



THE GEORGETOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER **SUMMER, 2012**

From the President:

The Brocklebank Museum opened for the summer on July 8, and our tour guides have been *busy!* We have had a great turn-out nearly every Sunday and continue to get rave reviews. Two members of the Civil War Roundtable e-mailed us after their visit and said, “We think you’ve put the rest of the region to shame for your work on the Civil War exhibit.”

Changes have been made and several new items have been added to our display, including swords, pistols, a bugle, and a belt with bayonet, scabbard, and cap box, all on loan from the Georgetown Library.

Many years ago, before there was a Brocklebank Museum or Georgetown Historical Society, residents donated items of historical interest to the Library. Some of these items have been stored away in boxes and are on display for the first time in many years, maybe even the first time EVER! We are grateful to the library trustees and staff for allowing us to use these items for our display.

If you haven’t been to the Brocklebank Museum recently, we hope you’ll drop in this Fall. We are open every Sunday from 2-5 through Columbus Day weekend. Admission is FREE to current GHS members. It is through the generosity of our members and friends and the dedication of our volunteers that we are able to keep the Brocklebank Museum open for all to enjoy.



Chris Comiskey , Georgetown Historical Society President



Union Cemetery Gravestone Conservation Project Phase 2

By Frederic C. Detwiler

The second phase of the project for the conservation of gravestones at the Union Cemetery is nearly complete. Funded by a Community Preservation Act grant administered through the Georgetown Historical Commission, the work involved conservation repairs to a second series of stones (for a total of 86 stones) and progress has been substantial although there are always more stones to conserve (374 total in need of conservation). The accompanying photos show work being performed the last week of August by Minxie and Jim Fannin of Fannin-Lehner Preservation Consultants, Concord, MA. Work has involved re-setting leaning stones, drilling and pinning broken stones, adhesively repairing broken and fallen slate markers, and cleaning conserved stones of organic lichen and moss growth as well as dirt and soot accumulated over the years. We are grateful to the Fannins and their team for a remarkable job on this work.



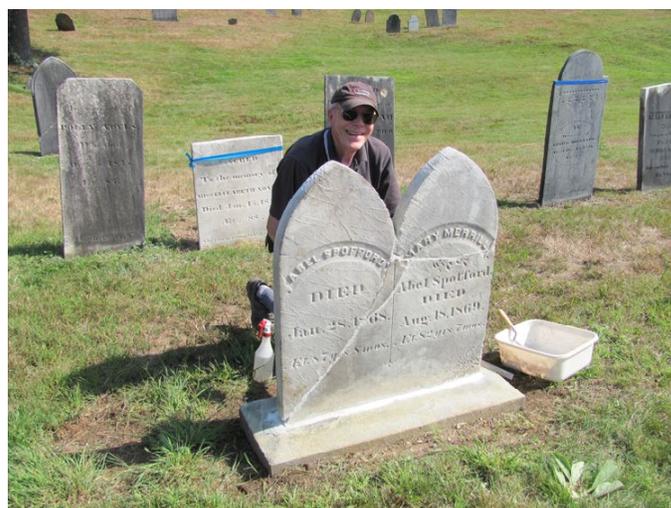
Minxie Fannin cleans lichen from the 1777 stone of Betty, wife of Solomon Nelson.



The 1732 stone of Hannah, wife of Joseph Nelson, grand-daughter of Samuel Brocklebank "slain by the Indians at Sudbury, April 27, 1676, and the first person buried at this place."



Three stones conserved in project phases 1 & 2.



Jim Fannin reassembles the 1868-1869 stone of Abel and Mary M. Spofford.



Capt. Fitch Weston 1844 stone work in progress. Stone of Albert & Lilly Franklin, 1855, needs conservation.



CEMETERY TOURS ***By Chris Comiskey***

Do you prefer to learn about local history, or are macabre tales on Halloween weekend more to your liking? Either way, we hope you will join us for one or both of our upcoming cemetery tours. Join us on October 13th and 14th at 2 PM for an historical tour of Georgetown's Union Cemetery on East Main Street. Learn about early ministers, slaves and abolitionists, soldiers, and young victims of a tragic epidemic. See the evolution of gravestone carving since 1731 and learn about early burial customs.

AND / OR.....

Join us for a glimpse at the macabre side of Georgetown's history on October 27th and 28th at 2 PM. Hear about ghastly accidents, tragic suicides, a deadly epidemic, and even a murder (and a most surprising murderer!) while touring Georgetown's oldest cemetery. Both tours will take place at Georgetown's historic Union Cemetery on East Main Street. Cost of admission is \$5.00, with all proceeds going to the Georgetown Historical Society. For more information, contact us at info@georgetownhistoricalsociety.com



Illustration from *Making History Fun and Frugal* By Kimberly Danger

<http://playdateplace.kmart.com/2011/11/making-history-fun-and-frugal/>

MAKING HISTORY FUN!

By Chris Comiskey

Here's a confession—I always hated History in school. It was one of my worst subjects. All those names and dates and battles—SO boring!

Years later, I started researching my family tree, and suddenly history became more interesting. I was surprised to learn that many of my ancestors arrived here only a decade or two after the pilgrims. They were among the first settlers of places like Ipswich, Salisbury, Newbury, and even Rowley, where their names are found on documents alongside those of Reverend Ezekiel Rogers and Captain Samuel Brocklebank. Some of my ancestors fought in the Revolution, the Civil War, and many other conflicts. Several were killed in Indian raids, and one, a ship's captain, was captured by a French Privateer!

I discovered the true value of all my research when my children began learning about US history in school. Those names, dates and battles became more interesting to them when they understood the part that their own family had played in America's history. They also enjoyed visiting many of our wonderful historic sites throughout the Northeast, like Plimoth Plantation and Old Sturbridge Village, and of course, their third-grade class visit to the Brocklebank Museum!

I strongly encourage parents (and grandparents) of young children to go beyond the history textbooks and learn about their own family's roots and the roles their ancestors played in our history, and to visit some of our interesting local historic sites. We are very fortunate to live in an area so steeped in early American history, and with such a wealth of wonderful historic places to visit nearby. Please contact us if you would like more information on how to get started on your own genealogy quest.



THE CIVIL WAR AND THE BROCKLEBANK HOUSE

By Christine Comiskey

Nearly everyone in Georgetown in the 1860s had a family member or acquaintance involved in the Civil War, so it is not surprising that the Brocklebank Museum has its own strong ties. Three of its former owners had family members in the war.

Benjamin McLaughlin owned the house from 1858-1859. His son, Benjamin, was in the 1st Company, Massachusetts Sharpshooters. He died a month after being wounded at Cold Harbor, VA in 1864 at the age of twenty-five. Mr. McLaughlin's daughter, Mary Wildes, was an Army Nurse at the U.S. General Hospital at Fortress Monroe, VA from 1864-1865. Her husband, George, was with the 16th Regiment, Company K, New Hampshire Infantry, and died of disease in New Orleans, LA in 1863 at the age of twenty-nine.

In 1859, Mr. McLaughlin sold the Brocklebank house to Reverend Charles Beecher and his wife, Sarah. Prior to living in Georgetown, Charles had lived in Louisiana, where he witnessed the horrors of slavery. His stories provided his sister, Harriet Beecher Stowe, with some of the inspiration for her famous book *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. President Lincoln, upon meeting Mrs. Stowe, called her "the little woman who wrote the book that made this great war."

Charles and Sarah's son, Fred Beecher, enlisted in Company B, 16th Maine Infantry upon graduating from Bowdoin College in 1862. He was wounded at Fredericksburg in 1862 and severely wounded at Gettysburg in 1863. He returned home and was nursed back to health by his family during the highly stressful time that Charles was on trial for heresy. Fred recovered and returned to Army life after the war. He was killed in 1868 at the age of twenty-seven in Colorado Territory while battling Indians.

The Beechers sold the house in 1869 to Melvin G. Spofford. Two of his brothers, George and John Spofford, were in the War, along with their brother-in-law, Nathaniel Pierce. George and Nathaniel were both with Company K, 50th Regiment Massachusetts Infantry in Louisiana and later with the 17th Unattached Company, Massachusetts Volunteers. They survived the War.

John Spofford enlisted in the Navy and served on the USS Potomac. He died of disease in Pensacola Florida in 1863 at the age of twenty-three.

All of the people mentioned are represented in our *Georgetown in the Civil War* exhibit.



PENN BROOK SCHOOL FIELD TRIP TO MUSEUM

On June 7, we happily welcomed the Penn Brook School third-graders on their annual field trip to the museum. We love their enthusiasm and their great questions, and always look forward to seeing them again during the summer with their families. A big *Thank you* goes out to my fellow tour-guides: Starr Anderson, Beverly Knapp, Ed DesJardins, Steve Keene and Rick Detwiller, along with a special thanks to Georgetown Police Chief James Mulligan and Crossing Guard George Comiskey for helping the kids safely cross busy East Main Street.

BOOK SIGNING--MEET THE AUTHOR!

On Saturday, September 22, William Hallett, author of *Newburyport and the Civil War*, will be on hand to sign his book from 1:30 to 3:00 at the Brocklebank museum. In the book, Mr. Hallett describes in thrilling detail the lives and deeds of those from the Clipper City who served both Union and Confederate causes. From the abolitionist preaching of William Lloyd Garrison to the heroism of Albert W. Bartlett, with naval warfare—including the construction of the USS *Marblehead*—and political intrigue in between. This is a must-read for those interested in local history and the Civil War. GHS currently has a limited supply of the books for sale at the museum.

TRAILS & SAILS WEEKENDS

The Brocklebank Museum will be participating again this year in the “Trails & Sails” weekends. We will be hosting an Open House on September 22 & 23, and September 29 & 30 from 12-5. We will not be offering guided tours during those days, but we will need some extra volunteers to keep an eye on things in each room. If you can spare a few hours and are willing to assist, please contact us at info@georgetownhistoricalsociety.com.



ANNUAL MEETING SPEAKER

We are please to announce that the speaker for our Annual Meeting scheduled for December 5 will be William Hallett, author of *Newburyport and the Civil War*. Bill and his wife Elizabeth, who are members of the local Civil War Roundtable, also conduct the *Footsteps of Heroes* tours of Newburyport, centering on people from that city involved in the Civil War. For more information, visit www.footstepsofheroes.com.



HOMER TAPIN SCHOLARSHIP

Each year, GHS gives out a scholarship in memory of Homer Tapin, a former president and founding member of the Society. The scholarship is awarded to a Georgetown High School senior who will be majoring in a history-related field. We are pleased to announce that the recipient of this year's scholarship is Marisa Michaud. Marisa will be attending Suffolk University in the fall to major in Art History. We congratulate Marisa and wish her much luck.

CURATOR'S CORNER

Steve Keene:

The Curator has been very busy entering data into our digital files of the inventory of the Museum Collection. He regrets that he is unable to include an article in this issue. He looks forward to reporting some enthralling information on our collections in the next issue.

DATES TO REMEMBER:

September 22 - Book signing by author William Hallett at Brocklebank Museum 1:30 - 3
 September 22 & 23 - Open House at Brocklebank Museum 12 - 5 "Trails & Sails" and "Georgetown Days" event
 September 29 & 30 - Open House at Brocklebank Museum 12 - 5 "Trails & Sails" event
 October 13 & 14 - Historical Tours of Union Cemetery 2 PM
 October 27 & 28 - Halloween Tours of Union Cemetery 2 PM

2012 DUES REMINDER – PLEASE



We still have 11 members who have not paid their annual dues for 2012, which were due in January. This makes it difficult for us to budget for other special events. If you have not yet paid your dues **PLEASE** do it soon. We count on every member to help us achieve our goals.

Thank you to everyone who has already sent in their 2012 membership dues. If you have not sent yours in yet, we hope you will do so soon. Visit our web-site, www.georgetownhistoricalsociety.com, and click on "Join the Society." You can print and mail in the membership form along with your dues, or pay online using Paypal.

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Georgetown Historical Society



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