

# Winter Newsletter

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## GEORGETOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*Preserving and promoting the history of Georgetown*



## A Note From The President

As we begin 2023, I would like to thank my fellow Board members for all their hard work in 2022. Below is an update on just a few of our 2022 initiatives:

The museum property looks more beautiful as each year passes due to the hard work of the “Intrepid Gardeners”. Even the drought last summer did not slow them down. As it happened, it was the perfect year to begin work on the removal of the invasive phragmites in the wetlands. This project will allow the cattails to thrive once again. Even though the restoration will be a multi-year project, monumental gains were made this past summer. Thank you, ladies, for all your hard work and to Alan Aulson for removing the debris. We wait with anticipation to see our King Hawthorn tree bud out this spring. Thank you to the Garden Friends for such a magnificent gift.

Thank you also to Judy Abbe for the beautiful artwork you donated to be raffled. Judy will be having an exhibit at the library this Spring, and I hope you all stop by to see more of her lovely work.

Our mission to digitize our collections continues, and we have found some extraordinary items as we continue to inventory. We will be sharing some of these collections by putting them on display at the library for all to enjoy. We have started with the Valentine collection. If there is anything you remember from visiting the museum and would like us to showcase it, please let us know. Suggestions are always welcome!

If you have any ideas for programs you would like to see us sponsor, just drop us an email. 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. Email us at – [info@georgetownhistoricalsociety.com](mailto:info@georgetownhistoricalsociety.com). Thank you again for all your support.

Betsy Moran

**Oil Painting Raffle**



The lucky winners of the Painting Raffle were John and Lisa Curley of Ipswich. They were delighted and very familiar with the bridge.

## **Presentation on the History of the Erie Fire Association #4**

By *Fire Chief Matt McKay* at the GHS Annual Meeting

Reported by GMHS students *Nayla Anderson* and *Madison Micale* and edited by Board Members *Chris DiFranco* and *Lewis Harrold*

Nearly every resident of Georgetown passes by the Erie 4 fire station on North Street without knowing its interesting history. Georgetown Fire Chief Matt McKay gave a presentation on the development of the fire station and its importance to the community throughout Georgetown's history at the GHS annual meeting in December. Erie 4 is the oldest privately owned fire company that is still running in the United States. The station was first founded in 1854 to protect the property of the Byfield District of Georgetown and Newbury. It is operated by community volunteers that are not paid by the town.

In their endeavor to serve the community, the Erie 4 members bought multiple fire trucks. Ginger, the famous Handtub, was purchased from the Jamaica Plain Veteran Firemen's Association in 1916. A handtub is a piece of equipment that has a water reservoir and a hose that is operated by multiple people pumping its brakes (the long bars on each side of the apparatus) up and down. For a picture of an antique handtub go to <https://www.myhandtub.com/handtubs.html>) Once on the scene, firefighters pumped the handtub to cause water to come out of the hose and put fires out. Erie 4 firefighters have used their variety of trucks to serve our community for years. Chief McKay described several of these and mentioned how difficult it is to find even a used modern truck at a price Erie 4 can afford.

Erie 4 makes history by still running to this day. Now it's time for our community to serve Erie 4. This is a piece of Georgetown's history that we should be proud of and want to support. Along with fighting fires, Erie 4 also holds events such as the Annual Night Before the 4th Cookout and Santa Visits in December. The function room in Erie 4 can also be rented out for \$200 a day. Erie 4 gets less than 10% of its budget from the town and depends on the community to remain open. Being active in the community is necessary for survival. The Friends and Business Friends of Erie help it remain open. Some other events that support Erie 4 are its annual golf tournament, and its breakfast and race day. We encourage you to go down and support Erie 4 at its next fundraising event. Go to the website <https://www.erie4.org/> for more information on how you can contribute.

As a citizen in Georgetown my (Nayla's) family has many ties to Erie 4. My father was a volunteer firefighter and my family rents the hall every year for a Chinese dinner. During Chief McKay's presentation I was surprised to learn that Erie 4 was struggling with funds. I was more shocked to find out that my fellow classmates had no idea about its history. Erie 4 is something that we should be proud of. As more people move into Georgetown there should be more people to be a part of our community. It seems that our community has been failing to come together over the years and support the citizen-formed fire station. Our small town should be proud that the oldest privately owned, volunteer fire association in the country is in our small town. We encourage you to support Erie 4 at its next event.

"Warm Hearts- Willing Hands" is the motto of our volunteer firefighters. I challenge the citizens of Georgetown to use warm hearts and willing hands to bring awareness to your friends and family about Erie 4 and go down and visit the functioning fire station. There's still so much more to learn about it than what is in this article. The Association has been fighting fires for 169 years. That's 169 years of service to our community.

Go down and support Erie so it can support us for years to come.

### **February Display at the Library**



Just in time for Valentine's Day we filled the display case at the Georgetown Peabody Library with some of the valentines we found in the collection. These were cards mostly from the 40's and 50's. They were very cute in the display case.

### **The Mystery of the Broom Brigade Solved**

Do you recall the picture from the Fall Newsletter (see below) of a, perhaps local, BROOM BRIGADE for which we have a large picture? This is why we are working so hard to catalog as many items as we can in the collection: Lew Harrold found the Broom Brigade in Steve Keene's database.



From the *Haverhill Gazette*, June 4, 1951: Georgetown Grange Drill Team was judged the winner in competition Saturday at the stadium during the Pomona grange field day. Front row, left to right: Mesdames Muriel L. Howe, Jeannette L. Morse, Velma C. Morse, Doris H. Thompson, Mae L. Murphy and Theresa C. Hughes. Back row: Mrs. Carrie W. Dean, Miss Sadie Cheney, pianist: Mesdames Laura M. Mello, Lily T. Hill, Muriel A. Jenne, Arlene Murray. Miss Fay A. Pleadwell.; Mesdames Doris E. Kent, Gertrude L. Wilmarth, Lililas G. Prescott, Barbara George, Vesta V. Brown and Bessie G. Kneeland, drill mistress. (Gazette Staff Photo)

## **Moving On**

It is with sadness that we announce that the GHS secretary, Lewis Harrold, and his wife Barb, are in the process of moving to Minnesota to be near their daughters. Georgetown will miss them both as will the Garden Friends, the library, the Needle Arts Guild, and their church in Groveland. They were only here in Georgetown for 20 years, but they have certainly left their mark. Lew is the one who has started us down the path of making the collection database in Past Perfect accurate and accessible. We are looking for someone willing to step into the GHS Secretary Position now held by Lew.

## **In Memoriam**

GHS wants to acknowledge the recent passing of two stalwart members of the Society.

Pat Skeirik was involved in the early years of the society. She lived to be 90 years old and had lived in Georgetown since the 1960's. She and her husband Peter raised their children here. They were very active community members. Pat, an avid reader, was particularly proud of her service as a Trustee of the Georgetown Peabody Library.

Joe Knapp passed away Feb. 10th at 88 years old. He was drawn into the Society by his wife Beverly who had been involved, thanks to her mother, Ruth Tyrie, with the society from the beginning. Joe's knowledge and quiet dignity helped move GHS forward during his years as an officer.

## **Recent Donation**

Gloria Maina's daughter, Donna, and her husband, Larry Doucette brought some books and files that Gloria had gathered over the years to donate to GHS. Many of the items are now at the library being

evaluated for inclusion in the History Room at the library. Betsy and I took a handmade costume Victorian hat back to the office for use in future events. Gloria was very active in the society during its early years.



Pictured are Donna Doucette, Larry Doucette and Besty Moran

## Upcoming Events

- Several GHS members will be leading the Merrimack Valley Chapter of the Massachusetts Society of Genealogists on a tour of Harmony Cemetery on Sat., March 25 from 1 to 3 PM If you are interested in attending, the genealogists ask that you please RSVP by March 23 to [merrimackvalley@msoginc.org](mailto:merrimackvalley@msoginc.org)
- The Garden Friends are sponsoring a talk on the History of New England stone walls at the library on Sat., Mar. 18 at 10 AM.
- The Kiwanis Pancake Breakfast will be Sat., Apr. 8 from 7 to 12 at Penn Brook School.

## GHS Officers

President: Betsy Moran

1st Vice President: Sylvia Johnston

Treasurer: Michelle Wilkins Cook

Secretary: Lew Harrold

Curator Pro Tempore: Rick Detwiller

Board of Directors: Jeff Lamoureux, Mary Saunders, Chris DiFranco, Darlene Dupre, Gloria Swanbon

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