



THE GEORGETOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

SPRING, 2013

From the President:

Dear Members and Friends of GHS:

Each May, the people of our town gather along East Main and Central Streets to watch and follow our traditional Memorial Day parade. We make the usual stops at the monuments and listen to speeches, prayers, and musical selections by the high school band. It is always nice to see so many townspeople taking time on their day off to remember what the day is really all about—honoring those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

Memorial Day, or as it was originally called, Decoration Day, was officially proclaimed in 1868 by Commander of the Grand Army of the Republic General John Logan as a day to honor fallen Civil War soldiers by decorating their graves. After World War One, it became a day to honor all who gave their lives for their country.

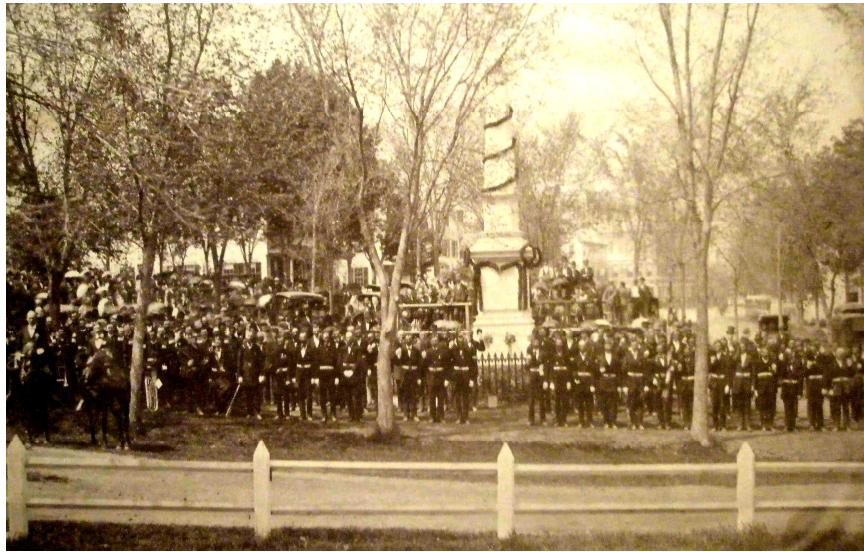
This issue of our newsletter is dedicated to the people of Georgetown whose names are forever immortalized on our town war memorials.

I hope to see you at the parade!

Christine Comiskey
GHS President



GEORGETOWN'S CIVIL WAR MONUMENT



Memorial Day 1874 dedication of Georgetown's Civil War Monument

*ERECTED BY THE CITIZENS OF GEORGETOWN AS A TOKEN OF GRATITUDE
TO THOSE BRAVE MEN WHO DIED IN THE SERVICE OF THEIR COUNTRY
DURING THE WAR OF THE REBELLION. 1861-65.*

So reads the inscription on our Civil War monument bearing the names of the fifty-one Georgetown soldiers who never returned to their homes and families.

Have you ever looked at the names and wondered who those men were? Here are some facts about the men listed on our monument:

The youngest Georgetown soldier to die in the Civil War was sixteen-year-old George Boynton, who lied about his age at enlistment, saying he was eighteen. The oldest was William Niles, age fifty-nine, who said he was forty-four. Eleven Georgetown men were killed in battle, six more died later of battle wounds. Four men died as a result of being prisoners of war. The many diseases associated with poor diets, unsanitary conditions, mosquitoes, etc. claimed the lives of twenty-nine of the men (one man's cause of death is unknown). Five of our fallen heroes were teenagers; twenty-eight were in their 20s; twelve in their 30s; five in their 40s and one, William Niles, in his 50s. In this close-knit community of a little over 2,000 at the time, each of these men was deeply mourned by many:

Isaac Bickford
Thomas Blackburn
George Boynton
Daniel Bryant
Charles Carleton
Willard Chase
George Cheney
George Clough
Edward Crosby
George Currier
Jeremiah Danforth
Amos Dole
Charles Dresser

Swinton Dunlop
Joseph Elliott
Moses Follansbee
Frank Foster
Ezra Harwood
Jacob Hazen
Joseph Hervey
Leonard Howe
John Hull
William Hunkins
Stephen Jameson
Daniel Jaynes
Harrison Jewett

Milton Jewett
James Kent
Daniel Kimball
William Marshall
Benjamin McLaughlin
Benjamin Merrill
Lewis Merrill
Richmond Merrill
Charles Needham
John Niles
William Niles
John Perley
Frank Pickett

Benjamin Pingree
Walter Pingree
William Sherburne
Amos Spofford
Charles Spofford
John Spofford
Moses Tenney
Patrick Treanor
Edwin Vance
John Weston
John Wildes
Francis Winter

CIVIL WAR LETTERS HOME:

One of the names on our Civil War monument is that of Jeremiah Danforth. He enlisted on July 26, 1861, along with his nineteen-year-old son, George. His older son, Eben, had enlisted two months earlier. Jeremiah was badly wounded at Antietam on September 17, 1862. We recently obtained copies of two letters written to Jeremiah's wife, Abigail:

Chambersburg, Oct. 2, 1862

Dear Wife:

I thought I would take this opportunity to inform you that, on account of being wounded, and my health being very poor, I am in the hospital here. It will please you to know that I am well taken care of and only want to see you and our dear children again. There is nothing that the people here have that they do not bring in for us, they come and ask me what I will have to eat, and bring me whatever I want. My appetite is very poor, and my wound very painful. I should have written before, but had no paper or pen, and was not well enough acquainted with any one here to ask them to write for me. I want you and Julia, and all the rest, to write soon, and send me some envelopes and postage stamps. I have not heard from George, but got a man to write to him yesterday. If I ever get well, and I am afraid I will not, I shall not stay in the army any longer.

Our regiment was very badly cut up, I suppose you have read the newspaper accounts of the battles. I have not heard a word from any one in the regiment since the battles.

Give my love and best respects to all my friends, and ask them to write to me as soon as they can. I am here now, but it is uncertain how long I shall stay here, and unless you write immediately, I may miss your letter. Direct your letters to Chambersburg Pennsylvania.

Rebecca H. Schively for Jeremiah Danforth

Days later, Mrs. Danforth received the following letter from Mrs. Shively, dated Oct. 6th, 1862:

Mrs. Danforth,

The letter which I wrote you the other day under your husband's dictation, has, I trust, prepared you in some degree for the sad news I have to communicate, and may God comfort and bless you under your trials. Yesterday, on Sabbath afternoon, between 4 and 5 o'clock, Mr. Danforth's sufferings on earth were over. His wound, the surgeon told me, was severe, and at times caused him much pain. From the Saturday morning before his death, he lay in a very feeble state, the physicians having then given him up, but keeping up his strength as long as they could with stimulants. Whenever he took the medicine, he would rally & seem for a while, much better. This continued until a few hours before his death, when he became insensible, and so passed away. I saw him last on Saturday evening, when he was unable to speak connectedly at all, only when his nurse asked him whether he had no grown daughters—he said "Yes, I have a daughter 15 or 16 years old." I am pleased to be able to tell you, that all that could be done for your husband was done, the hospital in which he lay is airy and comfortable; the head surgeon, Dr. Lewis, and his assistants, are good physicians, and very humane, and



the nurses who attended him are kind hearted men, and seemed much interested in him. Our ladies are making their best efforts to comfort and assist the sick and wounded soldiers, of whom we have two or three hundred here. Some of our clergymen also visited him, and conversed with him several times. Prayer was made for him by our pastor, in the German Reformed church, yesterday morning. Your husband remarked to me that he had seen many kind faces here, & many good familiar actions, which reminded him of home—"Indeed," he said, "if it had not been for that, I do not believe I could have kept up as long as I have." I visited him several times, though I did not find him out until last Wednesday afternoon. He spoke to me often and affectionately of his family and friends, naming all your children, and seeming to regret very much having left you. He was very anxious that the letter I wrote for him should reach you as quickly as possible. I was sorry I had not seen him sooner, that you might have heard earlier from him. I do not know exactly how long he was here, certainly not much over a week. I know he longed to see you all again, but God's Providence has forbidden it.....

Jeremiah Danforth was survived by his wife and seven children, ages two to twenty-three. His sons, George and Eben, survived the war.

IRON HORSES OF THE CIVIL WAR

We are pleased to announce that William Hallett, author of *Newburyport and the Civil War*, will be giving a talk on Trains of the Civil War on Tuesday, May 28th at 7 PM in the Georgetown Library Meeting Room.

The talk will include some background on the development and rise of the railroads and the differences between rail services in the North and the South. As the Civil War was the first test of the "Iron Horse," in wartime, the uses and impact of railroads will be discussed, along with details of the real Great Locomotive Chase, which differ from the movie versions. The importance of the railroad cannot be understated in its roll in the Civil War. Please join us for this free special event.



HAPPY 175th ANNIVERSARY, GEORGETOWN!

The following petition requesting that the Town of Rowley be divided into two separate towns was signed by 351 residents and filed with the State Legislature on January 22, 1838:



To the Honorable Senate & House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts:

The undersigned inhabitants and legal voters of the town of Rowley, in the county of Essex, would respectfully represent that it would be very much to the convenience and accommodation of the inhabitants of said town of Rowley, to be divided into two separate towns.

Your petitioners would respectfully ask leave to show to your Honorable Body, that there are three divisions or parishes in said town, known as Old Rowley, New Rowley and Byfield; that the first name is situated upon the Eastern stage road, at a distance of six or seven miles from New Rowley, which is upon the stage road leading from Newburyport through Byfield to Lowell and intersected by the state road leading from Haverhill to Salem, that there is much less connection in business between Old Rowley and the other two parishes from their local situation, than with almost any of the adjoining towns; thereby subjecting the inhabitants thereof to great trouble and inconvenience by the delay of letters in the Post Offices, and in transacting the necessary business as members of the same town.

Wherefore the undersigned would respectfully ask your Honorable Body to a consideration of the Geographical situation of said town, and to such other facts as may be important, and to set off the westerly part of the same, under a new name, with an Act of Incorporation, and as in duty bound will ever pray.

Although another petition was signed by 170 residents against the division, the Act to Incorporate the Town of Georgetown was approved by the Senate and House of Representatives, and by Governor Edward Everett on April 21, 1838.

DAN MEADER—YOUR 15 MINUTES OF FAME HAVE BEEN EXTENDED!

For several weeks in February, it seemed we couldn't put on the news without seeing GHS member Dan Meader. Dan, working with John McInnis Auctioneers, had the great privilege of acquiring, cataloging, and appraising items to be auctioned off through McInnis Auctioneers from the estate of David Powers, best friend and Special Assistant to President John F. Kennedy. Months earlier, Dan hinted that he was working on something big when he posted on his Facebook page, "I am immersed. Most important collection I have ever had the pleasure to handle. This is why I'm on this earth." Along with appearing on both local and national TV news programs, Dan was interviewed by many newspapers, radio shows, and *People* magazine. Dan was even invited to New York, where he did a live segment on *The Today Show*.



McInnis Auctioneers have been much busier lately thanks to the widely publicized JFK auction. Dan is currently working on another significant collection which is related to JFK and Hollywood. It is sure to result in another big round of publicity for the local auction house.

As if his life at McInnis wasn't busy enough these days, Dan was recently chosen to do a new TV show! He has been flying out to Hollywood to film episodes of the upcoming Travel Channel show, *Digfellas*, which will debut in June. Dan will be appearing at the end of each show to analyze items found at sites of historical significance. We wish Dan all the best, and are very proud here in Georgetown and at the Historical Society to say, "He's one of us!"

HELLOS AND GOOD-BYES

We extend a warm welcome to the following members who joined GHS in the past few months: Rebecca Alberg, Karen Brockelbank, Ty and Annmarie Cobb, Kathleen and John Gunzelmann, Michael and Jessica Hinchliffe, Barb and Lew Harrold, and Philip and Sandra Trapani.

We also note with sadness the passing of long-time members Joe and Gloria Maina, and more recent member Norine Scranton. We also extend our sympathies to long-time member and former Board Member Louise Richardson on the loss of her daughter, Nicole.

BROCKLEBANK FOUNDATION REPAIRS



Left: The foundation underpinning is leaning outward.



Right: Part of an interior foundation wall collapsed.



Historic artifacts in Brocklebank basement need to be identified and stored for repair work to begin.

The Georgetown Historical Society has applied for Community Preservation Act funding to do much needed repair work to the Brocklebank Museum foundation. We have already been approved by the CPC and are hoping for approval at Town Meeting on May 6. We hope you will attend Town Meeting to show your support.

We do not anticipate having to close the museum while the work is being done.

RESEARCHING HISTORIC HOMES MADE EASIER!

Researching your historic home is now much easier. The Registry of Deeds in Salem recently put all of its indices, deeds and plans dating back to 1640 online. Now you can trace your house's history from the comfort of your own home for free! Visit www.salemdeeds.com/newwebsite. Another useful free website is <https://familysearch.org>, where you can find census and vital records on some of the earlier inhabitants of your home (it is always best to view the original record, rather than trust the transcription). Additional details on past owners can often be found in obituaries. The Georgetown Library Local History Room has many old newspapers, including *The Georgetown Advocate* and others from the later 1800s on microfilm. More recent newspapers, starting in the early 1960s, can be found at the Georgetown Peabody Library website, <http://georgetownpl.org> and clicking on "Georgetown Newspapers." If you have questions about getting started on your own research, please feel free to contact us at info@georgetownhistoricalsociety.com.

SPRING CLEANING TIME

It's almost spring cleaning time at the museum. We want to have it fresh and clean for the arrival of the Penn Brook School third-graders on their field trip on June 13th and our summer re-opening soon after that. Clean up days are scheduled for Saturday, June 1st and June 8th from 10 AM to 2 PM. It would be helpful if you could bring buckets, clean rags and other cleaning supplies. Many hands help lighten the load, so we hope to see a number of our members and friends show up to help.



MUSEUM RE-OPENING

The Brocklebank Museum will be opening for the season on June 23 from 2-5 PM, and will be open every Sunday through Columbus Day weekend. We will continue our observance of the Sesquicentennial of the Civil War with our special "Georgetown in the Civil War" exhibit. GHS members can visit the museum for free, so if you haven't been recently, please drop by!

2013 DUES REMINDER - PLEASE



We still have a few members who have not yet paid their annual dues for 2013. We count on the support of every member to help us in our efforts to preserve and promote the history of Georgetown for future generations to learn from and enjoy. If you have not yet paid your dues, PLEASE do so soon. You can pay online by visiting our website, www.georgetownhistoricalsociety.com and clicking on "Join the Society." If you prefer, you can download a membership form and mail it in to us.

DATES TO REMEMBER

- May 6: Town Meeting, 7PM. Show your support for our CPA Brocklebank foundation project!
- May 27: Memorial Day Parade
- May 28: *Iron Horses of the Civil War* talk by William Hallett, 7 PM Georgetown Library
- June 1: Clean-up day at the museum. 10 AM to 2 PM. Volunteers needed!
- June 8: Clean-up day at the museum. 10 AM to 2 PM. Volunteers needed!
- June 23: Opening Day at Brocklebank Museum, including Civil War exhibit. 2-5 PM

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



Georgetown Historical Society



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