

Charlton Historical Society Newsletter

Spring, 2004

Volume 29, Number 1

News for Historical Society Members

Harvey Dresser - Unsolved Mysteries

-Donald H. Weinhardt

Harvey Dresser is the subject of this piece, since we are presently having a fireboard replicated for the Rider Tavern that is attributed to his hand and the original was found at his home. Harvey was considered a man of remarkable business ability. He began his business life as a painter, and rapidly extended his operations to the manufacture of furniture, carts, wagons, sleighs, and chaises; harness for same and various descriptions of iron work for same.

Richard, his grandfather, with his wife Dorothy settled that area of Charlton now known as Dresser Hill. Richard was from Thompson, Connecticut and in 1735 purchased 200 acres on this hilltop. Charlton, as a Town, still did not exist, and this land was part of the Town of Oxford. Richard and Dorothy had 13 children, the first 6 are listed as born in Oxford, the remaining 7 are listed as born in Charlton, as the Town of Charlton was created in 1755. Moses, the father of our subject, was born in 1755 and thus is the first child listed as born in Charlton. Moses and an older brother Reuben, for reasons unknown to me, left Charlton and settle in Chesterfield, Massachusetts. In 1777, Moses returns home to marry his childhood sweetheart, Abigail Blood. They marry in Dudley, probably in the church that Moses was baptized in. He and his bride return to Chesterfield, where records show they have 4 children. In 1788 Moses sells his property in Chesterfield and purchases his father's farm on Dresser Hill. He also builds a new house for his family. (Present day 3 Schoolhouse No. 6 Road) This house also became the home of Harvey Dresser and his family.

While trying to create this biographical sketch of our subject, several questions became apparent and we can use the help of anyone with knowledge on any of them.

Our first unsolved mystery involves the birth of our subject Harvey. He is thought to have been born in 1789, probably based on the fact that he was age 46 when he died in 1835. He is not listed in the birth records of either Chesterfield or Charlton, and yet we know his father is in Charlton in 1790, as he is listed in the Federal Head of Household Census. Is this a clerical omission or was he born some place else?

The second unsolved mystery involves an oil painting, a portrait of Harvey Dresser. In 1904/05 John Edward Woodbury of Worcester, had been commissioned to photograph significant sites, people and objects in Charlton. This was no doubt in preparation for the Celebration of the Town of Charlton's 150th Anniversary as well as the dedication of the new Dexter Hall in 1905. Among Woodbury's surviving glass plate negatives and lantern slides, in the possession of the Charlton Historical Society, is a view of a framed oil painting of Harvey Dresser, the inscription on the plaque on portrait indicates "Harvey Dresser presented by C. A. Paige". Calvin A. Paige was Harvey Dresser's son in law, and a very prominent businessman etc. in Southbridge. The question is: who was the portrait presented to, and where is it now, 100 years later. Anyone have any thoughts?



**Harvey Dresser Grave Yard
Dresser Hill, Charlton, MA c.1983**

The third mystery involves the relocation of the Harvey Dresser burial ground. For approximately 155 years, this plot of hallowed ground could be easily seen on the north side of Saundersdale Road, on Dresser Hill. This Family plot consisted of two monuments surrounded by a simple fence. The larger of the two monuments, capped with an urn, marked the grave of Harvey, his wife Ceney and at least two of their children. The second marker was an obelisk marking the grave of Jerry Merritt, who was Ceney's brother and a business partner of Harvey's. Sometime in the late 1980's or very early 1990's these graves were moved. Harvey Dresser's monument is now located in the Oakridge Cemetery in Southbridge. Question: what was the reason for the relocation, as the site is still vacant, and what happened to the Jerry Merritt monument?

Lastly, in a related matter, we are looking for a photograph of Richard Dresser's Cape style house that stood at the top of Dresser Hill until it was demolished in the mid 1990's. This was one of the earliest buildings constructed in what is now Charlton. The Charlton Historical Society is hoping to present at least two slide shows dealing with the earliest life in the Town of Charlton in the year 2005. This will be the Celebration of the Town's 250th Anniversary.

If you can contribute knowledge or help with any of the above issues, please contact me at 508-248-1632.

Tea and Strawberry Social

- Cindy Cheever

Come and enjoy a step back in time at the Historic Rider Tavern for our annual Tea. We will be serving in season a fresh strawberry soup, strawberry shortcake, strawberry lemonade and our own blend of Rider Tavern Tea.

Following the Tea will be a program by Amy Newell, Curator of Textiles and Fine Arts at Old Sturbridge Village. Amy will be giving a presentation on the styles and fashions of clothing worn in rural New England during the early 1800's using period garments, fabrics and colors. She will define the changing fashions and how rural New Englanders set the style of the day.

The Strawberry social will be held on June 27, 2004 at 12:00. A \$12 donation is requested for the Tea and program. Reservations are required may be made by calling Don Weinhardt at 508 248-1632

PAST EVENT

Property Committee Report

- Don Weinhardt

This is a summary of just some of the artifact and archival items donated to the Charlton Historical Society since our last newsletter in Sept. 2003. A few items were donated years ago but were not recognized in the newsletter before and have been included.

Kevinetta C. O'Brien, Charlton - Kevinetta has continued to donate additional material to our history and genealogy collection, including 13 books, photos, reports etc. (a late addition though not an artifact, but very welcome and useful, an almost new Eureka "The Boss" upright vacuum with all attachments); *Cindy Cheever*, Paxton - a very early wooden bobbin winder, a book "Historical Staffordshire- American Patriots and Views", by Synder, and a booklet "America's Early Taverns" by Sinock; *J& S Enterprises* (Joseph Craig and Sara Hunt), North Brookfield - a wooden butter bucket with natural finish; *Mrs. Marion H. Perry*, Worcester - a bathing tub made of tinned sheet iron, painted red, circa 1842-1857, made by the Dover Stamping Co., Boston.; *Donald R. Weinhardt*, Dudley - small wooden cask with metal bands.

Steve and Bonnie Clark, Charlton - black and white photo, mounted, subject is Harry Grimwade with his son Roger, riding in their electric car in Charlton City, and a quart milk bottle embossed A. M. SNOW / Guernsey / Milk / CHARLTON. (The Snow Dairy farm was more recently known as Fay Mountain Farm); *Roderick B. Sullivan*, Northborough - soft covered book "The Wheelock Family of Charlton", this book was compiled by the donor: *Cynthia Johnson*, Hubbardston - a hatchel, wood with iron spikes, used for combing flax fibers; *Anne Lovelace*, Holland - a collection of books, both hard and soft cover, thirty one in all, covering a range of subjects from history, genealogy, architecture, antiques, to social life in New England. *Genzyme Co.*, Charlton - a cap stone for a well, about four feet in diameter (This stone was found by Richard H. Green of Spencer, while attempting to locate the remains of the Lemuel Green farm, on the property now owned by Genzyme).; *Alan Leveilee*, Senior Archaeologist, on behalf of the Public Archaeological Laboratory, Pawtucket - report, "Historic and Archaeological Reconnaissance/Inventory Survey Cultural Resource Management Plan, Buffumville Lake, Charlton, Massachusetts" by Paul A. Russo; *Patricia Ram*, Cherry Valley - a redware stew pot, with pouring spout and hollow handle, made by the pottery at Old Sturbridge Village; *Marilyn C. Hultgren*, Charlton - a compact computer disk, titled "A Photographic Glimpse of the Old Time Charlton Schools".

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

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

The Widows Third

- Claudia Lacerte

The Widows Third shop at the Rider Tavern will be looking for craft persons who would like to sell their products during History Day in October. Any one working in the style of the 1800's would be appropriate, weaving, pottery, basketry, painting, etc.

If you, or you know of someone who would be interested please write Claudia Lacerte at 16 Flint Road, Oakham, MA 01068 or call 508 882-5239 for further details.

The Decorating Committee

- Joyce Stewart

The hunt continues for representations of decorative art from the homes of Charlton, Mass.! The cold days of winter have kept us warm by the thoughts of what lies out there still to be discovered.

Understanding the decoration found in the homes in the 1800's helps the Decorating Committee to make decisions for the Rider Tavern. Paint and techniques of paint seems to be a theme, which appears in all types of households during the 1830-40's.

We have completed the vinegar grain painting of a blanket chest for the Southeast Bedchamber and have disassembled the rope bed for treatment to the wood surfaces. The cutting of templates for the wall design for the bedchamber, planning of colors and a sample board for review by the committee is in the works. The assemblage of a talented group of local artists (volunteers who will still take my calls) will attempt to replicate the stencil and free hand painted patterns found in the McIntire/Bond home. This pattern is believed to date to the period of the tavern. The Southeast Bedchamber provides a similar location (2nd floor bedchamber) within the tavern to where the original is found. This design proves to be a challenge and labor intensive for anyone not dependent on the good food and hospitality of the innkeeper.

Signs, signs, everywhere a sign. The tavern sign was brought in for the winter for protection and we discovered the poor condition it was in. This sign has served a good 15 years but she has no more to give. The Decorating Committee will evaluate the signs on the building as well and will present their findings to the board for review. A recent visit to our folk art guru, Inez Gornall, has provided us with several quality books on the subject of tavern signs. "Lions & Eagles & Bulls Early American Tavern & Inn Signs" is published by The Connecticut Historical Society with over 80 examples of tavern signs for our research data. The symbols and meanings, dimensions and design will all be considered.

Our "Archive Saturdays" have been a pleasure to attend. We never know where or what information we will find. A recent discovery by Ruth (new kid on the block) of an 1835 household inventory list from Charlton has prompted an idea for a display at the tavern. Again, one piece of paper gives us a view into the past... Visit the tavern to see what is on this list and compare to your list at home.

As always we are interested in recording the artwork created in Charlton. If you know anyone who has original artwork (stenciling, samplers, pictures, paintings, etc.) from the 1800's that can be attributed to originating in Charlton we would appreciate a call to Don Weinhardt at 508-248-1632 for further follow-up.

Membership Update:

- Glenn Ellis

If your address label 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!

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!

Our 2004 season starts in June after the annual meeting. Paid membership renewals are due in May of each year.

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.

Capital Campaign Results

- Glenn Ellis

The 2004 Capital Campaign has raised \$2410 to date. We would like to thank and show our appreciation to the following area businesses for their support in helping us preserve our special piece of New England History.

American Reclamation Corp.
Charlton Flower Shop
Charlton Food Mart
Coldwell Banker Towne & Country Realty
Country Bank for Savings
Cronin Cabinets & Marine
Culliton & Fanning, CPA's
Curtis K Abbott Co Inc
Gentex Optics Inc.
Hyde Manufacturing
Karl Stortz Endovision Inc.
O'Malley's Truck & Auto Body Co
Ted's Package & Variety Store

If you would like more information on how you could help please contact us by mail at Charlton Historical Society, P.O. Box 252, Charlton, MA 01507 or phone Glenn at 508 248-7913.

Volunteers Wanted:

- Glenn Ellis

We need your help! If you are interested in volunteering at an event or being a member of the Board of Directors please let us know. We are also looking for help with the following projects: general maintenance and upkeep of the tavern, gardening and lawn care, and organization of the library and archival collection.

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 and area of interest 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, we will be glad to talk to you!

Wish List

We are in need of the following items. If you have any of the items on our "wish list" and would like to donate them to the society, please give us a call.

New/Used in Working Order:

Air Conditioner	Dehumidifier
Wheel Barrel	Hoses
Gardening Tools	Garden Compost
Solid White Table Cloths 6', 8', 10' lengths.	

Old:

Period furniture 1790 – 1840's,	
Sofas	Chairs
Side Tables	Tea Tables
Tavern Desk	Tavern Tables
Andirons	Fenders
Fireplace Tools	Floor Cloths, Rugs
Band Boxes	Figurines for mantel
Clock for mantel.	

Early Significant Charlton Historical Items:

Photographs	Account Books
Diaries	Documents
Post Cards	Advertising

We would be happy to make copies of any originals that you wish to retain but would be willing to share.

Calendar of Events:

PAST EVENTS

April 17, 2004 Saturday at 10:00

Guided Bus Tour of North West Charlton

The tour will depart from the Charlton Municipal building at 10:00 and return around 12:00. Charlton Historian, Bill Hultgren will guide us through historic District #11 visiting sites like the remains of the Prouty Wire Co. The site of the Jonas Bemis Farm Complex, The largest Black Cherry Tree In the state and The old Charlton Peat Co. bogs. These lively tours have filled up fast so please call Don Weinhardt at 248-1632 for reservations. A \$5 donation is requested to cover the cost of the bus and driver.

May 8, 2004 Saturday from 9:00 to 2:00

Yard Sale Fundraiser at the Tavern

We will be selling many items that have been donated to be sold. They will include tools, antique bottles, household goods, collectables and many other serendipitous items. We are still accepting donations of items for the sale. Call Don if you have anything! Stop by and search for treasures! We will be there rain or shine.

May 22, 2004 Saturday from 9:00 to 2:00

Rider Tavern Spring Cleaning!

This is our annual spring-cleaning. We will be performing many chores ranging from dusting to clearing brush, cleaning out the basement and the back shed. We will need your help! Please call Don if you are able to help out at 508 248-1632.

June 7, 2004 Monday at 7:00

Charlton Historical Society's Annual Meeting to be held at the Tavern

This is our annual business meeting. All annual reports will be presented and next years Board of Directors will be elected. Mr. Edward Hood, Director of Research Collections and the Library at Old Sturbridge Village in Sturbridge will present a talk on "New England Architecture".

June 27, 2004 Sunday at 12:00

Tea and Strawberry Social at the Tavern

For a donation of \$12 you can enjoy a relaxing Spring Tea and learn about the styles and fashions worn in Charlton in the 1800's. (See previous article for more details) For reservations call Don at 508 248-1632.

October 17, 2004 Sunday

Charlton History Day at the Tavern and Northside Village

Mark your calendars now for this annual event. Charlton History Day is the society's biggest event of the year and a chance for you to see all that is new at the old Tavern. Watch our local papers for more information as we get closer to the date.

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

Address Correction Requested

Charlton Historical Society ***Newsletter***

Spring 2004

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 **2004 Membership** **2004 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: _____