



WINCHESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BLACK HORSE BULLETIN

Volume 30, Number 1

January - March 2005

From the President

by Gail Sjo

We are off to a great start! This Fall the Society sponsored four distinctly different programs: Matthew Bronski's slide lecture on the evolution of baseball and baseball parks; a walking tour of the Medford Brook's Estate; an oral history night capturing the remembrances of Phyllis O'Neil Williams and John Williams; and Jeffrey Howe's slide lecture on house architecture, co-sponsored with Winchester Tomorrow.

One of the Board's goals is to provide programming that appeals to all segments of our membership, and we hope that one of these programs interested you enough to attend. But if not, help us by suggesting a topic, a speaker, or an historic place to visit.

(continued on page 2, President)

Massachusetts Historical Commission Awards MPPF Grant for the Sanborn House

by Carol Keller

This should be a happy holiday season for the Sanborn House. The Historical Society was just notified that the Society has been awarded a Massachusetts Preservation Projects Funds (MPPF) \$15,000 matching grant to hire a preservation architect to "accomplish a comprehensive survey of the Sanborn House addressing the development of exterior stabilization plans and interior rehabilitation design schemes."



View of Cambridge Street facade of the Sanborn House. Courtesy of Mark Flannery. Copyright © 2004 MarkFlannery.com.

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The Massachusetts Historical Commission annually awards these grants, and while all the details are not yet available, the Sanborn house joins other historic structures like Boston's Trinity Church, another grant receiver this year, and Ipswich's Castle Hill which received a grant last year. It offers validation of the importance of Winchester's own Sanborn House.

Thanks to all of the people who wrote supporting letters, to those at Town Hall who found needed documents and signed all the required pages, and to those who helped put together this very lengthy grant proposal. It is not common, it seems, for organizations to be awarded grants on their first application to the MA Historical Commission, so a great job was done by all these groups.

The lease for the Sanborn House was not presented at Fall Town Meeting due to the unusually large workload that prevented the Board of Selectmen, the School Committee, and Town Counsel from adequately reviewing and amending the lease. Town Meeting did, however, approve funds for "the cost of a feasibility study related to the Sanborn House" which the Selectmen did request. This, plus the above grant, is expected to enable site planning for the overall Sanborn property, a projected business plan for the Sanborn House, and the preservation architect's work to all be available before Spring Town Meeting.

A special holiday season could be followed by a very lively Spring at the Sanborn House!

(continued from page 1, President)

In addition, we can always use more help setting up programs, so get involved. Contact Carol Keller (tel: 781-721-4643; e-mail: kellerk@aol.com), who chairs our Program Committee. While I'm on the topic of volunteering, John Minniti, husband of new Board member, Laurie, heard that we needed help with the *Black Horse Bulletin* and volunteered. Due to John's initiative, creativity, and coordination, the *Bulletin* has a new format and the ambitious goal of publishing four times a year. I can't express how lucky we feel to have John step up and take over so seamlessly from Ellen Knight. A sincere thank you to John and my encouragement to keep sending those friendly "deadline reminders" to me and everyone else who is slow in writing their articles!

I'd also like to clarify some information about Society membership. For tax purposes, our calendar year runs from May 1st to April 30th. Every person/family on our mailing list is sent a membership renewal notice each Spring for dues for the upcoming year. Although we don't send reminder notices, we do not want to remove anyone's name from our list, so if you have questions about whether your membership is up-to-date for 2004-2005, please contact Paula Swartz (tel: 781-721-2138; e-mail: pkc.swartz@comcast.net).

Over the next few months, Paula will be using a computer program to transform our 10-inch thick pile of membership books into a database that allows us to communicate with all of you more easily, including sending tax receipts for donations ... but *not* selling (or giving away) your name or address to anyone.

Best wishes for a Happy and Healthy 2005.



September Program

Fenway Park, Ebbets Field and the American Ideal

by Matthew Bronski

On September 22, 2004, as pennant fever gripped Boston on the eve of the last regular season showdown between the Red Sox and Yankees at Fenway Park, Matthew Bronski gave a slide lecture at the Society's September meeting entitled *Fenway Park, Ebbets Field and the American Ideal: The Cultural Landscape of the Urban Major League Baseball Parks of 1909-1923*.



Ebbets Field, Brooklyn, New York, circa 1950; view of right field. Courtesy of Matthew Bronski.

The lecture examined the 14 major-league baseball parks constructed during the 1909-23 era, namely Wrigley Field and Old Comiskey Park in Chicago, Forbes Field in Pittsburgh, Shibe Park in Philadelphia, Tiger Stadium in Detroit, Crosley Field in Cincinnati, League Park in Cleveland, Griffith Stadium in Washington DC, Sportsman's Park in St. Louis, Yankee Stadium in The Bronx, The Polo Grounds in Manhattan, Ebbets Field in Brooklyn, and of course, Braves Field and Fenway Park in Boston.

(continued on page 3, Baseball)

In Our Own Words

by Marilyn Preston

On the evening of October 21, 2004, the Society presented the third in its "In Our Own Words" series.

Two life-long Winchester residents, Phyllis O'Neil Williams and John Williams, shared their memories of growing up in town in the 1940's and 1950's.

"Two life-long Winchester residents ... shared their memories of growing up in town in the 1940's and 1950's."

Their tales of school-year happenings from elementary through high school refreshed the memories of long-time residents and intrigued new residents, alike. Phyllis and John described:

- ❑ air raid drills, blackouts, and rationing during World War II
- ❑ bowling and going to the movies right here in downtown Winchester (located at the present day site of the Winchester Savings Bank)
- ❑ teen-year jobs at Brigham's and Filene's (located in the Locatelli Building at the time).

Phyllis talked about singing and dancing appearances in CYO, annual high school vaudeville, and, later, Winton Club shows; and John shared memories of hockey on Long Pond (in the Fells), and pick-up games in all sports at the various town fields long before organized youth leagues and play dates began to dominate youth activity.

As always, the enthusiastic audience was enthralled with their lessons in living history.

(continued from page 2, Baseball)

Ten of these ballparks were designed by the Osborne Engineering Co. of Cleveland, including both Fenway Park and Yankee Stadium.

Today these "classic era" ballparks are much beloved by the American public, and they have served as the inspiration for a whole new generation of neo-traditional urban ballparks that began in 1992 with the construction of Camden Yards in Baltimore.

To provide context for understanding these ballparks, Mr. Bronski discussed broader American cultural predilections of the 18th and 19th century that gave rise to and shaped both the game of baseball (from its origins in the early 1700's to its codification around 1860), and the origin and evolution of ballparks (from the early 1800's through present day, particularly through the 1909-1923 era).



A simple rural ball field (detail from Elysian Fields, Hoboken, New Jersey, 1865; Currier & Ives lithograph). Courtesy of Matthew Bronski.

Many were surprised to learn how the simple rural baseball field embodies the disposition of the American continent during the 18th and 19th centuries – both are small, precisely defined, and densely settled at their tip (dense northeast port cities in 18th-19th century America; and dense, precisely-defined home plate/infield area in baseball field), and both widen into an increasingly vast area of sparsely settled land as they extend out-

ward (dense port cities to rural farmland to untamed wilderness in 18th- and 19th-century America; and the infield to outfield to untamed land beyond at rural ball fields).

When the rural ball field was inserted into the dense urban fabric in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the ballparks were shaped and enriched by the constraints of the urban fabric, creating the eccentric angles, irregular dimensions, and varied outfield walls for which Fenway Park and the other parks of the 1909-1923 era are known.



Facade of Fenway Park, 1946. Courtesy of Matthew Bronski.

The resulting rich juxtaposition of a pastoral landscape (the field itself) with urban/industrial elements (dense urban setting, elaborate street facades, exposed steel trusses) places the ballparks of 1909-1923 in the select company of ideologically similar late-19th and early-20th century American planning and landscape designs such as Boston's Emerald Necklace and the other urban parks of Frederick Law Olmsted, planned suburbs such as Forest Hills Gardens, and planned industrial cities such as Chicago, Georgia.

And you thought Fenway Park was just a fun place to have a hot-dog and watch a game!

September Walking Tour

Medford's Brooks Estate

by Carol Keller

On September 26, 2004, members of the Society toured the Brooks Estate, located on Winchester's border with Medford and adjoining the Winchester Town Forest.

The tour included a nature/history walk through the woods and grounds lead by Audrey Stanwood, and a slide show presented by Tom Lincoln that featured photos taken by Sarah Lawrence Brooks in the 1880's, when the family occupied the estate as their summer home.

The Brooks family, one of Massachusetts' most prominent, settled in Medford in the late 17th century when the estate consisted of some 400 acres of woods and farm land. In 1880 Shepherd Brooks constructed his summer house based on a design by Pea-

body and Stearns. Holding a degree in architecture from Harvard, the estate became a large part of Shepherd's life work.

The City of Medford, which has owned the estate since 1942, passed a Conservation and Preservation Restriction permanently protecting the estate in 1998. As a result, restoration of the landscape and historic buildings is now underway.

Refreshments, and a tour of the Manor House and Carriage House completed the afternoon.



Society members enjoy the beauty and quiet of the Brooks Pond area on the walking tour the Brooks Estate. Courtesy of Carol Keller.



November Program

Victorian and Beyond: 19th Century Houses in and around Winchester

by Judy Thyson

On November 9, 2004, the Winchester Historical Society and Winchester Tomorrow combined forces to host a presentation at Temple Shir-Tikvah featuring Professor Jeffrey Howe. Gail Fenske of Winchester Tomorrow introduced Howe, a professor of art at Boston College, who has written two books about architecture (*Edvard Munch: Psyche, Symbol and Expression*, in 2001, and *Fernand Khnopff: Inner Visions and Landscapes* in 2004), as well as arranged exhibits at the beautiful McMullen Art Museum on Boston College's Chestnut Hill campus.

(continued on page 5, Victorian)

Society Publications

by Carol Keller

The following books, published by The Winchester Historical Society, are now available through the Society:

- ❑ *Children's History of Winchester*, by Mildred Allison (updated and edited by Ellen Knight)
- ❑ *Herbert Dudley Hale: French Method, Health Laws and Progressive Views on Education Contribute to a New Winchester High School*, by James Owen Ross.

The *Children's History of Winchester* was written to help 3rd grade teachers present the town's history and would make a great gift for any younger reader (or older reader who would like an easy-to-read overview of Winchester's history). The book was published by the Society thanks to grants from En Ka Society and the Massachusetts Historical Records Advisory Board. Copies are available for sale at Bookends or through the Society for \$9.95.

"The Children's History of Winchester ... would make a great gift for any younger reader (or older reader reader who would like an easy-to-read overview of Winchester's history."

Herbert Dudley Hale: French Method, Health Laws and Progressive Views on Education Contribute to a New Winchester High School is a pamphlet in "The Architects of Winchester" series that covers the history of Lincoln School. Published by the Society, it is a free benefit of Society membership; copies are being mailed to members.

Archival Center Makes Progress

by Nancy Schrock

Led by Randy Bairnsfather, volunteers Betsy Goeke, Diane Donovan, Sylvana Emprin, and Alice Fitzgerald have been cataloging collections in the Town Archival Center using procedures established as part of last Spring's grant from the Massachusetts Historic Records Advisory Board.

Instead of relying on the memory of volunteers or rummaging through files (which can cause damage and loss), researchers will soon be able to find what they need in *Past Perfect*, a database developed by the Association for State and Local History for organizations like ours. For example, users can now search the historic photographs collection (nineteenth century portrait photographs) by name of subject. The Society is eagerly awaiting the results of its application to the Winchester Cultural Council for funds for software to scan the photographs so pictures will also appear during a search.

The collections are already being put to use. The November/December *Bulletin* of the League of Women Voters of Winchester led with an article called "Roots," describing the early days of the League's predecessor, the Winchester Equal Suffrage League, founded in 1888. The research was made possible because of a finding aid created by Diane Donovan.

The Archival Center is located in Town Hall.
Hours of operation are:

- 1st Tuesday of month: 7:00 - 9:00 P.M.
- 2nd Thursday of month: 1:00 - 3:00 P.M.
- 3rd Thursday of month: 3:00 - 5:00 P.M.

All visitors must be supervised by one of the part-time volunteers who staff the Center. Patrons who cannot visit the Archival Center during its open hours may request individual appointments (tel: 781-721-7146; e-mail: archives@ci.winchester.ma.us); such appointments are made by individual volunteers at their discretion.

(continued from page 4, Victorian)

An audience of about 60 people had the opportunity to see the lovely interior space of the renovated temple, Winchester's newest historic building.

Winchester Historical Society member, Maureen Meister, gave an overview of the building: it started out in a downtown location near Book Ends and was later moved to its present site; it housed the Odd Fellows, the Knights of Columbus, the American Legion; and in more recent times has been both a two-family house and then apartment building. Maureen explained that the Arts and Crafts style of the building is reminiscent of Eastern European-style temples, which are commonly located in a neighborhood.

The presentation included many photos of 19th-century area homes which he compared to classic architectural styles that have had revivals over the past century. Winchester has many fine examples of these classical styles (Greek revival, Gothic, Italianate, Tudor, Spanish Eclectic, and Modern), as well as examples of newer architecture that use elements of these styles.

Professor Howe feels that there is a connection between the type of house one chooses to live in, which defines individual taste, and the style of our private lives: our homes not only fulfill our physical requirements, they embody our psychological and spiritual needs.



A Note from the Publisher

by John Minniti

Thank you, Ellen Knight, for your years of dedication as Editor and Publisher of the *Bulletin*! As I work on my first issue, I appreciate your effort all the more.

Little did I suspect when I offered to serve as publisher that Board members would be so willing to help ease the transition. If it weren't for their contributions (check the bylines), there would be no *Bulletin*. I thank them all for their helpfulness on my first issue.

So, here is *your* challenge: I would like to get contributions from anyone who cares about the history of our Town or has interesting historical tidbits to share. Here are the guidelines:

- we plan to publish the newsletter quarterly (January, April, July, and October); articles should be submitted to me (tel: 781-729-9328; e-mail: john.minniti@comcast.net) by the 1st of the preceding month

(e.g., by March 1st for the April issue)

- articles (preferably in electronic form – MSWord, Word Perfect, or simply a text file – but legibly handwritten is also acceptable) between 200 and 500 words in length (for reference, the Brooks Estate article is about 180 words and the baseball article is about 575)
- photos or illustrations (preferably in electronic form – jpg, gif, png, or tiff – but images that we can scan are also acceptable) at least 150 dpi, but 300 dpi or higher is better.

Simple, isn't it! I'll do my best to check the grammar, but even better, is there an Editor among you who would volunteer to help me?

In closing, please let us know what we can do to improve the *Bulletin*. This is your newsletter!

Notices and Upcoming Events

Board Meetings – Third Tuesday of the month (January 18 / February 15 / March 15, 2005): 7:30 P.M., Town Hall, Mystic Valley Room.

Programs – January 9, 2005, 3:00 P.M. - 5:00 P.M.: "Celebrate the New Year Party," Cyrus Dallin Art Museum, Jefferson Cutter House, Arlington (Members and guests only; watch for the invitation)..
February 2005: No program scheduled.
March 2005: The Clock Man (Date to be determined; watch for the meeting notice).

Help Wanted – The Society needs volunteers for the on-going oral history project. For more information, please contact one of the oral history coordinators: Marilyn Preston (tel: 781-729-2039) or Randy Bairnsfather (tel: 781-729-8539; e-mail: rmbairns@att.net).

The Annual House Tour is planned for May 2005, weather permitting. If you can help with this project, please contact Nancy O'Herron (tel: 781-446-7442).

Town Day is scheduled for June 2005. The Society, which sponsors the Historical Trolley Tours, will need volunteers to run the booth and assist people with tickets for the trolley.

Editor – to assist the Publisher with finalizing quarterly issues of the *Black Horse Bulletin*; please contact John Minniti (tel: 781-729-9328; e-mail: john.minniti@comcast.net.)

Plan Ahead – April 2005: Covered Dish Dinner (Date to be determined; watch for the invitation).

May 2005: Annual Meeting. Back by popular demand, Matthew Bronski will reprise his presentation entitled "The Cultural Landscape of the Urban Major League Baseball Parks of 1909-1923."



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