

THE GEORGETOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

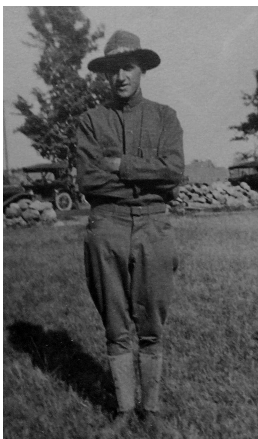


Preserving and promoting the history of Georgetown

Spring 2018 Newsletter

WORLD WAR I CENTENNIAL

This year, we will be observing the 100th anniversary of the end of World War I, and here in Georgetown, the sad anniversaries of the deaths of five young servicemen during that war. We dedicate this issue to these five men, whose names are on Georgetown's World War I monument:



Rene J. Gagnon



Harry L. Murch



Edward P. Nolin



Joseph H. Tidd



Bryant A. Browne

RENE JOSEPH GAGNON was born in Salem on February 18, 1896 to Joseph and Rose (Morency) Gagnon. He moved to Georgetown in 1916 after his divorced mother married Thomas Palardy, who owned a farm on Searle Street. Rene enlisted on June 4, 1917 and was sent to France soon after as a Private in Company D, 103rd Infantry. The May 15, 1918 Newburyport Daily News reported in the Georgetown section: *Mrs. Thomas Palardy of Searle Street received a telegram yesterday afternoon from the state department at Washington notifying her of the death of her son, Rene J. Gagnon, in France. The telegram stated that death was due to gas poisoning May 10. Private Gagnon was a member of Co. D, 103d Infantry, having enlisted last summer at Lynn in the old eighth regiment. He was 22 years old and a portion of the time worked on the farm here. He was a young man of good habits and was well liked by all who knew him. He is the first Georgetown boy to give up his life in France.*

Rene's body was later recovered and buried with full military honors on August 21, 1921 in St. Mary's Cemetery in Salem. Georgetown's Rene J. Gagnon Post 211, American Legion, was chartered on September 22, 1919, honoring the first Georgetown man to die in World War I.

HARRY LESTER MURCH was born in Georgetown on January 26, 1899 to Edwin and Mary (Dresser) Murch. On May 18, 1917, six weeks after the U.S. officially entered the war, President Woodrow Wilson signed the Selective Service Act, requiring all men between the ages of 21 and 30 to register for the draft. Although only 18, Harry enlisted the very next day, and a few months later was sent to France as a Private in Company F, 104th Infantry. Harry was killed in action at Chateau Thierry on July 19, 1918. Seven months later, after numerous inquiries, the Murchs finally learned the details of Harry's death and burial. The American Red Cross located a member of his company, who reported: *We were at battalion headquarters to the right of Chateau Thierry and preparing to make an advance and did go over the top at 3 o'clock that afternoon. About 2 o'clock, they, the Germans, began shelling us and Murch was*

hit by a high explosive shell and killed at once. He was buried in the woods near where he fell. We made our gain. I had known him since he came over and he was a mighty nice fellow and very popular with the company.

In 1921, Harry's remains were located and returned home, where he was buried with full military honors on September 11, 1921, in Georgetown's Union Cemetery.

At the 1927 Annual Town Meeting, the citizens of Georgetown voted to change the name of Union Park on East Main Street to Harry L. Murch Park.

EDWARD PETER NOLIN was the third Georgetown man to die in the service during the war. Edward was born in Georgetown on March 15, 1898 to Philip and Anna (King) Nolin. He enlisted in the Navy on September 4, 1918, and was a Fireman, 3rd class, at the Naval Training Station in Newport, RI. Shortly after his arrival, the deadly Spanish Flu struck the Training Station, claiming Edward as one of its many victims. He died at the Newport Naval Hospital on September 23, 1918.

JOSEPH HENRY TIDD was born in Georgetown on April 12, 1889 to George and Jennie (Hoyt) Tidd. He married Eva Barbour in 1911 and they had one child, Gordon, born in 1911. Joseph was a member of company A, 151st Infantry. He was killed in the Battle of Meuse-Argonne on October 3, 1918 and is buried in the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery in France.

BRYANT ATWOOD BROWNE was born in Melrose on March 21, 1901 to Fred and Alice (Small) Browne. The family was living in Georgetown at the time of Bryant's enlistment in 1917. He was a Corporal in Headquarters Company, 6th Infantry, when he died of disease on October 13, 1918 in Saint-Nazaire, France. His body was recovered and buried with full military honors on October 2, 1920 in the family plot in Mount Feake Cemetery in Waltham, MA. He was described in the newspaper as "*a young man of exceptionally fine character and was loved and trusted by all who knew him.*"

LETTERS FROM THE FRONT

Mary Murch was, no doubt, very proud of her son, Harry, so she decided to have some of Harry's letters published in the Newburyport Daily News, as other mothers had already done. Here are excerpts from four letters published in the newspaper on July 20, 1918:

May 12th *I am in a small dugout with three others, one of them is my old pal, George P., and we are all writing to our mothers. I think Mother's day is thought more of this year than ever before. The Boche are starting to send a few big shells over, and we will not need any Fourth of July celebration this year for we have it all the time. If I could write of all I have seen and been through I think I could write a small book. I am in the best of health.*

May 20th *I wrote you on Mother's day and I understand those were to go right through, ahead of all other mail. We are getting some fine spring weather here now, about like our spring weather at home. You may be surprised when I tell you I am writing this letter within easy sight of the German lines. Bert Eisnor and I are the only Georgetown fellows in this regiment now, but I expect the others back soon. I have not seen Clarence for nearly four months as he has been transferred to another outfit.*

May 31st *We are in a rest camp for a few days, the band here is giving us a concert and they are playing a fine piece now called "The End of a Perfect Day." When we are in the trenches we sleep in dugouts, and when behind the lines, in billets or barracks. The billets are barns with statements on the door saying it will hold so many men and so many horses. We sleep in the hay and the horses are beneath us. These barns are found for us through the town mayor. George and I went to a house and asked one of the French women to cook up a feed. She was a fine, motherly little woman and didn't want to take any pay but when we left we gave her what she thought was a very big price.*

June 23rd *Well, mother, this is Sunday morning, somewhere in France and it is a good morning to be alive. I was talking with an M.P. man a few days ago and he mentioned Georgetown. A fellow was*



walking by and stopped to ask who knew anything about Georgetown, and behold it was six-foot Harry Kinson. A few days later I ran across Chet Brown, so we four Georgetown fellows had quite a talk about our old hometown. I was in the hospital about a week ago with what they call three days fever. Most of the regiment have had it. It makes you feel mean. I went to the doctor and did not expect to go to the hospital, but I had a temperature of 102, so he thought I had better go, but am feeling fine now. We will soon have our second service stripe, but we hope we won't have more than a dozen of them. The French drink wine on the table as common as we do coffee. I have refused many a drink of it and they do not seem to like it, but you know, mother, how I feel about those things. There are a lot of temptations for a fellow over here. I have kept from them so far and guess I can the rest of the time. I have seen some good looking gardens over here. I suppose you are having green peas by this time. I would like some, as I guess you remember how I like them.

Little did Mary Murch know, as she proudly shared her letters, that she would soon receive the worst possible news. The day before the letters appeared in the newspaper, her beloved son had been killed in action.

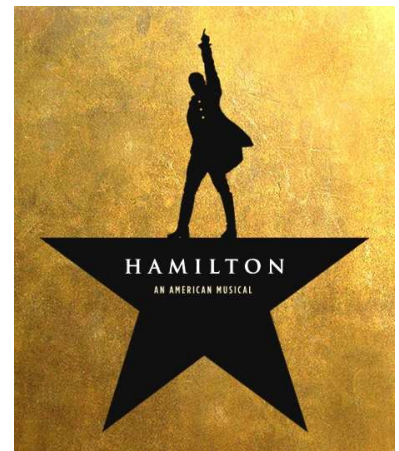
WORLD WAR I EXHIBIT



GHS is planning a special exhibit at the Brocklebank Museum this summer to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the end of World War I and to honor the five Georgetown servicemen who died during the war. We are looking for loans or donations of items pertaining to the war. If you would be interested in helping us with the display or have anything you are willing to loan or donate, please contact us at info@georgetownhistoricalsociety.com.

HAMILTON TICKETS TO BE RAFFLED!

We have received a VERY generous donation of two tickets to see *HAMILTON* at the Boston Opera House on **Friday, September 28th at 8 p.m.**, to be raffled off as a fundraiser for GHS. This ground-breaking musical about Alexander Hamilton was the winner of eleven Tony Awards in 2016, including Best Musical, and is the most sought-after ticket on Broadway. We will be selling raffle tickets at the Brocklebank Museum and at all GHS events this spring and summer. Tickets are \$10 each and can be ordered by e-mailing us at info@georgetownhistoricalsociety.com. The drawing will be held at the Brocklebank Museum on September 16th at 5 p.m.



TOWN MEETING MAY 7TH



Please show your support of GHS at the annual Town Meeting on May 7th at 7 p.m. at the high school. We have requested a \$5000 Community Preservation Act grant to fully fund the repair and painting of the Brocklebank Museum and to have our alarm system updated (we got \$12,000 approved last year, not enough to get the entire job done). The work should begin this spring and be completed before the museum opens for the summer. The Georgetown Historical Commission is also requesting funds for the much-needed repair and renovation of the town-owned school house, which sits on our museum property.

ANTIQUES APPRAISAL NIGHT

It's spring cleaning time again, a great time to get rid of all that old stuff cluttering up your attic, basement or garage. But wait, haven't you wondered if those old "family heirlooms" are worth anything? Do you suspect that garage sale find may be worth much more than you paid? If so, we welcome you to have your treasures verbally appraised at our **Antiques Appraisal Night**. We once again welcome the entertaining and informative antiques appraiser **Dan Meader** of McInnis Auctioneers. The event will be held at the First Congregational Church of Georgetown on **Wednesday, May 23rd from 7-9 p.m.** Admission is free, but for those wishing to have items appraised, the cost is \$5 per item with a limit of three items per person.



SAVE THE DATE!



Enjoy a great meal and help support the Georgetown Historical Society on **Monday, June 11th** at The Spot on West Main Street in Georgetown. The Spot will donate 10% of the cost of all food orders after 5 p.m. to GHS. We will also be selling *Hamilton* raffle tickets.

GROUNDS BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE

Our new Grounds Beautification Committee held their first meeting recently and are working on plans to make our museum grounds more attractive. If you enjoy gardening and would like to help, please contact us at info@georgetownhistoricalsociety.com. Thank you to our current committee members Betsy Moran, Mary Saunders, Sylvia Johnston and Eileen Seaberg.



HELLOS AND GOOD-BYES



We welcome the following new members, who have joined GHS in the past few months: Ruth Hazzard, Stephanie Parsons and Greg Beardsley.

We were sad to learn of the passing of Ken Nunan on April 6th at the age of 103. At a special celebration of his 100th birthday (pictured), Ken was presented with Georgetown's Boston Post Cane, given to the oldest citizen of each town in the Commonwealth. Ken was also an Honorary Life Member of GHS. We extend our condolences to his family.

HAVE YOU RENEWED 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.

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.

Help spread the word – invite your friends and family to join GHS!



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
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Georgetown Historical Society



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