

DOVER TIDINGS

Holiday 2008



Volume VIII No. 3

Susanne M. Knowles

Editor

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

invites you to a

Holiday Open House

Sunday, December 7, 2008

from 2:00 to 4:00 pm

at the

Benjamin Caryl House

107 Dedham Street, Dover

Seasonal Music by Diane and Michael Jones

Period Refreshments

Children's Activities with Olivia Tedesco

and Kate McNally

A Message from the President...

Dear Society Members:

Autumn is upon us and another busy and productive year is drawing to a close. On October 5th we celebrated our 7th annual Old Home Day, featuring expanded antique auto and craft shows, a banjo concert, and the traditional grange supper. Old Home Day has become a much loved celebration of all things Dover and I thank the many volunteers and sponsors who make it possible.

The Hodgson shed left to us by Toni Weathers has been restored and placed on the grounds of the Sawin Museum and we are grateful, both to Joe DeMarco for his skilled carpentry and to the many people who generously contributed to the preservation of this significant piece of Dover's history. We also appreciate the \$500 grant from the Dover Cultural Council. Visitors to the Caryl House will note, too, that we have a new garage.

Much remains to be done. As of this writing, we are emptying the basement of the Fisher Barn in preparation for the pouring of a new concrete floor for that structure. While historically correct, the existing dirt floor has proven to be a troublesome source of moisture and we hope that the new floor will eliminate the dampness while providing some badly needed storage space. In addition, Stan Adam's extraordinary model of the Dover Union Iron Works is now on display at the Sawin Museum and we are working with the Trustees of Reservations to add interpretational signage at the site of the actual structure in Noanet Woodlands. In the early years of the 19th century this seemingly insignificant structure housed a mill wheel that was 36 feet in diameter, one of the largest in the region and ultimately too large for the limited water power generated by Noanet Brook.

It is with great regret that we say goodbye to Glenda Mattes who, as Curator of the Sawin Museum, has worked tirelessly to catalogue our collections and ensure their proper storage and conservation. We are profoundly grateful for her dedication and hard work. We wish Glenda and Don well on their move to Boston and hope that they will be frequent visitors. At the same time we are delighted to welcome three new Board members, Fay Bacher (Acting Curator of the Sawin Museum), Nan Leonard (Programs), and Erika Lert (Buildings & Grounds).

There is much to be accomplished in the coming year and I urge those of you with an interest in the history of your community to join us. I look forward to seeing one and all at our annual Holiday Open House on December 7, 2008.

Elisha Lee
President

Caryl House

From 2 to 4 P.M. on Sunday, December 7, 2008, the Dover Historical Society will host the annual Holiday Open House at the Caryl House, 107 Dedham Street in Dover. As in past years the beautiful harpsichord made for Diane Jones by her late husband, Officer William Jones, will be brought to the Caryl House for the occasion and she and her son, Michael, will fill the rooms with the wonderful music of the season. Join us at this lovely social event to enjoy the music, the period refreshments, and the children's activities with Olivia Tedesco and Kate McNally.

Old Home Day at the Caryl House was very successful with a substantial increase in the number of visitors who toured the house, and both adults and children participated enthusiastically in the detective game which was originally designed for and is generally used by the children. The banjo music was moved from the house to the Fisher Barn and everyone who came was able to move about freely or just stop and visit while listening to the music. With grateful appreciation to the many people who contributed of their time and talent to support Old Home Day – our loyal docents, the ladies of the several garden clubs for the beautiful flower arrangements, Dennis Dowd, Jack Grennon, and Prudence Jones for the banjo concert – to name a few, we thank you.

Over the recent weeks the textiles – some very fine bed linens, quilts, coverlets, fragments of various woven materials including some pieces of the original bed hangings made by Sarah Messenger Kollock Caryl which served as a guide for the reproduction bed hangings on the bedstead in the Parlor – have been examined, evaluated, and transferred to the climate controlled Sawin Building for storage.

Spread over two days of morning and afternoon sessions – November 4th and 6th – the five second grade classes from the Chickering School came to the Caryl House to learn more about how a family like the Caryls lived, and what they used to heat and light their homes. Approximately 100 students attended these classes with Patti Howe and Priscilla Jones as part of the education program of the Dover Historical Society.

Dorothy Boylan

Caryl House Curator

Fisher Barn

For much of New England's agricultural history, barns such as the historic Fisher Barn in Dover were busy hubs of household activity during late November and into December. Crops had been harvested, meats had been cured and now it was time to prepare for the long winter season.

Part of this seasonal transition of work tasks included the preparation of flax to be spun into twine like thread fibers for spinning and looming. The flax to linen cloth process is a year long endeavor.

The steps of early spring planting, then stooking or harvesting the plant in early summer, and ripping or removing of the plant seeds in bench secures comb like structures have been completed. Also completed in mid to late summer was the process of retting. Retting was required to remove gummy like substances from the plant. This involved soaking the plants in stagnant water or retting ponds. Eventually, the man made ponds were drained back into the original water source, usually a nearby stream. The water from the retting pond became foul smelling and rancid, making the careful coordination and timing of such activities with your down-stream neighbors very important!

Now came the hard part! During this time of year, bundles of dried out and retted flax stalks (fodder) went through a "breaking" step. Typically a Flax Fodder Breaker was used to engage in this strenuous, loud and difficult work for breaking the outer flax straw away from the desired inner fibers. The fibers were then scutched, or drawing the fibers through coarse combs and beaten with paddles for the remaining straw to fall away and finally strung through hackles, yet another combing process. The inner fibers were then ready to be sorted and spun into the thread like fiber.

The final steps of breaking, scutching and hackling the flax plants were often done in the same spirit of corn husking or barn raising. It often called for early male settlers of the Dover area to gather at a neighbor's barn for a communal activity. It may not be a stretch to think that a supply of hard apple cider was on hand for these occasions. The Fisher Barn has a fine collection of tools used in this often forgotten, but critical process. An actual free standing Flax Fodder Breaker and examples of Hackles are on display.

Jack Hoehlein
Fisher Barn Curator

Sawin Museum

The volunteer team at Sawin has been very busy over the summer and early fall. The new exhibit, Amelia Peabody: Her Life and Works opened on schedule on Old Home Day, October 5. Thanks, especially, to Anna Lert, a sophomore at Dover-Sherborn High School, who set up the exhibit for us. We are happy to report that about fifty people saw the new exhibit on Old Home Day and that attendance has continued to be good.

Included in the new exhibit is the late Dick Vara's model of the Dover Union Iron Mill. Dick did extensive research on the DUIM site and the old mills of the early 19th century in general. He published a book about the DUIM and designed this model before his death in 2005. Stan Adams, who executed Dick's design has given the model to us and we are thrilled. It was last seen at the Fisher Barn on Old Home Day in 2003 when Dick was signing his book. We are very excited about this acquisition, as it shows one of the earliest examples of industrial activity in Dover. The site is located in Noanet Woodlands, which was given by Miss Peabody to The Trustees of Reservations. She was also instrumental in the restoration of the mill dam in the 1950's. If you haven't been to Sawin, be sure and stop by. If a Saturday isn't convenient, leave a message on the Sawin phone 785-1832 and someone will call you to arrange a tour at your convenience.

We are in discussions, initiated by Doug Adams, father of Stan Adams, with The Trustees of Reservations regarding the addition of interpretive signage to the Iron Mill site. We feel cooperation between DHS and TTOR has the potential to benefit both organizations and we are very excited about it.

Also, Shirley McGill has recently given us 2 beautiful silk quilts, likely made in Dover by her grandmother, Lilian ME Bond, who lived on Wilsondale St. in the late 1800's.



This gift prompted us to have a quilt expert, Vivien Sayre, come to appraise our quilt collection. In the process we discovered a fairly valuable Chickering family quilt from the early 19th century.

Last, but certainly not least, thanks to the work of Jim Hooper and Joe Marcus, we now have digital copies of all our old maps plus our World War I Liberty Bond posters and a number of Dick Vara's larger drawings. I am pleased to say that we can now offer copies of these historic maps to anyone who would like one of them for their home.



This will be my last update as curator of Sawin Museum. My husband and I are moving to Boston. I am turning the reins over to Fay Bacher as of January 1, 2009.

Glenda Mattes

Sawin Museum Curator

Key Telephone Numbers

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DHS Schedule of Events

Winter and Spring 2008-2009

Sunday, Dec. 7 -- 2 -4 pm -- Holiday Open House at Caryl House. Diane Jones and Michael Jones will provide seasonal music. Period refreshments will be served.

Tuesday, Feb. 3 -- 7 pm -- In the Community Room of the Dover Town Library. Diane Rapaport, award-winning author, will speak on, "The Naked Quaker: True Crimes and Controversies from the Courts of Colonial New England." This talk will bring local history to life with true court cases—amusing, poignant, shocking—about our feisty colonial ancestors. Snow date: February 10.

March -- Annual Meeting. Date to be announced.

Sunday, June 7 -- 2-4 pm --Annual Garden Party at the Caryl House.

All welcome ** No Charge ** For further information,, please contact Nan Leonard (508-785-0123). or nleonard11@aol.com.