

Georgetown Historical Society

Preserving and promoting the
history of Georgetown

Newsletter – March 2024

Letter from the President



As we begin 2024, on behalf of the entire Board, I would like to welcome our two new Board members, Carol Snow and Beverly Knapp. We are all very much looking forward to the contributions of both ladies on our upcoming 2024 programs and events. Thank you both in advance for giving your time for the betterment of the Society.

Below is a very well-written article by AP History students Seamus Cahill, Margaret Winslow, and Will Sorenson. The three have done a wonderful job summarizing the presentation from our annual meeting held on December 2, 2023 at the Georgetown Peabody Library. As you will appreciate as you read the article, the presentation by James Gage (his mother Mary was unable to join us) was very well received by all those attending. James's presentation is yet another example of history hiding in plain sight, especially if you know what to look for!

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 events. Feel free to drop us an email anytime at

–info@georgetownhistoricalsociety.com. Thank you again for all your support.

Betsy Moran



Thank you to Maureen and Alan Aulson for the donation of a beautiful Stonewall Kitchen breakfast gift box for our annual meeting door prize.

The following is the article written by Seamus Cahill, Margaret Winslow, and Will Sorenson Georgetown High School AP History students. It is a summary of the 2023 annual meeting presentation.

Historic Milestones: More than Just Old Road Signs – James Gage Presenter

When you think of milestones you often think of achievements or accomplishments but there is an entirely different meaning. So, what are milestones anyway? Try thinking more literally. Milestones are often historic landmarks that offer the distances (in miles) between towns, often through stone engravings. These milestones can date back to colonial times and can even include directional arrows. North Shore milestones were often used for travel to and from Boston, but also helped with navigation among much smaller suburbs, and were present all the way up into New Hampshire. In the 1890s, local citizens began attempts at preserving these historic milestones which are historic landmarks for numerous towns. Often individually carved, these milestones are all unique in certain aspects, and reflect many unsaid stories, and hint at mysteries within historical records.

Where Can I Find Them?

Numerous local towns are home of these milestones and can be visited today thanks to efforts towards preserving them. Some of these local towns and the year their milestones were created are as follows: Newbury (1708), Ipswich (1709), Wenham (1710). Many towns have numerous stones including Wenham which has 3. Many of these early milestones can be found along the “Bay Road” which had numerous historic names, and typically ran East from Boston and served as a road north to Portsmouth, NH (connecting the two ports). This road largely followed the same path Route 1A does today. These milestones are widespread, as many can also be found in Hampton and Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The quaint town of Chester, NH even has 8 surviving milestones! Restoration efforts on many milestones have made them more visible, but many have stood the test of time.

What Does a Milestone Look Like?

Part of what makes these historic landmarks so special is the variety in appearance. No two stones are identical, and through analysis historians can often determine the tactics used to carve them or can connect multiple milestones. The milestone designers sometimes included a biblical quote or significant geometric designs, but the stones are often highlighted by a large number to signal the number of miles, and at least one large letter to signal the destination which is that far away. Signature marks on individual milestones help connect these milestones back to potentially the same mason. These milestones come in tall, short, thin, and wide varieties. These milestones often were used to advertise for local taverns. The type of stone used depended on what was available at the time, and if eventually painted, it was done with hand mixed paints. Some more complex than others, these landmarks truly have much room for interpretation, and offer hints at

the trends of colonial New England history. These stone signs would eventually be replaced with cast metal ones.



Above is one of the three Wenham milestones (Milestone 21), and exemplifies what elements milestones typically include. The “I” stands for Ipswich, with a 6 to mean 6 miles away. The “B” stands for Boston, with a 21 to mean 21 miles away. The initials D.D are for the designer of which was likely Daniel Dodge.

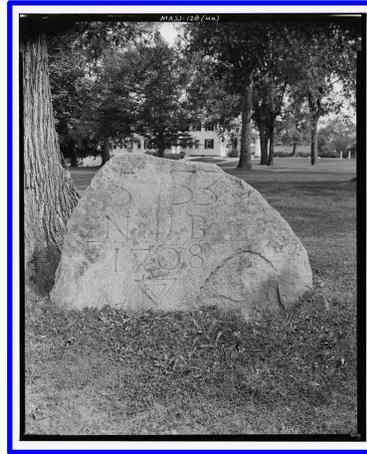
Revealing History’s Secrets Through Geometric Designs

Various milestones also contain triangles, or geometric designs. These designs have helped historians link milestones together to potentially find their designers. In Newbury, 4 of the 5 milestones contain a form of the same triangle. Two of these milestones have the same double triangle design (suggesting a beginning and end). The other stones did not have the double triangle, suggesting they were carved at different times, likely between the other two. These triangles were also found on two doorstones that had been for the mansion of John Dummer. This house, built by John’s grandfather Richard, was located where Triton Regional School currently stands. This link between Dummer, the milestone triangles, and the doorstone triangles, have revealed the Dummer family as the designers for 4 of the 5 Newbury milestones. John Dummer would extend construction of his milestones only through part of Newbury, as his wealthy agricultural class was at odds with the wealthy class benefitting from the port of Newbury. This division eventually would result in the formation of Newburyport, separate from Newbury.

A Few Other Examples of Surviving Milestones



A.



B.



C.



D.



E.

- A. Ipswich Milestone, located beside Appleton Farms. Top of the stone must have broken off at some time, as the B was carved more recently than the rest and has better workmanship. It was originally carved in 1709.
- B. Newbury Milestone 33, located on the grounds of Governor's Academy. This is the oldest surviving milestone in New England (1708).
- C. Wenham Milestone 20 ½, located in the center of town, in front of town hall. It was carved in 1710.
- D. Wenham Milestone 20, located on the south side of town (originally in front of the burial grounds, and also in front of the meeting house at one point) It contains a biblical saying from Job 30:23 "I know that thou will bring me to death and to the house appointed for all living."
- E. Portsmouth Milestone, currently located in a cemetery at the intersection of Peverly and Middle Roads in Portsmouth. This milestone was carved after 1800, based upon quarry tool marks.

There are many more surviving milestones all over the North Shore and southern New Hampshire!

Turnpikes and Horses!

Believe it or not, in the early 1800's when turnpikes such as the Newburyport Turnpike (which is now part of Route 1) were finished, these roads proved ideal for horse racing. Laws restricted turnpikes, requiring them to follow a straight path regardless of inconveniences in the way. These straight paths prompted horse racers to travel from as far away as a Virginia to compete. These races were formal and sanctioned races, which often included a dress code. Riders were required to be "neatly dressed in a silk jacket, jockey cap, pantaloons, and half boots, or they will not be permitted to ride." The Lynnfield Hotel was built along the Newburyport Turnpike for the convenience of travelers as well. Horse racing did not stop with the Newburyport Turnpike either, as the Salem and Lynn turnpikes developed trotting races as well. This information is credited to the 1806 Newburyport Herald, and the 1821 Salem Gazette. So next time you travel down a straight turnpike, just envision the horses that used to race those tracks! If you want to see a milestone on Newburyport Turnpike, milestone 7 is a good option, as it can be viewed from the parking lot across from Rowley Marketplace!

RACE HORSE.



ON the 4th of July, at 12 o'clock, the white Horse **MATCHLESS**, lately from Norfolk, Va. will be at the Lynnfield Hotel. At 4 o'clock, P. M. he will run with any Horse that maybe brought against him. There will be a dinner and other refreshments provided for gentlemen who attend, and wish to partake. July 3.

Above is an excerpt from the Salem Gazette July 3, 1821.

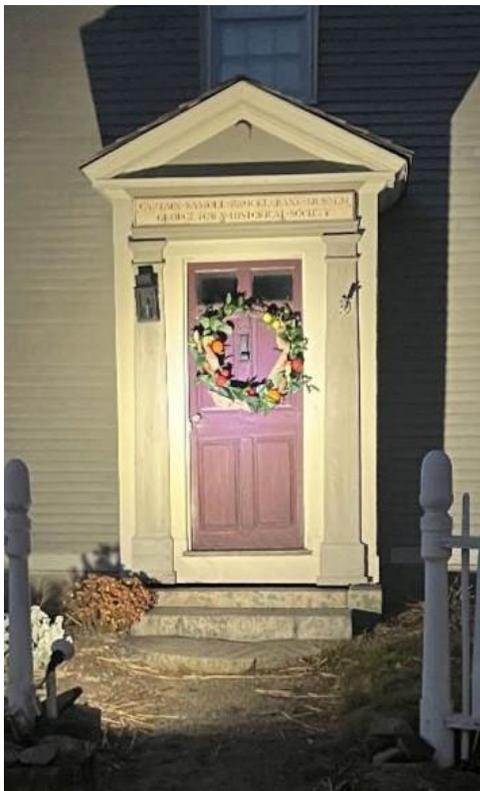
Benjamin Franklin did what?!

It was believed that Benjamin Franklin forged his own milestone around 1767, because of this famous milestone's initials of "BF" seen below. Along with the milestone comes a story of Franklin going mile by mile conducting an inspection of colonial post offices. As he went along, he simultaneously put a stake at every mile while a group of workers behind him placed all the stones. The story has been told so many times that it has become a historic fact. This story is backed up with the fact that he did go on two post office inspections. While that is a cool story of Benjamin going down the streets marking miles, it's not true at all for two reasons. One of the reasons is that 1767 wasn't the year that the stones were put up. The carver liked the ideas of the mile 63 being set with the same mileage as the year so he put 1763 and his initials on the bottom. Another problem was that Benjamin Franklin wasn't even in the country in 1767! He was in London dealing with Britain at the end of the seven years' war and the cusp of the revolution!

This is the milestone mentioned with the initials “BF” engraved in the bottom right corner and the date “1763”

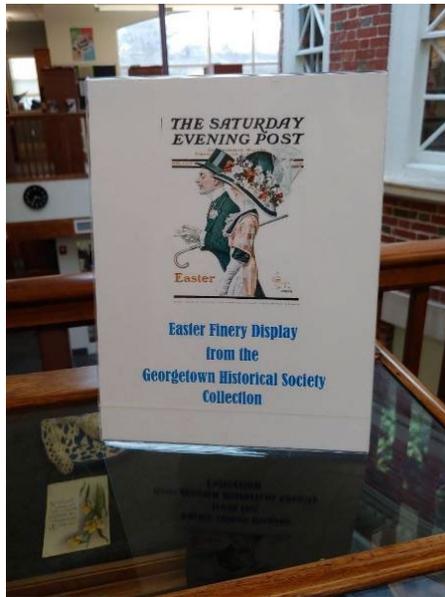


Thank you once again to Jeff Lamoureux and his merry elves, Sam and Meredith, for the beautiful work done to the museum's front door - another gorgeous wreath by Sam and great lighting work by Meredith. Thank you all.



In February GHS used the display cases in the Georgetown Peabody Library to celebrate George Peabody's 229 birthday on Feb. 18th. George gave the town the money to build both its first and second public library buildings as well as being helpful in the construction of the most recent addition.

In March and April come see the display of hats, gloves, purses and cards from the GHS collection to illustrate the custom of dressing up for Easter - "The Easter Parade." The cases are at the top of the stairs next to the board games and in the room with the fireplace in the older section of the library.



Save The Date(s)

- Friends of the Georgetown Peabody Library book sale. Donated books and other materials can be dropped off during library hours March 6th – March 13th. Sale starts Thursday March 14th through Sunday, March 17th. Sunday \$5 a bag from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.
- Kiwanis pancake breakfast Saturday, April 6th 7 A.M. until noon at Penn Brook School.
- Garden Friends Plant Sale May 11th at the Knights of Columbus yard on Main Street
- Spring Stroll downtown Georgetown businesses May 11th – check Social Media for your favorite store's hours
- June 14th 4 to 9 p.m.- First 2024 Walk by Moonlight event check website and Social Media for details - <https://walkbymoonlight.com>
- Look for special events at the Brocklebank Museum when we open for the summer in late June or early July.

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