

# THE GEORGETOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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*Preserving and promoting the history of Georgetown*  
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Winter 2015 Newsletter

## ***GEORGE PEABODY – FATHER OF MODERN PHILANTHROPY***



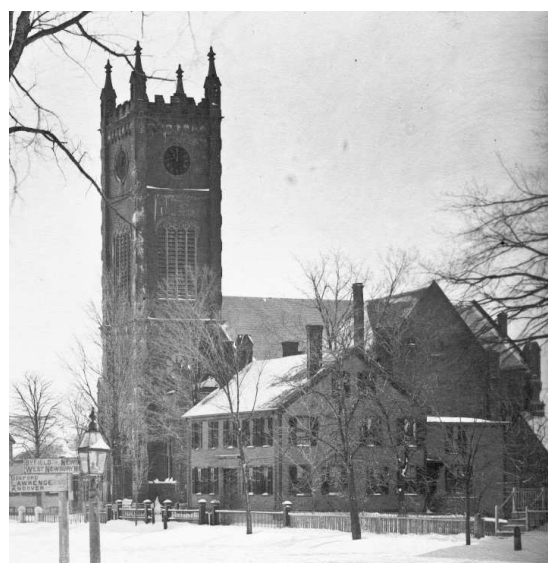
Ascending the steps of our town library, one can't help but notice the portrait of a distinguished looking gentleman at the top of the stairs. But do you know who he is? And what is he holding in his hand?

George Peabody has a classic rags-to-riches story. Born in South Danvers (later renamed Peabody in his honor) in 1795, he was the third of eight children born to Thomas and Judith (Dodge) Peabody. After only four years of schooling, he was apprenticed to a grocer, and after his father died in 1811, the family became impoverished. "I have never forgotten and never can forget the great privations of my early years," George once said.

While serving in the War of 1812, George met businessman Elisha Riggs, who, after the war, made George a partner in his wholesale dry-goods business in Washington D.C. The business flourished, and young George was well on his way to becoming a very wealthy man. In 1835, while in London on business, George established the merchant bank of George Peabody and Company, dealing in securities in American enterprises. As his fortune grew, so did his reputation of honesty and integrity. George Peabody was a man of great generosity and through his many charitable contributions in the U.S. and London, where he later lived, has become known as the Father of Modern Philanthropy.

### **THE LOCAL CONNECTION**

Georgetown had the good fortune of having a direct connection to George Peabody. His mother, Judith Dodge, was born here, and his sister, Judith Peabody Russell Daniels lived here for many years. George was very generous in the support of his extended family, and in 1836 purchased a parcel of land in the center of town for a home for his sister and brother-in-law. In 1845, he purchased a new pulpit and furniture for the First Congregational (Old South) Church, where his sister worshipped. When the heresy trial of Reverend Charles Beecher resulted in the withdrawal in 1864 of 83 church members, Judith was among those who left to form a new church in town. Upon hearing of the new congregation without a church building of their own, George offered to have a fine new church built in memory of their beloved mother.

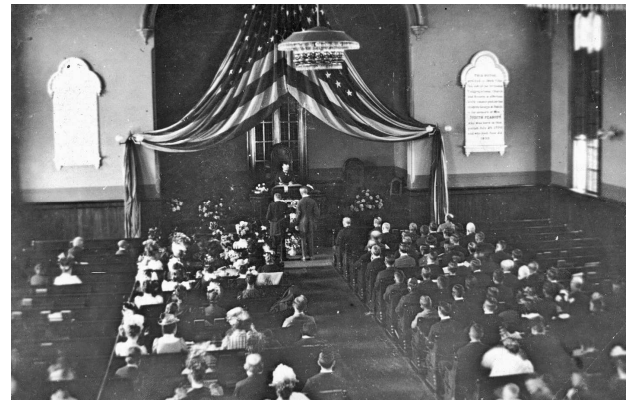


**The home of Judith Peabody Russell Daniels  
beside the Memorial Church**

At a ceremony in 1866 to lay the cornerstone of the church, Mr. Peabody addressed the crowd, stating that, since the church was for the “exclusive use of a particular society,” he was also having built, at the back of the lot, a free library for the use of the entire town, and that he had already ordered 2,400 volumes from London for the library.

### THE LAST OF THE LOCAL LEGACY

There is little left of Mr. Peabody’s generous gifts to the town. When the Old South Church was torn down in 1875, the pulpit and furniture given by Mr. Peabody were sold. The Memorial Church burned down in 1920, although it had ceased being used as a church in 1908 when the congregation reunited with the First Congregational Church due to dwindling membership. The library, having been built too close to a wetland, suffered from water problems, damaging many of the books. A new library was opened on Lincoln Park in 1909, and the old library building was eventually torn down. The lot where the library and beautiful old stone church once stood is now the town parking lot. Judith Peabody Russell Daniels’ house still stands



**Interior of Memorial Church with tablets dedicated to Mrs. Peabody and Rev. Isaac Braman**



**The original Georgetown Peabody Library and Memorial Church**

Fortunately, the new library continues to carry his name, and is known to this day as the Georgetown Peabody Library. A few of the original donated volumes remain in the Local History Room. The portrait that once adorned the wall of the old library hangs prominently at the top of the stairs in the new addition. If you look closely, you will see an envelope in his hand, with the words, “To the Chairman of the Peabody Library, Georgetown Mass. George Peabody.”

## HAPPY 220<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY, GEORGE PEABODY!

The Friends of the Georgetown Peabody Library will be honoring George Peabody’s 220<sup>th</sup> birthday during their Quilt Reception on **Saturday, February 7 from 9-1**, when a new plaque about George Peabody will be unveiled. Items relating to Mr. Peabody will also be on display. We hope you will join the Friends of the Library for this special event.

### TRIVIA

Who established the first library in Georgetown? While George Peabody would seem to be the obvious answer, the first library in Georgetown (then known as Rowley West or Second Parish) was actually established by the Reverend James Chandler. His Last Will and Testament, dated May 23, 1787 stated: *To this Church and Parish, the second in Rowley, I give ten Pounds to purchase and begin a social Library for their general use of Books of practical Religion and Godliness.* John Tenney (who was the executor of Reverend Chandler’s estate) was appointed the first librarian in 1795.

## ***ENDANGERED GEORGETOWN***



**The Adams-Kimball Barn on Central Street**

The owner of the Adams-Kimball barn at 304 Central Street has submitted plans to have the historic building removed or demolished. The sturdy old timber-frame barn is believed to have been built by Captain Benjamin “Tanner” Adams circa 1770 for use as a tannery. The property was later owned by Col. John Kimball who also owned and operated a tannery on the premises in the early 1800s.

Members of the Georgetown Historical Society Board of Directors and the Historical Commission will be attending hearings and working to try to find a way to preserve this important piece of Georgetown’s history.

## ***GHS & GHC FIGHT PROPOSED CELL TOWER***

The owners of 105 East Main Street are hoping to have a 141-foot Varsity Wireless monopole cell tower installed on their property, just behind Honey Dew Donuts and directly across the street from the Brocklebank Museum. The proposed cell tower location lies between two recently surveyed historic areas in our town. The historic buildings within these areas are listed in the Massachusetts Historical Commission’s MACRIS database, and the Elm Street and downtown areas are recommended for inclusion as Historic Districts in the National Register of Historic Places. This proposed cell tower would have a major detrimental effect on the real estate values of nearby historic homes, and would negatively impact the aesthetic appeal of Georgetown’s historic downtown and Elm Street areas.

Rest assured that the Georgetown Historical Society and the Georgetown Historical Commission are working diligently to block this project from becoming a reality.



## ***HELLOS AND GOOD-BYES***

We extend a warm welcome to the following new GHS members: Elinor Spofford, Tom and Nancy Howland, Leah Crohn and Ian Memhard. We also extend a special thank you to Mrs. Spofford, who donated several Spofford family heirlooms, including a revolutionary-era child’s desk which originally belonged to Mehitable Wood of Boxford.



**Everett “Bud” Spaulding**

We note with sadness the passing of George Thompson, who joined GHS in 2007, and of Everett “Bud” Spaulding. Bud has been a GHS member for forty years, and grew up in the house at 108 East Main Street, now known as the Brocklebank Museum. The Spauldings were the last family to live there, and were direct descendants of the first family, the Brocklebanks. Bud was a member of the Georgetown Fire Department for 50 years, serving as chief from 1990-1994. He and his brother Arthur owned Spaulding Colonial Reproductions, and built the carriage for the town’s cannon “Old Nancy.”

## UNION CEMETERY DOCUMENTATION



Georgetown Historical Commissioners Phil Trapani and Joe Knapp (who are also GHS members) are working with the Boy Scouts on a project to photograph, map and document all of the gravestones in Georgetown's historic Union Cemetery, including transcribing the inscriptions. When completed, this will be a wonderful source of information for genealogists and historians.

Georgetown's historic Union Cemetery

## GHS ANNUAL MEETING

We had a great turn-out for the Georgetown Historical Society Annual Meeting on December 3<sup>rd</sup>. If you weren't able to attend, we hope you caught the meeting on the GCTV cable station. Thank you to GHS member Rick Palardy for taping the meeting for us.

After a re-cap of the year's highlights, the following GHS volunteers were awarded with Essex National Heritage Volunteer Reciprocal Passes: Karen Brockelbank, Ralph Chouinard, Brendan Comiskey, Chris Comiskey, Barry Crawford, Sue Daigle, Ed Des Jardins, Rick Detwiller, Loretta Foan, Sylvia Johnston, Beverly Knapp, and Jeff Lamoureux. The passes—which were part of our new volunteer incentive program for anyone volunteering at least ten hours with GHS—will get them into over 60 historical sites in Essex County absolutely FREE!

We bid a fond farewell to our Treasurer Barry Crawford, who has accepted a position at the Naval War College in Newport, RI, as well as Curator Michelle Prior and Board Member Michael Hinchliffe. We extend a warm welcome to our newest Board members Michelle Cook (Treasurer), Lew Harrold (Secretary), and Directors Terry Palardy and Mary Saunders.

We had a good year financially, ending the year nicely in the black, thanks in large part to our increasing membership. We added 23 new members this year! In fact, our membership has more than doubled in the past five years. Please continue spreading the word about GHS, and invite your family, friends and neighbors to join, volunteer, or donate.



The Baldpate Inn of Georgetown

After the brief business meeting, the audience was treated to a special presentation by Rick Detwiller on *The Public Houses of Georgetown*, about the hotels, inns and taverns of our town and their importance to the local economy.

After Rick's presentation, there was time to socialize, enjoy refreshments, and shop at our GHS gift shop.

## 2015 DUES REMINDER

Thank you to all our members who have already sent in their 2015 annual membership dues. If you have not yet paid your dues, we hope you will do so soon. All Annual memberships run from January 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup>. A membership form is included with this newsletter for your convenience, or you can pay online by visiting our website, [www.georgetownhistoricalsociety.com](http://www.georgetownhistoricalsociety.com) and clicking on "Join the Society."



# Georgetown Historical Society, Inc.

P.O. Box 376, Georgetown, MA 01833

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## 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 newsletter by e-mail. ☐ Yes ☐ No

### Membership Levels:

- |                                |                |                                |                         |
|--------------------------------|----------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$200 | BENEFACTOR(S)  | <input type="checkbox"/> \$300 | LIFE (One-time payment) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 | SUSTAINER(S)   |                                |                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 50 | CONTRIBUTOR(S) |                                |                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$ 30 | MEMBER(S)      |                                |                         |

*Your membership contribution is tax-deductible. Please make 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*  
*Georgetown, MA 01833*

## *Georgetown Historical Society*



### **OFFICERS**

<i>President:</i>	<i>Christine Comiskey</i>
<i>1<sup>st</sup> Vice President:</i>	<i>Sylvia Johnston</i>
<i>2<sup>nd</sup> 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>

### **DIRECTORS**

*Rick Detwiller, Jeff Lamoureaux, Ed Des Jardins,  
Terry Palardy, Mary Saunders*

*NEWSLETTER EDITOR Christine Comiskey*

- JOIN US ON FACEBOOK! Search Groups: "Georgetown Historical Society."
- VISIT OUR WEBSITE: [www.georgetownhistoricalsociety.com](http://www.georgetownhistoricalsociety.com) to see more information about GHS, upcoming events and Newsletter archives
- E-MAIL US AT: [info@georgetownhistoricalsociety.com](mailto:info@georgetownhistoricalsociety.com)