

# THE GEORGETOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Preserving and promoting the history of Georgetown

Summer 2016 Newsletter

## **THE MIGHILL MANSION / BALDPATE INN**



Just below the summit of Baldpate Hill stands a grand old structure with a rich history.

The oldest part of the house was built in 1733 by Stephen Mighill (1707-1783) who purchased the property from his father, Nathaniel. The early years were filled with much sadness, as Stephen and his wife, Elizabeth (Woodman), lost six of their nine children in youth or infancy, including an eight-year-old son who died after falling into a scalding hot vat of liquid in a malt house on the

property. The Mighills, who were considered aristocratic, owned slaves. Their house servant, Sabina, lost two of her children, one year old Fellis and twenty-two year old Cesar, while she was owned by the family. Sabina and her daughter were later sold to Reverend James Chandler.

After the deaths of Stephen and Elizabeth, the property was passed down to their only son, David (1746-1811) who married Huldah Dole. Tragedy continued to visit the house, as David and Huldah lost five of their nine children in infancy. Their youngest son, Stephen (1793-1819), who inherited the house in 1811, died at age 26 of "fits."

David and Huldah's other son, Dr. David Mighill (1786-1851), had graduated from Dartmouth College in 1809 and settled in Dunbarton, NH, where he married Elizabeth "Betsy" Mills. Upon the death of his only brother, the Doctor purchased the estate from the other heirs and moved his family and medical practice to Georgetown, making substantial additions and renovations to the old homestead while carrying on a lucrative medical practice despite his rather remote location. David and Huldah had three sons, John, Stephen and David, all of whom survived well into adulthood. John (1815-1895), the oldest, married Sarah A. Nelson and remained on the old family homestead until turning it over to New York businessman Paul Nelson Spofford in 1889.

Mr. Spofford turned the old mansion into a hotel, but being unsuccessful in the venture, he leased the property a few years later to William and Eliza Bray. Due to the joviality of Mr. Bray as a host and the excellence of the food under the direction of Mrs. Bray, the Baldpate Inn soon became a great success.



**Dr. David Mighill**

For twenty-eight years, Mr. and Mrs. Bray continued to operate the Inn. The building was enlarged several times, the grounds were beautifully landscaped and the rooms of the Inn were elegantly decorated by Mrs. Bray. It became a popular destination for city folks looking to escape to the country.

Following the deaths of William and Eliza Bray in the early 1920s, their daughter Wilhelmina carried on the business alone until 1927, when she was joined by her new husband, William A. Harriman. Unfortunately, the Great Depression put an end to the Inn's success; it was lost to foreclosure and sold in 1939 to a group of doctors.

Since 1939, the Baldpate Hospital has been a facility for the treatment of substance abuse and mental illness, where a number of celebrities, past and present, are rumored to have visited.



A guest room at the Baldpate Inn

## **CURATOR'S CORNER**

By Karen Brockelbank

Special thanks go out to the anonymous donation of an Odd Fellows plaque awarded to Roy Spaulding in 1910. The Independent Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF) is a religiously and politically independent fraternal order of Odd Fellows, founded in 1819 by Thomas Wildey in Baltimore, MD. From 1860 to 1920, the Odd Fellows became the largest among all fraternal organizations, (at the time, even larger than Freemasonry). By 1889, the IOOF had lodges in every American state.

Although the hey-day of the IOOF has come and gone, it still exists in the United States. Their goal

is to provide a framework that promotes personal and social development. Lodge degrees and activities aim to improve and elevate every person to a higher, nobler plane; to extend sympathy and aid to those in need, making their burdens lighter, relieving the darkness of despair; to war against vice in every form, and to be a great moral power and influence for the good of humanity.

The inscription on the plaque for Roy Spaulding reads as follows:  
*I, Roy Chester Spaulding, was initiated in Protection Lodge, #147 at Georgetown, State of Massachusetts on the 22nd day of June, 1910. Received the First or Pink Degree July 6th, 1910, the Second or Blue Degree July 13th, 1910 and the Third or Scarlet Degree on July 20th, 1910. Was appointed January 1, 1911 and served as Outside Guardian three years, to June 1914.*

Roy Chester Spaulding was born in Georgetown in 1888 and died in 1972. Thanks again to the anonymous donor.



## **TRAILS & SAILS 2016**

The Georgetown Historical Society will once again be participating in *Trails & Sails* with an Open House at the Brocklebank Museum on September 18<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> from 2-5 pm. We will also be offering a fun and educational scavenger hunt in the Union Cemetery on both Sundays from 10-4.

In addition, the Georgetown Cultural Council will be conducting *Arts and Architecture* walking tours of Georgetown on September 17<sup>th</sup> at 11, 1, and 3.

For more information on these and over 150 other FREE *Trails & Sails 2016* events, visit: <http://www.essexheritage.org/ts/>



## ***MORE DIGITIZED NEWSPAPERS ADDED TO LIBRARY WEBSITE***

The Georgetown Peabody Library has recently added even more digitized local newspapers to their website offerings. They include *The Star* (15 issues, January 1871 to March 1872), and one issue each of *The Georgetown Evangelist* (November 25, 1867), *The Granger* (March 1874), and *The Georgetown Blunderbuss* (July 4, 1878).

You can now search these newspapers and more by going to:  
<http://box2.nmtvault.com/ResCarta-GPL/jsp/RcWebSimpleSearch.jsp>



## ***ANTIQUES APPRAISAL NIGHT***



Our second annual Antiques Appraisal Night was held on May 18<sup>th</sup> at the Georgetown Peabody Library, and it was another great success! Our sincere thanks go out to Dan Meader of McInnis auctioneers for an entertaining and informative evening, and to all who came and brought their interesting heirlooms and collectibles to be appraised.

## ***PENN BROOK STUDENTS VISIT MUSEUM***

On June 10, our tour guides welcomed about 100 Penn Brook School third-graders and their teachers for a tour of the Brocklebank Museum and one-room school house to learn about what life was like in the “old days.” Although we are always happy to do this tour for free, the students surprised us by taking up a collection and presenting us with \$92 to help with the upkeep of the museum! A few weeks later, we got another nice surprise—a large envelope full of thank you notes! Here are a few samples, transcribed as written:

*“Thank you for giving us a tour of the Brocklebank Museum. I liked the part where you shoed us the amputating saw. I liked it because you counent belife how big it was. Another thing I liked about it was the haunted meal chest because it was scary and cool. Lastly the school house because it had all the tiny chairs. I loved the tour. I would like to live at that time because I liked the dolls.”*

*“Thank you for volintering at Brocklebank. First, the dolls are so creepy. But cool. Next, the big fire place. It's cool how that's how people used to stay worm. And heat up there food. Lastly, the old school house. Be careful on the oven it hurts. It was cool to see all the old desks.”*

*“Thank you for volunteering and showing me Brockel Bank Museum. First, the haunted meal chest was so cool. I wonder if it will ever be haunted again. Second, the big fire place was cool too. I think its neat how the fire kept them warm. Finally, I liked the old bath tub it was cool. I think its pretty cool how they take a bath in it.”*

*“I loved your museum because it tought me stuff I never would have known. Also the school house was so much fun and I also learned a lot. Third was the funny stories that they told us. That's the reason I loved it.”*



## ***RED SOX TICKETS RAFFLE***

GHS member Tony Bilo and his cousin Nick, visiting from Florida, headed to Fenway Park on August 9<sup>th</sup> to cheer for their favorite team, thanks to Tony's wife, Annette. She was the winner of our recent Red Sox vs. Yankees tickets raffle. Thank you to all who purchased tickets to help support the Georgetown Historical Society.



## ***HOMER TAPIN MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP***

We are pleased to announce that the 2016 recipient of the Homer Tapin Memorial Scholarship is David Casson. David plans on attending Salem State University this fall, majoring in history and secondary education.

The scholarship is given out each year to a GMHS senior who is planning on majoring in a history-related field. It is given in memory of Homer Tapin (1916-2011) a founding member and past president of Georgetown Historical Society.

## ***FREE HOUSE HISTORIES***



GHS President and chief researcher Chris Comiskey has been VERY busy working on house histories for GHS members for the past several months. If you have requested but not yet received your house history, rest assured that it will be coming. Researching older homes, especially those built before 1855, can be very complicated and time-consuming.

If you are interested in learning about the history of your house, contact Chris at [info@georgetownhistoricalsociety.com](mailto:info@georgetownhistoricalsociety.com).

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

We extend a warm welcome to Joseph Corcoran and Claire Walsh, who joined GHS in the past few months.

## ***GHS MEMBERSHIPS – SPREAD THE WORD!***

The Georgetown Historical Society membership has been growing by leaps and bounds lately! Thank you to all our newer members, as well as our devoted members who have supported us for years.

We hope you will help us spread the word about GHS by sharing our newsletters and inviting your family, friends, and neighbors to join GHS. New or renewing members can use the membership form included with this newsletter, or join online by visiting: [www.georgetownhistoricalsociety.com](http://www.georgetownhistoricalsociety.com) and clicking on “Join the Society.”



Georgetown Historical Society, Inc.  
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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 _____                   |



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## *Georgetown Historical Society*



### **OFFICERS**

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- 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)