
Charlton Historical Society Newsletter

Spring 2009

News for Charlton Historical Society Members

Volume 34, Number 1

Get Out of Town!

By Cindy Cooper

Visitors usually stayed with relatives when they came to local towns during the early years of our country. However, many times strangers appeared, with no place to stay. The Colony of Massachusetts Bay in 1637 declared the attitude that should be taken by the public: "...no toune or pson shall receive any stranger, resorting hither with the intent to reside in this jurisdiction, nor shall allow any lot or habitation to any or intertaine any such above three weeks..." Later regulations stated that anyone remaining in a town for three months and not "warned out" would be considered an inhabitant of that town. Warnings issued through the Court of Quarter Sessions relieved the town of liability for the newcomer's support. If he then needed to reside at the poor farm or almshouse, the town from which he came was financially responsible. Between 1755 and 1783, over 50 entries for Charlton are registered in the Worcester County warnings. These entries warn individuals, couples, and entire families, to leave.

Frederick L. Rushton wrote on the subject in the Worcester Telegram on March 4, 1934, "It developed upon the landlord or head of the family to give written notices to the selectmen or town clerk of the acquisition of a new tenant; otherwise, in the event the newcomer became destitute he himself would be liable to be charged with his support."

Usually the people who remained in Charlton were boarded out, with the host family being reimbursed for expenses. Charlton officials frequently wrote to the officials from other towns to request compensation for supporting a resident of the other town. Frequently, there were multiple correspondences between two towns concerning an individual whose residency status was questioned, until a mutual understanding was reached. Expenses for caring for those who were Charlton's responsibility were included in the town's annual reports.

Times changed, and the custom of warning people out of town stopped. However, the poor who needed help still existed. In 1904 Charlton

and four other towns formed an almshouse association. The Charlton poor farm provided shelter, food, clothes, and work for the poor from the five towns. The residents at the 265-acre farm tended to the vegetable gardens, milked the cows, and collected eggs from the chickens. Excess produce and dairy items were sold to cover the expenses. As time passed, several more towns joined the association, which purchased the property in 1925. The almshouse, located off A. Young Road, is now converted to a rest home.

Village Improvement Society

By Cindy Cooper

Over 100 years ago, residents recognized the importance of the center of town and formulated a method to improve the visual appeal of the area. Organized as the Village Improvement Society on February 20, 1904 "for the purpose of improving the streets, sidewalks and public grounds in and around the center village of Charlton..." members quickly acted. After organizing, the next gathering was held at the new Overlook Hotel at the invitation of its manager, Mr. E. Stimpson. Thirty people met in the dining hall to discuss the bylaws and hear each officer give brief remarks, followed by vocal solos and a tour of the magnificent hotel.



1918 Sidewalk Rolling

With the formalities of organizing complete, the following meeting the members voted on their first improvement: "a modern system of street lighting."

The Executive Committee's sole job was to implement the plans developed by the Society. However, before they could act upon that task, the issues presented at an emergency meeting took priority. New England Telephone and Telegraph Company had plans to add 20

Property Committee Report

By Don Weinhardt

This is a summary of just some of the artifact and archival items donated to CHS since last reported in our Fall 2008 newsletter: **Arthur L. Furtado**, Charlton-Book, hardcover, "Blackmar Genealogy," compiled by Alfred Owen Blackmar, Columbus, Georgia, April, 1898. **Ruth (Pierce) Eastman**, Charlton-Shawls, two, one is black and one is paisley, worn by Elizabeth (Moore) Eastman, wife of Reuben Eastman, c. 1862. **Robert Langlois**, Brookfield-Quinabaug Historical Society Leaflets, 38 in all, plus indexes for Volumes 1 and 2, plus a scrapbook of a newspaper clipping showing the devastation that New England suffered as a result of the 1938 hurricane. **Jean Anderson**, Charlton-A selection of material from the Helping Hand Society including a history, annual reports and members list, also a selection of material from the Charlton Methodist Church, including photos, parish lists, and annual reports.

Thank you all for helping to preserve Charlton's past. If you have, or know someone who has, any locally significant material, and is looking for a good permanent home for it, please contact Don at 248-3202.

Also note that the archive and library reorganization is almost complete.

Winter is Over!

After rejuvenating during the winter, the Charlton Historical Society Board of Directors is ready to begin an ambitious schedule of projects and activities for this year!

Restoration of one room representing the Victorian period (about 1837 to 1917), and upgrading an adjoining hallway, are among the physical projects to be undertaken this year at the Rider Tavern. Photographs of some of the residents who occupied one-third of the building from the Victorian era into the 1970s will hang in the refurbished hallway, and those inhabitants owned many of the furnishings that will be displayed in the restored room.

Refurbishment of the shed in the back of the building will continue, with completion expected by Fall. At approximately 100 years old, it is a baby in relation to the tavern, but still an integral part of the way of life in Charlton many years ago. It contains a two-seater outhouse!

The Board of Directors is seeking new members. Board members meet on the second Thursday each month. Put your talents to work on one of the subcommittees: decorating, gardening, archives, property, restoration and maintenance, publications, and membership. If you have an interest in becoming a member of the Board, please call Bill Hultgren at 508-248-7034.

Event Calendar

All events are held at the Rider Tavern, 255 Stafford Street, Charlton, MA unless indicated otherwise.

May 16 Yard Sale 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Search through the treasures to find vintage jewelry, ephemera, decorations, dishes, linens, knick-knacks, bottles, books, tools, and furniture. Donations welcome until May 9th.

June 8 Annual Meeting 7:00 p.m.

Bob Wilder presents: "The Not So Good Ol' Days" tales of life in the mid-1700s to mid-1800s. Hear how families cared for the ill, and doctors learned their skills. Find out why some people did not let their own relatives into their house. Learn about the morals (or lack thereof) of the time.

A summary of the past year's Historical Society activities, and goals for this year, will follow. Light refreshments will be served. Free.

July 12, August 9, and September 13

1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Tours of the Rider Tavern, 255 Stafford Street, Charlton, MA

Guides at the tavern will tell about the ballroom and taproom, Victorian room renovations, the Militia lot, Marquis de Lafayette's visit, the Worcester and Stafford Turnpike, County Gore, stagecoaches, taverns, and prominent residents in the early 1800s while you tour the building.

Donation: \$1.00.

September 7 Old Home Day

10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on the town common

Look at a pictorial display of the #2 Schoolhouse, view the Charlton High School yearbook from 50 years ago, receive a free newsletter, and shop for Charlton history books and memorabilia.

October 4 History Day Noon to 3:00 p.m.

Discover the Victorian Room, hear about the widow's third, watch handcraft demonstrations, and view displays at the tavern. Free.

Refreshments may be purchased for \$5.00.

For more information about any of these events, call Cindy Cooper at 508-248-7840 after 4:00 p.m.

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

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Date _____

Name _____

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:

www.CharltonHistoricalSociety.org
508-248-3202

Board of Directors

President: Cindy Cooper

Vice President: William Hultgren

Clerk: Ruth Schwendeman

Corresponding Sec.: Harry Howard

Archivist: Donald Weinhardt

At Large:

Curtis Abbott

Cindy Cheever

Peter Cooper

Claudia Lacerte

Coming Events:

May 16 Yard Sale 8:30-2:00

June 8 Annual Meeting 7:00 p.m.

July 12, Aug. 9, Sept. 13 Tours 1-3

Sept. 7 Old Home Day 10-2

Oct. 4 History Day Noon-3