

# MEDFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



FALL, 2010

## President's Overview



With the Fall season, our active programming has resumed. Look inside this newsletter for pictures of the second annual Historic Bike Tour along with our programs for the rest of the season and early next year. I'd like to thank the programming committee for its continuing success in enhancing the quality of our activities.

Please note two events which are almost upon us – the Gala at City Hall on Saturday, November 6 and the program at Shiloh Baptist Church on Sunday, November 7. While we would have preferred at least a week between these two events, schedules at the locations didn't allow it. We're proud to have the volunteer base to stage these events the same weekend and hope to see you at both if possible.

Looking back, one of the most remarkable things about the Medford Historical Society is the collection of "Historical Registers" which the Society published quarterly from 1896 until 1943. Members of the Society did historical research and read their papers at Society meetings. Many of these papers were then printed in the quarterly Historical Register along

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### Society Officers

President **John Anderson**

Vice President **Sharon Guzik**

Recording Secretary **Maura McEnaney**

Corresponding Secretary

**Donna Laquidera-Carr**

Treasurer **Ruth Roper**

Assistant Treasurer **Stan Eckstein**

Director of Collections **Barbara Kerr**

### Directors at Large

**Pam Bybell**                      **Kyna Hamill**

**Susan Gerould**                **Jim Kiely**

**Jenny Gilbert**

## A fresh focus on *Fundraising* at MHS and some thoughts on what we're *Raising Funds FOR*

*Ruth Roper, Treasurer*

As Treasurer of the Medford Historical Society, I must keep a watchful eye on where and how we spend to be sure we're being fiscally responsible. As I reported at the Annual Meeting in May, there is good news and there is sobering news, about our finances. Our budgeted expenses are in balance with our income this year: we brought in about \$16,500 and spent just about the same amount. We have just about \$100,000 in the bank. That is wonderful news! But in today's economic climate, \$100,000 does not provide meaningful income for an organization; it really is more of a contingency fund, which could quickly disappear if we did half the projects on our list. It has only been possible because we have no paid staff positions, and have deferred major building maintenance for years now. Without staff support, the twin efforts of raising money and contracting necessary building maintenance present a challenge for even the most well-meaning volunteer board, who must also oversee programs, public relations, exhibits and collections manage-

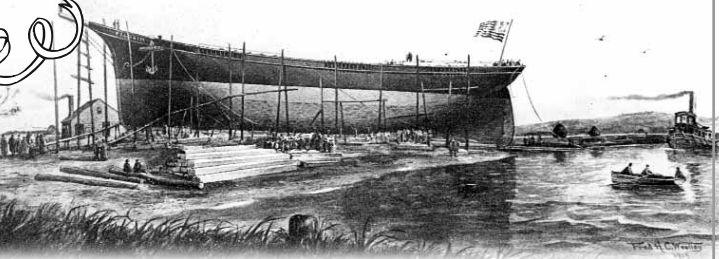
ment. As our elderly headquarters nears its century mark, nuisance issues such as mold, aging systems, inadequate electric power, an outdated floorplan and display areas have gradually become serious enough to require a more focused effort so we can continue to safely house our collections at 10 Governors Avenue

One day last spring, longtime Medford resident Laurence Brown contacted then-Coordinator of Volunteers, Fred Schlicher and asked, "How can I help?" Recognizing Larry's financial and planning skills, and his optimism about reaching out to Medford residents who do not yet know about the vital work and mission of MHS, Fred suggested Larry head up a Fundraising Committee. And so, with an ambitious goal of raising \$15,000 in the coming year, Larry has consulted with those who have been connected with MHS for years, as well as others, with the fresh ideas of the outsider. Building on the successes of Events Coordinators of recent years — Barbara Kerr, Jim Kiely, Lou Cohen, Kyna Hamill, and others — who managed to raise thousands of dollars, even in uncertain economic times, the Fundraising Committee has raised the bar. In conjunction with what the Events Committee has

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Join us at the Fall Fundraiser Gala. Details are on page 6.



with illustrations and a table of contents, in a style similar to a scholarly journal. These publications not only tell stories of Medford history, but they echo how people viewed our history from the perspective of so long ago. Finding that especially interesting, I decided to do a centennial review of the Register published 100 years ago, and I hope you find it as fascinating as I did.

In October, 1910 the Society published Volume XIII, No. 4. As usual for the time, the cover had a line drawing of Society headquarters, the Francis House, birthplace of Lydia Maria Child, the famous abolitionist. The old headquarters building is still standing at 38 Salem St, but has been modified beyond recognition and is now the home of the "Wonder Taste" restaurant. The Society did not move into its present building until 1916.

This issue includes an article by one Eliza Gill: "Stagecoach Days in Medford." She points out that for 150 years the only crossing of the Mystic River convenient to land travelers headed north or northeast from Boston was over the succession of bridges built and rebuilt at the site of the present day Cradock Bridge. Travel was all privately arranged either by coach, horseback, or on foot until the first stagecoach line was established in 1761 to take customers from Portsmouth to Boston with an overnight stop in Ipswich. The article includes the text of the public notice inaugurating the service. There was one round trip per week in a coach accommodating only 4 passengers for 13 shillings and 6 pence each one way. This would be a large sum of money at a time when dinner at a steakhouse would only be about 1 shilling.

Within 10 years a number of other stage lines were established connecting Boston to Salem, Marblehead, and Newburyport. Stops included the Royal Oak, Blanchard's, or the Admiral Vernon Tavern in Medford. These taverns flourished as land travel increased.

The author mentions an account of a gentleman (85 years old in 1910) who, back in the day, had journeyed regularly from Montpelier, Vermont to Boston by wagon carrying beef, poultry, eggs, and cheese, returning home with dry goods and groceries. The round trip took two weeks, including overnights in Medford.

It wasn't until 1805 that a regular stage service connected Medford to Boston. Although the Medford Turnpike (Mystic Ave.) was the most direct route, many



stages went over Winter Hill in Somerville in order to pick up additional passengers. One of the stagecoach entrepreneurs was a Mr. Joseph Wyman who grew up on a farm near the present Oak Grove Cemetery and for whose family Wyman Street in West Medford is named. The article provides considerable detail about him and his family. Although Joseph Wyman died in 1867, the author was still able to talk to people in 1910 who remembered him and his style of service.



Joseph Wyman

Another article in the October, 1910 edition discusses some cannonballs, recently dug up near Fulton Heights. There's speculation as to whether they were from a mock battle of "whites versus Indians" that local boys staged around 1840 in which the boys may have used some ammunition and artillery pieces which were inexplicably nearby or whether the cannonballs were from a more organized artillery practice ("muster") done by adults several years later. This came from an eyewitness to both events. Best of all, there's some interesting commentary on these musters and how the "temperance reformation that was gaining ground was in no way friendly to the dissipation attendant on the old musters, and which were deprecated by many because of their demoralizing tendencies." Sounds like the musters were a lot of fun, and it's fortunate that the Fulton Heights area was virtually unpopulated in the 1840s.

There's a brief article and an illustration, which was already 55 years old in 1910, of the Toll House on the Mystic Turnpike. By 1910, the Toll House had given way to a horse racing track which is now gone as well.

Finally, the 100 year-old Register concludes with a list of all the papers and addresses in its fourteenth year, 1909-1910. They note that on three occasions "the electric lantern was operated by Mr. Eddy." I wonder if the "electric lantern" was some sort of projector.

If any of the articles pique your interest, all of these Historical Registers are available for study at Society headquarters, and we have extra copies of most issues for sale at a nominal price.

While the Society has not published a Register for nearly 70 years, members have continued the tradition of documenting the history of Medford. Barbara Kerr, Dee Morris, and Tom Convery have published a number of books over the years. These books are available at the Society. Tom's latest book includes several articles by Society members. Tom has generously agreed to donate all proceeds from his latest book, *Reflections*, to the Historical Society. There's more information about this recently published book elsewhere in this newsletter.

We hope to see you at upcoming events, and the officers and board welcome your participation in the Society.

—John Anderson, President

## Fundraising at MHS *continued*

planned for the coming year (see elsewhere in this issue) the Fundraising Committee has some exciting high-powered stuff in the works, including our Fall Fundraising Party. (See the announcement in this newsletter and please attend!) This event will be the cornerstone of our fundraising for the year and you'll have a chance to mingle with familiar faces and, most importantly, meet some people who haven't been involved in the Society until now. Larry has done a great job of reaching out to people and resources in the community who have been in Medford a long time, but may be new to us.

An e-blast to MHS members last June requesting fundraising ideas yielded many other great suggestions. Among them: house research, slogan-T-shirts, Medford-scene note card sales, a Trivia contest, brick purchase, Medford-opoly, old-house dinner parties, a rummage sale, Mystic Lake swim/bike ride, shopping percentage days, an Antique show. These are all terrific ideas, but require volunteer labor beyond what our Board can provide, so — back to you, membership! If any of you can head up one of these fundraisers, or another of your design, we'll support you in any way we can.

So, why are all these faithful volunteers willing to spend their time and energy to throw the party or organize the sale or produce the ambitious project, which often has little to do with their first love of History, and more to do with the not-so-exciting practical concerns of housing a collection? Because they recognize that there are materials and artifacts and stories and the life legacies of women and men who once lived and worked and dreamed dreams in our city and are now contained in our tiny, antique headquarters on Governors Avenue. Things could perish from mildew or decay or neglect without our intervention and care. Stories and mysteries could be given new life, to speak to us and our children, and their children's children, to teach by example, to inspire, to amuse, to comfort, to bear witness. We are charged with a mission "to preserve Medford's history", and countless members have poured out volunteer hours to do that, but we are at a point where we frankly need to raise significant funds to do it better, to better serve our community.

Since this is a time when interest rates are low, and professionals are available more readily and more economically than in the past, we are willing to consider judicious spending from our savings to complete projects beyond the capabilities of our volunteers. But we will also need individual donors to step forward to underwrite specific major projects with either money or time. Our extraordinary Civil War photos need "angels" to complete the work begun by the team of volunteers now headed by Allison Andrews; our quaint old Spanish Mission headquarters needs funds for a new ceiling, mold remediation, new flooring, better lighting and exhibit space — in fact, any number of

areas in our collections and properties would benefit from sponsors. Those of you who care about what we are trying to do at the Medford Historical Society, and who are in a position to help financially and/or professionally, are invited to consider what project you might be able to contribute to. We need you.

Here's hoping that in the next few years we can make the jump from financial break-even to the financial vitality we need to move forward.



Shiloh Baptist Church & The Medford Historical Society Present...

## A History of Shiloh Baptist Church

Sunday, November 7, 2010

from 3:00-6:00 pm

Shiloh Baptist Church, corner of Holton and Bower Streets in West Medford

*Featured Speakers: Mayor Michael McGlynn, John Anderson, Cortland Dugger, Whitfield Jeffers, Sandra Bronson, Malcolm Andrews, Reverend John Page, Ret. Judge Marie Jackson*

A tour of the church will begin at 3:00 pm, followed by speakers at 4:00 pm

Refreshments will be served and an exhibit of artifacts will be on display.

This program is free and open to the public. For more information visit [www.sbcofmedford.org](http://www.sbcofmedford.org) or [www.medfordhistorical.org](http://www.medfordhistorical.org).

# History Gifts

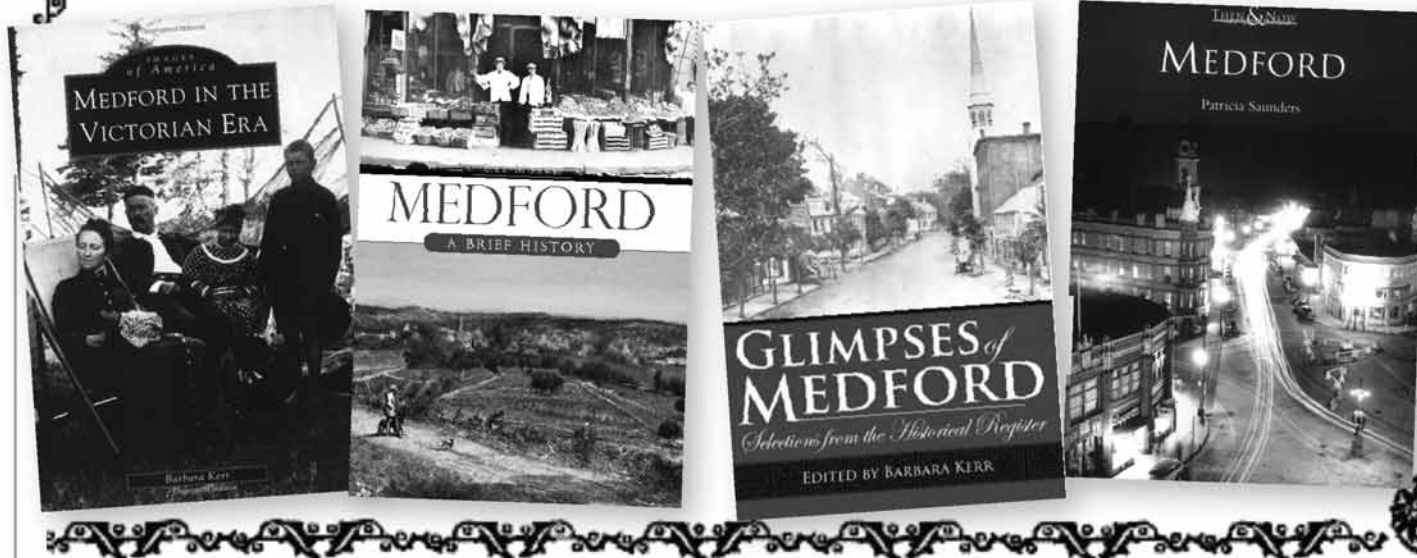
When you are doing your holiday shopping, consider a Medford history book. The shop at the Historical Society offers a number of titles that make great presents for Medfordites, past and present.

The titles include the latest Medford history – *Medford: A Brief History* by Dee Morris (2009). We also stock the recent publications, *Medford, Then and Now* (2005), *Glimpses of Medford: Selections from the Historical Register* (2007), and *Medford in the Victorian Era* (2004). All of these titles are \$20.00.

Other titles on sale include *Old Ships and Shipbuilding Days of Medford* (\$10.00), *The Incredible Ditch : a Bicentennial History of the Middlesex Canal* (\$10.00), and “lightly used” copies of *Landscapes of the Civil War* (\$20.00).

Also available is Tom Convery’s latest book *Reflections*, which is a nice collection of brief history articles and reminiscences, including a very interesting piece about the 1938 hurricane. This book is available at the MHS, but can also be purchased directly from Tom Convery (781-396-8129) or from John Anderson (781-395-5138).

The Society is open from 12-4 on Sundays if you want to stop by and browse. Books can also be ordered by mail, e-mail or phone.



## Tom Convery's Book to Benefit MHS Now Available

Our last Newsletter announced that Tom Convery had published his sixth book, *Reflections*, and agreed to donate the proceeds to MHS. To date, Tom has donated over \$2000 for which we are very grateful! Although this is not a MHS publication, several members of the Society have contributed articles including Kyna Hamill (Peter Tufts House), Fred Schlicher and Tom Lincoln (Royall House and Slave Quarters) and John Anderson (History of Medford Historical Society). Please consider buying this book to benefit the Society. This is one of the many ways we are raising money to pay for building repair and improvements. Copies may be purchased for \$10 in town or \$12.50 if sent by mail. Call John Anderson at 781-395-5138 or Tom Convery at 781-396-8129.

## Antique Appraisal Night

Thursday, January 20, 2011

Dust off your precious objects and bring them in to be appraised by Kaminski Auctions.

This will be a fundraiser for the Medford Historical Society and is being brought back by popular demand.

Thursday, January 20, 7:00 pm, Medford City Hall



## Remembering John Lonergan (1938-2009)

John Anderson

MHS members are grateful for John's work with the Society including two years as President during a period

when he played a key role in rebuilding the organization. He was one of those people who never really grew old because he never lost his optimism and his desire to continue learning, meet new people, and find ways to help his family, friends, and community.

John's family, spearheaded by Judy Lonergan, chose an excellent way to honor his memory by combining his love of St. Joseph's School with his love of MHS and history. The family sponsored an essay contest about the Civil War. Eighth graders at St. Joseph's were challenged to: "Think of what you learned about the Civil War – its causes, its people (soldiers), its resolutions. Using essay format, discuss the reasons for the

war, the sacrifices that were made, the resolutions, and your reflections."

We were honored when Judy and Principal Deveney asked MHS to form a committee to judge the essays. Kyna Hamill, Jim Kiely, and John Anderson enjoyed reading and scoring the essays. We especially liked the comment from one writer that the whole thing could have been prevented if only both sides had listened to each other and worked things out! Although it was difficult to pick winners among so many excellent essays, in the end we chose:

**First Prize:** Daniel Fothergill  
**Second Prize:** Ashley Zero  
**Third Prize:** Courtney Mitchell  
**Honorable Mentions:**

Mark Cangiano and Kayla Harris

The prizes were presented at the Memorial Day Assembly in back of St. Joseph's on a perfect late spring day.

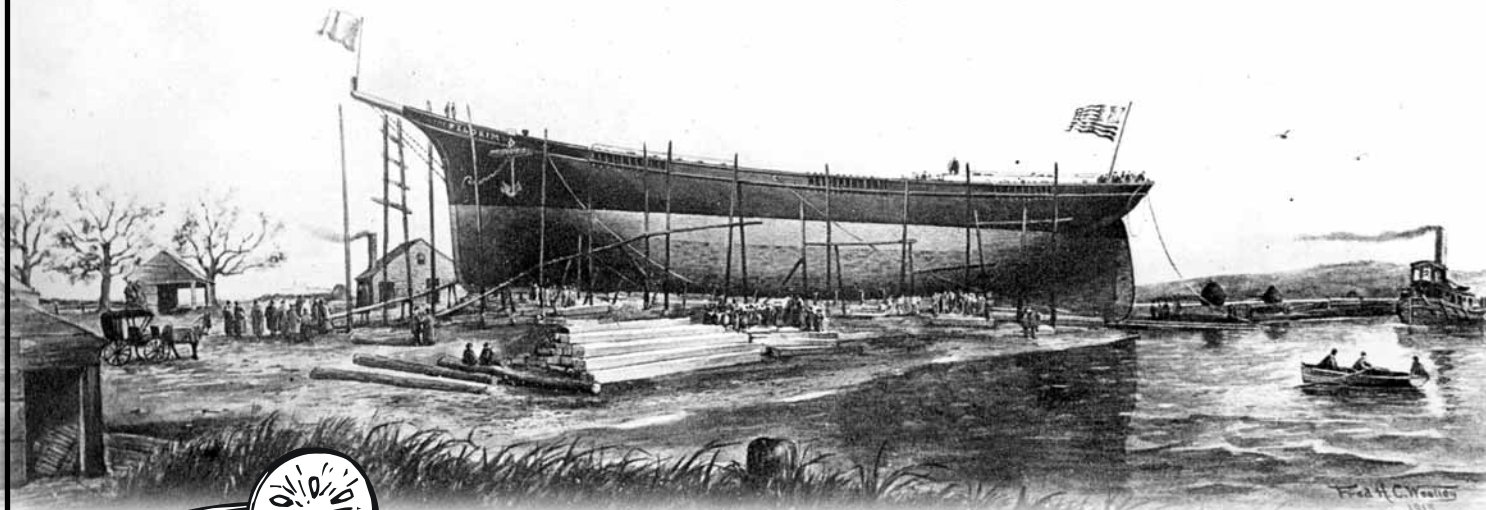
Thanks to all the participants, St. Joseph's and the Lonergan family for this great event.

A parade marches down High Street towards Main Street c. 1910.





# The Medford Historical Society presents its First Annual Cocktail Party Fundraising Gala



## Please join us for an evening of food, fun, and friends

# and Party Like It's 1794...

### Saturday, November 6<sup>th</sup> 6 to 9 pm at City Hall in Medford

Sample cocktails from three centuries, savor delicious hors d'oeuvres, and glimpse one of the largest Civil War photograph collections in existence (our very own) in addition to other selections from our vast collection.

Proceeds will benefit the Medford Historical Society which has dedicated itself for over 100 years to preserving our great city's rich history---a history that now spans five centuries.

Tickets are \$40 or \$70 for two, purchased in advance. The evening includes a Thanksgiving turkey raffle, a 50/50 raffle, music, VIP's, cash bar and a few surprises. So take a break from your hectic schedule and stop in for an hour or three.

Don't wait....only a limited number of tickets are available. Please contact Larry Brown for tickets at [brownlaurence@comcast.net](mailto:brownlaurence@comcast.net) or @781-249-0748. Tickets can also be purchased at the Lonergan Insurance Agency in Medford Square. Medford Historical Society is a registered 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

*above: Ship "Pilgrim", last of the Medford built ships, is ready for launching at Foster's Boatyard, December 4, 1873.*



## Second Annual Historic Bike Tour

Kyna Hamill



On Saturday, September 25, 35 avid cyclists gathered at Whole Foods for the second annual bicycle tour of Medford.

This year, the tour focused on the the historic rum and shipbuilding industries of Medford. The tour covered eight miles and visited locations such as the Paul Curtis House, Salem Street Burial Ground, MacDonald Park, the MHS headquarters and the Royall House and Slave Quarters. Another highlight was a visit to the controversial mural called the "Golden Triangle of Trade" painted by Henry Billings in 1938. Look for a history of this mural in the next newsletter.

A big thank you to Whole Foods who once again supplied refreshments at the beginning and end of the tour as well as all the speakers including Dee Morris, Barbara Kerr, Maura McEnaney, Jerry Hershkowitz, Tom Lincoln and Mike Oliver.

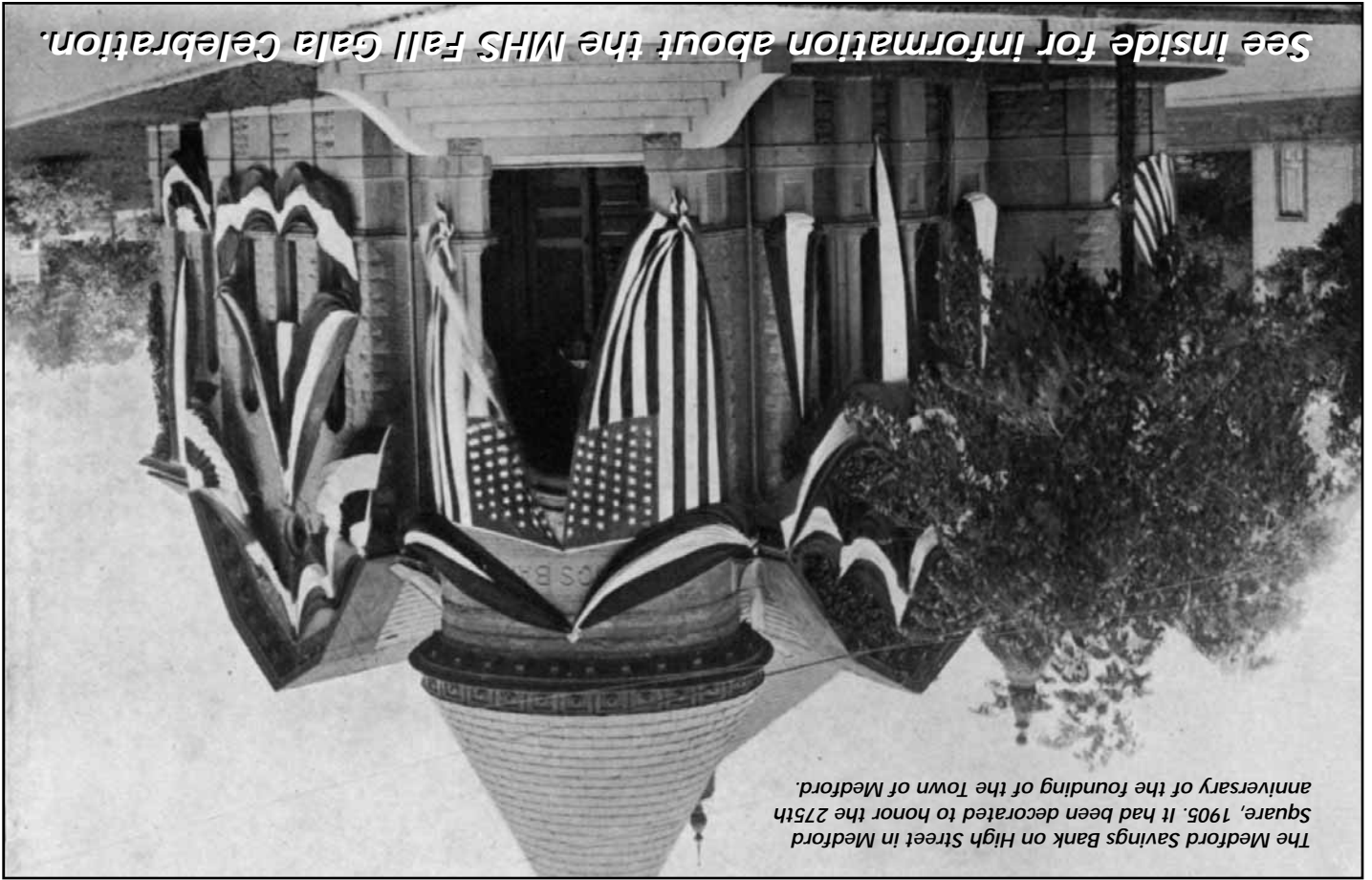
If anyone is interested in trying out the route, come by the Historical Society and pick up a map which also includes some old colonial rum recipes.



*In September, bicyclists stopped at various places on their tour to listen to talks by Kyna Hamill, Dee Morris, Barbara Kerr, Maura McEnaney, Jerry Hershkowitz, Tom Lincoln and Mike Oliver about various aspects of the Rum Trade in Medford.*



*See inside for information about the MHS Fall Gala Celebration.*



*The Medford Savings Bank on High Street in Medford Square, 1905. It had been decorated to honor the 275th anniversary of the founding of the Town of Medford.*



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