

# Charlton Historical Society Newsletter

Fall, 2003

Volume 28, Number 2

News for Historical Society Members

## Important Charlton Artifacts Conserved!

- Donald H. Weinhardt

As with many communities, prior to their creation of a local historical society, Town government or the Library becomes the repository of historical artifacts. Such was the case here in Charlton, with the Historical Society only being organized in 1963.

The Board of Directors of the Historical Society became aware, in 2002, that there were three artifacts in the possession of the Library, that were in dire need of repair and conservation. One of these was an oil painting the other two were samplers and each was about 170 years old. I was authorized, by our BOD, to contact the Director and Trustees of the Charlton Library, and propose that we borrow these three items. We will research each one, and have them repaired and conserved by professional people in the respective skills, and it will be done at our expense. The Library Trustees approved this proposal at their December 2002 meeting.

Why are these items worthy of our attention and expense? The oil painting is one of Major John Spurr, born in 1783, to General John Spurr and Mercy Dunbar. General John Spurr, among all his accomplishments is remembered as "one of the party which threw overboard the British tea in Boston Harbor". General John Spurr made his first purchase of land in Charlton in 1788, and he became a very large landowner. Major John, the subject of the portrait, was a Major in the militia, justice of the peace, Representative and State Senator from Charlton, and a member of the Constitutional Convention of 1820. He also ran a store and managed a hotel in Charlton Center. In later life he became a farmer, he died in Charlton in 1863. The surviving portrait is not signed but based on the subject's age and attire, it probably dates to circa 1835.

The first of the two samplers was wrought by Mary A. Town, when she was aged 15, it is dated 1833, Charlton Mass. Mary A. Town was born Oct. 12, 1818, to Thomas Town and Sally, per the listing in Charlton, Mass. Vital Records. Thomas Town was a descendant from William Town, as was Salem Town, they are distant cousins. Thus two separate branches of the Town Family tree, both settled in Charlton. Thomas Town is listed in the Federal census of 1800, his house was on Richardson Corner Road, and still stands today.

The second sampler was wrought by Sally Nichols Twiss, in 1830, when she was 24 years old. She was born in Charlton. This sampler is a family record for her parents



Sampler created by Sally Nichols Twiss in 1830 shown before conservation work was performed

and siblings, showing birth, marriage and death dates up to the time the sampler was created. Moses first shows up in the 1790 Federal census of Charlton.

In February both of these samplers were delivered to the Textile Conservation Center of the American Textile History Museum at Lowell, MA. The Spurr oil painting conservation was performed by Caroline Adams Frey of North Kingstown, RI.

When estimates came back for this work, it was considerably beyond our expectation. The Friends of the Charlton Library, hearing this, stepped in with a sizeable donation, which was greatly appreciated.

Two of the items required new frames, and two beautiful frames were a donation from Jim Hipkiss and Peg O'Connor, owners of Framer's Gallery in Auburn and New England Graphics in Sturbridge. We thank them both for their on going support.

Please stop by Rider Tavern, on Charlton History Day, Sunday, Oct. 19, from 12 noon until 4 p.m. to see the completed items on display. Aimee Newell, curator for Textiles and Fine Arts, for Old Sturbridge Village, will be on hand to talk about the samplers.

## The Decorating Committee

- Joyce Stewart

The fall of 2003 is upon us and the painting has begun! After much consideration and investigation work, the decorating plan for the Black Mantel room and Southeast Bedchamber has been completed and work is in progress. The Black Mantel room had its challenges with four doors in a small space that has been altered several times. We decided to repaint the walls, woodwork and doors with the colors found under several layers of paint (circa 1820-40's). This space will serve as a display area for several of the past prominent families from Charlton (Dresser, Spurr, Town). A grant from the Charlton Cultural Council and Mass Cultural Council supported a replication of the original Harvey Dresser lion fireboard painted by local artist Inez Gornall. This stunning folk art piece will be the focal point in the Black Mantel room. The 1830's original is privately owned and has been displayed at the Boston Fine Arts Museum at the Folk Art Exhibit - 1999-2000 and has been documented in Nina Fletcher Little's books.

Decoration was achieved by the use of paint in varying ways. We will be featuring many techniques of painting (stenciling, free hand painting and graining) in the Black Mantel room and the Southeast Bedchamber. The Bedchamber has the base colors of gray on the woodwork found under the layers of paint. The walls will have the color scheme and design of the McIntire/Bond home located in Charlton. The hard work of Cindy, Nate and Pat Cheever, Cindy Cooper, Glenn Ellis, Harry Howard, Don and Carol Weinhardt have pushed these projects along to the current status. We are very pleased to share our progress (or regression) of decoration in these rooms with all who visit!

Located below the Bedchamber is the Parlor on the Widow's Third side of the tavern. It has received simple swag curtains fashioned out of a period print design in gold and blue. An appropriate room to receive the elegant and fashionable indulgence of window dressing. We are still in search of period appropriate furnishings for this space and welcome any leads on potential candidates!

## Revisiting Old Techniques

-Claudia Lacerte

This summer Joyce Stewart, Cindy Cheever and Claudia Lacerte enrolled in classes at the Fletcher Farm School for Art and Crafts in Vermont. Joyce and Claudia were interested in learning the art of vinegar graining and plan to use their knowledge to restore a few pieces of furniture that are at the Tavern using the original graining methods. Cindy chose to expand her skills at spinning. She will find many ways to use her talents to add spun and woven textiles to the Tavern. There will be a display set up at History Day. We hope you come by and ask questions and take a look at the "before" pieces, and come again next year to see the "after"!

## Property Committee Report

- Donald H. Weinhardt

This is a summary of just some of the artifact and archival items donated to the Charlton Historical Society since January 2003:

Richard H. Green, Spencer - a slip of paper, to Deacon Daniel Bacon, from Town clerk Isaiah Rider, dated November 10, 1799, announcing an intention of marriage between Matthew Clap of Charlton and Susanna Ryon of Sturbridge, 14 copies of the periodical "The New England Galaxy", book, "The Story of My Childhood" by Clara Barton, 1907 (Clara taught school in Charlton); Kathy Meyerdieck, East Brookfield - a costume, the vest and coat part of a British military uniform representing the 64th Light Infantry of Foot; Bill Hultgren, Charlton - 2 early school text books, an early prayer book, an ironstone plate, white body blue edge, Leeds pattern; Don Weinhardt, Charlton - book, "American Wall Stenciling, 1790-1840" by Ann Eckert Brown 2003 (the book includes two pages dedicated to the Rider Tavern); Claudia Lacerte, Oakham - six hard cover books dealing with the subjects of architecture and decoration of New England Homes, black glass, onion style bottle, probably a repro from Jamestown, VA, for use in the barroom; Shirley S. Baer, Norwell - three copies of the periodical journal "The Decorator", published by The Historical Society of Early American Decoration, Inc. This issue Vol. 57 No.1 features the Rider Tavern. (Shirley Baer is the editor); Harvey Flanders, Auburn - a newspaper clipping from the "National Aegis", dated April 25, 1826, advertising an auction, of Rider Tavern by it's then owner Richard Stone. This item was then matted and framed by Frank Morrill, Charlton.

Old Sturbridge Village, with Frank G. White, curator, facilitating the donation - 14 pieces of silver plate flatware from the "Overlook" hotel. (Now Masonic Home) These items were originally given to OSV by the Wells family. OSV kept a sample for their collections; Cindy Cheever, Paxton - a stoneware bottle for the barroom; Joseph A. Craig, New Braintree - 9 pairs of very early spectacles, some very unusual, 21 pieces of tableware, both knives and forks, very early, from the donor's great grandfather's farm in Sturbridge, they will be used in the barroom; Carol Jones, South Royalton, VT - small pewter tray with sugar and creamer, small brass scoop candle holder, heart shaped dough cutter: Sara Hunt, New Braintree - early wood knife tray with turned handle, also for use in barroom.

Kevinetta C O'Brien, Charlton - Kevinetta continues to add a significant amount of material, in quantity and quality, to our history and genealogy archives. During this reporting time period she has added 61 books, booklets and leaflets as well as clippings, photos, slides etc. In addition she has donated 13 Photo album/scrap books for 13 years of her 3rd grade classes in both the City Grade School and Heritage School, also a wood peg from the No. 2 Schoolhouse, a cricket stool from the Tucker farm auction, and a pressed glass Lafayette cup plate.

Thank you all for helping to preserve Charlton's past.

Also, be aware that the CHS historical library and

archive collection is presently being organized in new-dedicated space in the west wing of the building. Hopefully in about one year, we will be able to open the collection for use by people researching local history and genealogy. To that end, if you have any locally historically significant material, that you would like to donate, please contact me at 248-1632.

## Charlton History Day **PAST EVENT** Sunday October 19<sup>th</sup> from 12-4 PM - Glenn Ellis

Take a step back in time and enjoy the afternoon as costumed interpreters guide you through three historic sites in Charlton's Old Northside Village.

Tour the 204 year old Rider Tavern, located at 255 Stafford Street in the Old Northside Village, and see the completed and on going restorations of the 15 rooms inside as well as the period gardens outside. Early crafts such as chair rushing, basket making and spinning will be demonstrated as well. Enjoy period music in the Widow's Garden provided by the Heritage String Band. Browse the Historical Society's Gift Shop "The Widow's Third" and check out the wonderful selection of handcrafted items and various periodicals on local history. Bill Hultgren, the author of "Images of America, Charlton" will be on hand to sign copies of his book which will be also be available for purchase.

Relax and enjoy an afternoon Colonial Tea in the Tavern Ballroom. Costumed interpreters will be serving the Tavern's own blend of herbal tea and freshly baked gingerbread with old fashioned whipped cream. (A donation of \$5 is requested for the tea)

Across the street in the Militia Lot join the Jeremiah Eames' Rangers as they show the typical 18th century military activity of militia mustering and training. This unit will display weapons and equipment of the Revolutionary War era and explain the role of local militia in this important part of our history. Members will explain what a militiaman wore, used, and carried as he performed his civic duty. The re-created Eames' Rangers consists of many "veteran" reenactors from throughout New England and New York who participate in various living history activities at sites throughout the northeast.

Further down Northside Road is the #2 Schoolhouse. There will be costumed interpreters telling stories of what it was like to attend school in a one-room schoolhouse. Tours of this building will be available as well.

The Charlton Heritage Preservation Trust will be sponsoring the Third Annual Scare Crow Contest in the Old Store Lot across from the Tavern. Contact Lisa Westwell at 248-5121 for entry details.

All festivities, excluding the Tea, are free of charge. Sponsored by the Charlton Historical Society, Friends of the #2 Schoolhouse, The Charlton Heritage Preservation Trust and the Town of Charlton.

## Membership Update:

- Glenn Ellis

Please take a look at the address label on this newsletter to check your membership status. If it contains the following message, "Membership Status: 2003 Dues are due" Please complete the coupon in this newsletter and return it to us with your payment. As you know, your dues are used to continue the preservation of Charlton's history. At \$5 for an individual membership and \$10 for a family it is one of the best deals in town! We are always working to expand our membership and word of mouth is one of the best ways. If you know someone who is new to town, let them know of the benefits of being a member of the society!

The society is solely funded through private and corporate contributions as well as local grants. We do not receive any funding through local taxes. All contributions are tax deductible. We keep our membership dues low in order to include all that are interested. We rely on the generosity of those that can afford more to help us by including a tax-deductible contribution with their membership application. We would like to thank all of you who have contributed in the past and those of you who are considering it now!

Reminder: If your mailing address changes, please let us know. If your newsletter is returned and we do not have your correct address you will be dropped from the mailing list. If you have any questions concerning your membership status, please contact Glenn Ellis at 508 248-7913.

## Meet your Board of Directors

-Glenn Ellis

The following Charlton Historical Society Members were elected to the Board of Directors at our June Annual Meeting:

### Officers:

President – Donald Weinhardt

Vice President – Glenn Ellis

Treasurer – Joyce Stewart

Correspond Secretary – Ken Amend

Clerk – Cindy Cheever

### Members at Large

Curtis Abbott

William Hultgren

LeeAnn Amend

Claudia Lacerte

Cindy Cooper

Virginia Lawler

Barbara Dean

Cindy Ricard

Harry Howard

Kathleen Walker

We need your help!

Have you ever considered becoming a member of the board? We meet monthly at the Tavern to discuss and vote on Tavern restoration projects, event planning and other society business.

Working with the Historical Society to preserve the history of Charlton is a great way to meet new people and give something back to your community. You can include your phone number with your membership renewal coupon and we will get in touch. Or call Don Weinhardt at 508 248-1632 or Glenn Ellis at 508 248-7913.

**Charlton Historical Society**  
**P.O. Box 252**  
**Charlton, MA. 01507**

*Address Correction Requested*

U.S.POSTAGE  
Charlton, MA

## *Charlton Historical Society Newsletter*

**Membership Form**, Please complete the coupon and mail it with your check to the address provided

**Charlton Historical Society**  
**P.O Box 252**  
**Charlton, Massachusetts 01507**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Type of Membership     **Individual \$5.00**     **Family \$10.00**     **Life \$50.00**

**2003 Renewal**     **New Member**

I do not care to join the CHS at this time. However, I would like to make a donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to volunteer at an event or be a member of the Board of Directors. Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_