

MEDFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



SUMMER, 2010

President's Overview



Normally, summer is a time of reduced activity at the Historical Society. But this year, the Civil War photo project is continuing to gain momentum and plans are afoot for a major fundraiser this fall.

We also had a pleasant surprise when we were able to help a lost door find its way home. This was one of those moments that makes working with historical objects and history buffs so much fun.

Visitors to 10 Governor's Avenue may have noticed the wooden exterior door on display in various parts of the vestibule with the note pinned on it "Colonial Door 1750's, From the birthplace of Charles M Barrett in Concord Mass, Donated by his daughter Miss Mary Barrett Dec 1937". Barbara Kerr certainly noticed the door as it was often in the way and quite awkward to move around. While it is an intrinsically interesting object with its antique hardware and nails, we really knew almost nothing about it, except that it had little to do with Medford and doesn't fit in with the rest of our collection - we're really not an architectural museum.

Sometimes, contrary to "Murphy's Law," everything goes right. Jay Hurd, while working on the Civil

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Valeriani Scholarship Essay Awards Announced



Dr. Joseph Valeriani

The Society recently awarded \$500 to Natalie Breen, Medford High School 2010 graduate, along with honorable mentions to Laura Cangiano and

William Durney, also 2010 Medford High School graduates. This award is in honor of the late Dr. Joseph Valeriani, past President of the Medford Historical Society and head of the Social Studies Department at Medford High School. This year's topic was "Explain why you are interested in history and what could be done by the High School and the Medford Historical Society to promote an interest in Medford history among today's students."

While any middle-aged person from Medford who went to Medford High or has an interest in history will remember Dr. Valeriani, newcomers and younger people may be unaware of his legacy. Between 1975 when he became President of the Society and 1995 when he passed away, he was a major force in preserving Medford's historical record, buildings, and artifacts. Early in his tenure, the mission of the Society was expanded to "...correct the myths that had grown up over the years, ... and to celebrate historical anniversaries." One of the major "myths" he strove to correct concerned the building we now know as the Peter Tufts House. For years, the 18th century brick building at 350 Riverside Avenue had been incorrectly referred to as the "Cradock House" based on the belief that the house had been built in 1630 for Matthew Cradock, rather than around 1680 by Peter

Tufts, Sr. The whole question and many myths about the house could be the topic for an article in this newsletter. For example, the house was also known as the "old fort." The thick walls and unusual port-hole windows had spawned the myth that the house had been built as a fortification against attacks by Native Americans.

Dr. Valeriani was also active in the Medford Historic Commission (a municipal board distinct from our Society) and the Royall House. Reflecting our updated mission for the Historical Society, we participated actively in 1976 Bicentennial celebrations and over the years placed many historic markers around the city, including one at the Peter Tufts House. You can find these granite blocks with bronze plaques at many sites.

In 1981 SPNEA, now known as Historic New England, had owned the Peter Tufts House for many years, had decided to de-accession the house. They had been so successful in acquiring properties over the years that they had exceeded their ability to maintain all of them to their own high standards. Dr. Valeriani did not want the house to fall into private hands, as it would then be inaccessible to the public. The house is especially significant to the Society because of its association with General Samuel Crocker Lawrence who saved the building from destruction in the 19th century. This is the same General Lawrence of the rum-making family, who was the first Mayor of Medford and collected the Society's Civil War photographs. With the help of the City of Medford and Tufts family descendants, the Society acquired the house in 1982.

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Valeriani Scholarship *continued*

The Society also financed a number of privately published books and calendars, notably a general history of the city, "Medford on the Mystic," published in 1980. Dr. Valeriani was an excellent fundraiser so that these publishing projects did not deplete the funds of the Society.

When Dr. Valeriani passed away in 1995, a scholarship fund was established in his name to provide a stipend to a Medford High School or Vocational High School graduating student for further studies. Many members of the public contributed to this fund as a lasting tribute to this important Medford figure and the Society is honored to be able to award this scholarship to a great Medford High School graduate.

The winning essay was submitted by Natalie Breen:

I am a history geek, plain and simple. I love learning about the past and its effects on the modern world, I love learning about culture and the development of societies. The world we live in now, every day, is a direct result of the events before us; and the things we do today, create tomorrow. I am interested in learning from the experiences of others in order to grow and not repeat superfluous mistakes made by our forefathers. My passion for history is reflected in my favorite volunteer activity, being a historical tour guide. This summer will be my third year as a veteran tour guide at the Boston State House, a job I hold with pride and one in which I cannot wait to arrive in the morning. To attain this position, one must have a desire to arduously study centuries of information involving colonial Massachusetts, our government, and architectural history. People ask if I find giving countless tours a day repetitive or boring. Yet I feel absolutely nothing repetitive about enriching people's lives. I especially enjoy teaching people older than me something new, it is gratifying and empowering. My favorite is when locals come in and I can dazzle them with stories about the neighborhoods they grew up in. It is sometimes sad to see how little people know about places they have lived their whole lives in. I love the traditions and modern clichés that derived from the centuries old statues and paintings. I love the artifacts that are still used today such as "Billy Butler's Bible" where advice is passed from governor to governor. I love the chuckles I get when I speak of Abraham Lincoln's portrait and confess his self consciousness over his height and how the expression "it cost an arm and leg" comes from the old pricing system used by artisans. I love pointing out the teagle, a unique mix of turkey and eagle on old Boston monuments prior to the decision of what the national bird would be. Being knowledgeable of history allows one to become more aware of their surroundings and helps make connections to things they may question today. Medford offers a plethora of history dating back centuries. To promote an interest in history it is necessary to instill a sense of pride; pride invokes a will to

represent your community. Enthusiasm is truly contagious and I genuinely believe once a feeling of pride forms in the student community, it will spread quickly. In order to do your community justice one must be informed with the correct information. Due to Medford's history I believe it would be most beneficial to offer an elective (a minor class worth half the credits of a major subject such as English) in Medford High School based solely on Medford's enriching and interesting history. It is hard to captivate teenagers' minds, but because electives are not as severely weighted it would allow the student the freedom to enjoy the class and become enraptured by streets they know, houses they drive by everyday - without the pressure. Also their peers would surround them, and learning in a fun environment would lead to enthusiasm and excitement about going to their second period Medford History class! The history teachers at Medford High have endless amounts of enthusiasm for history and would undoubtedly accept this idea with open arms and minds. Last year, a social studies teacher suggested we visit the Medford Historical Society's display of artifacts, and I was astounded that a building I drive by everyday contains such stories and memories. Maybe a new, eye-catching welcome banner outside of the somewhat unnoticeable building would provoke people passing by to stop in and one can be assured that once you go in and see for yourself, recommendations will spread. Local history is intriguing as it is relatable to students, a vital factor. Perhaps by hosting exhibits based on famous families of Medford and asking their descendants (who may still live in Medford) to submit photos or personal memoirs, they themselves will be an advertisement in itself, wishing to show off their family memorabilia. The advertisement in the newspaper is wonderful publicity, but to reach a younger crowd, a more technological form of media should be used (we are the instant gratification generation after all; the newspaper has fallen way to cnn.com). You could even elect a "spokestudent" to help spread word of events, contests, and exhibits; students love to beef up their resume and they will attract the attention of students who may find a real passion in their visits. Local history is something that is all too often overlooked and I wish you the very best in promoting the rich history of the wonderful city we live in. Enthusiasm is contagious.

Laura Cangiano, who received honorable mentioned offered these suggestions in her essay:

"... many people know that Medford has some connection with boats and shipbuilding. However, what they fail to recognize is just how big of an activity this shipbuilding really was in Medford. Some of the fastest and finest wooden ships ever built came straight out of Medford. After the completion of a ship, there would be a big send-off ceremony in which many adults would be relieved of their jobs for the afternoon and children would have the privilege

of leaving school early to watch the ship be sent off to sea. Imagine if there were some sort of reenactment of a ship building send off similar to the reenactments they do of the Boston Tea Party and of the Boston Massacre. The reenactment of Paul Revere's ride is a wildly popular and very enlightening performance in Medford that many residents look forward to each year, so why not do something similar to promote how popular shipbuilding was? ...Being a student at Medford High School for four years, I can assure you that students would be very enthusiastic about helping to launch and run such an activity, and would be more than happy to drum up interest in it throughout the community. The students at Medford High School are a very talented and underestimated group of individuals who can be a very powerful force when banded together for any cause.

Another simple thing that could be done to spread an appreciation for history in the town is setting up a tour of all the historical landmarks in Medford. Students in both elementary and high school could benefit from knowing the history of their city a little bit better. The tour could start at the Medford Historical Society and end with maybe a tour of a small exhibit or something of that nature. Simple things like that can go a long way with not only students, but other residents of the town and may even spark an interest in the preservation of some of the current Medford landmarks - I believe learning about the history of your city or town is just as important as learning about past presidents, battles, or discoveries in history. I also believe it isn't too late to start educating the students and citizens of Medford about the city's eventful past in new, fun, and exciting ways.

William B. Durney, who also received honorable mention, contributed these recommendations:

Despite [many] opportunities for students to learn about Medford history, most students are simply unaware... In order to bridge this gap, students need to be better informed of all that the Medford Historical Society offers. This would bring in more participants to the Historical Society's events and exhibits, as well as increase the collective historical knowledge of Medford students and help make them advocates for local historical resources. My history teacher last year had the right idea, encouraging students to visit the photograph exhibit. However, I think it would be more beneficial if Medford history could be worked more seamlessly into the history curriculum at the high school. For example, during the U.S. History course, a timeline of Medford's history could be incorporated into the normal study. A few homework assignments could be to read articles from the Historical Society's archives or do individual research on Medford's past. To make local history even more engaging, presenters from the Historical Society could make occasional trips to the high school to serve as guest speakers.

This would hold students' attention, being a break from the usual lessons, and enlighten them on history that is relevant to themselves. Even something as simple as a brochure that could be distributed during history classes could go a long way towards helping students become aware of their town's history and how they can become more involved in it.

As I learned from the seminars at *Facing History and Ourselves*, a valuable approach to teaching history is to give students historic information, yet leave open to interpretation the application of this information to their daily lives. Medford is one of America's oldest European settlements. Given the many historic resources of our community, Medford High School students have a local laboratory for understanding the ways America has and continues to grow, and for exploring their role in that process. Ideally, the Medford Historical Society can take a greater role in making that connection."

Local Historian Honored at MHS Annual Meeting

MHS friends, volunteers and board members filled the Governors Avenue headquarters for the society's annual meeting on May 21, where they elected new board members and got an update on our current operations and upcoming activities.

This year, local historian and author Dee Morris was honored by the board for her continued efforts to keep the history of Medford alive for local residents. Morris, author of *Medford: A Brief History* is a popular lecturer whose topics cover everything from our city's notable pigeon enthusiasts to the pioneering soldiers battling the first gypsy moth invasions. Look for more information about Dee's neighborhood walking tours and ongoing lecture schedule in our upcoming programs.

Also at the meeting, MHS members approved the proposed slate of directors, which this year included new board members Stanley Eckstein, who will serve as assistant treasurer and Donna Laquidara-Carr, who will take on the role of corresponding secretary.

Eckstein, a certified public accountant and owner of the Medford Square business that bears his name, is a long-time Medford resident and community volunteer. He is the past president and current board member of Temple Shalom of Medford. Laquidara-Carr is a researcher, writer and editor, whose historical research for her Ph.D. thesis on African-American literature helped her develop an ongoing interest in New England history.

These two new members are a welcome addition to the strength of the MHS board, consisting of a dozen talented and dedicated individuals. Also re-elected to the board were: President, John Anderson, Vice President, Sharon Guzik, Treasurer Ruth Roper, Recording Secretary, Maura McEnaney, Director of Collections, Barbara Kerr and Directors at Large, Pam Bybell, Susan Gerould, Jenny Gilbert, Kyna Hamill and Jim Kiely.

We'd like to thank board members new and old for their service to MHS this past year.

President's Message *continued*



Belle K. Martina, a modern Barrett descendant poses recently with the historical Barrett door which will find its new home in Concord.

War photo project, noticed the door and heard about Barbara's desire to de-accession the item. At the same time he started a new job at the Concord Museum and spoke to the curator, Mr. David Wood. As it turns out, the Barrett Farm, after languishing in obscurity and gradual decay, is in the midst of a major restoration funded by a private non-profit. When completed, the house will be donated to the National Park Service and

become part of Minuteman National Park. There's more information at <http://home.comcast.net/~jamesbarrettfarm/>

The people restoring the Barrett Farm were extremely excited to hear about the "discovery" of the door and promptly made contact with me. Jim Cunningham and Frederic Detweiler rushed over to Medford to look at it accompanied by Kate Martin, a student at the University of Virginia, and a Barrett descendant who is spending her summer working as an intern on the project. She was happy to pose for a picture with the family door. The restoration team actually has a picture of the door from 1888 when it was still in place at the Barrett Farm. Looking at the old picture, it's clear that this is the same door. They had just ordered a copy to be fabricated, based on the picture even though the picture showed only part of the door. They measured the door carefully and were delighted to find that their estimates based on the picture were fairly close. Of course, they are going ahead with the reproduction door as it would be unwise to expose the original to the elements. It was a thrill to see how excited they were by all this.

As it turns out, this door played a part in the first battle of the Revolutionary War, the Battle of Lexington and Concord. Colonel Barrett, the master of the house, was a well-known patriot and was suspected (correctly) of having hidden a large arsenal and provisions in the Concord area. This was the primary reason the British launched their offensive which resulted in the pitched battle at Old North Bridge in Concord. Around the same time, another group of British confronted the Barretts at their home.

Frederic Detweiler sent me the following information:

"As proven by the historic photos and the note attached to the door, it is the exterior door to the Barrett Farm kitchen seen in the 1880s photo from the Muster Room. Apparently, it was through this doorway Stephen Barrett entered when he was grabbed by the British on

April 19th, 1775. Also, the note attached to the door specifically states it was from the birthplace of Charles M. Barrett. Charles was Col. James Barrett's great grandson, born in Concord in 1827. He was one of the last Barrett owners of the house, father of Charles M. and ... Mary Conant Barrett born 1854... "

(Thus it appears likely that Mary Conant Barrett is the "Mary Barrett" who donated the door in 1937. The Barrett genealogists found her in the Medford census in 1930, but not in 1940. The Barrett Farm passed out of the family around 1900. One wonders why the door was removed, but then other parts of the house were also removed and now reside at the Concord Museum.)

Mr. Detweiler continues quoting the *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* of 1875, "The Concord Fight":

"On seeing Stephen, a son of Colonel Barrett, who had just entered the house, an officer demanded his name. 'Barrett', said he. 'Then you are a rebel' and taking hold of him, said, 'You must go to Boston with us, and be sent to England for trial.' He was, however, released when Mrs. Barrett exclaimed, 'He is my son, and not the master of the house.' It was the intention to take Colonel Barrett a prisoner, as he was considered one of the prominent rebels of the province. Another son, James Barrett, Jun., was at the house, but being lame and inactive at the time [probably in small bedroom by the kitchen], he was not molested. The soldiers had collected a few gun-carriages in a pile to burn. These were placed dangerously near the barn. Observing this, Mrs. Barrett reminded the officers of their promise not to injure private property. They promptly ordered the articles to be carried into the road, where they were consumed. Shortly after they were startled by the signal-guns at the bridge, and the troops immediately retreated toward the village. "

".... On the arrival of these patriots [from Sudbury, Stow Harvard, etc.] within half a mile of the South Bridge, they were informed by Stephen Barrett, stationed there, that they were to proceed to the North Bridge. To reach that point they had to pass Colonel Barrett's house. Noticing the British there, they halted, and Colonel How exclaimed, 'If any blood has been shed, not one of the rascals shall escape', and, disguising himself, he rode on to ascertain the truth, and talked with the British officers. Stephen Barrett, who came along with the Sudbury men, on entering the house of his father was confronted as we have described. The Sudbury militia and minute-men followed in the rear of the British, and joined in the general pursuit from Concord to Charlestown...."

(It is striking how genteel this confrontation seems to have been. The way wars are fought today, the outcome would probably be very different.)

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Newsletter Submissions

The MHS newsletter is published quarterly. We are looking for submissions for future issues. If you would like to submit an article about a topic of Medford history or a reminiscence about your personal Medford history, please send it to **vickihh@verizon.net**.

Based on what we now know, the MHS Board agreed that the door should return home to Concord, preferably to the Barrett Farm. However, the house is under construction and has not yet been transferred to the National Park Service. It's not clear what the NPS plans are for the house, and neither an interpretative nor conservation plan for objects has been completed. So, we are loaning the door to the Concord Museum until such time that the Barrett House becomes a house museum and can properly display and conserve the door. If this doesn't happen within 10 years, then the door will stay at the Concord Museum,

joining their collection of Revolutionary War items, including other fragments from the Barrett House.

One door closes, and another door opens. While we were working things out with the Concord Museum and the Barrett House, another door was donated to the Medford Historical Society. This one, also believed to be 18th century, is from a house in Medford. We'll have pictures and information in our next newsletter!

I hope you are all having a great summer!

–John Anderson, President

Medford Historical Society Programming for 2010-2011

The Programming Committee is pleased to announce the events for 2010-2011. Although we are still trying to finalize some dates and locations, please make note of the following programs.

Saturday, September 25, 2010 – Historic Bicycle Tour with a focus on Medford's Rum and Ship-building industries will begin at Whole Foods in Medford at 10 am. Suggested donation is \$5.

November 7, 2010 - Lecture on the History of Shiloh Baptist Church in West Medford. Time TBA. Holton & Bower Streets, West Medford.

January/February, 2011 – Antique Appraisal Night. Dust off your precious objects and bring them in to be appraised by a professional auction house at a location and time TBA. Please note this will be a fundraiser to benefit the Medford Historical Society.

March, 2011 – Lecture Series: Recognizing and Restoring Architecture

Ryan Hayward, Medford Historical Commission, will speak on architectural house styles of Medford at MHS Headquarters, 10 Governors Avenue, date TBA.

Stefan Knust of Goody Clancy Architects will speak on the recent reconstruction work on Trinity Church Boston on Wednesday, March 2 at 7:00 pm, Grace Episcopal Church.

April, 2011 – Barbara Kerr and Dee Morris will speak on “Medford Square Before and After the Interstate 93”. See photos of the Square, hear about businesses that have come and gone, and share your memories of your favorite shops in the “Square”. Medford Senior Center. Date TBA.

May 20, 2011 – Annual meeting and members' reception at MHS Headquarters, 7:30 pm. The Programming Committee includes Kyna Hamill, Chair, Dorothy and Stan Eckstein, Barbara Kerr, John Anderson and Mike Oliver. Special thanks to Fred Schlicher and all his work as Co-Chair last year. Questions, comments or suggestions? Email kynahamill@yahoo.com.



MHS members and friends were treated to a walking tour of the Tufts University campus, led by programming committee chair Kyna Hamill. Stops included the Goddard Chapel, Miner Hall, the Memorial Steps, and Barnum Hall, named after circus magnate and Tufts benefactor P.T. Barnum, whose beloved elephant Jumbo became the school's official mascot. The April tour preceded a lecture about Tufts' early history, presented by Anne Sauer (bottom), director of the Digital Collections and Archives.

Brooks Estate Restoration

This Spring the Medford-Brooks Estate Land Trust (M-BELT) completed restoration of the west porch of the Shepherd Brooks House. Designed in 1880 by the Boston firm of Peabody & Stearns, which was just beginning to gain stature in and around Boston and Newport, the west porch once again connects interior rooms with one another and the exterior environment with visitor experiences of the building as a whole. Before taking on this restoration project, M-BELT had been protecting what was left of the porch as it took on other restoration projects involving the house's brickwork, windows and drainage system.

The subdued though stately aesthetic of the house and porch was appropriate to Shepherd Brooks. Somewhat reclusive by family accounts, he was working in 1880 with his brother, Peter Chardon Brooks III, as an important financier behind the reconstruction of Chicago following the Great Fire of 1871. While summering in separate houses at the Medford estate, Shepherd and Peter tended their masterfully designed estate grounds and communicated with such notable architectural firms as Burnham & Root and Holabird & Roche on the design and construction of some of Chicago's most notable modern buildings.

In the nineteenth century, the west porch offered Shepherd Brooks' family and their friends sweeping views of surrounding farmland, Brooks Pond and the Peter Brooks house on the western edge of the estate. M-BELT plans someday to restore the view to Brooks Pond by thinning a portion of the encroaching woodland. For now, however, visitors can bask in the sun while enjoying the porch's arched copper roof, detailed railings and columns, and Queen Anne combination of brick, granite and wood. The mansion will be open on August 22nd. The public is invited to see the progress being made.

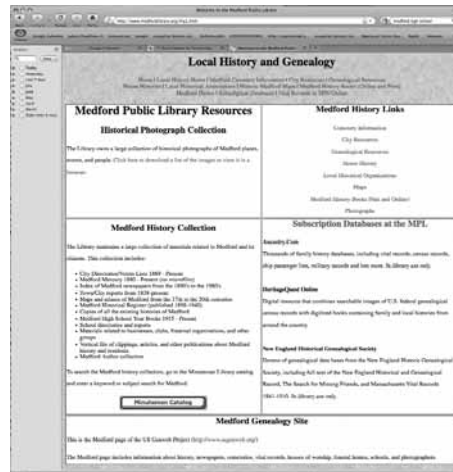
This circa 1885 photograph of the Shepherd Brooks house shows the west porch as it originally appeared.



Restoration of the west porch was made possible through M-BELT's long-term commitment to revitalizing the estate buildings and grounds so the public can use them as meeting and recreational spaces. The west-porch project was paid for through federal grant money, in-kind donations and continued support from M-BELT's membership.

Medford History Links on the Library Web Page

As of July 6, the Medford Public Library's web page features an expanded local history section with links to many local history and genealogy resources.



Over the last few years more and more Medford information has become available online. The pages include links to cemetery information, city and local historical organizations,

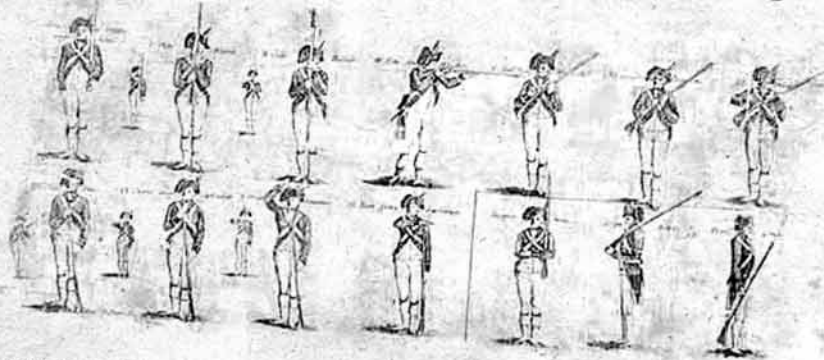
house history resources, Medford maps online, Medford history books online and in print, photograph collections, genealogical resources, vital records, and subscription databases. The Library's local history pages can be found at: <http://www.medfordlibrary.org/lhp1.html>.

Tom Convery's Next Book to Benefit MHS

Our last newsletter mentioned Tom Convery's efforts over the years to benefit local charities through the sale of books documenting the history of Medford through personal reminiscences and research. Great news: Tom has just completed a sixth book and all profits will benefit the Medford Historical Society. The book costs \$10, \$5 goes to the printer, and \$5 to the Society. His first five books raised a total of nearly \$30,000 so we have high hopes. 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 (Brooks Estate), John Anderson (History of Medford Historical Society), and excerpts from the late Linda Penta's 2006 thesis on the Brooks Estate. Please consider buying this book to benefit the Society. Copies may be purchased by calling John Anderson at 781-395-5138 or Tom Convery at 781-396-8129.

To all brave, healthy, and interested individuals so inclined in this neighborhood who gave any inclination to join the troops for the differences of liberty and independence against the hostile design of the foreign enemy

TAKE NOTICE



THE FIRST PATRIOTS: REBELS AT RIVERBEND PARK

By order of the Provincial Congress a muster will be held on

Saturday October 2 & Sunday October 3, 2010
Mystic Riverbend Park in Medford count. Middlesex

Join the Medford, Stow, Woburn and Charlestown minuteman companies for a weekend long 18th century lifestyle experience. We welcome engagement of an audience of all ages. You will see military drill, music, craft, cooking, and dance. We will be hosting a military drill for audience participation, school in the 18th century, and a short lecture about Medford during the war for independence. We start at 9 am until 7 pm on Saturday and 9 am until 5 pm on Sunday. Schedule of events shall be posted each day on site.

Our event is located adjacent to the meadow behind the Andrews and McGlynn Schoolhouses. Parking is located adjacent to the site. Look for the large wind turbine to find our camp.

We honor those who here gave their time and lives to answer the call of liberty through and beyond the Siege of Boston, April 19, 1775 through March 17, 1776.



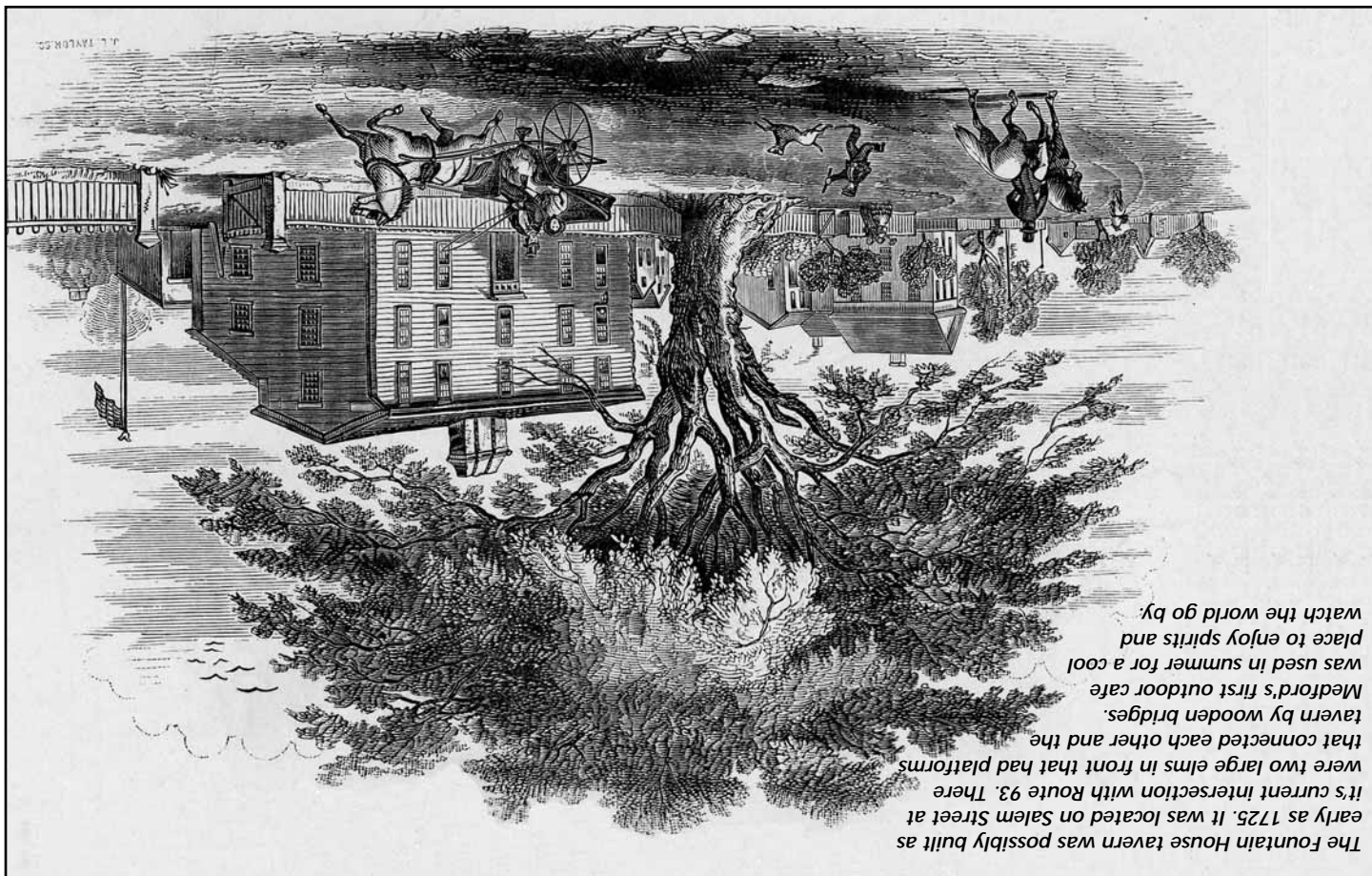
Riverbend Park, Forest Street Post Office, Isaac Royall House, 1690-1730, and Historic Ship Street. Helmets are required; all cycling levels welcome. Suggested donation of \$5.00 will support future Medford Historical Society programming.

HISTORICAL BIKE TOUR

Saturday, September 25, 2010

Begins at 10 am, Whole Foods Market parking lot. 2151 Mystic Valley Parkway Medford.

Join a group of avid cyclists and historians for the second annual historical bike tour of Medford. This year we will focus on Medford's rum and ship-building industries and explore some of the city's hidden corners by bike. The ride will begin at Whole Foods in Medford at 10 am. It will last approximately two hours and conclude with a rum tasting. Some stops on the Bike Tour will include: Mystic



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