# MEDFORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY EVASUATE SUMMER, 2011

### Presidents' Overview: New People & Projects



We're wrapping up another year at the Historical Society with

some exciting developments. At the annual meeting, we thanked outgoing Board members and Officers Susan Gerould, Jenny Gilbert, Sharon Guzik and Pam Bybell for all their work and were pleased to welcome Fred Schlicher, Luke Pomorski and Jay Hurd to the Board. We are preparing for a large renovation and repair project at 10 Governors Avenue, expanding our outreach to local schools and planning for next year's public programs while we continue the Civil War photography cataloging and digitization project.

This "Presidents' Overview" starts a new chapter in MHS history. Kyna Hamill was elected Co-President along with John Anderson at the annual meeting. Kyna first came to MHS as a volunteer in 2008, was on the organizing committee of the Civil War Exhibit in 2009, has served on the board for two years, chaired the Programs and Events Committee, and has now stepped forward as Co-President with the enthusiastic support of the membership. John has served as President for three years and is delighted to share the responsibility with Kyna.

The main hall at 10 Governors Avenue is now closed for repairs. As many people have noticed, there's been

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Luke Pomorski

#### **Society Officers**

Co-Presidents John Anderson and Kyna Hamill Recording Secretary Maura McEnaney Corresponding Secretary Donna Laquidara Carr Treasurer Ruth Roper Director of Collections Barbara Kerr Directors at Large Stanley Eckstein Jay Hurd

Stanley Eckstein Jim Kiely Fred Schlicher

### City, Volunteers Join forces to Preserve Historic Salem Street Burying Ground

by Maura McEnaney

Looking for an opportunity to help preserve one of Medford's historic treasures?

The Salem Street Burying Ground, final resting place for more than 700 Medford residents dating as far back as 1683, is in need of a few friends who can help extol and maintain the importance of this Medford Square landmark.

Located between Riverside Avenue and Salem Street, the site is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, on property settled in 1630 by Matthew Cradock, the first governor of Massachusetts. Many of Medford's founding families are buried there, including former Massachusetts Governor John Brooks (1752-1825), 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century merchants, prominent sea captains and Revolutionary War patriots. The property's southwest corner also houses the unmarked graves of about 50 enslaved africans, some of whom may have been owned by West Indies sugar cane magnate Isaac Royall and



family before the British loyalists fled their George Street estate on the eve of the American Revolution.

Local historian and author Dee Morris has guided a number of walking tours through the Medford Square site. "Spending time in Salem Street Burying Ground is an opportunity to understand something about the early people who founded Medford," she notes. "It is a chance to look at the stones of

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above; Historic gravestones needing repair have been tagged for restoration. below: Restoration project volunteers from left, Wallace Kountze, Bob Spry, and Nino Susi with conservator TaMara Conde meet with Mayor Michael McGlynn to update him on the progress of the project.



http://www.medfordhistorical.org



a mold problem for years. The mold has been wiped off, painted over, or simply ignored for too long. The most obvious indication of the problem is the mold on a large section of the ceiling. Consensus among experts was that at least half the ceiling and the insulation underneath should be removed and replaced. As homeowners know, projects in older homes tend to snowball both because of the challenges of upgrading older buildings and the desire to do additional improvements which are much more cost effective when done with other work. In our case, it seemed foolish to replace only half the ceiling which is not plaster or plasterboard, but fiberboard with a skim coat of plaster. Fiberboard holds moisture, and we now know that is part of the problem. We also plan to upgrade the ceiling insulation since another cause of the mold was some condensation of moisture on the metal ceiling beam. The existing ceiling also lacked proper vents to allow air circulation between the roof boards and the top of the insulation. We will be using a foam product that can fill the entire space between the ceiling and roof without the need for any vents.

With the ceiling down, it seems the perfect time to make improvements to the lighting which will be evident in the entrance hall, main meeting room, and upstairs office. Although this project will not address all the issues at 10 Governors Avenue, it will go a long way to improve the environment in the building. Look for a well-lit, freshly painted, mold free ceiling in the meeting room by the end of the summer.

We were successful in raising funds to pay for a portion of this project. The Fall Gala, spearheaded by Larry Brown and his family, got us off to a good start. Tom Convery agreed to donate the proceeds from his latest book, Reflections, and an anonymous donor matched \$3000 of our annual appeal. These efforts raised approximately \$10,000 of the \$30,000 we need to complete the project. Reluctantly, we will also utilize funds from our reserves, but the Board sees this as a necessary investment to protect the collection and provide a healthy environment for volunteers and visitors. Further fundraising is planned in the coming months and years in order to return money to the reserve account.

The success of the Medford Historical Society is the direct result of the volunteers and donors who support the organization. With your continued help and encouragement, we look forward to another year of strengthening the organization as well serving our members and the community at large.



far left: Members congregate for refreshments at the Royall House before the annual meeting in May. left: Volunteer Brenda Breed was honored for extraordinary service to MHS for her archiving of the post card collection.

### Welcome to the New MHS Board members for 2011-12

Jay Hurd has been a resident of Medford since 1986. He retired from Harvard University in 2008, where he served as the Preservation Review Librarian for Widener Library. He currently works as a museum educator/interpreter for the Concord Museum. For more than 10 years, Jay has served as recording secretary for the Board of Directors of the Friends of the Medford Public Library. He also served on the board of the Medford Arts Center Inc. (MACI), on the Steering Committee for the Medford Recycling Program and has been active in the West Medford Little League, Babe Ruth and Senior Babe Ruth baseball.

Fred Schlicher is a Program Manager for Massachusetts Climate Action Network focusing on expanding the statewide network of 44 chapters and helping individual chapters achieve their community action goals. Prior to MCAN Schlicher owned and operated his own consulting firm providing organizational management, public relations and community relations services to a variety of educational, governmental and industry clients. He is a former journalist and has a BA in English from Southern Methodist University and is a graduate of the Professional Certificate Program in Public Relations from UCLA.

Lukasz (Luke) Pomorski is a graduate of Tufts University and is currently working on a Masters degree in the Library and Information Sciences program at Simmons with a focus on Archival Studies. He works on special projects in the Digital Collections and Archives at Tufts University and has previously volunteered with Catholic Charities in their immigration clinic.

-John Anderson, Kyna Hamill, Co-Presidents

### Burying Ground continued

not only the prominent merchants but also the tavern keepers, carpenters and home makers who built a viable community despite a variety of obstacles and difficulties. A quiet moment spent with the Osgoods, Bishops, Tufts and other families can lead us to a wider understanding of our own role in creating community."

Despite its significance to our local history, Salem Street Burying Ground in recent years has fallen into disrepair, its history in danger of being lost forever. Many of the headstones, some of which bear the symbol of a winged skull– a colonial New England representation of the soul's flight from mortality – have gone missing or are damaged beyond recognition. Landscaping also deteriorated and records about the property can be difficult to find.

In 2009, community volunteer Bob Spry, along with Nino Susi, current chairman of the Medford Historic Districts Commission and Wallace Kountze, special assistant to Mayor Michael McGlynn, launched a project to create a master conservation plan for this important site. Funding for this first phase of the preservation project came from the Massachusetts Historical Commission and a federal Community Development Block Grant obtained with the help of the mayor's office and Medford's Office of Community Development.

Late last year, a second round of financing of up to \$76,000 was obtained from those same sources to begin the restoration work on more than 100 historic gravestones. In late May, conservators began straightening and resetting some of the more intact gravestones, while identifying gravestone fragments that will be used in the reconstruction of others. The city has pitched in by removing a few small volunteer trees that blocked part of the walking path and trimming up the larger, mature trees to create a clear line of sight through the property.

Plans for the future include restoring the brick wall near the corner of Salem and River Streets, making the cemetery handicap accessible, and creating an interactive display about the importance of Salem Street Burying Ground in Medford's history. A group of Medford High School students is researching the lives of some of the more prominent people interred at the cemetery. Copies of their completed pamphlets will be available at the cemetery entrances.

Even with all these efforts, more help is needed to keep the cemetery viable for future generations, notes Susi, project coordinator for the restoration project. Susi and others would like to see a committee of "friends" adopt Salem Street Burying Ground, taking time to watch over and possibly clean and beautify the site, while raising public awareness — especially with our city's middle and high school students — about the important history that lies within its walls. With all the activity that's happening on the site, now is a good time for citizens to get together and keep that momentum going.

"Salem Street Burying Ground is a real gem, right in the middle of Medford Square," notes Susi. "The memory of those who helped build our city — and our nation — deserve to be preserved and respected for years to come."

If you are interested in the Salem Street Burying Ground project, or want to help form a "Friends" committee, please contact Nino Susi at 617-504-8566, or by email at medfordhistoricalcommission @comcast.net



Conservator TaMara Conde records the inscription from a broken gravestone before beginning the repair.

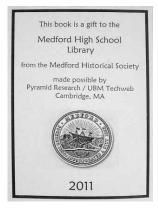
### **Update on Education Outreach**

by Allison Andrews

Lecture series, visitation hours, newsletter articles – the Historical Society reaches out to share the city's rich history with our membership and our community.

The past year has found us collaborating increasingly with the city's schools, reaching out to the city's youth in some old and new ways. Here are the Society's recent efforts to support teaching local history.

### **Book Donation**



In April, the Society was pleased to deliver a set of local history books to each of the city's public schools. Students now have a wealth of information about their city's history, and the school libraries have materials for general reference that also support city-wide local history curricula.

Each school received about 15 books and related

documents drawn from titles for sale at the Society. Medford Public Schools' library specialist, Maria D'Orsi, reviewed the materials and made selections for the appropriate grade levels.

The variety of material – factual accounts, personal stories and lots of pictures – recount the city's rich history of pre-Colonial days, the American Revolution, the industrial  $19^{th}$  century and continuing growth in the  $20^{th}$  century.

Contemporary local authors included in the collection are familiar names such as Barbara Kerr, Dee Morris, Tom Convery, Patty Saunders and Oscar Greene. The youngest authors are the Hobbs Middle School Class of 1996 who produced an illustrated and annotated version of the beloved Medford poem "Over the River and Through the Woods."

For making this book donation possible, we are thankful to Pyramid Research/UBM Tech Web in Cambridge and their support of local non-profit organizations, and to Pyramid employee Sonia Jorge for initiating the grant.

Libraries at the Columbus, Brooks, McGlynn and Roberts Elementary Schools, McGlynn and Andrews Middle Schools, Medford High School & Vocational School, and the Curtis Tufts School all received a set of materials.

## MHS Programs in Support of Teaching Local History

Over the past year, MHS has heard from teachers in Medford elementary schools, asking for resources for teaching local history. The teachers have offered suggestions for activities that enhance classroom learning.



Allison Andrews, Medford Historical Society member and Columbus Elementary School parent, Maria D'Orsi, Medford High School librarian, and John Anderson, Medford Historical Society president, at the Medford High School Library with some of the books the Historical Society donated to the schools.

They have also voiced the need for some version of Medford history that is compiled and edited specifically for teachers to use for the development of lesson plans. There is an abundance of reference material on the history of Medford, but more, in fact, than is practical to sort through and distill down to grade-specific narrative for classroom teaching. And any topic of Medford's history already being taught can be enhanced with details and illustrations if the right resource is available. There is particular need at the third grade level, when local history is introduced into the curriculum.

MHS has been able provide a few opportunities to a limited number of schools. The response has been enthusiastic, and that nudges us toward a larger goal: to expand the ideas and turn them into programs, and, through conversation with teachers, create teaching support that serves all of the city's schools, public and private.

To this end, three programs are taking shape: classroom presentations, historic walking tours for school neighborhoods, and workshops for teachers.

### Presentations

Last spring, MHS hosted four third-grade classroom visits at our home at 10 Governors Avenue with Peter Escott, an MHS member active in the Civil War photographs cataloging project, as the featured speaker.

Peter is a retired history teacher (though he easily made a temporary transition out of retirement once the students entered the room). Students listened to Medford's story surrounded by the very artifacts of those earlier times. Peter brought in materials from his

### Education Outreach continued

own Civil War collection, adding a memorable handson experience.

With a script-style outline and designated props, this type of presentation could be offered as needed by any number of presenters. When on-site visits are not possible, classroom visits are an option. A kit of artifacts (or when necessary, reproductions) would travel with the presenter.

### Walking Self-Tours

A simple idea for easily arranged, low-cost field trips: put together a historic walking tour for each school neighborhood. After all, it seems as though there is some point of historical interest around nearly every corner in Medford. MHS can provide a map with short texts (both for places that are and places that used to be) and pre-tour study materials.

### Workshops

As mentioned, teachers have asked MHS for historical content that is organized for their use in lesson planning. Specifically, they hope that information could be offered in workshops that would also earn them professional development credits at the same time.

This concept has been presented to the Medford Public Schools Humanities Department which responded positively to the preliminary proposal. They can guide us through the School Department's requirements for workshops of this type.

The potential programs described above are still in the planning stage. An ad hoc Education Outreach Committee is exploring ways to create and implement them, for instance, reviewing curriculum development tools and looking at successful programs elsewhere that can serve as models. And as far as Medford's history goes, MHS has lots to share.

### St. Joseph's School Essay Contest

This year, MHS again agreed to judge the St. Joseph's School 8<sup>th</sup> grade essay contest, sponsored annually by the Lonergan family. As in previous years, the topic was the Civil War which is covered in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum . Students were challenged to describe the circumstances of the conflict and then offer their reflections upon how it was finally resolved.

MHS judges (John and Heather Anderson, Larry Brown, Allison Andrews) read over 60 submissions and selected the top three essays and two honorable mentions. These awards were presented at St. Joseph's Memorial Day Assembly on May 27 by Allison Andrews and Judy Lonergan. The winners received a cash prize in addition to the award certificate.

The Lonergan family sponsors the contest annually in loving memory of John Lonergan (1938-2009), recent president of MHS and a friend to Medford in many ways.

### Medford Historical Society Programming for 2010-11

The Programming Committee completed a very full year in 2010-11. Members include Kyna Hamill, Dorothy and Stan Eckstein, Mike Oliver, and Barbara Kerr. We would like to thank Larry Brown and John Anderson for help with events, and we welcome Nancy Preziosi to the committee for 2011-12. We would also like to thank all the facilities willing to host our programs and events while we prepared for the renovation in the MHS Main Hall; these include Grace Episcopal Church, Royall House and Slave Quarters, the Medford Senior Center, Mayor McGlynn and Medford City Hall, and Shiloh Baptist Church.

We began the season in September with a bicycle tour that focused on Medford's historic rum and shipbuilding industries. In November, we enjoyed a fascinating afternoon learning about the history of Shiloh Baptist Church in West Medford and completed our first-ever fundraising Gala. January brought the Antique Appraisal Night, which, although successful, would likely do much better in the spring next time! In March, we sponsored a lecture series on "Recognizing and Restoring Architecture" which featured Ryan Hayward of the Medford Historical Commission who spoke on house styles of New England and Stefan Knust of Goody Clancy Architects who spoke on the reconstruction work at Trinity Church, Boston. In April, it was standing-room only for Barbara Kerr and Dee Morris' talk on "Medford Square Before and After the I-93". With a record attendance of 84 people, this event will occur again on Monday, August 1 at 7:00 PM in the Medford Public Library.

The Programming Committee will meet in June to decide the schedule for next year; look for another historical bicycle tour, a featured church history of Medford, and other interesting presentations.

Questions, comments or suggestions? Email kyna hamill@yahoo.com

### **Peter Tufts House Tours**



Tuesday, June 14 - 5:30 PM Tuesday, July 12 - 4:00 PM Thursday, July 28 - 11:00 AM

The Peter Tufts House is at 350 Riverside Avenue; tours last about one hour. *Parking is available on Rockwell Avenue, perpendicular to the house.* 

Please sign up at the Medford Public Library for the time of your choice. Tours are **free**, but donations are appreciated.



Your Medford Historical Society Newsletter

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