



WINCHESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BLACK HORSE BULLETIN

Volume 32, Number 1

January - March 2007

From the President

by Gail Sjo

Being on the Board of the Winchester Historical Society has always required officers and directors to generously volunteer their time and talents.

Now that we have the opportunity to transform the Sanborn House into an Historical and Cultural Center, the added responsibilities have dramatically increased the needed numbers of hours, skills, experience, and talents.

Fortunately our vision for the Sanborn House has attracted many new, energetic and hard working volunteers. The concrete accomplishments of the past year are remarkable, yet we know that to achieve our long term, ambitious vision, more is needed. With this in mind, the Board has embarked on a formal development

(continued on page 2, President)

Returning to His Roots

A Gift From the Past

by Cynthia Latta

One bright October afternoon I walked into the Sanborn House to see the message light flashing on our new telephone. Fully expecting it would be another call for the previous owner of the number, I pressed the "play" button anyway. To my surprise, the message was from Edward Downes of Weston who had heard about the restoration of the Sanborn House, had seen our new phone number, and said he had a photo of the family that he wanted to give us. I immediately returned his call, and arranged for him to give us a ring when the picture was ready. His nephew, Philip Downes, had the original and would make an enlargement for us.

A couple of weeks later, Mr. Downes called to say he had the picture and was bringing it over with his son, Bob. Where should they bring it? The Sanborn House seemed to be the logical place, so we agreed to meet there at three o'clock. I quickly called everyone I could think of who might be available and rounded up Tom Michalak and Gail Sjo.

The photo, now on display outside the music room, shows the entire Downes family in 1946. The four boys, Edward, Richard, Thomas and Philip, are all in uniform, all having served the United States in World War II and returned home safely. Their parents, Mary and James Edward Downes, and sister Rose are also in the photo, which was taken on the steps outside the front door.

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Directors (through May 2009)

Bob Colt	Patrick Hall
Nancy Kilker	Cynthia Latta
Marilyn Preston	Samuel Seidman

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Edward also brought some other memorabilia regarding the Downes & Reader Hardwood Co., Inc. and Edward's service in the army. (Downes & Reader was begun by Edward Downes and Rod Reader after the original Downes Lumber Company was sold.)

Mr. Downes willingly accepted our invitation to tour the house and reminisce. Unfortunately, we did not have enough warning to round up a tape recorder. However, he has more pictures and has expressed a willingness to return with enough notice to enable us to have the right equipment ready. What we do remember from the visit is that Mrs. Downes ran the family with a strict but loving hand. The library was filled with great books and comfortable leather chairs where Edward spent many happy

evening hours. Unlike the Sanborn children, who had their own dining room and staircase, the Downes children ate in the big dining room and used the main staircase. The wine cellar of the Sanborn days became a place to store apples – apples from their own trees. And unlike Mrs. Sanborn, who communicated with the hired help only via the intercom, Mrs. Downes went down to the kitchen to talk to the staff. There was a full-time staff of five – a cook and two maids who lived in, and a chauffeur and gardener who came during the day. The house itself was something of a hobby for the elder Mr. Downes, who took great pride in keeping it well maintained.

It is the hope of the Winchester Historical Society that within a few years the house will again look as it did when James Edward Downes was caring for it.



October Program

Introducing Robert Coit

by Ellen Spencer

On Tuesday evening, October 3, 2006, Ellen Spencer gave an illustrated lecture entitled "Robert Coit: Architect for Winchester" in the Winchester Room at Town Hall. The large audience included several Coit descendents who came from out of town to learn about their relative and his contributions to Winchester.

Ms. Spencer showed most of Coit's documented work in town as a way of discussing the architect's almost fifty-year career and his place in the Boston architectural scene during that time (1890-1942). She also discussed many residences that, although undocumented, are unmistakably by Coit. Finally, Ms. Spencer pointed out numerous architectural details, both exterior and interior, that are characteristic of Coit's designs.

Ms. Spencer has been doing research on Robert Coit in preparation for publication of the next

monograph in the Winchester Historical Society's *The Architects of Winchester* series.



Example of Robert Coit-designed house in Winchester, Massachusetts.

(continued from page 1, President)

process. The goal is straight forward – we want to improve how the Board is structured and functions while adding members who bring the expertise and skills we need to move forward.

Before February, we plan to clarify and rewrite officer and director roles and responsibilities, overhaul and rationalize our committee structure, assess current officer and director expertise and skills, and begin recruiting additional Board members to strengthen areas of weakness.

To help meet this aggressive timetable, we are using an external consultant to guide our efforts, one who has years of experience in working with nonprofit boards on both development and fundraising. And what a help this has been already – having an outsider to discuss ideas with, provide feedback, and share "best practices" used by similar organizations is allowing us to accomplish these critical tasks. Change is not simple or tidy, but due to the ongoing commitment of our volunteers, the Historical Society seems poised to rise to the challenges we have set for ourselves.

To give us a chance to recognize all of these hardworking individuals, the officers will be hosting a "Volunteer Thank You" Party in February, an event we hope will become a wonderful annual tradition.

I will tell you about our progress in the next edition of the *Black Horse Bulletin* and welcome hearing from any of you who have questions, ideas, or want to know more about Board and other volunteer opportunities.



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Bookends



Welcome

by Nancy Kilker

We welcome the following new members to the Winchester Historical Society:

Jennifer and Kip Adams
 Carol Backs and Josh Kapp
 Laura and Michael Bailey
 Barbara Clarke and John Capeci
 Edward Downes
 Marjorie and David Estridge
 Maurine and Gary Gilbert
 Elizabeth and Robert Goeke
 Jane Graham
 The Hoyt Family
 Anne and William McCarron
 Anthony Menounos
 Joyce Mills
 Ann and Donald Muir
 Deirdre O'Connor
 Tim and James Sheehy
 Rachel and Keith Whitehouse
 Margaret Wiseman

If you need a Winchester Historical Society membership application or have membership questions, please contact Nancy Kilker (e-mail: phadas@comcast.net) or see the Society Web Site.



From the Archives

by Nancy Schrock and
 Randy Bairnsfather

The Archival Center has received a donation of 39 cassette tapes from the library. The tapes include oral histories of Winchester residents and discussions of town issues such as the debate about building the current high school. All of the tapes need to be transcribed. We need volunteers to do this so we can make the transcriptions public.

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), which are set by individual volunteers at their discretion.

WINCHESTER

OUR OFFICE IN POST OFFICE BLOCK is open every week day from 8 A. M. to 6 P. M., also Saturday evenings 7 to 9. A touring car is always on hand ready to show prospective customers our large list of properties offered for sale in this town. Included in this list are homes of moderate prices offered at \$3000 and upward, and many new attractive cement and shingle houses ranging in price from \$10,000 to \$17,000. If possible appointments should be made in advance. Telephone Winchester 502-1 or 264-6.

SHEFFIELD ROAD

Modern house of 12 rooms and bath; hot water and hot air heat; all hardwood floors, modern cooking conveniences. Exceptional closet room, awnings throughout; beautiful shrubs nearly 20,000 sq. ft. land. Price \$16,500.

WEST SIDE BARGAIN

House of 12 rooms and tile bath. Steam heat and electric and gas lighting, 3 open fire-places, oak floors. Laundry and toilet in the basement, 18,000 sq. ft. land, select neighborhood. Price \$11,500, \$3,000 cash.

WEDGEMERE

A modern house just completed, having all those features that are generally demanded in a new house, that is, hot water heat, large living-room, mahogany finish, den or smoking room and lavatory on the first floor. Exceptionally convenient and attractive kitchen. Four good chambers and large modern bath room on the second floor, 2 chambers and trunk room on the 3rd floor. Laundry and toilet in the basement, 8600 sq. ft. land. Near to trolleys and trains. Price \$8,800, \$2,000 cash.

EAST SIDE BEAUTY

Natural stained shingled house of 8 rooms and modern bath, furnace heat, electric lights and hardwood floors. Gas and coal ranges, gas water heater. 4300 sq. ft. land, ideal location. 5 minutes to everything. Price \$7,000 one half cash.

EDWARD T. HARRINGTON CO., 4 Common St.

WINCHESTER

Transcribed copy of real estate advertisement found at the Archival Center in the October 20, 1911, issue of the Winchester Star. Do you recognize any of these houses? Perhaps yours is included.

Chimneys and More

by Cynthia Latta, Chair, Building and Grounds Work Group

Everyone who has worked on an old house knows that sometimes things look worse before they look better. The Sanborn House is no exception. The big project for the fall was the reconstruction of all three chimneys, a job involving heavy equipment, staging, tons of materials, and more tons of detritus. But the work is now complete and cleanup underway.

The work was done by LAL Masonry of Saugus and paid for with funds appropriated by Town Meeting for stabilization of the exterior of the house. The initial idea was that the Town would pay for some of the painting, but practical considerations forced a change of plan. The restoration painters who looked at the job would only work on a time and materials basis – who could say how many hours it would take to remove the old paint – but the Town can contract only on a fixed price basis for a clearly defined scope of work. So the Town agreed to do the chimneys in lieu of the painting since the chimney job could be narrowly defined.

The new chimneys have the same profiles as the old ones, and are as close as possible to the originals in color and texture of the brick and mortar. When the masons began taking the old chimneys down, they found three flues in a chimney that seemed to serve only the furnace and one fireplace, creating something of a puzzle until we learned that the house originally had two coal furnaces. (Today, one oil furnace serves the entire house.) Unfortunately, the chimney serving the fireplaces in the oak room, library, and master bedroom is not functional. When it collapsed (some time ago of its own accord), the bricks and mortar fell inward, blocking the flues. Clearing and repairing the flues did not seem to be a cost-effective use of scarce funds, since safety concerns would probably prevent usage of the fireplaces in any case.

The Town also paid for installation of the exterior security lights which now illuminate the base of the building and the veranda at night. Nardone Electric did the actual installation. All the light has been

directed downward, except on the veranda where the ceiling prevents light from escaping into the night sky.

The Historical Society has begun the work of repairing the exterior wood trim. The first project was the water table (the trim boards just above the foundation). That job was completed by Matthew Morabito, a graduate of the North Bennet Street School preservation carpentry program. The next exterior task will be the column bases. The immediate need, though, is for the fire protection system. Until that is installed, we cannot hold events for the public unless we have a fire detail on the premises.

Inside, Jim Obbard has been patching the interior holes left by the removal of the air conditioners. Actually, it would be more accurate to say he is rebuilding the walls where the studding and plaster were removed to accommodate the machines. Peter Engeldrum has been busy adjusting doors so they open and close easily and is working with Meg White in the Town engineer's office to find a lasting fix to the problem of roof leaks at the corners of the balustrades.

Other volunteers are installing interior plastic storm windows in the rooms with painted woodwork. It was decided not to risk damaging the natural woodwork in the dining room, oak room, and library even for the worthy cause of cutting down on drafts.

If you are in the neighborhood of the Sanborn House and see a car parked there, stop in, sign the guest book, and take a look around to see how much has been accomplished.



November Program

Savoring Soda Fountain History

by Dinah Voorhies

On Wednesday, November 29, lecturer Dee Morris delighted several dozen history buffs with an illustrated talk on the 19th century rise and 20th century demise of the elegant soda fountain. Not surprisingly, the business saga and success of the two entrepreneurs behind the industry, James W. Tufts and Alvin Puffer, have many contemporary elements and would be worthy of a Harvard Business School case study.

As with most business ventures, a combination of talents was critical. Alvin Puffer (b. 1819 in Stow, MA) contributed the skills of a blacksmith, plumber,

brass founder, and general mechanical genius. His own early success in constructing soda fountains in

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the 1850s and 1860s brought him enough wealth and property that his second marriage in 1862 involved a pre-nuptial agreement!



Dee Morris answers questions during her presentation on the soda fountain industry led by Alvin Puffer and James W. Tufts.

James W. Tufts (b. 1835 in Charlestown, MA) worked in a drugstore, sold his own brand of lozenges during the Civil War, and by 1867 was able to open a lavishly appointed drugstore in the heart of Boston near the Union Oyster House. It was one of several that he owned, and in his Medford store he installed a soda fountain, where he came to know Alvin Puffer. (Both men lived in Somerville for a time, but ended up living in Medford, where they both built stately mansions.)

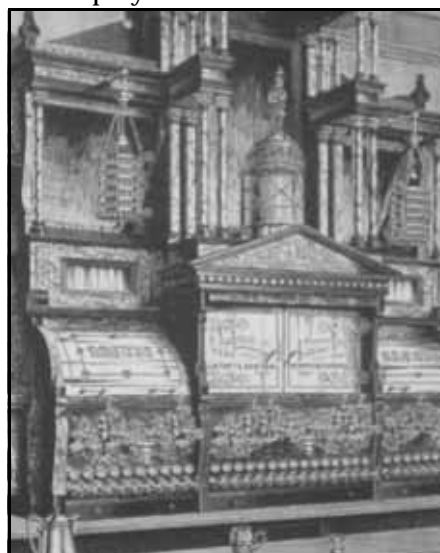
The product that brought together the talents of a mechanic and a drugstore owner relied on a third person as well. John Matthews, Englishman turned American, paved the way for the soda fountain by coming up with a reliable method for creating carbonated water. In his process, sulfuric acid was blown over marble chips, and water was filled with the resulting carbolic acid. (Working on the lower East Side in New York, one of his best business coups was contracting for the waste marble from the construction of St. Patrick's Cathedral.)

In 1876 Tufts took a major financial risk. He raised \$50,000 to construct a three-story glass building at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition and set up the most magnificent soda fountain seen to date. The summer was hot, thirsty crowds streamed in, and it was a huge success. His "Arctic soda" fountains continued to be featured at expositions, and sales boomed. Trade cards sporting fashionably dressed polar bears reminded the public of the cooling properties of soda water, while "Tufts Torrid

Fountain" could provide it heated, for cold weather. In 1895 Tufts, together with Puffer, Matthew's son, and a Mr. Lippincott from Philadelphia, formed the American Soda Fountain Company.

As Ms. Morris pointed out, the company sold more than just a beverage or machinery. The soda fountain manufacturers had a complete vision of the experience their customers should have, and realized that they were selling what we would now call ambiance. Morris commented that just as Starbucks differentiates itself from the quick pick-up cup of coffee, so a visit to a soda fountain was meant to be a very special experience, complete with beautiful equipment ornamented in the most fashionable styles, fresh flowers, and a spotless environment. Glasses were cleaned in front of the customer using a device such as "The Maelstrom" glass washer, and employees were chosen for their intelligence and trained to pour drinks from impressive heights, "cascade" style. Favored by Temperance Movement leaders and followers, the soda fountain, its makers instructed, should only be tended by those who had taken The Pledge. (Considering the early behind-the-scenes process of carbonation, one can see an extra reason why!)

Care of their workers seems to have also been important to Puffer and Tufts. Benefits included a profit-sharing plan, there were advancement opportunities within the company, and unions were kept at bay by offering a 59-hour wage for 55 hours of work. When Tufts felt that his health required him to withdraw from the business, he founded Pinehurst in North Carolina. First a convalescent home, now the world-famous resort, it was a place to which he invited older employees for care and rest.



When soda fountains were all the rage. In the 1800's, they made a statement.

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(continued from page 5 Soda Fountains)

The manufacturing of soda fountains came to Winchester in 1908 when Alvin Puffer's son Luther opened a factory for "soda water apparatus and carbonators" near the current site of the transfer station. But the true heyday of the soda fountain would soon pass, as the lure of moving pictures, the interruption of World War I, and the arrival of other social venues such as the country club and the cocktail party came along. Glorious machinery with names such as "The Saratoga," "The Egyptian," "The Commonwealth," and the room-sized "Clarendon" became dinosaurs and rapidly vanished.

The talk concluded with some local reminiscences and connections. Marilyn Preston recalled her grandfather's days as a tinsmith at the Puffer factory and visits to him at lunch hour. Descendant Sheila Puffer spoke of the family's and her own connection with Canada, stemming from Royalist migration, and marveled that without having any prior idea of the Winchester connection she had ended up living in a place that her ancestors had called home. Afterward, in the Town Hall lobby, under the marble eye of Colonel Winchester wearing his holiday hat, the thirsty listeners enjoyed root beer floats, lime rickeys and cherry cokes.



High Society on Myopia Hill

Mrs. Sanborn Heads Horse Show Committee

by Ellen Knight

Seventy years ago, on June 6, 1936, the Winchester Horse Show was one of the year's social highlights. People came from near and far to attend, with box holders including Sir Graham and Lady Sinclair Lockhart, the Count and Countess de Mendos, and other members of what was called "the horsey set."

The show was a benefit for Winchester Hospital. The committee was chaired by Mrs. Oren Cheney Sanborn, 11 years after the Sanborn family left the Sanborn House. She was assisted by daughter Helen Sanborn Ralls and others, "the same committee that for so many years has, by its earnest efforts and real hard work, maintained the entire operating rooms and contingent suites at the Winchester Hospital."

Helen Ralls's name was also included among the list of those with entries, suggesting to the imagination that she rode out from the Sanborn Carriage House when the family still lived in Winchester.

Grounds for the show were specially constructed at the Winchester Country Club. According to the newspaper report of June 12, the location was "at the old farm well above the country club links, commanding an excellent view of the lakes and the wooded highlands to the eastward.... The outside course provided natural brush, bar, ditch, and stone-wall jumps, which is unusual."

Reportedly, the "country club setting delighted competitors and gallery." It has, of course, long since passed into history.

**THE STAFF OF THE BLACK HORSE BULLETIN
WISHES YOU ALL
A SAFE AND HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

**WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU AT
WINCHESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY PROGRAMS
THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.**

Winchester Historical Society Publications

Please use this order form to purchase copies of Society publications. For descriptions and non-member pricing, see the Society web site (www.winchesterhistoricalsociety.org). Send the completed form, together with a check for the total amount, to the Winchester Historical Society, PO Box 127, Winchester, MA 01890-0127, Attention: Book Sales Department.

	Title	Member Price	No. of Copies	Cost
BOOKS	<i>A Children's History of Winchester, Massachusetts</i> by Mildred Allison; updated by Ellen Knight	\$9.95	_____	\$_____
	<i>Winchester, Massachusetts, The Architectural Heritage of a Victorian Town</i>	\$15.00	_____	\$_____
	<i>Artists of Winchester, 1850-1950</i> by Ellen Knight	\$6.00	_____	\$_____
PAMPHLETS	<i>Winchester High School, Winchester Junior High School, McCall Junior High School, Lincoln Elementary School, a Centennial History, 1904-2004</i> by Ellen Knight	Free	_____	
	<i>The Architects of Winchester, Massachusetts</i> (edited by Maureen Meister):			
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MAPS / NOTEPADS	<i>1854 Map of Winchester (27" x 20")</i>	\$15.00	_____	\$_____
	<i>1875 Map of Winchester (17" x 11")</i>	\$2.00	_____	\$_____
	<i>1886 Map of Winchester (28 ½" x 22")</i>	\$15.00	_____	\$_____
	<i>1889 Map of Winchester (29" x 19")</i>	\$15.00	_____	\$_____
	<i>1941 Ernest Dudley Chase Pictorial Map of Winchester</i>	\$15.00	_____	\$_____
	Notepads - small (4 ½" x 5 ¼") (multiple designs): specify design (see web site): _____	\$2.50 per pad	_____	\$_____
Notepads - large (5" x 7") (multiple designs): specify design (see web site): _____	\$3.25 per pad	_____	\$_____	
Shipping and Handling:				\$3.00
TOTAL:				\$_____

Notices and Upcoming Events

Meetings – Board Meetings – Third Tuesday of the month (January 16 / February 20 / March 20, 2007): 7:30 P.M., in the Music Room, Sanborn House (15 High Street).

Programs – January 7, 2007, 3:00-5:00 P.M.: “Celebrate-the New-Year” Party; Whittemore-Robbins House, Arlington, Massachusetts (members and their guests only).

February: “Volunteer Thank You” Party; watch for the meeting notice.

March: Date and agenda to be determined; watch for the announcement.

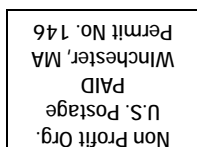
Help Wanted – The Historical Society needs:

- Volunteer Coordinator (up to 10 hours per month)
- Marketing/PR Writer (approximately 8 hours per month)

For more information, see the October - December, 2006 issue of the *Black Horse Bulletin* (available on the Historical Society Web Site) for details, or contact Gail Sjo (tel: 781-729-6560; e-mail: sjogail@aol.com) or Carol Keller (tel: 781-721-4643; e-mail: kellerck@aol.com)

The *Black Horse Bulletin* needs volunteers to write articles about Winchester’s history. If you would like to see your bylined article in print, please contact John Minniti (e-mail: john.minniti@verizon.net), Charles Harris (e-mail: charleyharris@yahoo.com), or Cynthia Latta (e-mail: cynthia@chickadee.us), or call the Winchester Historical Society (tel: 781-721-0135).

The Town Archival Center needs volunteers to scan and catalog its postcard collection and transcribe tapes. If you can spare a few hours, please contact the Society volunteers who operate the Center (tel: 781-721-7146; e-mail: archives@ci.winchester.ma.us), or call the Winchester Historical Society (tel: 781-721-0135).



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