



Middleborough Historical Association, Inc.
P. O. Box 304, Middleboro, MA 02346
www.middleboroughhistoricalassociation.org
Nancy J. Thomas, Editor

Winter 2014 Meeting

The Winter members' Meeting will be held on **Saturday, February 22, 2014 at 1:00 PM** in the Middleborough Public Library's lower level meeting room, (weather permitting!!).

Prior to the program there will be a brief business meeting during which a by-law change will be proposed. (See article below). A quorum of 15 members is needed to conduct this item of business.

The program, which is free to members as always, will be **"The Role of Women in the North and the South during the War Between the States."**

The presenter will be our own Jo Ann Clay. (See more on Mrs. Clay under "Vice-President" below).

Refreshments will be served and there will be a table with interesting items for sale. Any questions, please call President Cynthia McNair at 508-947-3394.

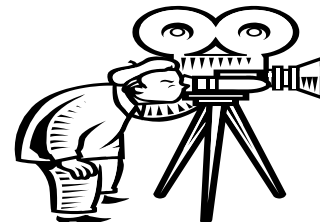
Proposal of a Change in By-Laws

Because the Annual Meeting is now in November, there needs to be a Fall Meeting in September at which nominating committee members and

office openings are announced or members are selected to be on the committee.

The by-law change which moved the Annual Meeting from June to November was approved at the last June Annual Meeting in 2012. However Article 11 remained the same with regard to holding the required four membership meetings in February, April, June and November.

The proposed change is to amend Article 11 by adding a Fall Meeting in September and eliminating the February meeting as one of the required four meetings. This does not preclude a meeting in February, but it will no longer be considered one of the four required meetings. The vote on this proposed amendment will take place at the Winter Meeting on February 22nd.



A Visit from the BBC

In early December, President Cynthia McNair was contacted by Nick Tanner

from Wingspan Productions, a London-based television company known for historical documentaries. Wingspan is producing a new biography on Charles Stratton for the British Broadcasting Company which will explore the extraordinary life and times of Stratton (Gen. Tom Thumb) and the broader context of public entertainment and spectacle in the nineteenth century.

Mr. Tanner learned of our Tom Thumb collection from Professor Eric D. Lehman of Bridgeport University in Connecticut and was on his way to meet the professor and visit the Barnum Museum when he arranged to visit our museum. Doug Vantran and former curator Nancy Gedraitis welcomed him there.

He was enthusiastic as he looked at myriad tiny boots, shoes and gloves that had belonged to Stratton. Since many of the artifacts were wrapped and boxed for the winter, it took time to open, view and photograph them. He remarked that he was never allowed to get as close to artifacts when he worked with the British Museum! He later returned to the UK to decide which artifacts would best help bring the Stratton story to life.

Nick Tanner, presenter Ian Hislop and the BBC documentary film crew will be in Middleboro in late January 2014 to film at the former Stratton mansion located at 351 Plymouth St. Wingspan has asked MHA for the loan of a photo of Charles and Lavinia holding a baby. (That baby was not theirs, but a borrowed one.)

Wingspan Productions will gift us a copy of the completed film which we hope to present to our members at a future date. We are happy that our collection has received such international attention!

Nancy Gedraitis
Former MHA Curator

From the President's Desk...

If you have driven by the museum lately, you may have noticed some changes. There are several improvement projects now completed. The Sproat Tavern outhouse has a new roof as Bob Reimels and Doug Vantran have continued working on refurbishing this historic building throughout the fall. Dana Menzel was our roofing contractor for the Blacksmith Shop, Judge Wood Law Office and the Whistle House (no more leaks and now its tower has added support). Mike Bertoncini was the contractor who replaced all the windows on the two mill houses with Harvey loE/argon energy star windows which are easy to maintain. No more wind blowing into the museum as with the old drafty windows!! The security screens that protect from vandalism are also back on. Remember that the screens on one mill house were an Eagle Scout project. In all the Association spent over \$31,000 on needed improvements. Maybruck is the contractor for our Community Preservation Act-funded project of installing ceiling insulation and heating/air conditioning units for both mill houses. These projects are expected to be completed by the end of January.

I wish I could say our work is done, but there are many future needed projects which include exterior wall insulation and siding work and replacement of half the Carriage House roofing. Any ideas for fundraisers and funding sources, please share these ideas with us.

We need your input on how we can better serve you as a member of the MHA. We need your involvement and ideas. We still have not found a secretary and the museum needs a knowledgeable curator.

Cynthia McNair

Christmas Parade!!

Saturday, November 29, 2013 saw the Association entered in the annual Middleborough Christmas Parade. Wally Glendye and Doug Vantran marched with our banner, while Gladys Beals held the place of honor in our 1934 Maxim fire truck, skillfully driven by Tom Westgate! Mr. Westgate made necessary repairs to get it ready for the event. Candy was distributed to parade spectators by Kate Lazarovich and Joshua McNair. Thank you to Jo Ann Clay for these great photos!



Maxim Motors

This year is the 100th anniversary of the founding of Maxim Motors, the renowned former local manufacturer of fire apparatus. MHA will be celebrating the anniversary with an event planned for this June.

The Planning Committee is seeking personal memories or memorabilia about Maxim Motors. If anyone has Maxim items or information, please call Dorothy Thayer at 508-947-2596.

Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting was held on November 2, 2013 at Lorenzo's Italian



Restaurant. A delicious Italian hot and cold buffet lunch was enjoyed by all, followed by a most interesting talk by Professor Eric D. Lehman of Bridgeport (CT) University on his newly-published scholarly biography entitled "Becoming Tom Thumb: Charles Stratton, P.T. Barnum and the Dawn of American Celebrity." (Wesleyan University Press, 2013) In his book, Prof. Lehman makes a case for Stratton being the very first international celebrity. The author did research for his book at our museum.

Elections were held prior to the program. The Nominating Committee was comprised of Judith Bigelow-Costa, Caroline LaCroix and Wayne Perkins. The following officers were elected: Jo Ann Clay – Vice-President for one year (to fill the unexpired term of Dean Rantz who had resigned), Kate Lazarovich – Treasurer for one year and Dorothy Thayer – Director for three years. There were no nominations for Secretary for one year or for another Director for three years.

Introducing ...

Vice-President Jo Ann Clay

"I was born in Norfolk, Virginia where I worked as a licensed nurse. My husband of 35 years, David, and I have 5 children and 11 grandchildren. We moved here from Chesapeake, Virginia about 4 months ago to be near our 2 daughters and 4 grandsons that live in Plymouth.

During the past 25 years I have been: Past President of the Pickett-Buchanan Chapter United Daughters of the Confederacy of Norfolk; recipient of both the Jefferson Davis and Winnie Davis Medal and a Virginia Division Chairman; Confederate Historian of Norfolk; past officer in the Rev. Robert Hunt Chapter Daughters of the American Colonist of Virginia Beach and the Great Bridge Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution of Norfolk; member of the Suffolk Chapter of the 17th Century Colonial Dames, Norfolk Historical Society and Friends of Norfolk Historic Cemeteries.

I worked as a docent at Historic Fort Norfolk and Hunter House Victorian Museum in Norfolk. I am a published historical writer and have contributed to two historical books.

I am a descendant of a 1607 settler of Jamestown named Robert Beheathland. I have researched over fifty of my family genealogy lines. I volunteer with veterans and schoolchildren and also love doing crafts.

I am happy to serve as your Vice-President during this year."

Museum Maintenance Projects

In view of the grant we received for major work on the two mill houses, members may be interested to know of other projects that have been completed on the buildings since 2001. Thanks to Dotty Thayer for compiling this information.

Mill House #1

2001: scraped and painted; chimney capped.
2006: roof stripped and reshingled. Berryman & Son - \$8,200.
2009: gutters installed (rear). Berryman & Son - \$1,546.
2010: plumbing (new sink, toilet, water heater and electric – new plug). Hopwood Plumbing; electric - \$1,231.50.

Mill House #2

2001: chimney capped.
2002: scraped and painted (front and side of main section).
2006: 2 chimneys repointed and sealed. Mr. Anthony's Chimney Service - \$1,950; roof stripped and reshingled. Berryman & Son - \$8,500.
2007: walls stripped, repaired and painted (Research Room). Paint donated by Wilmot's.
2008: sillwork (front door to Research Room and back door into hallway). R.O. Delano Restoration - \$5,817; electrical work (dedicated plugs, update motion detector outside). \$400.
2009: gutters installed (front and back main section).
2010: ceilings (some upstairs and some on first floor) repaired, blueboarded and plastered. J & J Donofrio Plastering - \$9,420.
2010-11: sillwork (front and rear doors of ell), front of ell and side of main section reshingled. Dana Menzel Co. - \$4,200, \$7,700; wallpaper stripped, walls cleaned and painted, shelving (3 rooms). Museum supplies - \$192.41.

