

DOVER TIDINGS

Holiday 2010



Volume X No. 3

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Editor

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

The Dover Historical Society

invites you to a

Holiday Open House

Sunday, December 5, 2009

at the

Benjamin Caryl House

107 Dedham Street, Dover

2 pm - 4 pm

*Electa Kane Tritsch will be at the Holiday Open House to sign copies of the long awaited reissue of Richard Hart Vara's history of Dover, **Dover Days Gone By.***

Edited by Ms. Tritsch and updated with over 120 new pages of fascinating tales, detail and illustrations of Dover.

Limited edition hardbound copies are \$100 and softcover copies are \$25 each.

Seasonal Music by Diane and Michael Jones

For boys and girls: Make a winter treat for your feathered friends with Olivia Tedesco

Period Refreshments

The President's Message

Explorers of town property may have hiked the cart path leading from Strawberry Hill Street to the 66 acre Larrabee-Whiting Estate. While all that remains of Thomas Larrabee's farm house is a cellar hole, our erstwhile Town Historian Frank Smith tells us that it was built by Larrabee's fellow veterans upon his return from the Revolutionary War in 1778. In 1865 the property was willed by his son Deacon Joseph Larrabee "to the inhabitants of Dover forever for the relief, comfort, and benefit of the poor persons who have a legal settlement in Dover."

Deacon Larrabee's language is revealing in its precision as Massachusetts law required a town to support only those paupers who were either born within its limits or who had "acquired a settlement" therein. While the so-called "settlement laws" were exceedingly complex and changed over time, a legal settlement was generally attained by marriage, parentage, birth, or being a citizen of Massachusetts or another state with an estate having a certain principal value or yearly income. Prior to 1780 legal settlement could also be attained by virtue of slavery. Settled paupers were thus a town responsibility, overseen either by the Selectmen or a Board of Overseers.

In order to ensure that transient individuals did not become a financial burden upon the community, the Selectmen issued "warnings out". On August 21, 1784 the Selectmen of Dover issued their warrant to Constable Theodore Newell to warn out one Joseph Senaah, then boarding at the home of James Draper. The warning notes that "said Joseph Senaah being reputed to be born at Natick in the County of Middlesex, about 23 years ago, and to have gained a legal residence in Barre with his parents since that time...is now unable to support himself by reason of weakness and bodily infirmity, and is not admitted to be an inhabitant or [to have] gained a legal residence in said Dover." The intention was not so much to force these transient individuals to leave as to make it clear that in the event of illness or injury the town would not be responsible for their care.

In 1817 the Town purchased the William Bacon property on Pine Street for use as an alms house, but this arrangement does not appear to have lasted long as in 1821 it was voted "that paupers be put out at auction to those who will take them on best terms excepting those as in the opinion of the overseers could not be put up at auction for the advantage of the district." This practice, knowing as venduing the poor, was common to New England and entailed the auction not of the individuals themselves, but of responsibility for their care and keeping to the lowest bidder. The auction was held at the Williams Tavern on March 19th, 1821.

It must have been a troubling prospect for the community in that it seems to have happened only once. Smith notes that in later years the board of overseers of the poor chose to provide financial support within private families or through a monthly allowance.

I would like to remind members that nominations are now being accepted for the Society's Preservation Award. Details are available on our website doverhistoricalsociety.org and at the Dover Library.

As always, I thank you for your continued interest and support.

Elisha Lee

An Elixir for Local History



Historic houses and living history museums have not fared well in recent years. Add the current economic downturn, and it is easy to imagine local history going the way of the Passenger Pigeon. And yet, in Dover we are basking in a renaissance of sorts, rather like getting a hefty dose of Lydia Pinkham's Vegetable Compound. Pinkham herself is an amusing piece in Massachusetts history, noted less for her elixir to combat female complaints than for the mass marketing techniques that made it famous and her rich. Her recipe became one of the most successful patent medicines of the 19th century, reaching its zenith just in time to rescue the Pinkham family from financial ruin in another pretty significant financial downturn – the Panic of 1873.

Our elixir is that Doverites continue to do local history. For starters, this month we celebrate the new edition of Dick Vara's *Dover Days Gone By*. This hugely ambitious project has been propelled by love and a firm conviction that continuing to tell Dover's story is important to our community. And with this issue of Tidings comes a new entry in our Historical Insights series, "Doctor George Caryl's Medicines," the work of Priscilla Pitt Jones and Kendrick Jones, and supported by the Dover Cultural Council.

Might you have latent interest in becoming a more active friend of local history? Have you ever thought you might want to "do" history? Here is medicine that might be useful in fueling the little flames within. The dosage is conservative and highly palatable. And the prescription has unlimited refills.

- Help us in our interpretive and teaching functions by developing exhibits for Sawin, Caryl or Fisher. Our own collections deserve to be mined for new insights. And we have an obligation to the community to keep telling new stories.

- Read local/regional history avocationally. Those afflicted with the bug will find some wonderful opportunities to indulge your passions. You can find full-text digitized versions of a surprising number of Dover-related secondary sources, exploring them on your trusty laptop in the comfort of your home. Have the intestinal fortitude for the History of Norfolk County 1622-1918? Just go to www.archive.org.

- Examine historic graphic images and primary documents for fun. You can spend hours with the 238 primary documents made accessible by Old Sturbridge Village. (www.osv.org/explore_learn) Or maybe you'd rather read John Quincy Adams' diary online thanks to the Massachusetts Historical Society. (I warn you that it is not entirely scintillating, e.g., "The weather has cleared up." 12/2/1779.) (www.masshist.org) They also have a wonderful tool for reading original documents online; you might want to use it with their fascinating sources dealing with the end of slavery in Massachusetts. (<http://www.masshist.org/endofslavery/?queryID=50>) I also love the website of Historic New England. They have made an enormous effort to make their collections accessible online. (<http://www.historicnewengland.org>)

- Help save local history before it slips away. Photographers "do" history by documenting and thus preserving the present. Good listeners with curiosity and patience "do" history by collecting and faithfully transcribing oral histories from life-long residents. Those who support local and regional preservation and conservation efforts "do" history, as do folks who offer to the DHS artifacts of Dover's past that fill critical holes in our collections.

- Support historic houses, living history museums and other historical sites. Bring your kids; bring your house guests. Go often.

- Support with your presence the faithful docents who deliver a memorable and joyous Caryl House Holiday Party year after year. Joining in the festivities is a splendid way to usher in the holiday season. Please become part of this lovely tradition.

Next time I will suggest some online resources for those who think they might want to "do" history in the conventional sense – researching and writing on historical subjects. In the meantime, best wishes for a wonderful holiday season.

Barbara Palmer
Caryl House Curator

The Fisher Barn

This time of year presented a vast number of important tasks for our agricultural forefathers. The harvesting of crops and preparation for the long winter was serious work and there was precious little time for leisure activities. Once the harvest was complete, attention was drawn to the creation and maintenance of household and barn tools that were instrumental to keeping the household in working order.

The Fisher Barn is filled with items that are fine examples of the ingenuity required to utilize the resources available to maintain the homestead. Visitors to the Barn quite often view an item on display and inevitably ask, "what's this used for?"

A few of the items that are frequently inquired about are listed below. Would you know what they are used for?

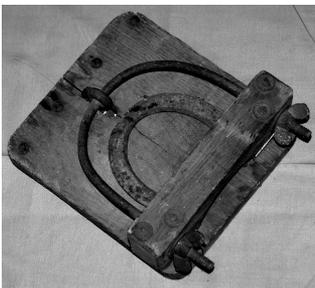


What's this used for?

This is a hay knife! Loose hay would be stacked up to perhaps 200 feet high. Rather than trying to dig it out with a fork, in many instances they would cut it, slice through it to free it up. This design came into use during the second half of the 19th century.

What are these used for?

These are Sheep Shears! These hand forged tools may have been locally made and were used for shearing sheep and perhaps grass. The estimated age of use for these shears is between 1700 and 1800.



What's this?

These are fine examples of Meadow Shoes! Designed to keep horses from becoming mired in the local bogs and mud filled fields. A horseshoe mounted on a square wooden base with metal hoops designed to hold the horse hoof in place. The hoop was tightened with two thumb screws.

There are many items on display like these examples that can be seen at the Fisher Barn. All are welcomed to come and visit and ask, "what are these?"

Jack Hoehlein
Fisher Barn Curator

Sawin Museum

In anticipation of the publishing of the Final Edition, the "Dover Days Gone By" exhibit is finally in place. Old Home Day was a fabulous success, with almost 170 people coming to see the exhibit !!! We would love to have EVERYONE in Dover come in to see the exhibit, so if you haven't been in yet, please do make the time to visit in the Spring.

Sawin Museum is pleased to report that we have some wonderful new volunteers working with us on some of our projects.

Most recently, we have two DS high school students, Katrina Brace and Ollie Luey, making great headway in digitizing our clothing collection. They come in weekly, and have been staging the clothes and taking pictures which will, ultimately, need to be loaded into our museum software, along with documenting information. The pictures are however, a step in further documenting our clothing collection and we are very pleased to have their dedicated assistance. Ben Brea's Eagle Scout project involving the transcription of the Reverend Benjamin Caryl sermons continues, and is making considerable progress. That said, there is still a need for volunteers, so please hook up on the website to help, or, see if one of the transcription sessions at the Library fits into your schedule. The website is: www.benjaminacarylsermons.net. Go online and see if you can assist Ben in his endeavor.

We have, also, made great connections with the Girl Scouts and, most recently, the Boy Scouts. After some discussions with both groups, many new and interesting ideas have been generated and are under consideration. These ideas include some scouts doing their own genealogy and providing these to the Dover Historical Society to document their family's history and their presence in Dover.

We welcome ALL Dover families to explore their roots and to provide DHS with the information. This will result in the need for some more volunteers to input some of these histories in the computer system, so opportunities for computer work are still very much available. We have other potential opportunities for the students, as well, to do baking for the Great Historical Cake Sale in June and October, possible thespian opportunities doing living history, lots of research opportunities for school papers, and even some landscaping opportunities in the spring. There are some other very exciting opportunities which are being considered, and we are looking forward to announcing them in the future.

We have opportunities for other young (or old) Dover citizens to be involved in our projects, or projects of their own interest, so, we suggest you think of some of your own, or call us and we can provide some guidance. These projects can be for either community service credits for students, or for personal edification on the part of others. We look forward to working with you on whatever you decide would fulfill your need to be involved in Dover's history.

Please call us at 508-785-1832 and leave a message if you would like to discuss any ideas you have as to how you would like to be involved. We look forward to speaking with you and assisting you with some question or issue for which you would like further information.

Fay Bacher

Sawin Museum Curator

Mark Your Calendar

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

Come to the Caryl House, 107 Dedham St. Enjoy festive decorations and seasonal music by Diane and Michael Jones. Boys and girls, make a winter treat for your feathered friends with Olivia Tedesco. Period refreshments will be served.

Saturday, Feb. 12th, 2011. Tour of the World War II Museum, 8 Mercer Road in Natick. The tour is set for 10 AM for the first 25 persons. A 10:30 AM tour is still open if the Society has more participants. Liability and policy forms must be signed by each participant. Checks for \$25 per person should be made payable to the World War II Museum. The museum is in the Natick Office Park located off the eastbound lane of Route 9 directly across from the Natick Collection Mall.

Thursday, March 31, 2011--7 PM- Annual Meeting of the Society at the Dover Library. Electa Kane Tritsch will speak on the long awaited reissue of Richard Hart Vara's history of Dover, *Dover Days Gone By*. Edited by Ms. Tritsch and updated with over 120 new pages of fascinating tales, details and illustrations of Dover.

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