

# THE GEORGETOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Preserving and promoting the history of Georgetown

Spring 2015 Newsletter

## GEORGETOWN IN THE 1900s



While most of our newsletter features focus on Georgetown/Rowley in the distant past, we decided for this issue to take a look at some memories of Georgetown that our long-time townie members may recall. Do you remember when downtown Georgetown looked like this? Did you ever eat at Watson's Restaurant (now *The Spot*)? Were you there the day Jewel the elephant paid a visit?

## LIONS AND TIGERS AND BEARS OH MY!

In the spring of 1939, Gus Tramer and his family moved to town and opened the *Hickory Tree Wild Animal Farm* on Jewett Street, on what is now the Woodman farm. For a small admission fee, people could see circus-style animal acts and occasional celebrity acts such as cowboy Tom Mix.



Photos courtesy of former GHS President Don Gordon



One day, trainer Wavy Cline rode Jewel the elephant to town and had her do some tricks. She even stuck her head into Watson's Restaurant! After Wavy had a few too many beers at Watson's he was unable to ride Jewel home and had to walk the whole way back with her. The farm did well for several years, but with the start of World War II and gas rationing, it was forced to close in 1942.

## ***THE WELFARE GARDEN***

Berwyn Andrus of Bountiful, Utah recently contacted GHS and shared some great memories and photos (below) with us. He visited Georgetown in 1949 as a visiting Mormon missionary and spent time working with the local congregation. During the summer of 1949, they planted a “welfare garden” on the property of Peter and Alice McCallum on the corner of Andover and West Streets, to provide fresh foods at low cost to local residents. Before planting the crops, they needed to remove many large rocks from the property. A comical looking home-made tractor was put to good use. Elder Andrus, a self-proclaimed “city slicker” accompanied Ellsworth Tidd one day to get a load of “dressing” for the garden, which he soon learned was just a nicer name for manure. After spreading the fertilizer, they planted corn, carrots, beans, squash and potatoes. At that time the Georgetown Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints did not have their own building, and held meetings in members’ homes. Sunday school meetings were held in the home of Oscar and Hilda Tidd of West Street.



**Above: Mormon Sunday School at the home of Oscar & Hilda Tidd, Mothers Day 1949**



**Left: The home-made tractor, probably built by Oscar Tidd, was a classic example of Yankee ingenuity**

**Below: (l-r) Elder Berwyn Andrus removes a large rock from the field; farm owner Peter McCallum directs Elder Eugene Larsen on the tractor; Eugene Larsen plows the field**





## PARANOIA WILL DESTROY YA!

Following World War II, the country entered an era known as the Cold War. Many will remember the “duck and cover” drills from their school days, and the sound of air raid sirens being routinely tested. Some may have even followed the Civil Defense recommendations to



build a fallout shelter in their back yard or basement. With increasing worry about what the Russians were up to, the US Air Force Ground Observer Corps were established, and volunteers scanned the skies for suspicious aircraft. Here in Georgetown, a tower was built near Rock Pond for use of the Corps on the property of James V. Marapoti, a member of the town's Civil Defense team. Although the tower has long since been removed, the land on which it once stood is now protected by a Conservation Restriction.



Left: Ground Observer Corps tower near Rock Pond

With so many volunteers looking to the sky some strange reports, such as this one, came in:

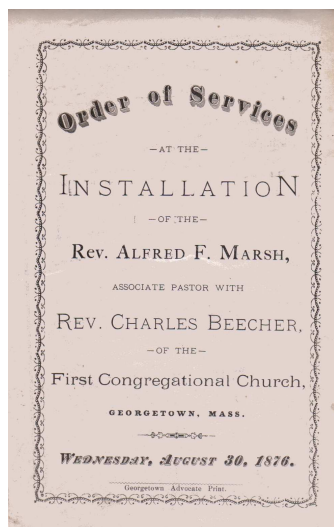
PROJECT 10073 RECORD CARD		
1. DATE <b>8 February 1956</b>	2. LOCATION <b>Georgetown, Massachusetts</b>	12. CONCLUSIONS <input type="checkbox"/> Was Balloon <input type="checkbox"/> Probably Balloon <input type="checkbox"/> Possibly Balloon <input type="checkbox"/> Was Aircraft <input type="checkbox"/> Probably Aircraft <input type="checkbox"/> Possibly Aircraft <input type="checkbox"/> Was Astronomical <input type="checkbox"/> Probably Astronomical <input type="checkbox"/> Possibly Astronomical <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other <b>Unreliable Rpt</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Insufficient Data for Evaluation <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown
3. DATE-TIME GROUP Local <u>      </u> day GMT <u>      </u>	4. TYPE OF OBSERVATION <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ground-Visual <input type="checkbox"/> Ground-Radar <input type="checkbox"/> Air-Visual <input type="checkbox"/> Air-Intercept Radar	
5. PHOTOS <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	6. SOURCE <b>Civilian</b>	
7. LENGTH OF OBSERVATION <b>not reported</b>	8. NUMBER OF OBJECTS <b>multiple</b>	9. COURSE <b>not reported</b>
10. BRIEF SUMMARY OF SIGHTING <b>Group of saucers observed in north on clear sunlit day. Half hour later saw two more, only closer. Letter to J. Edgar Hoover about the possibility of the saucers being Russian.</b>		11. COMMENTS <b>Avid reader of Keyhoe and Frank Scully. Obvious psychological motives in reporting objects. No information other than that the witness has observed flying saucers. Unreliable.</b>

In addition to the Ground Observer Corps tower, the town also had a Civil Defense bunker, which was located at American Legion Park, just past the parking lot. It was removed in 1990.

## Curator's Corner

By Karen Brockelbank

Despite record-breaking snowfalls that trapped many of us inside our homes, the past winter months brought several generous donations to the Georgetown Historical Society. Andrea Brennan of Georgetown found a stash of documents in her cellar that yielded some gems. Among them was an "Order of Services" program for a service conducted at the First Congregational Church on August 30, 1876 by Rev. Charles Beecher. In addition there were several Annual Reports, Farmers Almanacs and a school primer all dating back to the 1800's.



Charles W. Tenney, Fred Tenney (with daughter), Moses Tenney

Mr. Andrews also sent in a copy of a play written to celebrate the first 100 years in Georgetown's history, school class pictures, and a newspaper clipping showing details of a scandalous 1957 bank robbery in Georgetown!

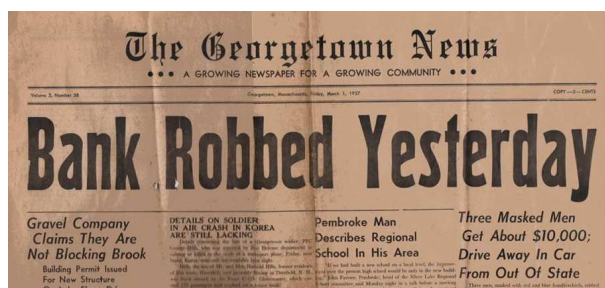


South School, Georgetown, 1889

Bruce W. Andrews of Shrewsbury selected the Georgetown Historical Society as a recipient of some treasures collected by his grandmother, Mary Whitney, a native of Georgetown. Among them was a photograph of four generations of the Tenney family circa 1900 (left). In addition, Mr. Andrews donated several pictures of the Georgetown Boy Scouts (below), as well as pictures of a local Missionary Society that his grandmother Mary Whitney belonged to.



Boy Scouts on Memorial Day, 1941



Thank you to Andrea Brennan and Bruce Andrews for these artifacts.



## ENTER TO WIN A BRAND NEW iPad AIR 2!

One of our GHS members has very generously donated a brand new Gold iPad Air 2 to be raffled off as a fundraiser for the Society. This iPad comes with wi-fi and cellular capabilities. Raffle tickets will be sold at the museum throughout the 2015 season and at all GHS events through October. The drawing will be on November 1, 2015. All new GHS members joining in 2015 will automatically receive a free entry into the raffle. Tickets will sell for \$5 each or 3 for \$10.



## TIME FOR A TREASURE HUNT!



It's spring cleaning time, a great time to get rid of all that old stuff cluttering up your attic or basement. But wait, haven't you wondered if those old "family heirlooms" that grandma gave you are worth anything? Do you suspect that garage sale find may be worth much more than you paid? If so, please join us as we welcome antiques appraiser Dan Meader for our Antiques Appraisal night. The event will be held at the Knights of Columbus building at 87 E. Main Street on **Thursday, June 18<sup>th</sup> from 7-9 PM**. Cost is \$3 per item, limit three items.

## LEARN ABOUT FORGOTTEN HEROES

As we conclude our commemoration of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Civil War, we welcome you to attend a talk by Faith Johnson on some of the forgotten heroes of the post-Civil War period. Faith will tell the fascinating stories of Esther Douglas, Mary Peake and Mary Phillips, three courageous women, members of the American Missionary Association, who travelled south after the war to establish schools and teach the recently freed slaves. This **FREE** special event will be held on **Wednesday, May 27 at 7 PM** in the Georgetown Library Meeting Room.



Mary Peake

## NEW GENEALOGY RESOURCE AT LIBRARY



The Georgetown Peabody Library has recently added *My Heritage* to its lineup of offerings for historians and genealogists. You can access *My Heritage* from home using your library card. Visit the library website, [www.georgetownpl.org](http://www.georgetownpl.org) and click on "services," then "online resources," and scroll down to "newspapers/genealogy." Search for birth, marriage and death records, census and military records, and more. The library also has old Georgetown newspapers and Town Records online under Local History. Check it out!

## OPENING DAY AT THE BROCKLEBANK MUSEUM

The Brocklebank Museum will be opening for the season on **June 28** and will be open every Sunday through Columbus Day weekend from 2-5 PM and other days and times by appointment. Come check out our newest acquisitions and our *Early Businesses of Georgetown* exhibit. Admission is always free to current GHS members.



## ***BE A TOUR GUIDE - GET A FREE ENHA PASS!***

If you are interested in local history and enjoy meeting and talking to people, you should consider joining our Brocklebank Museum tour-guiding team! It is a fun and easy job—no memorization or wearing of costumes is required. You get to choose the Sundays you wish to work. This is also a great opportunity for high school students looking to earn Community Service credits. As an added incentive, **anyone who**

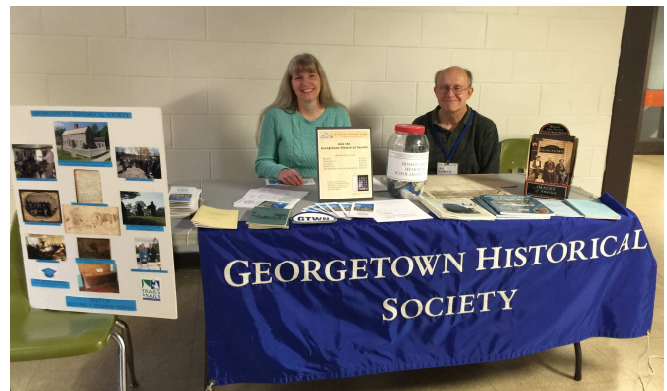


ESSEX NATIONAL  
HERITAGE AREA

**volunteers at least 10 hours with GHS this year will receive an Essex National Heritage Area Volunteer Reciprocal Pass.** This enables you to get into over 60 Essex County historic sites, including such popular venues as the Crane Estate, the House of Seven Gables, and the Peabody Essex Museum, absolutely **FREE!** If you are interested in volunteering or would like more information, please contact Georgetown Historical Society President Chris Comiskey at 978-352-7364 or e-mail her at: [info@georgetownhistoricalsociety.com](mailto:info@georgetownhistoricalsociety.com).

## ***KIWANIS PANCAKE FESTIVAL***

We hope you enjoyed a delicious breakfast at the annual Kiwanis Pancake Festival on April 4. We wish to thank all who stopped by the GHS table to chat, join GHS, purchase merchandise or donate to the Homer Tapin Memorial Scholarship Fund. Also thank you to those who manned the GHS table throughout the morning: Jeff and Hannah Lamoureux, Mary Saunders, Terry Palardy, Michelle Cook, Sylvia Johnston, Lew Harrold and Chris Comiskey



**GHS President Chris Comiskey and Secretary Lew Harrold at the GHS table on April 4.**

## ***WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS***

We extend a warm welcome to the following people who have joined our membership in the past few months: Elizabeth Hastings, Bryan and Amy Benoit.

## ***2015 DUES REMINDER***



Thank you to all our members who have already renewed their annual memberships for 2015. If you have not yet renewed your membership, we hope you will do so very 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**

*President*

*Christine Comiskey*

*1<sup>st</sup> Vice President*

*Sylvia Johnston*

*2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President*

*Ralph Chouinard*

*Secretary*

*Lew Harrold*

*Treasurer*

*Michelle Cook*

*Curator*

*Karen Brockelbank*

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*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)