

Charlton Historical Society Newsletter

Fall 2005

Volume 30, Number 2

News for Charlton Historical Society Members

Charlton History Day

By Cindy Cooper

The Rider Tavern is the setting for discovering the town's past, as costumed volunteers and informative displays provide insight into the lives of local residents in the 1800s. Thanks to loans from Old Sturbridge Village, the Willard Clock Museum, and private collections you will be able to view more Charlton artifacts than ever, including some paintings by one Charlton artist who became nationally recognized (with a few of his works listed at the Smithsonian). Demonstrations of rug hooking and weaving complement the displays of samplers and quilts, providing examples of the many tasks the women performed. Children will be invited to play the imaginative games of the day.

Be sure to view the displays of Charlton events from 50 and 100 years ago. Fifty years ago, Charlton was poised to celebrate the town's 200th anniversary. Major events were planned for early October. Then, the devastating flood of 1955 struck the area. Glen Echo Lake gushed into Charlton City with such tremendous force that huge houses moved off their foundations and business structures were reduced to rubble. This pictorial account of the tragic event says so much more than words can describe. Also look for the memorabilia from the anniversary event that was canceled as a result of the flood.

Also on display will be a vintage photograph exhibition, "The Children of Charlton," with pictures dating from the 1890s through the 1920s. These charming photos are from the Charlton Historical Society archive collection, and represent many local family names. The display will be complemented by presentation of children's toys and other artifacts from the time period. A display of the newly donated 1910 Sanborn map of Charlton Center will include views of the buildings around the common consistent with that time period.

During the one hundred years since Dexter Memorial Hall was dedicated, the building that now houses the library has served a variety of functions. It has been the center of local government offices, a location for town meetings, used for schoolrooms, and

provided the high school with a basketball court in the upper meeting hall. The display highlighting this structure shows both interior and exterior pictures of the building over the years. The facade of the building has remained constant, but the vehicles and landscape have certainly changed!

Outside, the Heritage String Band will provide a background of period songs, while you meander among the flower gardens. The Militia Lot across the street will host a military encampment, including a Revolutionary War cannon and musket fire.

Amid all the activity, take time to relax in the ballroom. For a \$5 donation, costumed volunteers will serve you the Tavern's own blend of herbal tea, and freshly baked gingerbread with old-fashioned whipped cream.

In the process of experiencing all this, take note of the changes at the Tavern in the past year. The first thing you notice is the hand-painted tavern sign hanging from gallows-style posts, made possible by a grant from the Charlton Cultural Council and the Massachusetts Cultural Council. One bedchamber has been hand-stenciled using a pattern found at an historic house in Charlton. A room off the ballroom has been converted to a display gallery. Another room has become the "Widow's Third" Gift Shop, where you will have the opportunity purchase Charlton history books and handcrafted items. The taproom project is a work-in-progress. A grant from the Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor, Inc., combined with local donations and volunteer labor, will result in the professional reconstruction of the early fireplace hearth and mantle.

Don't miss out on all the fun at this free event. Come to the Rider Tavern, 255 Stafford St., on Sunday, October 16, 2005, between noon and 4:00 p.m. to "Celebrate Charlton!"



Property Committee Report

By Don Weinhardt, Archivist

This is a summary of just some of the artifact and archival items donated to the Charlton Historical Society since our last newsletter in Spring 2004.

Cindy Cheever, Paxton - Yarn winder, reel type, wood with iron crank handle; **William Hultgren**, Charlton - Three different bound reports dealing with the appraisal and the self help grant application, the Town of Charlton prepared for the purchase of the Fay Mountain Farm, a framed print, water colored, 8½" x 12", the subject is General Marquis de Lafayette with drawn sword mounted on horseback. The printed caption, in part, is M. Le Marquis DE LA FAYETTE. / Commandant - general de la garde national et Citoyenne de la ville Paris. The print has been backed, matted and framed by Frank Morrill.; **Ruth Anderson**, Charlton - Some obsolete items previously used at the Charlton City Post Office, hand held precancel stamp device, wood change box c. 1895, large paper clip, c. 1895, hand held paper hole punch, letter opener and a hand held weighing device with ruler.

John Henry Bogie, Worcester - Soup plate, white ceramic, possibly French porcelain. Provenance as per the accompanying letter: "This is an authentic piece of French porcelain which would have been in daily use in either the late 18th century or early 19th century. It was purportedly used by the Marquis de Lafayette when he dined in at a plantation in the area of Selma/Camden, Alabama along the banks of the Alabama River." (note - Lafayette was visiting in this area of Alabama on April 7th and 8th in 1825); **David G. Alter**, Ellington, Connecticut - Sanborn maps, set of seven, produced and copyrighted by the Sanborn Map Company, New York, dated Nov. 1910. These maps are of Charlton, Worcester County, Massachusetts and include detail drawings of Charlton Center, Charlton City, Charlton Depot, Dodge, and the Overlook Hotel.

Harry R. Howard, Charlton - Photo, b & w, 8" x 10", 1911 view of the house at 63 Main Street, Charlton, shown seated in the foreground are four members of the Lewis A. McIntire family, set of seven 3" x 5", color photos, showing renovations to the house at 63 Main Street dated September 1991; **Marjorie Barrows**, Sterling, New York - The program for the Graduation Exercises, Class of 1905, Charlton Grammar Schools dated June 16th., this gift came to us via the Auburn Historical Society; **Winifred Ewing**, Charlton - A collection of photo snapshots, b & w, varying sizes, mostly taken around the "Common" in Charlton Center. They are of people buildings, activities and pets and date from about 1900 until 1940, there are about 118 in total, also a program, "Twenty Seventh Annual Graduation Exercises of Charlton High School", class of 1935, Dexter Memorial Hall, June 20, 1935; **Arthur A. Bellerive**, Charlton - Sign, cardboard, orange

and black, this was a directional sign to be used at the Town's 200th Anniversary in 1955, the celebration was canceled because of the devastating flood.

Christine McTigue, Charlton - Photo, b & w, 8" x 10", c. 1948, the subject is the Fred Eastman house which was located on City-Depot until the house was disassembled and moved, in part, to Brimfield, also a photo, 4" x 5" of Fred Eastman on the porch of the above listed house; **Daniel Dano**, Charlton - Photo, color, 8½" x 11", printed on an oilcloth like fabric, subject is a militia man reenactor sitting in the Militia lot with Rider Tavern in the background; **Sandra Dam**, Charlton - A framed photo, b & w, 11" x 14", the subject is a Reunion at the District 11 Schoolhouse on Brookfield Road. The date and attendees are unknown to us, can anyone help?

Frank Tessier, Charlton - Photos, four, color, 3" x 5", subject is the festivities of Old Home Day on Sept. 5, 2005; State Senator, **Stephen M. Brewer** - Photographic copies of pages from ledgers in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts archives, the subjects are the creation of the District of Charlton in 1755 and the annexation of "Country Gore" to the District of Charlton in 1757.

Also note, the archive and library re-organization is moving forward, and very good progress has been made. If you have, or know someone who has, any locally significant historical material and is looking for a good permanent home for it, please contact me at 248-1632.

Special thanks here to Armand Besette for totally refurbishing the metal Rider Tavern sign and to Frank Morrill for his donation of a heavy-duty metal easel.

Summer Series

The Rider Tavern was the place to be this summer for a series of slide show and lectures in celebration of Charlton's 250th anniversary. Don Weinhardt's two presentations pleased a packed room each time he displayed one of the historic houses built before 1840 on the screen. Kevinetta O'Brien and Cindy Cooper told stories of each of the district schools, while explaining the social and cultural context of education over the years. Joyce Stewart shared surviving views of early stenciled, free hand painted, and grain painted decorative techniques from featured Charlton and West Sutton homes, and discussed speculation on the artists involved in creating these patterns on the walls. Using evidence from letters, receipts, probate inventories, portraits and the clothes themselves, Aimee Newell lead an exploration of the clothing that our ancestors wore 200 years ago. Ruth Schwendeman provided a program on early taverns, including the people who ran them and what their customers ate, drank, and did at these centers of community. The final program, by Bill Hultgren, described General Lafayette's historic visit through Charlton in 1824.

Historical Appeal

OOPS! We apologize...

Due to an inadvertent error, we neglected to provide a complete list of donors to the 2004 Charlton Historical Society Annual Appeal. We deeply appreciate the donations of the following members:

Kevinetta O'Brien

Margaret O'Connor and Jim Hipkiss

Doug Quigley

Armand and Lucille Richards

Stefan and Nancy Sage

Erik and Ruth Schwendeman

Florence and John Shaw

Joyce Stewart

Frank V. Toscano

Donald H. and Carol A. Weinhardt

Thanks to the generosity of all of our 2004 annual appeal donors, we raised over \$2,400 to support the Historical Society's activities in 2005 – the 250th anniversary year of our town. Again, thank you for your support and our apologies for inadvertently shortening the list in the last newsletter.

Thank You

A Big Thank You to our Corporate Donors!

The following corporate donors contributed over \$2,500 to the Charlton Historical Society in 2005. These donations have helped us to put on our summer lecture series and to perform necessary maintenance at the Rider Tavern. Please help us thank them by patronizing these businesses.

Silver Corporate Members:

Country Bank

Curtis K. Abbott Company, Inc.

Flexcon

Hyde Dexter Russell Charitable Fund

Karl Storz Endovision

Southbridge Savings Bank

Walmart

Bronze Corporate Members:

Alliance Realty

Cronin Cabinets

Envirosafe Foam Insulation

New England Graphics

Village Photo

Webster First Federal Credit Union

Garden Report

By Ruth Schwendeman

With a wet spring, dry September, and the inevitable garden losses that go with having the building exterior painted, it's been an interesting season at the Tavern! But there are a couple of bright spots to report. The newly planted dooryard garden at the building's entrance, filled with heat and drought-tolerant lamb's ear and sedum, seems to have taken off. And the year-old west terrace garden has made a nice show this summer, with its combination of black-eyed Susans, bee balm, nasturtium, and perennial geranium. Of course New England's best garden display is yet to come. Join us on History Day, Sunday, October 16, for the glorious fall foliage as well as the special fun and festivities at the Tavern.

WET PAINT

...describes the sign that could have been erected at the Rider Tavern for the past three months. Periodic painting of the tavern is required in order to both restore its historic integrity inside and maintain the exterior of the building. Volunteers have been busy with all the painting projects this year. The entry hall has a fresh coat, creating a wonderful first impression to match the quality work throughout. The stenciling in the east bedchamber is complete, reproducing an authentic Charlton design found in a house on Bond Road. Two rooms off the ballroom have received a fresh outlook: the "Widow's Third" Gift Shop has been painted from ceiling to floor, and a decorative stencil applied around the top; the former doctor's office has been transformed into a display gallery, with the stroke of a brush on the walls and floor offering a new perspective on the room. The front and east sides of the building were professionally painted. The other two sides also need to be painted, but will not be done until more money is raised.

Clean Sweep

Are you doing some fall cleaning? Don't know what to do with all those items that are still in wonderful condition but you no longer have room for them? Donate them to the Charlton Historical Society for the yard sale. You know your item will be sold to help raise funds for on-going maintenance, and you may be able to deduct the value of the item from your taxes! Contact Don Weinhardt at 508-248-1632.

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

Membership Form

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

Name _____ **Date** _____

Address _____

Type of Membership:

____ **Individual \$5.00**

____ **Family \$10.00**

____ **Life \$50.00**

____ **Renewal**

____ **New Member**

I would like to volunteer at an event or be a member of the board of directors. Phone _____

____ **Enclosed is a donation of \$** _____

Comments: _____