

# Georgetown Historical Society

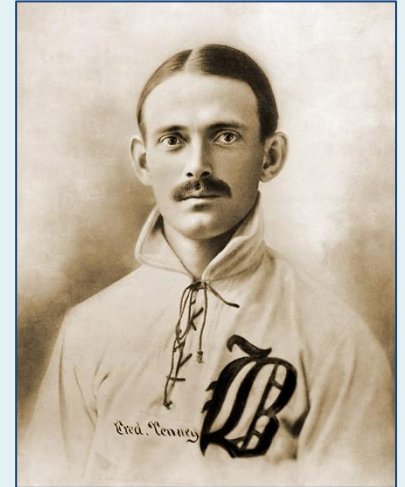
## Spring Newsletter 2021

### Fred Tenney – Georgetown’s Own Major League Baseball Star!

A Georgetown native, Fred Tenney was a professional athlete who played for various Boston National League baseball teams, as well as the New York Giants. His career spanned almost 20 years. In honor of his 150<sup>th</sup> birthday, here is a celebration of Georgetown’s major league baseball star.

#### Beginnings

Born in 1871 to Charles William Tenney and Sarah Lambert DeBacon, Fred Tenney could trace his lineage back to the first ship that populated Rowley – the *John of London*, led by the Reverend Ezekiel Rogers in 1638. One of the chief reasons Rev. Rogers left England was his refusal to endorse the playing of sports on the Sabbath, as outlined in *The Book of Sports*, published decades earlier by the English monarchy. The Tenney family was deeply religious, with beliefs steeped in local tradition. Rogers’ convictions would later resurface as a strong influence in the early part of Fred’s professional career. His refusal to play on Sundays caused some disagreement with team management.



Fred Tenney 1897

#### The Soiled Collegian

Discovered while a student at Brown University, Fred was offered a contract with the Boston Beaneaters in 1894. At 5’ 9” inches tall, he was one of the shortest players on the team, but Fred put every ounce of his 155 pounds into his left-handed batting and throwing. After trying out different roles on the team, he eventually became a skilled first baseman. At this time in baseball history, it was uncommon for a college academic to become a professional baseball player. Tenney – whom most regarded as a gentleman – was referred to as “The Soiled Collegian.” When needed, however, he was capable of standing up for himself, such as when he was suspended for several games after fisticuffs with umpire Bill Clem in 1906.

#### “The Best First Baseman Who Ever Lived”

Tenney was strong and compact, with a distinctive style and consistently high statistics. He had an outstanding arm, stretching far up when making a catch. In 1897 he and colleague Herman Long were the first duo to make the “3-6-3 double play”, a tag-team effort between first and second basemen in eliminating two players at once. In addition to his physical skills, Tenney also managed the Boston Beaneaters for a couple of years, coached college teams and wrote for several baseball publications.

Rivalry between the National League and the newly formed American League spelled the death knell for the badly operated Boston Beaneaters at the turn of



Artwork for Tenney  
Baseball cards

## Fred Tenney, continued

the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The American League had a new team in 1901 – the Boston Red Sox – that would eventually become the more popular team in the city. Although there was an opportunity for Tenney and some of his colleagues to jump ship and play for the Red Sox, they refused to “cross the railroad track” to Huntington Avenue and play at a new baseball field located in the Fenway. He chose retirement instead in 1911, one year before the completion of Fenway Park.

### At Home With Fred Tenney

When his baseball career took off, Fred married popular Georgetown local Bessie Farnham Berry in 1895, and the young couple moved to Winthrop to be near the Beaneaters at the South End Grounds. First daughter, Barbara, was born on the Fourth of July in 1899. Because he was always away for her birthday, Fred brought her an engraved, commemorative silver spoon as a present from whatever city he was playing in during the holiday. After his baseball career ended, Tenney spent several decades as a life insurance agent before his death in 1952 at the age of 80. He was a dedicated father, husband and a prolific artist. We are deeply grateful to Fred’s great-granddaughter, Daphne Noyes, for sharing some personal anecdotes for this article.,



Fred Tenney (top) with Herman Long (right), Bobby Lowe (left), and Jimmy Collins (bottom) 1900



New Library Cabinets

## Transformation Is Afoot in the Local History Room at the Georgetown Peabody Library

By Michele Augeri

Custom cabinets were installed recently in the Library’s Local History Room, built in a style and manner which would have suited Library benefactor George Peabody, Esq. himself. The oak cabinets feature lockable glass doors and are stained to match the original woodwork installed in 1904. This project was funded by a generous grant from the Community Preservation Council (CPC) and ably built by Ken Kumph of Premier Builders in Georgetown.

In addition to beautifying the space, the cabinets will keep the Library’s collection of locally significant historic resources secure and protected from dust and mishap. The Local History Room collection - which includes everything from 17<sup>th</sup> century Bibles (donated by local ministers for the library’s original collection in 1869) to last year’s high school yearbook - is currently undergoing a major reorganization to make its contents more accessible for those looking to research and record Georgetown’s history. The new cabinets also expand the storage space available to collect new documents and artifacts in the continuing history of the town.

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

As we begin 2021 at the Georgetown Historical Society, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome Chris DiFranco to our Board of Directors. Several of the board members met Chris when his Georgetown AP History class reached out to us in June of 2019 and asked if they could assist in a special project. Chris' class created our Instagram account, for which we are very thankful, so please be sure to follow us! Chris, welcome and thank you for your commitment to the continued success of our society.

Together in 2020, we have made considerable strides in continuing to champion the historical society's mission to preserve the historic Brocklebank homestead for future generations. Although we were not able to have guests visit the museum, our work did not falter. Thank you to my fellow board members and society volunteers for your industrious work both on the museum structures and the property this past year. Jim Boynton continued with his valiant effort in the restoration of the Shoe Shop windows and sills, which are now complete. Thank you for your painstaking work - a job well done! Once we can open, the shoe shop will now become an additional part of our tour, highlighting Georgetown's shoe-making history. The intrepid gardeners began the creation of a historic dooryard/kitchen garden made possible with the Essex Heritage Grant funding. These gardens will also become an additional part of the museum tours, informing visitors on garden practices of the colonists. The gardeners also added several smaller planting areas and continued to enlarge the border garden along the edge of the wetlands with relocated, donated, or divided perennials.

In the coming year we look forward to the continued prosperity of our society while working with you all not only with the upkeep and maintenance of the museum property and grounds, but also to cultivate and sustain interest in our rich local heritage, per our mission statement.

Please reach out and let us know if you have any recommendations or concerns regarding the museum structure, the property and gardens or any programs you would like to see us sponsor. We welcome and value the input of all our members. As always, if you have the time, we welcome your participation in all our goings-on. Just send us an email at – [info@georgetownhistoricalsociety.com](mailto:info@georgetownhistoricalsociety.com).

As a reminder, if you have not sent in your 2021 dues, please take the time to do so now as it is our members like you who enable our continued success as a society. Thank you again for all your support.

*Betsy Moran*

## CHRIS DIFRANCO JOINS BOARD

GHS is proud to announce the addition of Chris DiFranco, a teacher at our own high school, as a new board member. DiFranco teaches Social Studies at Georgetown Middle High School where he has been since 2004. He currently teaches US History I, Advanced Placement US History, Abnormal Psychology and Advanced Placement Psychology, advises the Civil Rights Club, and coaches Varsity Boys Soccer, Middle School Girls Basketball, and Varsity Boys Tennis. Chris loves exploring local history and historical memory which led to his interest in the historical society. Chris also loves being outdoors with hiking and biking as two of his favorite activities. His favorite thing to do is spend time with his wife Faith and two children Mackenzie and Abigail.



## GROUNDS BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE

Spring at the Museum

Now that the snow is melting, the tulip, daffodil, and grape hyacinth bulbs are tentatively sprouting, getting ready for full spring as soon as it arrives. Meanwhile, the committee is busy planning a small colorful Victorian-style garden within the fence in front of the parlor window. Several members are tending seedlings indoors in anticipation of spring planting.



The seeds we ordered with funds from the Essex National Heritage Foundation grant have arrived. Also ordered are witch hazel and winter berry bushes for behind the house near the staghorn sumac. These shrubs had medicinal uses by colonists and native tribes.



We will begin working on the grounds soon – stop by and say hello if you see us working!

Grape Hyacinth, Daffodils  
and Witch Hazel

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**Mission Statement:** *The Georgetown Historical Society, a non-profit volunteer organization, cultivates and sustains interest in our rich local heritage by collecting, preserving and displaying cultural material. It does this through research, education and the operation of an historic site.*



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