



THE GEORGETOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER **WINTER 2013-14**

From the President:

The Annual Meeting of the Georgetown Historical Society was held on Wednesday, December 4 in the Georgetown Library Meeting Room. Despite our press releases being omitted from the local newspapers two weeks in a row, we still had a surprisingly good turn-out.

The meeting opened with a recap of our 2013 events. Rick Detwiller spoke about our big foundation repair project at the Brocklebank Museum, made possible with Community Preservation Act funds. We wish to thank Advantage Contracting and Stickney Masonry for a job well done, as well as Rick, who headed up the project.

Election results were read by Nominating Committee member George Comiskey. There were few changes on the Board, with most officers remaining in the same positions as in 2013. Michelle Prior, who was appointed Interim Curator for the remainder of 2013 after the death of long-time Curator Steve Keene, can now remove the "interim" from her title. New to the Board is Michael Hinchliffe, who moved to Georgetown in 2013, purchasing one of our beautiful 18th century homes. He was elected to a five-year term as a Director.

Treasurer Barry Crawford gave the financial report. We had a good year financially, ending the year in the black, due largely to an increase in memberships and donations.

Following the brief business meeting, our special guest speaker Dan Meader was introduced. Dan's family has been a part of this town since the earliest settlers, and has amassed a great collection of Georgetown memorabilia. Those in attendance were treated to a very interesting talk by Dan about many of the items and their history, and were invited to view his impressive display and ask questions afterwards. The meeting was filmed by the Georgetown Community Television, so if you did not have the opportunity to attend and have not seen it yet, you can check for viewing times or request a copy of the DVD by visiting: GCTV.georgetownma.gov.

In closing, I wish to thank you all for electing me to a fourth term as President of the Georgetown Historical Society.

Sincerely,

Christine Comiskey



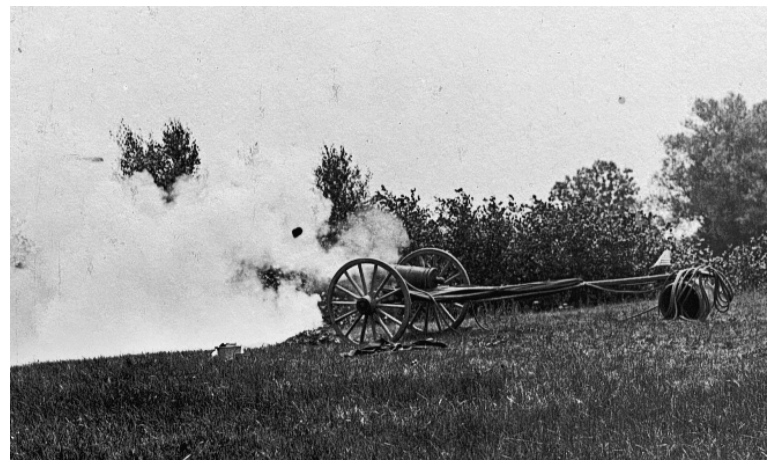
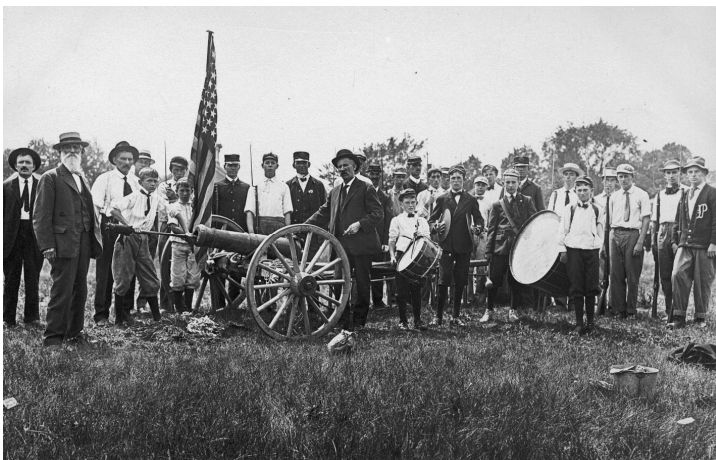
OLD NANCY – A SIGNIFICANT ARTIFACT OF THE REVOLUTION

By Frederic C. Detwiller

The cannon captured in November 1775 from the British munitions ship “Nancy” was said to have been left on the dock in Gloucester. It was guarded by Rowley militia when most of the rest of the captured munitions were sent to Washington’s army in Cambridge. According to James L. Nelson in *George Washington’s Secret Navy* (pp. 206 – 215) the taking of the ship “Nancy” was one of the most significant captures of munitions for the American rebel army at the outbreak of the Revolution. Captain Benjamin Adams of the Rowley militia, who lived in the West Parish, now Georgetown, is reputed to have captured a British gun, as cannons were then called. Major Eben Boynton of Rowley is said to have purchased the gun from the Gloucester docks. Having made no provision in his will for the gun’s disposition after his death, it became an object of contention between his two sons, one of whom lived in Rowley’s East Parish, and one in the West Parish that became Georgetown in 1838. Hence the rivalry by each town over the cannon “Old Nancy” for the last 175 years!



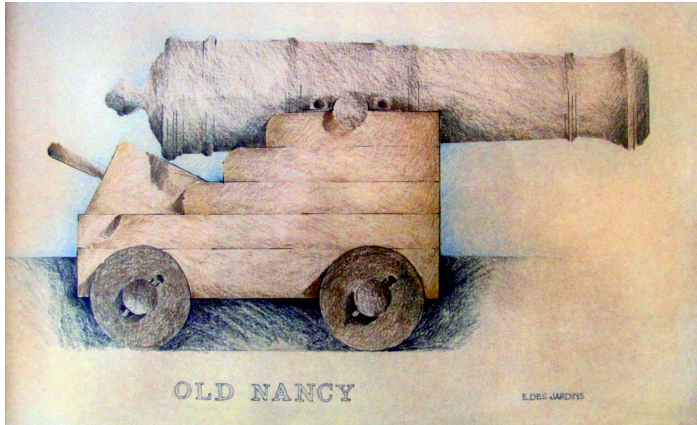
A postcard advertising Old Home Week in 1909 mocks the rivalry between Georgetown and Rowley over the cannon. The sign reads, “Rowley Rowley Pumpkin Pie, you can’t git Old Nancy if you try. Yours, The Georgetown Boys.” Both towns claim to have the “real” Old Nancy.



The firing of Old Nancy during the Old Home Week celebration, July 27, 1909.

OLD NANCY DRAWINGS DONATED TO TOWN FOR DISPLAY

On October 7th, 2013, Georgetown Historical Society's Ed Des Jardins made a presentation to the Selectmen of his original drawings for the installation of the cannon now at Georgetown's Town Hall. Forty years ago, Des Jardins, a former Rowley resident, now of Georgetown, did the necessary research and documentation at Harvard's Fogg Museum to produce the drawings of the cannon and its reproduction gun carriage that would have been used on the British Brig "Nancy" during the Revolution. Bud and Arthur Spaulding of Colonial Reproductions in Georgetown produced the gun carriage in its authentic setting as seen today. Bud Spaulding, who was fire chief from 1990 to 1994 now 86, also attended the presentation event.



One of several drawings by Ed Des Jardins of the gun carriage for "Old Nancy"

"Old Nancy" mounted on its reproduction gun carriage at Georgetown Town Hall. Ed Des Jardins did the design for its reproduction

(Photo by F. C. Detwiller)



CEMETERY TOUR BRINGS IN NEW MEMBERS

Our Historical and Halloween Tours of Union Cemetery in October were our most successful ever! Beautiful weather all four days brought out enthusiastic crowds. Several tour-goers even decided to join GHS! We extend a warm welcome to Jacqueline Brockelbank, Pam and Tom Lundquist, and Eric and Deb Waybright.

NEW HISTORICAL DISPLAY AT GEORGETOWN FIRE DEPARTMENT

At the Spring 2013 Town Meeting, the Central Fire Company received a Community Preservation Act grant to have a cabinet constructed to house and properly display antiques pertaining to the history of the Georgetown Fire Department and the Central Fire Company. The cabinet, custom made by the local craftsmen of Premier Builders, is in the main lobby of the Central Fire Station. The public is welcome to view the display from 6 AM to 9 PM. The Georgetown Historical Society applauds the efforts of the GFD to preserve and display these wonderful artifacts.



Top shelf: Leather fire bucket; main carriage lantern from 1875 Amoskeag Steamer; speaking trumpet.



Second shelf: Complete set of front and rear lanterns from Amoskeag Steamer.

Third shelf: Small kerosene lanterns; line-throwing gun; ID plate/red light from late 50s-early 60s; steam gauge from Amoskeag Steamer.

Bottom shelf: Pair of Dietz fire lanterns; silver trumpet presented to Captain Hiram Harriman by members of Washington Engine Co. No. 1 in 1872.

GEORGETOWN'S ICE INDUSTRY

Excerpted from the book "Tales and Reminiscences of Georgetown" by Eleanor Stetson

Commercial ice harvesting began in Georgetown around 1853 when ice was cut on Pentucket Pond for local use. It was stored in an icehouse located just west of the present American Legion beach site. The business started by Little & Tenney was carried on by Sherman Nelson, John A. Hoyt & Sons, Edward Lee, Wallace Adams, David Hemeon and lastly, by the Elliott brothers. Another icehouse was erected some years later on Rock Pond by the two Abbott brothers who shipped their ice to Boston to be distributed to the surrounding communities. Still later, two more icehouses were built on Pentucket Pond, and these businesses also shipped their ice to Boston. At one point in time, Georgetown boasted of four icehouses; three on Pentucket Pond and one on Rock Pond.

The process of ice harvesting began by drilling a hole with a large auger to measure the thickness of the ice. This was done periodically until the ice was the proper thickness. One problem the men had to contend with was snow which, because of its insulating quality, slowed the freezing process and had to be removed.



Once the ice was of sufficient thickness, a horse-drawn circular saw would be hauled back and forth across the ice marking and cutting it into "fields" and then "squares." When this was completed, the workers hand-cut the ice into blocks with an up-and-down saw. In more recent years, gasoline motors replaced the horses making it possible to harvest 2400 cakes a day.

A "float," made by gathering together several of the ice blocks, was hauled to an open channel of water which had been cut and kept open to the icehouse. In the canal was a continuous double chain with lags spaced at regular intervals operated by a gasoline motor. Using longhandled hooks, the men would push the ice blocks into the canal onto the lags. The blocks were carried by the revolving chain to a platform outside the icehouse where a worker would hook and slide them into the compartmented icehouse to be stored layer upon layer with the uppermost layer thickly covered by straw for insulation. After weeks and months of storage, the uniform blocks of ice changed little in size.

Activity at the icehouses was constant as freight cars were loaded daily, leaving for Boston in the early evening hours to be unloaded the following morning to the waiting ice wagons.



Icehouses were made of wood with double walls. At the ground level the studs were 24" apart but at the top they were only 18" apart. Boards were placed on the outside and inside of the studs. The space between the walls was filled with sawdust for insulation, which, in part, explains why icehouses burned often and completely.

The house at the end of what is now Spofford Avenue burned in 1906 and was never rebuilt. The one on Rock Pond burned in July, 1919 followed a month later by the large Fells icehouse which was on the site of the American Legion beach on Pentucket Pond. Tons of ice were lost in these two fires. The Fells icehouse was never rebuilt, but another was built on the Rock Pond site only to fall to the fiery destiny, it seems, of all icehouses.

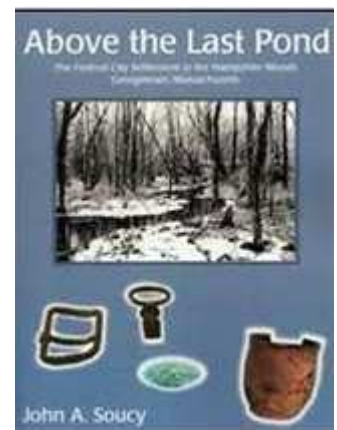


Ice harvesting continued in Georgetown until September 10, 1952 when the last cake was removed from the icehouse then owned by the Elliott brothers. This last remaining icehouse was being razed when it burned under suspicious circumstances on June 14, 1953.

Thus, an era came to an end.

ABOVE THE LAST POND

A talk on the book *Above the Last Pond: The Federal City Settlement in the Hampshire Woods, Georgetown, Massachusetts* by John Soucy will be held at the Langley-Adams Library, 185 Main Street, Groveland on Wednesday, January 29 from 6-8 PM. This event, presented by Bill Newell and Joe D'Amore, is free and open to the public. Copies of the book will be available for sale for \$18. Visit www.langleyadamslib.org for more information.



2014 DUES REMINDER



If you have not yet paid your 2014 dues, we hope you will do so soon. 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. Dues for all GHS members who are not Life Members are due in January. This enables us to budget for special events. 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." We wish to thank all our members who have already paid their GHS dues for 2014.



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 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 fee 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"/> Archives management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter | <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising/Merchandise sales |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Special events | <input type="checkbox"/> Executive Board member |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Curatorial Data Input | <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>1st Vice President:</i>	<i>Terrance Hart</i>
<i>2nd Vice President:</i>	<i>Sylvia Johnston</i>
<i>Secretary:</i>	<i>Karen Brockelbank</i>
<i>Treasurer:</i>	<i>Barry Crawford</i>
<i>Curator:</i>	<i>Michelle Prior</i>

DIRECTORS

*Ralph Chouinard, Rick Detwiller,
Jeff Lamoureux, Ed Des Jardins,
Michael Hinchliffe*

- JOIN US ON FACEBOOK! Search Groups: "Georgetown Historical Society."
- VISIT OUR WEBSITE: www.georgetownhistoricalsociety.com to see more information about GHS and upcoming events.
- E-MAIL US AT: info@georgetownhistoricalsociety.com