we now know that the House, spanking new, stood witness to the prologue to the American Revolution. If work began in spring, might the workmen have discussed that the British had closed the port of Boston and passed the Coercive Act? In summer did they rile at the notion of being required by the Crown to board English troops in their homes? In September did word spread through the Parish that the first Continental Congress had gathered in Philadelphia? Was the House standing tall by February 1775 when the English Parliament declared the Massachusetts colony in rebellion against the Crown? And did it shelter the Caryls gently that they might find the strength to comfort the Havens when news reached them that on the 19th of April Elias had fallen at Menotomy (now Arlington)?

This study is a wonderful jewel for the Caryl House, the sort of documentation all National Registry structures deserve. This is the proper conclusion to the preservation work that dominated the scene for the past two years, strengthening the significance of the House and enlarging its value to its community. I am thrilled that we got such an illuminating result, grateful for all I learned in the process, and tickled that it happened on my watch. Thanks to all who made this possible.

Barbara H. Palmer

Curator, The Benjamin Caryl House

1 Miles, D. W. H., *The Tree Ring Dating of the Benjamin Caryl House*, 107 Dedham St., Dover, Norfolk County, Massachusetts, Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory, Report 2012/51, passim.

11 Kathleen Kamm Jones and Donald E. Jones, “Some Ancestors of Pearl Griggs Kamm, Part I - Colonial New England Lineages.” Self-published, 1993, p. 21.

111 Smith, Frank, *Narrative History of Dover*, a history of Dover, Massachusetts, as a precinct, parish, district and town, 1897, p.92.

The Rake's Progress

Our featured farm implement is a dump rake for haying. It sits on the edge of the field near the Fisher Barn. There is nothing particularly remarkable about this specimen – there are thousands of them on farms around the world and many are still in use. It represents a transitional stage in haying, a huge improvement over the kind of primitive hand



rake that would have been used in early hay gathering. This device would have been attached to a draft horse and the operator would sit above and to the front of the axle. (The seat on our rake is missing. Many of the seats were recycled for scrap after the rakes fell into disuse). It was an uncomfortable and bumpy ride with nothing to

absorb the shock. When the tines filled with hay, the operator would raise them with a lever and deposit the hay in a pile the length of the axle and perhaps six feet long and a foot wide. The process resulted in a series of parallel lines of piled hay called windrows. We see these after every snowstorm when, just as you've finished shoveling the driveway, the plow comes along and deposits a nicely compacted ridge of snow between you and the street – you probably have other terms for it. The hay would then be allowed to dry and gathered for baling or storage in the hayloft. A bale might weigh 150 pounds. Modern hayrakes are beautiful high-tech machines with many times the capacity of our artifact but the mechanical principles haven't changed all that much.

Hay is still harvested and baled, and the bales are immense, consisting of perhaps a ton of hay. With record droughts in the west, such a bale might sell for 200 dollars. There's a lot of hay theft, and farmers have begun imbedding GPS units in the bales to track wayward hay, modern technology to combat old-fashioned rustling.

Richard White

Curator, The Fisher Barn

Spring Comes to the Sawin

That famous groundhog, Phil, says Spring is coming early!!! Let's hope he will be accurate in his prediction, as it seems winter has been forever!!! So, we are READY for the Spring opening of our Museums to

the public. We would love to have you stop by and visit, with your children/grandchildren- if you are looking for some fun (free) family time, or, without them- if you are looking for some quiet adult learning time. We have a variety of exhibits related to the history of our wonderful Town of Dover, a very special place, indeed. We are committed to the concept that citizens, especially young ones, should know about the town they live in, and we are committed to providing lots of interesting, sometimes thought provoking, and often fun, stories, tidbits, insights and speculations related to what happened here during the last several centuries...

We are pleased to note that we have another Dover Sherborn High School volunteer working with us this Spring. Laura Gillespie, will be completing her National Honors Society Service Project by converting the "Dover Days Gone By" exhibit into a slide show, which will allow us to have some extra space for other new and interesting exhibits. We welcome her involvement, and hope that she finds her experience an enjoyable one.

We, also, encourage Dover Sherborn students to join us for a few or many hours, in any of a variety of projects that can be used for their Community Hours. This is a wonderful opportunity for youths to be exposed to civic projects close to home, and, to work cooperatively as a volunteer.

We, especially, welcome and appreciate folks in town with an historical bent who would like to volunteer for as few as three hours per year (one Saturday afternoon) as a docent, or more, with the Dover Historical Society. We are an all-volunteer Society, and require a contingent of volunteers in order to maintain our museums and keep them open for the public. We are thankful for all efforts to assist us in our mission, and hope to see you soon, either as a volunteer or as a visitor. Come in and check us out! If you have not been in to visit us yet, you WILL be surprised by the three gems in Town: the Sawin Museum, the Caryl House, and the Fisher Barn. If you know us already, come back and learn more about Dover. And, if you have any items that you feel might contribute to our collection, give us a call or stop by, as we are interested, sometimes amazed and, often surprised by the variety of items that come through our doors. Welcome!

Fay Bacher
Curator, The Sawin Museum

Third Annual Preservation Award



House Sketch by Pat Hilpert 1999

Based on nominations from the community, Priscilla Jones is pleased to announce that the recipients of the Dover Historical Society's Historic Preservation Award are Susan and Edward Fitzgerald for their home at 2 Main Street built in 1800. Originally one of the houses on Battelle Row, Sue and Ed oversaw work from 2004 to 2006 to remove an old horse shed, build a carefully integrated addition, and renovate rooms in the house. More recently, a chimney was rebuilt and vinyl siding, windows, trim detail, and roof were replaced to complete the original structure's exterior renovation. Discovering the foundation of a 9' wide chimney provided excitement during the dismantling of the existing porch and construction of a new covered patio. Lighted at night, the cupola, built using the curved glass panes from the home's original cupola, serves as a crowning beacon to the traveler.

Other Committee Members include Jill French, Sara Molyneaux, and Charlotte Surgenor. We look forward to continuing to celebrate those who choose preservation of Dover's heritage homes.

Spring 2013 Docent Schedule

Saturdays, 1 – 4 PM

Caryl House

April 6	Amy Wilcox
April 13	Dale Cabot
April 20	Janet Giannini
April 27	Amy Wilcox
May 4	Richard White
May 11	Kevin Shale
May 18	Richard White
May 25	Priscilla Jones
June 1	Jane Moore
June 8	Sue Knowles
June 15	Barbara Palmer
June 22	Teresa Thakur
June 29	Jack Hoehlein

Sawin Museum

Ursula Gray
Beth Sagan
Elisha Lee
Richard White
Clare Burke
Clare Burke
Patty Howe
Jack Hoehlein
Jack Hoehlein
Jack Hoehlein
Fay Bacher
Dorothy Boylan

Sunday, June 9, 2 – 4 PM Caryl House Garden Party

Elisha Lee, Sue Knowles, Jane Moore, Janet Comiskey Giannini, Priscilla Jones, Barbara Palmer, Fay Bacher

Officers and Board Members

Elected at the Annual Meeting March 21, 2013

President	Elisha Lee	(508)785-1653	eleejr@verizon.net
Vice President	Jack Hoehlein	(508)479-1937	jhoehlein@hotmail.com
Secretary	Priscilla Jones	(508)785-0236	priscillapjones @yahoo.com
Treasurer	Sue Fitzgerald	(508)785-2161	suefitzgerald @comcast.net
Caryl House Curator	Janet Comiskey Giannini		janetcomiskey @comcast.net
Fisher Barn Curator	Richard White	(508)785-3197	whitefork@verizon.net
Sawin Museum Curator	Fay Bacher		
Fund Raising	Heather Hodgson	(508)785-1977	UnpackingSolutions @comcast.net
Hospitality	Dorothy Boylan	(508)785-1980	DLBoylan@hotmail.com
Public Programs	Clare Burke	(508)785-1357	clareburke@comcast.net
Public Relations	Sue Knowles	(508)785-0858	susanneknowles@aol.com
School Programs	Lori Carbone	(774)893-4024	loripaulc@comcast.net
Volunteers	Lynn McGill	(508)785-0005	lynnlmcgill@yahoo.com

Advisory Board

Pam Kunkemueller	Judy Schulz
Shirley McGill	Deirdre Windsor-Bailey
Dale Cabot	Patty Howe
Kim Phelan	Barbara Provest

Mark Your Calendar

The Annual Caryl House Garden Party will be held Sunday, June 9th from 2 to 4 PM at the Caryl House. Greet your friends and enjoy a Springtime Celebration. Period refreshments will be served.