

DOVER TIDINGS

Fall 2010



Volume X No. 2

Susanne M. Knowles
Editor

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

A Message from the President

One of the pitfalls of local history is the tendency to see one's community as an entity apart from its surroundings. In actuality, of course, Dover was a part of Dedham until 1836, and the original Dedham Grant encompassed 200 square miles stretching from Boston to the Rhode Island border. It is not surprising, therefore, that our history is very much interwoven with that of the surrounding area.

One particularly audible manifestation of this connectivity is the bell in the Dover Church. The church itself was established in 1754 as the Fourth Parish of Dedham. The original structure burned in 1810 and was replaced with a second church in 1811. This structure burned as well in January of 1839 and the bell, cast at the Holbrook Bell Foundry in what is now Millis, was installed with the construction of the third and present church on the site.

Virtually no trace of the Holbrook Bell Foundry remains to be seen and yet it was quite well known in its day and Holbrook bells can be found in all parts of the country. The company's founder, Major George Holbrook (1767-1846) was born in Wrentham and in his youth was apprenticed to Paul Revere as a machinist and clockmaker. While best known for his work as a silversmith and for his Midnight Ride, Revere was a man of many talents. In 1787 he established an iron and brass foundry in Boston's North End where, six years later, he cast his first bell for the Second Church in Boston.

In 1797 after serving his apprenticeship and probably additional employment in Revere's shop, George Holbrook established himself as a manufacturer of both bells and clocks in Brookfield, MA. While known to have manufactured case or "grandfather" clocks, much of his horological production appears to have been in the form of tower or steeple clocks. After experiencing a financial failure in 1812, Holbrook left Brookfield for Laconia, New Hampshire and ultimately East Medway, MA (now Millis) where in 1816 he established the Holbrook Bell Foundry at the southwest corner of Main Street (Route 109) and Spring Street.

Colonel Holbrook's son, Major George Handel Holbrook (1798-1875), took over the family business in 1820. In the tradition of his father and Paul Revere, the younger Holbrook appears to have been a man of multiple abilities, being an accomplished musician, frequent director of the Handel and Hayden Society and, in partnership with his cousin Josiah Holbrook Ware, a noted manufacturer of pipe organs. The Holbrook & Ware factory was also situated on Main Street, directly across from the Holbrook Bell Foundry. The foundry operated until 1880 when Major Holbrook's grandson Edwin Handel Holbrook ceased operations in order to accept a position with the Pension Department in Washington, D.C. The building was demolished in 1890 and no trace of its existence remains. The organ business continued under the leadership of George Handel Holbrook's son Edwin Lafayette Holbrook until the 1890's.

As always, I am grateful for your continued support.

Elisha Lee

The Caryl House Flax Crop

I need to harvest our flax crop. The dainty blue flowers appeared around the Fourth of July, so in theory at least, it should have been ready thirty days later.



The plot certainly wasn't large enough to support a serious effort to harvest fiber, and if it had been, it would now be too late. For fiber harvest you want the tender stems of the plant to be more green than yellow, promising that the fibers will be long and strong. I think the chances are slight that come spring we could

actually have rallied the troops to pursue the smelly and nasty job of "retting" the straw (soaking it in water to promote rotting). Just as well.

I really hate to part with the vivid lime green patch. It has been so pretty. So instead I will simply harvest the seed to plant next year. Even that involves several steps: bundling the straw and letting the bundles dry well in the sun, and later “rippling” the stalks to dislodge the seed pods and salvage the tiny seeds. Harvesting just for seed requires that I begin only after the tendrils glow yellow and you can begin to hear their dryness when caught by soft breezes. Then the seeds will be fully mature. I’ve pried open one seed pod with my fingers.

Alas. Not encouraging. In truth, it has been a miserable summer for growing flax. Too hot and too dry. Our crop never reached full height, and the soil beneath it has been vastly depleted in making the valiant effort. We cannot plant in the same location next year.

Still, the tiny flax plot was symbolically very important. It brought to life a new exhibit at Caryl and became its emotional centerpiece. The exhibit tells the story of how flax is made into linen, and the social and economic implications of same on family and community life in rural New England in the early 1800’s. “From Flax to Linen” opened in June. It includes a collection of interesting artifacts from the teaching collection that you may touch and examine closely – including samples of flax straw before and after retting; a luxurious bundle of flax fiber ready for spinning; and examples of early linen and linsy-woolsey textiles. A narrated slide lecture provides deeper understanding and striking images and the Fisher Barn’s collection of flax-related implements drives home the strength and stamina required of the women, men and children involved in the process.

When we open in September the plot will be bare, but the exhibit continues throughout the fall season. Please come and see it. The June Garden Party was a lovely occasion. Thanks to all of you who made it so, especially our special guest, Barbara Provest, who spun flax for us all afternoon and shared her prodigious knowledge with good humor and generosity.



Barbara Palmer

Benjamin Caryl House Curator

Dover's Dairy Farm History

On display at The Fisher Barn are several fine examples of milk and cream bottles used by the many dairy farms in the area. From the late 1800's through the end of the 1950's, the Dover area proved to be ideally located for commercial dairy farming. Perhaps one of the largest and most notable was the Valley Farm Dairy.

Valley Farm Dairy

Michael W. Comiskey acquired his original Valley Farm dairy stock back in 1891. At that time his farm was at the present "Mill Farm" property on Dedham Street. Shortly after 1900 the Comiskays bought the ninety-seven acre Harding place at the corner of Haven and Main, and Valley Farm Dairy began to grow.

Initial sales were made to Dana Hall School in Wellesley, and soon a delivery route was extended into Natick. A new silo was added to the old dairy barn, the dairy house was improved, and new wagon sheds were added.

By 1920, the Comiskey sons began to come into the business. Frank did the Dana Hall route each morning before starting off to high school, and in 1923 brother Ted came in to help out. As the business and delivery routes grew, brothers Dan and Leo joined the family business and before long, the Valley Farm Dairy was the largest in the area.



Valley Farm Dairy developed delivery routes in Dover, Natick, Wellesley, Wellesley Hills, Needham, Westwood, Medfield and as far as Millis. It remained an active dairy business until operations ceased in 1960, nearly seventy years after it had been founded

Dairy workers lived in the old North District Schoolhouse that Comiskey moved across Main Street and converted to a boarding house

In the early sixties the land was purchased by a group of Dover residents in an effort to preserve it as a major tract of open country land. Their original idea was to use the property for an eighteen hole golf course and country club, and in January 1966 all of the buildings except for the main house were removed. But the golf club did not gain enough support and never materialized.

Comiskey Family Photographs

On an early summer morning in 1923 Ted Comiskey is ready to set off on his milk route. Valley Farm horse drawn dairy wagons were a familiar sight in all the surrounding communities in the twenties.



Visit The Fisher Barn this fall to learn more about Dover's history and industry that shaped our community

Jack Hoehlein
Fisher Barn Curator

A Brand New Sawin Exhibit ... and more

We are pleased to announce that the new main exhibit in the Sawin Museum is *Dover Days Gone By* and is based upon the new soon to be published book by the same name, written by the late Richard Hart Vara, Dover's Town Historian. This was Dick's last dedicated effort at completing the updated written and illustrated history of Dover, and is the Final Edition of the book. The first edition was published in 1976. Unfortunately, he passed away in 2005 before he could complete the new publication which includes many new pictures as well as much new and more accurate and detailed information regarding Dover's past.

However, Dick left to the Dover Historical Society a treasure trove of completed notes and work, including some of his fabulous watercolor paintings, which will be on display in the museum. They document a variety of historical events

and locations. The book has been lovingly and undauntingly compiled and edited by Electa Kane Tritsch, with the amazing and indispensable support of Pam Kunkemueller, Project Manager and Past President of the Historical Society.

We invite you to come visit the exhibit and get a more extensive understanding of Dover's history, much of it now invisible. Come find out about the hanging at Springdale Crossing. Or is your property the site of any of Dover's historical events? Was an old schoolhouse, a dairy, a dance hall, a blacksmith shop, the Poorhouse, or ammunition storage located where you now live? Do you live on the site of fun and frolic that was prevailing at the Pavilion and Dance Hall at Ben Sawin's Grove? Was your house the first solar house in the country? Why do some of us call the Dover Market "Higgins"? What event was Tubwreck Drive named for? Do you know about Dover's involvement in the American Revolution? Or, the month-long crime spree, robbery, arson and breaking and entering by a group known as the Yegg Gang? Are you related to any of Dover's Honor Roll? Do you live in a Hodgson House? Were you here the night Caryl School burned? Do you know about the Grange? Did you graduate from Dover High School? Have you ever seen the Dover Demon (not on one of our T-shirts)?..... Come find out more...

The book will be available for sale in late fall in time for Holiday giving. Look for the announcement and order form in the Old Home Day Program Book. There will be 100 numbered hard cover copies which will sell for \$100, available on a first come, first served basis. Soft cover copies will cost \$25. While you wait for the book, come see the new exhibit!

DHS has also been most fortunate this summer to have Ben Brea, a young Dover citizen, who, as his Eagle Scout project, has undertaken the scanning and transcribing of the Benjamin Caryl sermons that DHS owns. He plans to provide copies to volunteers and to possibly have them available on an interactive file sharing website. Ben invites anyone interested in assisting in the transcribing of the sermons to please contact him at benbrea@gmail.com.

We still have opportunities for Dover students to earn Community Service hours for the upcoming school year. Contact us if you need credits and we will gladly review with you our available opportunities. Some include photography and computer work, in case those skills appeal to you. Sawin Museum welcomes all school and scouting troops to come and tour.

Fay Bacher

Sawin Museum Curator

Fall 2010 Docent Schedule

Saturdays 1-4 PM

	<u>CARYL HOUSE</u>	<u>FISHER BARN</u>	<u>SAWIN MUSEUM</u>
Sept 11	Dorothy Boylan	Jack Hoehlein	
Sept 18	Barbara Palmer & Olivia Tedesco	Richard White	
Sept 25			Dorothy Boylan
Oct 2	Barbara Palmer	Jack Hoehlein	Ursula Gray
Oct 9		Richard White	Elisha Lee
Oct 16	Sue Knowles & Olivia Tedesco		Patty Howe
Oct 23	Jane Moore	Priscilla Jones & Olivia Tedesco	
Oct. 30			Priscilla Jones
Nov 6	Alison Campbell	Jack Hoehlein	Elisha Lee
Nov 13			Patty Howe
Nov. 20		Betty Brady	

OLD HOME DAY Sunday, Oct 3

Dorothy Boylan

HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE Sunday, Dec. 5

If you can fill one of the open dates above, please contact Elisha Lee at
eleejr@verizon.net.

Mark Your Calendar

Join us for these upcoming events sponsored by the Dover Historical Society.

Sept. 11th through Nov. 20th – Open Houses

There will be open houses at Caryl House and Fisher Barn, 107 Dedham Street, and the Sawin Museum, 80 Dedham St., from 1 to 4 PM each Saturday. All those interested in Dover's history are invited.

Sunday, Oct. 3rd - The 9th Annual Old Home Day Celebration. See schedule on the reverse side of this page.

Sunday, Dec. 5th - 2 to 4 PM -- Holiday Open House.

Come to the Caryl House, 107 Dedham St. Enjoy festive decorations and seasonal music. Period refreshments will be served.

Old Home Day 2010

Sunday, October 3rd

10:00 AM – 4:00PM – **5th Annual Craft Fair** - Town House, 5 Springdale Ave.

In our Great Hall, Dover locals and neighboring artisans selling hand-crafted pottery, quilts, doll clothing, greeting cards, wood carvings, jewelry, and more!

Silhouettes by Carol Lebeaux classic hand-cut of children, families & pets (bring photo). To schedule a ten-minute appointment call 785-1977. Walk-ins fine too!

Noon – **Ringing of the Dover Church Bells**

Noon - **Antique Auto Show & Parade** (at 2:00) - Militia Field across from Library Hounds and horses from the Norfolk Hunt Club arrive after 1:45 to lead the parade. Please vote for the Best Car in Show! Visit the hounds.

Noon – 2 PM - **Lunch on Town Green** – Burgers & Dogs from Dover Market

Noon – 4 PM - **Sawin Museum** – 80 Dedham Street An exhibit highlighting Dover as written in the second edition of *Dover Days Gone By*. McGregor McGehee will provide musical entertainment. Historic cakes will be available for sale.

Noon – 4:00PM - **Caryl House and Fisher Barn** – 107 Dedham Street

"From Flax to Linen" & "18th century Barnyard Poultry" exhibits on display.

Powisset Farm will be selling organic produce picked fresh that morning.

Field Day - Games start at 2:30PM. Old-fashioned children's games including tug-a-war, three-legged race, potato-sack race, and the infamous egg toss!

Checkers Champion -Come match wits with past state champion Richard White.

12:00 – 4:30PM – **Horseshoe Tournament** - American Legion Hall

New last year and oh so fun we've brought back again – call 785-9878 for more info.

2:30PM – **Hodgson House Walking Tour** – Hodgson Garden Shed on Sawin

Property. Two tours led by Paul Tedesco – call 785-1933 to sign up (limited to 10).

4:45PM - **Ceremony for Disposal of Unserviceable Flags** - American Legion Hall

Music provided by Chickering School's Chorus. Bring a flag for disposal.

5:30PM – **Old Fashioned Grange Supper** - American Legion, 32 Dedham Street

Ham & Turkey with Bean Supper catered by Dover raised Geoff Janowski owner of Blue Ribbon BarBQ! Come one come all - \$12 Adults & \$8 Seniors/Children. For supper reservations call Heather Hodgson at 785-1977 or oldhomeday@comcast.net.