



MEDFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

# NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2016

## President's Overview:



It is early April. As I write this column, it is snowing quite intensely, but I'm confident of at least two things:

Spring weather will come!

With your help, MHSM will begin its 121<sup>st</sup> year and continue to preserve Medford history in our museum.

I'd like to use my column to talk a bit about our collection. The collection IS the foundation of our Medford Museum.

The important questions about the collection are:

What do we have?

Why is it important?

Where do we go from here?

### What do we have?

Our current displays include:

- Medford authors - Lydia Maria Child, Alonzo Fields, Fanny Farmer, and others
- Shipbuilding tools, hull models, and pictures of Medford built ships
- Firefighting items including helmets, a fire bucket, and antique alarm equipment
- Military uniforms and other artifacts from the Civil War, Spanish American War, WWI, and WWII
- Lawrence Family artifacts
- Medford Rum – bottles and distilling equipment
- Architectural remnants, antique pictures and souvenir objects relating to the circa 1683 Peter Tufts House

*continued page 2*

## Society Officers

*President John Anderson*

*Vice President David Fedo*

*Treasurer Ruth Roper*

*Assistant Treasurer Hallie Lee*

*Recording Secretary vacant*

*Corresponding Secretary Susan Fedo*

*Director of Collections Barbara Kerr*

## Directors at Large

*Stanley Eckstein Mike Oliver*

*Suzanne Ezekiel Joan Quigley*



*This beautifully carved scrimshaw piece depicting Ironclad CSS Manassas was recently donated to the Medford Historical Society and Museum.*

## Medford Ship Fights for the Confederacy!

by John Anderson

Long-time member Rick Leary recently donated a newspaper from 1862. It features an article about the Confederate warship, CSS Manassas. Rick also donated an etched scrimshaw piece picturing the Manassas. What's particularly interesting to us is that these items tell both a Civil War story and a Medford story.

The Union imposed a crushing blockade on southern ports. The Confederates had no navy to match the Union. The Confederates did have some warships that roamed the high seas, preying upon Union commerce, but they were unable to bring home much booty. Instead the Confederates focused on raising the cost of the war for the Union by sinking merchant ships in both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

The SS Enoch Train, named after a well known Boston sea captain and merchant, was built in Medford in 1855. It would later be renamed the CSS Manassas. She was not a clipper ship, but rather a "steam propeller tow ship." Clipper ships were not the only ships made in Medford! The Enoch Train was in use on the Mississippi River when the Civil War began. It was converted by the Confederates to a warship. She was first used as a privateer and later as a Confederate Navy vessel.

The conversion of the Enoch Train consisted of covering her in

inch thick iron plates, fitting her with a single cannon and a sharp iron ram. She was then renamed the CSS Manassas, probably after the famous battlefield where the Confederates won the first engagement of the war, the Battle of Bull Run. With so much weight, she rose only 2 1/2 feet above the waterline. Her smooth, convex iron shell was designed to harmlessly deflect cannon shells. Her appearance earned her the nickname "The Turtle." The Yankees called her "a hellish machine." The plan of attack was to approach Union ships broadside and ram them while Union cannon fire bounced harmlessly off her shell. It must have been hellish indeed to see this thing coming straight at you. It must have been more hellish to be inside the Manassas with poor visibility, limited ventilation and a hot steam engine. Shells banged and shook the ship, finally climaxing with a huge crash and jolt at the time of collision.

Confederate engineers hoped for a technological breakthrough, a "silver bullet" to destroy Union warships. They tried building submarines and ironclads, the most famous of which is the Merrimack. Remember the famous battle between the Merrimack and the Monitor? Neither was sunk, but the Yankees eventually forced the Merrimack to retreat.

The Manassas fought in two

*continued page 5*

## **President's Overview** *continued*

- Native American artifacts, both decorative and practical
- A Medford diorama, presenting a large three dimensional view of the Medford Square area in 1855

These displays are the most visible part of our collection, a bit like the part of the iceberg you can see! There are many treasures not in plain sight. A few examples include historic postcards, the "Slave Letters" of Timothy Fitch, art, family diaries, newspapers, census records, annual reports of the town and the city, and photographs on glass and paper.

On the second floor we have filing cabinets and shelves full of documents, photos, maps, books, and other publications relating to Medford history.

The basement area, which is as large as our main hall, has rack after rack of a wide range of objects – framed pictures, antique kitchenware, architectural remnants, and furniture. We literally have thousands of items.

In addition to our Medford related items, we also have a nationally recognized collection of Civil War photographs and memorabilia – bullets, uniforms, uniform fragments, flags, and plaques. Our collection of nearly 4,000 photographs is widely recognized as one of the top Civil War photography collections in the country!

### **Why is our collection important?**

We receive inquiries by telephone, email, and in person from Medford residents and out-of-towners looking for information about historic buildings, people, and events. Our most popular inquiries come from Medford residents researching the history of their house or genealogical questions. Using maps, photographs, town and city censuses and tax rolls we can help answer these questions. Authors often use our archives for research as they prepare lectures and write articles and books. Local historians such as Dee Morris, Michael Bradford, and Barbara Kerr have spent hours in the archives. Items from the collection are used in our educational outreach to third graders in the Medford Public Schools. The children love handling real objects and guessing how they were used.

### **Where do we go from here?**

Over the past few years we have been renewing, updating, and rotating the part of our collection on display on the first floor. If you haven't stopped in for a while, drop in on a Sunday afternoon and take a peek.

We continue our efforts to examine and catalog our collection. This work started in earnest about 10 years ago. As we discover long forgotten treasures, our volunteers feel more like archeologists than curators. Even the existence of our nationally significant collection of Civil War photographs had been forgotten until they were "discovered" in 1991 by the son of a then board member.

Most recently, volunteer Beth Hayes launched a project to inventory our collection of textiles. Among the over 300 items already examined are a number of bridal dresses/gowns. I was astonished to learn that we have the wedding dress of Charlotte Swett Hallowell, wife of Edward N. Hallowell, abolitionist and Civil War hero. He served as Colonel in the famous Massachusetts 54th, the first regiment of African-Americans. Both Charlotte and Edward died in Medford. Edward died in 1871 at an early age due to his war injuries. Charlotte lived until 1919. According to



*Volunteer Peter Escott sharing stories about Medford historical artifacts with visiting third graders.*

the "Find a Grave" website, she was a supporter of the Medford Public Library, and in 1902, donated fifty rare Italian books and many photographs to the library. She also convinced a close friend to donate an additional 103 volumes of German works.

Beth Hayes, working with other volunteers, is planning an exhibit of Bridal Gowns from both our collection as well as items loaned from friends of MHSM. A good deal of work remains to be done. The opening date is not yet set, but we are hoping to see it up and on display sometime in June.

We solicit donations of objects related to Medford history, influential Medford residents, or things made in Medford. We love all old things, but we focus specifically on collecting Medford related items. Later in this newsletter, look for an article about recent donations that link Medford and the Civil War. Would you believe that Medford built a Confederate warship? Well, not exactly....

I must report that the MHSM Board has reluctantly made a decision to sell the Peter Tufts House. We feel that it is in the best interest of the house to find a new and more affluent steward. A press release explaining our decision is opposite this page in this issue of the newsletter.

Let me close by reminding you that we are supported exclusively by our members and friends through dues, gifts, occasional fund-raisers and grant awards. We receive no assistance from the City.

We greatly appreciate and count on you and ask for your continued support.

John Anderson, President

## MHSM Statement on the Peter Tufts House

by John Anderson

In a time when it seems that many historic properties all over the City of Medford are threatened, I want to bring everyone up to date on the situation at 350 Riverside Avenue, the Peter Tufts House, also known (incorrectly) as the Cradock House. It is one of the oldest remaining brick houses in the USA, built around 1683.

Over the centuries, the house has experienced periods of neglect, threatened demolition, and subsequent refurbishment. SPNEA, now known as Historic New England (HNE) purchased the house in 1930. During the 1970s and 1980s SPNEA decided they could not provide stewardship for all their properties and sold many of them, including the Peter Tufts House. In 1982, the Medford Historical Society & Museum (MHSM) raised funds to purchase the house.

Since 1982, a couple lived there as caretakers paying minimal rent. Over the decades a number of deferred maintenance items piled up. When the caretaker moved out in 2013, the house, although basically sound, was no longer livable.

Over the last three years, the Medford Historical Society and Museum invested over \$45,000 on plumbing, heating, asbestos removal, mold abatement, and the complete replacement of the knob and tube electrical system. There were no three prong

outlets in the house! This addressed the most pressing basic safety issues and improved livability.

Securing a \$5,000 grant from the National Trust, and matched with \$5,000 of our own money, we engaged experts to document the history of the house and advise us as to the best use of the building. The subsequent report asked us to consider a number of factors before deciding to sell or keep the house. In the meantime, we have rented the house on a month by month basis to several responsible individuals.

It has now been more than two years since the former caretaker moved out. After long discussions and many Board meetings, we concluded that the Society and Museum does not have the resources to ensure adequate stewardship of the property. Although the basic mechanical systems are safe and functional, many other repairs are needed. Maintenance and ongoing repairs are beyond our ability to fund and manage. Therefore, the Board voted to sell the property, but without a specific timeframe. We need to find the right buyer who understands their responsibilities and is enthusiastic about the house!

The Peter Tufts House is NOT THREATENED in any way by this decision. When MHSM purchased the property, the deed included a permanent preservation easement administered by Historic New England. The

property cannot be subdivided or demolished. The entire exterior and many of the interior features are protected by the deed restrictions. HNE requires work to be approved in advance and they inspect the house annually for compliance.

We have made this decision reluctantly, but feel it is in the best interest of the house to seek a new owner and steward.



*View of the Peter Tufts House before its restoration  
by Samuel Crocker Lawrence ca. 1890.*

## Calendar of Events



### May:

#### Annual MHSM Tea Fundraiser

#### Mother/Daughter/Family and Friends Tea

Saturday, May 7, 2:00 to 4:00 PM

10 Governors Avenue

This year our 3rd Annual Tea is just before Mother's Day. Bring your Mother, your Daughter, Family Member or a Friend and join us for a very special Spring afternoon of tea, sweets and savories galore, raffles and other surprises. Tickets will go on sale on April 2nd. \$15.00 per person. Contact Susan at 781 483-8098 or at SusanRFedo@gmail.com or Barbara Kerr at the Library, bkerr@minilib.org. Tickets at the door will be available if any remain, seating is limited at this sit-down event.

#### MHSM Annual Meeting

Open to members and non-members

Business meeting: John Anderson

Guest Speaker, Mark E. Rumley, Medford City Solicitor on the Charter Change of 1986

Friday, May 13, 2016, at 7:00 PM

10 Governors Avenue

Both an annual celebration and a business meeting, the Annual Meeting agenda includes the nomination and vote (members only) on new Board Members, updates by active members on the successes and challenges of the past year, ranging from the digitization of our Civil War photograph collection to the initial plans for the sale of the Peter Tufts House, and the happenings in between! As most of you know, there's a discussion underway to revise Medford's City Charter. It was last changed when we went from "Plan E" to "Plan A" 28 years ago. Mr. Rumley will talk about how this transpired back in the day when most of us either weren't here or don't remember. Party refreshments follow.

### June and July:

#### Historical Wedding Dress Exhibit and Talk

Opening reception, Friday, June 3 at 7:00 PM

Exhibit, hours: Sundays, June 12 through July 31, from noon to 4:00 PM, and by special arrangement with

MHSM at 10 Governors Avenue

#### Accompanying Lectures:

July 13, at 7:00 PM Intense Feelings and Broken Hearts: Romantic Love in Early Medford by Dee Morris

Date TBA: American Wedding Fashion Traditions by Karen Herbaugh of the Lowell Textile Museum  
Both at the Library, for reasons of space

Everyone loves a wedding! The textile collection of the MHSM contains several lovely examples of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century wedding dresses. This summer, we will display our dresses and other examples of wedding fashion for your viewing pleasure. Our wedding celebration will include a lecture on wedding dresses by Karen Herbaugh of the Lowell Textile Museum. Medford's own Dee Morris will also share some love stories of early Medford (see above) If you would like to loan your wedding dress to the exhibit contact Barbara Kerr at bkerr@minilib.net.

### August:

#### Joint Author Lecture

by both Brenda Albus, author of *A Woman Fearing Nothing, the story of Medford resident and Revolutionary War hero Sarah Bradlee Fulton, and Medford historian, Dee Morris*

Thursday, August 11, at 7:00 PM 10 Governors Avenue

Sarah Bradlee Fulton lived in Medford during the American Revolution. She is a rather legendary character in Medford history but information about her is limited to a few articles and some brief accounts in Medford history books. In 2014, however, Brenda Albus published a book called *A Woman Fearing Nothing: the story of Sarah Bradlee Fulton*. Albus is a descendant of Fulton, and did a great deal of research for the book which included help from the Medford Historical Society and Museum. This lecture will combine the story of Sarah Bradlee Fulton and the story of Albus's search for the facts about her famous ancestor. Local historian Dee Morris and Brenda Albus will both speak during the program.

### September/October:

#### Live Theater at MHSM

#### *Letters to Medford: A Play About the Past*

#### *According to the Future*

by Kyna Hamill, directed by Wanda Strukus

Performances at 10 Governors Avenue

Thursday, September 29 at 7:30 PM

\*Friday, September 30 at 7:30 PM

Saturday, October 1 at 7:30 PM

Sunday, October 2 at 2:00 PM

Thursday, October 6 at 7:30 PM

Friday, October 7 at 7:30 PM

Saturday, October 8 at 7:30 PM

Sunday, October 9 at 2:00 PM

#### \*Opening Night

Friday, September 30, 2016

If you missed this charming show in 2014, *Letters to Medford* will be mounted again in fall 2016 with a special performance and talk back on Friday Sept. 30th celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the groundbreaking for the MHSM building.



Christine Banna Photography

Inspired by a letter to the future written by the Medford historian Reverend Charles Brooks in 1855, the play weaves together excerpts from historical and contemporary letters, and brings the past, present, and future together in a tale that is both a charming ghost story and a spirited debate about history and the future. When the spirits of Reverend Charles Brooks, Lydia Maria Child and Lucy Osgood, historical figures with ties to Medford, return to see how the future has turned out, they learn a thing or two from modern-day Medford teenagers who have their own strong opinions about the future.

## Medford Ship *continued*

naval engagements on the lower Mississippi River, with mixed results. In the first battle, October 12, 1861, she rammed the USS Richmond damaging the ship seriously, but not sinking it. The Manassas was also damaged in the collision. She lost her ram, smokestack, and temporarily lost power when her engines were thrown out of gear. Still, she was able to retire while sustaining heavy fire from the Union ships. On April 24, 1862, after repair, she singlehandedly took on multiple Union ships. One Union ship managed to turn in time to avoid the ram, another, the USS Mississippi, received a glancing blow, and a third was seriously, but not fatally damaged. All this time the Manassas was fired upon by multiple ships, apparently with little effect. The end finally came when the USS Mississippi attempted to turn tables by ramming the Manassas. The Manassas evaded the attempt, but was run aground. Her crew escaped before the Union ships focused their fire on the stranded Manassas. Eventually she slipped off the bank, floated down the river in flames, exploded, and sank. This crew did better than those aboard the short lived Confederate submarine, CSS Hunley. The Hunley sank and was raised twice during sea trials

Stay tuned for further information. MHSM will host a gala opening to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of our building. You will meet the writer, director, and cast.

Tickets go on sale in July. \$15 adults; \$12 students and seniors. Email [tworoads.org@gmail.com](mailto:tworoads.org@gmail.com) if you have any questions. Sponsored in part by the Medford Arts Council.

### Summer Community Programs

See you at Medford CACHE's Circle the Square this summer, Thursdays, June 16, July 21, and August 18, 3:30 to 7:30 PM. [circlethesquaremedford@gmail.com](mailto:circlethesquaremedford@gmail.com).

Watch for additional program news (or any changes) on our website, [www.medfordhistorical.org](http://www.medfordhistorical.org), on Facebook, in our weekly Club News column in the Transcript, and in future Newsletters. If you do not already receive regular email updates, please send us your email at [medfordhistorical@yahoo.com](mailto:medfordhistorical@yahoo.com).

### Special Thank Yous

From MHSM for speaker Jeffrey Amestoy, author of *Slavish Shore* (March '16), the Historical Wedding Dress Exhibit and lectures (June – August '16), and Brenda Albus, author of the book on Sarah Bradlee Fulton (August '16), and also from Two Roads Productions for *Letters to Medford*; all of these events have support in the form of grants from the Medford Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.



The steam icebreaker Enoch Train was originally built in Medford in 1855 by James O. Curtis as a twin-screw towboat. It was refitted for the War and renamed Manassas.

killing half the crew the first time and the entire crew the second time. In its first battle, the Hunley sank a Union sloop, but in doing so damaged itself severely enough to permanently sink along with the entire third crew.

In the end, these “silver bullets” weren’t effective. The Union’s grip on the seacoast and eventually the Mississippi River were important factors in winning the war.



Medford Historical Society & Museum

# 3rd Annual Tea

for Mothers, Daughters, Families & Friends

Saturday, May 7, 2016 2:00-4:00 PM  
10 Governors Avenue

Featuring a short talk: "Lydia Maria Child on Mothering and Nutrition"

\$15 tickets go on sale April 2. Seating is limited. Reserve a place by contacting Susan at 781.483.8098 ,  
[SusanRFedo@gmail.com](mailto:SusanRFedo@gmail.com) or, Barbara at [bkerr@minlib.org](mailto:bkerr@minlib.org).  
Tickets at the door will be available if any remain.  
This is a sit-down event.

[www.medfordhistorical.org](http://www.medfordhistorical.org)



Your Medford Historical Society Newsletter

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



MEDFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
10 Governors Avenue  
Medford, MA 02155

NON PROFIT ORG  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
BOSTON, MA  
PERMIT NO. 739