

THE GEORGETOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Preserving and promoting the history of Georgetown

Winter 2018 Newsletter

FEBRUARY IS BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Ask a long-time resident about Georgetown's black history and you will likely be told about Cuffee Dole, the former slave, Revolutionary War soldier and land owner who now lies in the most well-known and visited grave in Union Cemetery. His gravestone bears the inscription: "White man, turn not away in disgust, thou art my brother, like me akin to earth and worms." But few are aware that there were over a dozen other slaves in Rowley West Parish (now Georgetown) in the 1700s, many of whom lie forgotten in unmarked graves in the same cemetery.

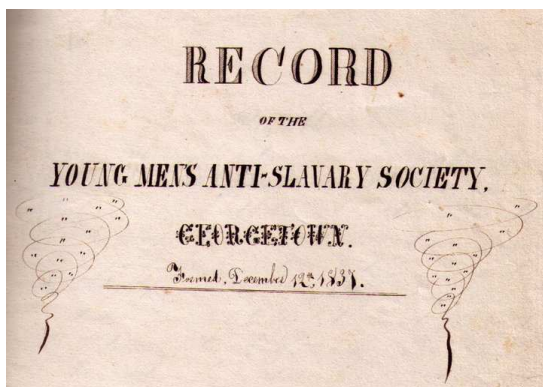
The earliest known record of a slave in Georgetown is December of 1741, when Nota, "Mr. Job Tyler's Negro woman" died at the estimated age of 63, followed a few months later by the baptism of Peter, "a negro servant of Jeremiah Herriman," by Reverend James Chandler, a slave-owner himself. There were at least nine owners of slaves, or "servants for life," as they were called, in the parish. With the exception of Cuffee Dole, little is known of our earliest black residents beyond their names—Sabina, Chloe, Cesar, Dinah, Candace, etc.—in the vital records and in wills, where they were listed as property. Slavery was abolished in Massachusetts by a decision of the Supreme Judicial Court in 1783, a fact that Reverend James Chandler seems not to have known when he wrote his will in 1787. In it, he writes: "I commit to my said wife my Negro Woman Sabina not to be by her sold out of the house, but to serve her and be provided for by her as is mete, but if said Sabina shall live to be a burden which my said wife shall think too heavy for her to bear, my Will is that my Executor assist in providing for her as is fitting for an aged servant that has been faithful." He also mentions Sabina's daughter in the will: "To my Negro woman Phillis, I give her manumission or freedom and five pounds lawful money, a chest and such other things in my house as are known by the family to be her things. I give her also the bed that her mother and she lodge in and all the bedding belonging to it..."



Grave of Cuffee Dole

Let us fast-forward now to the 1830s, when Newburyport native William Lloyd Garrison and others began fanning the flames of the abolitionist movement and state, county and local anti-slavery societies began springing up. The Young Men's Anti-Slavery Society of Georgetown was founded in December of 1837 with sixty-six members.

Two of Georgetown's most active abolitionists were Moses Wright and Theodore Elliott. Both were conductors on the Underground Railroad and many escaped slaves were welcomed into their Central Street homes and assisted on their way. They also entertained in their homes many of the most famous leaders of the abolitionist movement, including Frederick Douglass.



(Image courtesy of Dan Meader)



Mr. Douglass, whose 200th birthday will be observed in February, gave a lecture to the Young Men's Anti-Slavery Society on September 10, 1841 at the Baptist Meeting House in Georgetown and was a special guest speaker at the Annual Meeting of the Essex County Anti-Slavery Society held in Georgetown's Savory Hall on June 14 - 15, 1845.

We know of two other people who were born into slavery and later lived in Georgetown. Louisa Price was born a slave in Baltimore around 1799. She was purchased at the age of two and brought to Massachusetts. She lived in Georgetown from about 1820 until her death in 1882 at age 83. According to her obituary, she received a quality education and was well respected. She is buried in Union Cemetery.

Frederick Douglass

Robert Williams was born into slavery in Aiken, South Carolina in 1862. He came to Georgetown around 1872, where, according to his obituary, *"he was given the benefit of educational privileges such as the town affords, mixed with white children of his age, and grew up a favorite with all."* He worked as a farm laborer and was a volunteer firefighter with Engine Company No. 4. He died of tuberculosis in 1888 at age 26 and is buried in Harmony Cemetery.

Our own Brocklebank Museum has an important connection to the abolitionist movement. Reverend Charles Beecher, an abolitionist, lived there with his family from 1859-1869. He had previously lived in Louisiana, where he witnessed some of the horrors of slavery. He told his stories to his sister, Harriet Beecher Stowe, providing some of the inspiration for her best-selling novel, *"Uncle Tom's Cabin,"* published in 1852. President Lincoln referred to her as *"the little woman who wrote the book that made this great war."*

LETTERS FROM THE FRONT

One hundred years ago, many of our Georgetown men were overseas fighting in World War I. Five of them would not return.

The following are excerpts of letters published in the Newburyport Daily News on May 23, 1918, from two Georgetown men, George Moffitt and Harry Tidd, written from a hospital in France while recuperating from "shell shock" after the battle of Bois Brûlé near Apremont. Both men were members of the 104th Infantry.

In a letter from George Moffitt to his mother: *"...I am still in the hospital but am feeling fine, hoping to be able to go out soon. The hospital is a good place but it is too lonesome for me. Harry Tidd was here but is gone now. I have not seen Harry Murch for over a month, but I guess he got out of it without a scratch. Some of us got it pretty hard but the next time there will not be any Huns left..."*

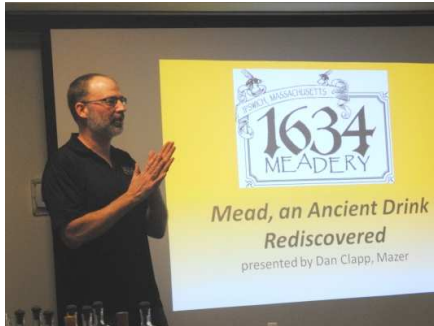
In a letter from Harry Tidd to his mother: *"...Just a few lines to let you know that I am feeling a lot better and hope to join my regiment soon. In my mind there is none like it anywhere, for when it comes to putting up a good fight, the 104th is certainly there. No doubt you have seen by the papers of the good work we did and how many there were who received the war cross. We had two lieutenants and three sergeants, and my lieutenant and sergeant both got one. I am in a large divisional camp and see all kinds of fellows that I know and have met before. I saw our old 8th Regiment supply sergeant Walter Brock for the first time since the split. In the old regiment in the states John Parkhurst of Boxford is here too, and both are feeling fine. It is lovely weather over here now but I think it is better at home. The sun shines all the time and the fields are full of flowers. It is nearly three weeks since I left my company and it seems like a year to me. I would like to get back to my company very much and get some mail for I must have a lot there. I have seen so much now that nothing worries me and I only feel bad for the folks at home. I have three very good friends here, Bob Lake of Topsfield, George Paradis and E. W. Foster, both of Boxford,*



the latter now being a sergeant. I am always looking for Joe and Roy [his brothers] as I feel sure I will see them over here some day, and every new lot of men that comes in I hurry down and look them over to see if either of them are in it..." (Harry's brother, Joe, was one of the five Georgetown men who died in the war.)

The 104th Infantry was honored with the French Croix de Guerre for exceptional bravery in combat, the first American unit to receive such an honor from a foreign county.

GHS ANNUAL MEETING



The Annual Meeting of the Georgetown Historical Society was held on December 6th at the Georgetown Peabody Library. We had another great year with several successful fundraisers and our membership continues to grow. The following officers were elected for 2018: President, Christine Comiskey; 1st Vice President, Sylvia Johnston; 2nd Vice President, Ralph Chouinard; Secretary, Lew Harrold; Treasurer, Michelle Cook; Curator, Karen Brockelbank. Betsy Moran was elected for a five year term as a Director.

After the brief business meeting, our special guest speaker, Dan Clapp of the 1634 Meadery in Ipswich, gave a very interesting presentation on the history and making of the ancient honey-based alcoholic beverage known as mead, "the nectar of the gods." After his presentation, everyone was able to sample his product. We also raffled off several donated items. The winners were: Rick Detwiller - Stonewall Kitchen Deluxe Italian Gift Basket and \$25 gift card to Flatbread Pizza; Cindy Taplin - \$25 gift card to Best Bagel; Betsy Moran - "Wilbur's War" World War II book trilogy; Chris Comiskey - bottle of Cranberry Mead from 1634 Meadery. (Photos courtesy of Jeff Lamoureux)



TIME TO PAINT THE MUSEUM!



This spring, the Brocklebank Museum will be getting a much-needed face lift. Work will begin in a few months and will include repairing or replacing damaged or rotting wood, and scraping, priming and painting of the exterior trim and clapboards. We will also be updating our alarm system. This work will be made possible by Community Preservation Act grant money. We had \$12,000 approved at last year's Annual Town Meeting (which was less than we had requested), and we hope to get another \$5,000 approved this spring so that the projects will be fully funded. Please attend the annual town meeting on May 7 to show your support.

ED DES JARDINS DONATES ARTWORK TO GHS

Local artist and former GHS board member Ed Des Jardins has generously donated twenty-eight pieces of his artwork to GHS to be sold to raise funds. His subjects include Georgetown's Brocklebank Museum, the Pillsbury-Dickenson-Witham house and Old Nancy, along with other local historic buildings. Please e-mail info@georgetownhistoricalsociety.com if you are interested in purchasing any of these pieces.



CROSBY'S MARKET DONATES TO GHS

Last year, Georgetown Historical Society participated in the Crosby's Market "Bagging for the Environment" program. We are happy to announce that Crosby's donated \$322.55 to GHS in December, based on the number of tokens collected. Thank you to all our members and friends who brought their reusable bags and placed their tokens in the GHS canister, and thank you to Crosby's for supporting local charities while cutting down on the use of plastic bags.



FREE HOUSE HISTORIES



Have you ever wondered about the former inhabitants of your historic home? If so, you can learn about them simply by requesting a free house history, available to all current GHS members. These histories are not the same as the Elm Street and Village District histories which the Georgetown Historical Commission had done for the MHC-MACRIS database. Ours include a full deed search, census, vital records, maps, newspaper articles, etc. Please e-mail GHS at info@georgetownhistoricalsociety.com to request your house history. This has proved to be a great recruiting tool, so if you know anyone in Georgetown who owns a historic home, please encourage them to join GHS for their free house history.

SAD GOOD-BYES

We were sorry to hear of the passing of two of our members. Long-time GHS member Lois Hazen passed away on January 15, and Frank Phillips, who joined GHS just last year, passed away on November 29. We extend our condolences to their family and friends.

NEW FACEBOOK PAGE



In order to take advantage of some benefits offered to non-profits through Facebook, we have created a new GHS Facebook page, "Georgetown Historical Society in Massachusetts." Announcements and events will be posted on this new page. We still have our old group, now renamed Georgetown MA History, where we hope people will continue sharing their old photos and stories.

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 2018, 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 2018 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:

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$200 | BENEFACTOR(S) | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 | LIFE (One-time payment) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 | SUSTAINER(S) | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 50 | CONTRIBUTOR(S) | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 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)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Museum tour guide | <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising/Merchandise sales |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter | <input type="checkbox"/> Executive Board member |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Special events | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |



Georgetown Historical Society
P.O. Box 376
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Georgetown Historical Society



OFFICERS

<i>President</i>	<i>Christine Comiskey</i>
<i>1st Vice President</i>	<i>Sylvia Johnston</i>
<i>2nd Vice President</i>	<i>Ralph Chouinard</i>
<i>Secretary</i>	<i>Lew Harrold</i>
<i>Treasurer</i>	<i>Michelle Cook</i>
<i>Curator</i>	<i>Karen Brockelbank</i>

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*Joe Corcoran, Mary Saunders, Rick Detwiller,
Jeff Lamoureux, Betsy Moran*

NEWSLETTER EDITOR *Christine Comiskey*

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