

THE GEORGETOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Preserving and promoting the history of Georgetown

Winter 2017 Newsletter

THE NAME TREE

Most towns have had a few special and fondly remembered trees, ones that were frequently photographed and written about. They were usually centrally located and were notable for their great size, age or beauty. This is the story of a very different tree, one hidden deep in the woods of Georgetown, and how it attained its fame.

One November day in 1839, three young men from Georgetown went for a hike. They headed for an area north of the Parker River known as Hampshire Woods. Stopping first to explore the remains of the old Federal City settlement, they wondered what life was like for the early families who settled there in the 1700s. Continuing on, they turned south, passed through an ancient orchard and soon arrived at a place known as “the ridge,” where they stopped to rest under a big old beech tree. Lying there under its spreading branches, one of the boys noticed something carved in the smooth bark of its trunk. Closer inspection showed the inscription IB ED 1820. After speculating for a while on who may have left the inscription, the boys took out their jackknives and left their own marks on the tree. Upon returning to town, they told others of their discovery.



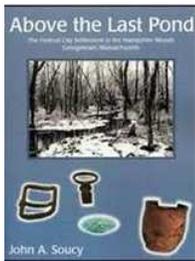
In the mid to late 1800s, a clearing near Federal City became a popular gathering place for picnics and social gatherings, and many more visitors made the trek to the now well-known beech tree, adding their own notations.

On a summer day in 1894, three elderly but spry gentlemen returned to the place they had discovered in 1839. They found that the bark of the old tree was now covered with hundreds of carvings, and that two nearby beeches, no doubt offspring of the original, also had many carvings. They reminisced about the folks, many of them long gone, who had left their names or initials on “the venerable beech” over the years. They also admired an old inscription on one of its larger limbs: “*Long may this monument of fame Stand sacred, honored with your name.*” They also noted, sadly, that the tree did not appear to be very healthy, and worried that it may not survive for much longer.

In her book “More Tales and Reminiscences,” Eleanor Stetson (1896-1997) described visiting the old tree in her younger days and leaving her own initials in one of two entwined hearts. Years later, Eleanor and her sister, Satira, brought the next generation of family members to see the old tree. Sadly, they discovered that it had fallen, and was scattered in pieces down the steep slope below the ridge, although the other carved beech trees remained. On their final visit to the

place years later, not only were the beech trees gone, but the ridge itself had fallen victim to the gravelling operations of the mid 20th century.

But all was not lost! A sapling offspring of the famous beech was dug up many years ago by Albert Tidd, who owned the tract of land in Hampshire Woods where the famous tree once grew. He planted the sapling in his yard on School Street (now owned by his grandson) where it continues to thrive.



For more information on the Federal City settlement, we suggest reading “Above the Last Pond” by John A. Soucy, available through Georgetown Historical Society. John offers a different take on the location and demise of the Name Tree. However, the eyewitness accounts in the books and old newspaper articles used in researching the above story included detailed descriptions of the location of the tree, south of Federal City and near Scrag Pond, which is some distance from where John claims it was located.

OTHER NOTABLE TREES OF GEORGETOWN

The Pickett Elm on Andover Street, named for the long-time residents who lived in the nearby house, was an enormous and ancient tree, greatly admired by the citizens of Georgetown. With a trunk circumference of 20-25 feet and a height well over 100 feet, it dominated the landscape. In the spring of 1898, a massive limb measuring over three feet in diameter fell from the tree during a severe storm, damaging the house. It was determined that the tree was unsafe and was taken down soon after, much to the sorrow of the community.

The Three Sisters. The original boundary marker between Boxford and Rowley, this oak tree was once known as the Two Sisters, with the letters B and R carved into its trunk. When Georgetown became a separate town in 1838, the letter G was added. According to a story in The Georgetown Advocate, one day around 1878, a hunter saw his prey disappear into a hole in the tree. Apparently not realizing the significance of the tree, he tried to smoke the animal out by setting fire to some leaves and twigs in the hole. It turned out that the tree was hollow, and turned into a great chimney. The following year, when the Selectmen of the three towns did their annual inspection of the boundaries, they found nothing but a burnt stump where the tree once stood. The following year, the tree was replaced by a granite marker with the letters R, G and B.

The Buttonwood Tree on Nelson Street is said to have been planted in 1747 by Solomon Nelson in honor of the birth of his daughter, Huldah. It was badly damaged in a storm in January of 1984 and taken down soon after. A piece its trunk is stored at the Brocklebank Museum.

The Liberty Tree was a pine tree planted on the corner of Pine Plain Road and West Street by Highway Department employee Jerry Wildes on Armistice Day in 1918. The tree later died, and was replaced on November 11, 1985 by an ornamental flowering crab tree. This tree was removed a few years ago when work on West Street included the removal of the traffic island on which the commemorative tree stood.

Oak trees from Baldpate Hill were used in the construction of the USS Constitution and later for repairs to her hull in 1813.



The Pickett Elm (photo courtesy of Dan Meader)



World War I veteran Felix Caporizzo and Highway Surveyor Ben Bailey replant the liberty tree in 1985 as other veterans look on.

ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of the Georgetown Historical Society was held on December 7th, 2016 in the Georgetown Peabody Library meeting room.

We had another great year with several successful fundraisers, and our membership continues to grow, with 32 new members joining GHS in 2016!

The following officers were elected for 2017: President, Christine Comiskey; 1st Vice President, Sylvia Johnston; 2nd Vice President, Ralph Chouinard; Secretary, Lew Harrold; Treasurer, Michelle Cook; Curator, Karen Brockelbank. Jeff Lamoureux was elected for a five year term as a Director, and Joe Corcoran was elected to fill the remaining two years left on Terry Palardy's term. Terry decided to step down, and we extend our thanks to her for all her assistance in her three years on the Board of Directors.

The following volunteers were honored and will be receiving Essex National Heritage Area volunteer reciprocal passes: Karen Brockelbank, Ralph Chouinard, Michelle Cook, Ed Des Jardins, Rick Detwiller, Lew Harrold, Jeff Lamoureux, Sylvia Johnston, Mary Saunders and Chris Comiskey. The ENHA passes are awarded to anyone who volunteers with GHS at least ten hours in a year, and gets them into over sixty historic venues in Essex County for FREE!

Following the brief business meeting, Rev. Dr. William Boylan was introduced and gave an interesting talk on "The Role of the Byfield Parish Church in Forming the American Mind." The talk focused on Theophilus Parsons, son of the second pastor of the church, who drafted the key document leading to the ratification of the Massachusetts Constitution in 1780. The Massachusetts Constitution subsequently became a model for the U.S. Constitution. We thank Rev. Boylan for sharing with us his knowledge of this influential man, largely forgotten by history.



Rev. Dr. William Boylan at the GHS Annual Meeting

CEILING WORK COMPLETED AT MUSEUM

Repairs have been completed on the collapsed ceiling in the curatorial storage room and the sagging ceiling in the kitchen at the Brocklebank Museum. The money for these repairs came from a grant from the Community Preservation Act, approved at the 2016 spring town meeting. The new light-blocking window shades, which were also a part of the \$7,000 grant, will be installed in the spring. Thank you to all who voted in support of this historical preservation project.

ED DES JARDINS RESIGNS FROM BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Long-time GHS member, former GHS President, and current Board Member Ed Des Jardins, 80, announced at our January Board meeting that he has decided to resign from both the GHS Board of Directors and the Georgetown Historical Commission to spend more time with family.

Ed received a Local Preservationist Award from the Secretary of the Commonwealth, William Galvin, in 2014 for his 46 years of service dedicated to historical preservation in the communities of Georgetown, Rowley and Byfield.

We thank Ed for his many years of service to GHS and our community and for his commitment to historical preservation, and wish him all the best.



COMMUNITY MOURNS PASSING OF RICK PALARDY

Christmas Day joy gave way to great sadness as word spread through the community of the sudden death of Rick Palardy at the age of 66. Rick was a Life Member of the Georgetown Historical Society, where he was often seen behind the cable TV camera filming our events.



Rick was well known around town as the owner of the Wooden Toy and Gift shop on North Street, where he pursued his love of woodworking after his retirement. The beautiful case in Town Hall holding Georgetown's historic Boston Post Cane was one of Rick's creations.

Rick was also actively involved in the Erie 4 Fire Association where he was a volunteer first responder and call firefighter for over twenty years. If you ever attended an Erie 4 supper, you were probably greeted by Rick, who was described by so many who knew him as "the nicest guy you could ever meet." He will be greatly missed. We extend our deepest sympathies to his wife, Terry, and family.

LIBRARY NEWS

The Georgetown Peabody Library continues to add more newspapers to their searchable online database. Georgetown Records from 2003-2005 have recently been added, and 2006-2007 will be done in the near future.

The Merrimack Valley Chapter of the Massachusetts Society of Genealogists hold their monthly meetings at the library. "Who Cares about your Family's Special Heirlooms?" is the topic for the upcoming meeting on January 28 from 10-12. The meetings are free and open to the public. Visit the library website, georgetownpl.org for more information.

SIMPLE WAYS YOU CAN HELP GHS

Bring your reusable bags when shopping at Crosby's Market in Georgetown. Crosby's "Bagging for the Environment" program encourages good environmental practices by cutting down on disposable bags while helping local charities. Just bring your reusable bags and ask for your tokens, then put them in the GHS canister on the shelf in the front of the store. GHS will receive a nickel for every token collected through October 2017.

Does your employer have a charitable giving program? Make your annual contribution go even further by enrolling in your company's program.

Do your online shopping through Amazon's "Amazon Smile" program at smile.amazon.com and chose Georgetown Historical Society as your designated charity. Amazon will donate a small percentage of your sale to GHS at no extra cost to you.

TIME TO RENEW YOUR GHS MEMBERSHIP!

Thank you to all our members who have already sent in their membership renewals! If you have not yet renewed your membership for 2017, we hope you will do so very soon. All annual memberships expire on December 31st.

A membership form is included with this newsletter for your convenience, or you can pay online by visiting our website, www.georgetownhistoricalsociety.com and clicking on "Join the Society." If you are unsure of your membership status, please e-mail us at info@georgetownhistoricalsociety.com.

Your GHS Board of Directors is busy planning events and fundraisers for 2017 and we are looking forward to another great year. We hope you will be a part of it!



Georgetown Historical Society, Inc.
P.O. Box 376, Georgetown, MA 01833

Membership Form

Name(s) included in membership _____

Address _____

Phone number (optional) _____

E-mail _____

I would like to help GHS “go green” and save money. Please send my newsletter by e-mail. Yes No

Membership Levels:

- \$200 BENEFACTOR(S) \$300 LIFE (One-time payment)
 \$100 SUSTAINER(S)
 \$ 50 CONTRIBUTOR(S)
 \$ 30 MEMBER(S)

Optional:

- I would like to make a donation to Georgetown Historical Society’s Homer Tapin Memorial Scholarship Fund in the amount of \$_____

Your membership fee and scholarship donations are tax-deductible. Please make all checks payable to: Georgetown Historical Society.

Optional:

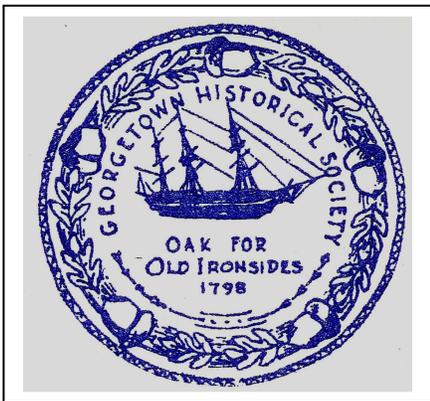
I would like to help as a GHS volunteer (check area(s) of interest)

- Museum tour guide Fundraising/Merchandise sales
 Newsletter Executive Board member
 Special events Other _____



Georgetown Historical Society
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Georgetown Historical Society



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