
 Holliston Historical Society
NEWSLETTER

Winter 2022



The dining room was set for tea
at the December Open House

Dates to Remember.....

January 15, 2022—Potluck Dinner has been POSTPONED

February 13—Along the Indifferent Road w. Washington

February 20—Baseball's Color Barrier by Ted Reinstein

April 24—A Visit with Isabella Stewart Gardner

May 22—Annual Meeting

June 19—Father's Day Car Show

September 18—Harvest Fair

A Note from Our President

January 2022

Dear Members,

I'm sure we're all looking forward to 2022 being a time of progress, and this note comes with a wish for happiness, health, and all good things for you and your family!

Right now we feel we need to be more cautious about meeting inside in large groups, so as you know, we will not be holding our January Members and Friends Potluck. However, as you will see in the following pages, we're looking forward to upcoming programs this winter and spring—some of which we may need to hold on Zoom. Committee activities will also continue remotely, if needed.

Thank you for the hard work, generosity, and kindness that you have shown during the pandemic that have enabled the Society to maintain a steady course. There is still much to be accomplished, and we invite your continued enthusiasm, interest, and talents to help fulfill our mission:

To help enrich the life of our community by promoting historical preservation and sharing Holliston's past and current history through research, publications, exhibits, programs, events, and education.

Please be in touch if you have ideas for the coming year—it would be great to hear from you!

Nancy

Nancy Lamb
President
nancybowenlamb@gmail.com

UPCOMING EVENTS

Along the "Indifferent Road" with George Washington, 1789

February 13, 2022 at 2:00 PM on Zoom

*A virtual presentation of the Historical Societies of Holliston,
Natick, and Sherborn and the Sherborn Library*

It was November 1789, and George Washington was returning to New York at the end of his post-inaugural visit to New England as the country's first president. Join us as we trace President Washington's route through Natick, Sherborn, and Holliston and learn about where he traveled, what he did, and what buildings and landmarks stand today as silent witnesses to his journey.

Join us on February 13 at 2:00 pm for this virtual presentation. This event is jointly hosted by the Historical Societies of Holliston, Natick, and Sherborn and the Sherborn Library.

This event is free and open to the public, but advance registration is required. For more information on the program, please visit the Holliston Historical Society web page at www.hollistonhistoricalsociety.org where there will be a link to the registration page.

—Terri Evans, Natick Historical Society

Meet the Author
—Ted Reinstein—

co-sponsored with the Holliston Public Library

Sunday, February 20th, 2:00-3:30 PM

In honor of Black History Month, local author and Holliston resident, Ted Reinstein will talk about his latest book, Before Brooklyn: The Unsung Heroes Who Helped Break Baseball's Color Barrier. The book chronicles the 60 years during which black baseball players were banned from the major leagues. Their struggle to integrate our national pastime paved the way for Jackie Robinson, yet they remained anonymous.

Depending on the number of COVID-19 cases in town, this program may be in person, hybrid, or virtual. Watch our website or the library's at www.hollistonlibrary.org for the latest information.

Upcoming Programs cont. on p. 6

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Suffrage Rally November 2021



At the beginning of November, we held our first “in person” program in many months. Joanne Hulbert led the rally and others read the words of past Hollistonians for and against the right of women to vote and to hold office.

L to r: Patty Pereira, Sheila Adams, Deb Moore, Frank Chamberlain, Terri Chamberlain, Joanne Hulbert, and Mary Greendale

Upcoming Programs, cont.

A Visit with Isabella Stewart Gardner: America's First Patroness of the Arts

April 24, 2022 at 2:00 PM

Known for her flamboyant manner and free-spirited ways, Isabella Stewart Gardner (1840 - 1924) became known as the first American "Patroness of the Arts." The ambiance of her Back Bay salon at 150-152 Beacon Street inspired the creation of "Fenway Court," an architecturally lavish backdrop for her significant collection of Italian Renaissance art. Fenway Court, known today as the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, was willed to the City of Boston for the "education and enjoyment of the public forever," and stands as a monument to her aesthetic sensibilities.

Jessa Piaia's character portrayals celebrate women of the past whose diverse lives span three centuries. In her poignant and inspiring dramatic vignettes, Jessa reveals the accomplishments, struggles, and contributions of these women to American history. Jessa depicts each woman's life set against the historic events and issues of the day.

Jessa studied performance at London's Oval House Theatre and graduated from the University of Massachusetts in Boston. Jessa currently works at Harvard University. She conducts most of her historical research at the Schlesinger Library at Radcliffe Institute which specializes in the history of women in America.

The above information was taken from Jessa's website:
<http://www.womeninhistoryprograms.com/about.html>

We fervently hope that this program will be held in the barn, in person, with refreshments to follow. We had first planned this program for April of 2020 when COVID struck. We look forward to finally welcoming Jessa to the HHS!

—Mary Curran

Buildings and Grounds Report



Above: The front of the house after it was stripped. Below: Detail of the front door after the painting was complete.

Thanks to a matching grant of \$10,000 from The 1772 Foundation with Preservation Massachusetts we were able to afford stripping 200 years of cracked and peeling paint and repainting the entire exterior of the Asa Whiting House. The house looks fresh and new as it would have when it was built in 1812. We have garnered many enthusiastic comments from members and non-members alike.

We are also thrilled to say that the Select Board approved \$89,045 of American Rescue Plan Act funds to come to the Society. This is for restoration of both porches and the west chimney from the roof up, as well as reimbursing us for the



\$16,000 emergency roof repair for the leak that happened in late summer. We are all very grateful to our town for this grant!

—Paul Saulnier and Nancy Lamb

A big thank you is owed to our new grant writing committee! Sheila Adams, Jane Gilfoy, Nancy Lamb, and Paul Saulnier are to be commended for their work in securing these funds that will allow the Society to maintain our buildings despite the loss of rental income we experienced due to COVID-19. —mec

Open Doors at the Society for the Holidays!

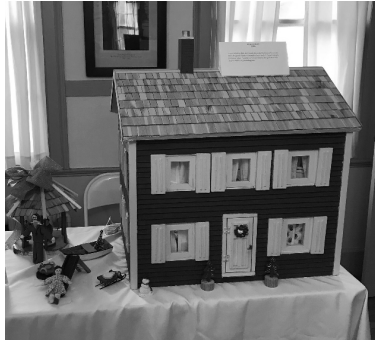
With the Asa Whiting House beautifully decorated by the Holliston Garden Club, on the afternoon of December 5 we welcomed members and visitors to enjoy color, fun, and history in the Asa Whiting House. The Society's Collections Committee added antique dolls and a doll house, vintage toys, and a decorated tree including home-made ornaments, and set the dining room for a holiday tea to celebrate the season. There was a display of items for people to guess "What is it?" Visitors also enjoyed the ongoing exhibits of historical maps, Holliston sports teams and special World War II postal envelopes. Many thanks to everyone who loaned items for display and helped set everything up, as well as welcomed our visitors.

After visitors enjoyed browsing through the displays and decorations in the Asa Whiting House, they were invited to come to the barn. Although the barn is usually chilly in December, the atmosphere was warm and hospitable. The scent of spiced hot apple cider filled the air. The Hospitality Committee and volunteers served homemade cookies and finger foods and offered a choice of eggnog, cranberry punch or hot cider.

The Holliston Historical Society Treasure Shop, started at this year's Harvest Fair, displayed for sale antiques such as figurines, dishes and fine collectibles. The Holliston Garden Club held a Christmas Bazaar. Christmas wreaths, ornaments for the tree, and many other items that their members had made were attractively set out for sale on tables in the barn.

Thank you to all the volunteers who helped with the treasure shop, made cookies and other finger foods, and served our visitors to the barn. It is always such a pleasure to work with such a good group. A special thank you to the Garden Club members who decorated the house delightfully and added to the spirit of the season with their Christmas Bazaar.

--Nancy Lamb and Sheila Adams



**Scenes from the
December 5th
Open House
and Barn**

Thank you to An-
drea Adams and
Nancy Lamb for
the photos!

ICY BUSINESS

During the Historical Society's Christmas Open House, there were many inquiries about the silver barrel-shaped object located in the corner of the meeting room. Donated by former caretaker, Bill Hodge, it is a lovely example of a patented, early 20th century ice box. Before the advent of freon powered refrigeration, an ice box (most commonly designed as a wooden box on legs, fully lined with zinc metal, with a drip pan underneath, and a smaller opening box on top to hold a block of ice) was the main method to keep household food and drink from spoilage. Hollistonians depended upon locally harvested ice to cool lemonade, make ice cream, mix cocktails, and even to preserve bodies before burial.

Ice harvesting from local ponds was a significant wintertime business until refrigeration became more popular. Ice from New England was viewed as the purest and clearest available and was much sought after. Jar Brook, in East Holliston, was dammed at one end to create Houghton's Pond (behind today's Dunkin Donuts building). The Rossini family owned Rossini Brothers Ice Co. and were engaged in the labor intensive task of harvesting ice from that pond until the 1940's. In the late 1800's horse powered ice scrapers were used to clear the pond of snow, then the ice was scored into large grids by ice plows. Large custom made saws cut the ice into blocks (often 12 – 20 inches thick and over



100 pounds) and the blocks were split from the ice grid with a splitting bar. Workers with long picks or poles would grab the blocks and direct them into an open water channel where they were floated to a landing dock. The blocks were then hoisted with large metal gaffs to be brought into an ice house (a building specifically built with double walls 12-14 inches thick, filled with straw or sawdust between walls for insulation).

The ice was tightly packed in rows and columns, insulated with more sawdust which kept the ice frozen well into the summer months. Remains of the Rossini Brothers ice house is still visible at the edge of Houghton's pond. Ice delivery was a once a week occurrence throughout the year. Tito or Joseph Rossini would cut ice chunks to size for home delivery. Rossini customers were provided with a red sign to be placed in a front window and turned to indicate the amount of ice desired (15, 25, or 60 cents). Then one of the Rossini brothers would grab his ice tongs and, with a leather strap placed over his shoulder to distribute the weight, would deliver the desired sized block to your ice box. Local, personal service!

Some FUN FACTS:

- One individual block of ice could often weigh 300 pounds
- Queen Victoria purchased ice from Massachusetts in the 1840's
- 8% of all ice consumed in the United States in the 1880's was produced in and around Boston
- By 1899 , ice harvesting was the 9th largest industry in the United States
- Ice from New England was sold to customers in Europe, the West Indies, South America, India, and China.
- The first ice box itself was patented in 1850.

Compare all of this with the large, stainless steel, refrigerated wonders we are dependent upon today!

—*Joanne Brown*

(Much of the above information was gathered from a conversation with Joseph Rossini and from wlfarm.org)

In the photo at left, a pair of ice tongs sit atop the ice box along with a “block of ice” made from cardboard and shiny paper, all decorated for the holidays with evergreens.

A Tree for the Trail



The bow-making team: Melissa Ford, Joanne Hulbert, Jane Gilfoy, Joanne Brown, Ginny Bates, Tim Kelly and Sheila Adams. Missing from photo is Pat Pereira.



Vintage postcard ornaments

The Society was delighted to be invited by the Holliston Lions Club, along with other Town organizations, to decorate one of their lighted trees set up near the gazebo on the Rail Trail as part of “Lighting up Holliston” this year.

The Collections Committee created hand-made bows and vintage photographic views of Holliston to decorate the tree and we received a number of appreciative comments.

Thanks so much to everyone who worked on this project: Pat Pereira, Joanna Hilliard, Melissa Ford, Joanne Hulbert, Sheila Adams, Jane Gilfoy, Ginny Bates, and Joanne Brown.

It was lots of fun!

—*Nancy Lamb*



Joanna Hilliard, Pat Pereira, Tim Kelly, and Jane Gilfoy decorated the Society tree on a chilly afternoon in late November.

Notes From Holliston History

..... No Rail Roads, no Telegraph, Telephone, or automobiles. Travel was by Stage Coach, horseback or “go as you please.”

Liquors were to be obtained at all the hotels, taverns, and stores in the Town. Teaming was largely by Ox teams. In 1812-14, Esq. Nathaniel Johnson drove an express team from Boston to Philadelphia with four oxen, in employ of the government, taking about six weeks for the trip, but the close of the war ruined that industry.

Washington street from East Holliston Depot to the Sherborn willows was not then built, the thoroughfare to Boston passing over Whitney Street by way of South Sherborn and South Natick until 1829.

The old Meeting House stood on the corner of Hollis Street, nearly in front of the present Town Hall building.

Farming was the principal industry, the Shoe making business just coming to the front. Money was scarce, barter the principal method of trade, and yet these people were as happy and contented and enjoyed life as well as the over-worked City dwellers in the twentieth century.

Notes - circa 1916 - from a manuscript
by John Mason Batchelder, the first president
of the Holliston Historical Society.
Contributed by Joanne Hulbert.

HOME COURT ADVANTAGE - Dec 10, 1914

While looking through the news clippings in our library for a blizzard story for the Winter Newsletter, I noticed multiple stories ranging over a week about a men's basketball game between the Holliston Independents and Co. M of Milford that was played on Dec 10, 1914 at Holliston Town Hall. Since the person clipping the articles was from Holliston, only the articles for Holliston were saved. Some of the headlines and dates from the local Milford and Framingham papers:

Holliston vs Milford Series Starts Thursday - Holliston, Dec 4
Holliston is All Ready For Big Game With Co. M (Special to the Journal) – Holliston, Dec 7

Holliston Cocksure of Defeating Co. M - Holliston, Dec 8

Big Crowd Expected at Holliston Contest - Holliston, Dec 9

Holliston Expects that 600 Persons Will Attend Game (Special to the Journal) - Holliston Dec 9

All Holliston Enthused Over Game Thursday, Holliston, Dec 9

Managers in Big Row Before Big Game, Holliston, Dec 11

And after the big build up to the game:

Holliston Gets Jump

Beats Co. M Basketball Team - Holliston Dec 11

One of the papers devoted an almost full page special feature with a By-line

HOLLISTON INDS. DEFEATED SOLDIER BOYS WITH EASE

By Robert W. Lamb

(Is HHS member Greg Lamb related to this reporter?)

The Boston Celtics enjoyed a home court advantage when playing at home on the parquet floor of the old Boston Gardens. Appar-

ently Holliston did too when playing in the small court at Town Hall.

Some excerpts from Mr. Lamb's article:

"The Soldiers were outclassed from start to finish in the battle staged in Holliston Town Hall witnessed by nearly 700 persons from Holliston, Milford, Hopedale and South Framingham.

.....

Everything favored Holliston in the game. The size of the hall was in its favor as the five are accustomed to playing on a small court ... In the first stanza Milford attempted the passing game, but the hall was entirely too small. ... When a Milford player got the ball, he was sooner or later bumped against the crowd so passing was impossible. ... While four Holliston men remained on defense most of the time, Pond kept on the offense near the goal. While time and time again, Pond stood alone under the Milford goal, there to receive the sphere and hoop it with ease". (NOTE: The 3-second rule was introduced in 1936, so what Pond did was legal).

...

"The game was devoid of fine basketball playing. It reminded one more of a football contest, so massed were the players. ... The Holliston fans lost a fine opportunity to clean up a bunch of money. Before the game started there was at least \$100.00 of Milford coin which wasn't covered and bets were offered at 10 to 8 figure. ... it looks as if the home fans made a very bad mistake not taking these bets. "

FINAL SCORE 37-21. The Holliston roster: Pond, Sullivan, Brown, Leland, Herrick and Shea. (Do any current HHS members have family ties to the players, perhaps Mr. Herrick?)

I wonder how the articles written for the Milford residents described the game?

—Carol Kosicki

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