



# WINCHESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## BLACK HORSE BULLETIN

Volume 31, Number 3

July - September 2006

### From the President

*by Gail Sjo*

If you read through the list of Directors on the bottom of this page, you will see three totally new names and one relatively new one. During my 10 years on the Board of the Society, this represents not only the largest number of new members elected in one year, but a significant step in our strategy to grow and strengthen the governance of the Society. Please join me in giving a most grateful and enthusiastic welcome to these four talented and impressive volunteers:

- Patrick Hall, partner, Hall and Sullivan, is an attorney who has been practicing in Winchester for twenty-five years. He has had significant leadership roles with the Chamber of Commerce, Winchester Sports Foundation, Fourth Middlesex Bar Association,

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### Capturing Memories of the Last Century

*by Susan Keats*

Oral history is a relatively new discipline, popularized by the invention of the tape recorder. The first formal instruction in the subject was offered by Allan Nevins at Columbia University in the 1940s. But the concept is not new. Over the centuries, many societies and individuals have relied on the spoken word to pass their experiences from one generation to the next.

The Winchester Historical Society began its oral history project in 1980 with a small group of people trained in interviewing techniques. Herb Edmunds, Randy Bairnsfather, Florence Hritsay and I captured memories of about 20 people whose lives spanned most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These individuals represented many families memorialized in the names of streets and schools – such as Simonds, Parkhurst, Thompson, Sanborn, and Mason. That program ended in 1982 when the limitations of Proposition 2½ eliminated funding for the Town



*Dick and Dot Santos, long-time Winchester residents, present readings from the Society's oral history collection.*

Archivist. Over the past 10 years, however, stalwart souls Randy and Florence have rekindled the effort and added another 10 people to the collection of narrators.

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Sanborn House Web Site: [www.sanbornhouse.us](http://www.sanbornhouse.us)

#### Officers and Directors 2006 - 2007

President	Gail Sjo
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Laurie Minniti	Judy Thyson
Jean Twitchell	

#### Directors (through May 2008)

Thomas Michalak	David Stirling
Paula Swartz	

#### Directors (through May 2009)

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

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The charm of oral history is that it brings to life details of a time gone by. The listener learns about people, places and events he never had the opportunity to see and know, such as the relocation of the Aberjona River from one side of Mystic Valley Parkway to the other, or the trolley line that ran up Church Street on its way from Stoneham to Arlington.

These details were described in the Historical Society's second oral history program held April 5<sup>th</sup> at the Town Hall and attended by nearly 70 people. This program, like the first, featured Dick and Dot Santos, experienced actors and long-time Winchester residents, in the roles of the interviewees. The four histories chosen for the evening were those of Lesley Wilcox, Edna Hatch, Malcolm Masters and Robert Sanborn. Each offered a unique perspective on life in Winchester in the 20<sup>th</sup> century; each also recalled people and events associated with the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**Lesley Wilcox** was interviewed in 1981 at her family home on Calumet Road when she was 81 years old. Florence Hritsay conducted the interview. Dot Santos and Randy played the parts of Lesley and Florence, respectively.

Leslie (Brown) Wilcox led a distinguished life and was one of Winchester's Grand Old Dames when she died in her 101<sup>st</sup> year. In the interview, she conjured up images from her early days and shared dozens of interesting details. Her great grandfather was David Nelson Skillings, whose vision and backing created Rangeley, a 19<sup>th</sup> century planned development within the town. Lesley recalled living in Rangeley, her schooling, traveling to Boston, and being an early college graduate. She talked of the changes in the community as she grew up, married, and raised a family here.

She and her husband were active in their church, the community theater and the historical society.

**Edna Hatch** was interviewed in 1981 at her home at Country Club Heights in Woburn when she was 89 years old. Susan Keats conducted the original interview and played herself. Dot Santos played the part of Edna.

Miss Hatch was born and raised in Maine and attended the Farmington Maine State Normal School where she prepared as a teacher. She taught briefly in Sanford, Maine, before coming to Winchester in 1915. She was hired to teach at the Washington School, then a four-room wooden building on Cross Street. After only a year she swapped jobs with the principal, who suffered from ill health. Miss Hatch stayed at Washington School until 1928, long enough to move with the school to Highland Avenue. The interview is rich in descriptions of how she dealt with children and male teachers as they began to populate the workforce, and how she became an art teacher, eventually ending up at the junior high school where she started the art department. Her career spanned 42 years in the Winchester school system. Her memories and comments provided a colorful look into those early days and captured a profile of a dedicated, creative, and independent woman who influenced many lives in town.

**Malcolm Masters** was interviewed in 1981 when he was 71 years old. Florence Hritsay was the original interviewer; Dick Santos and Susan Keats played the parts for the recreation.

Malcolm Masters was born in Winchester and spent his early years on Fenwick Road. He attended the Mystic School, then a little two room structure on Bacon Street. Though the school

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and the Mary Murphy Foundation. Patrick and his wife, Janet, have two children who have been educated in the Winchester public school system. Patrick likes history and especially the local kind, saying, "I have an active interest in events as they have occurred in this very place where I live and work each day." Patrick's legal expertise will be a tremendous asset to the Board as we begin our long-term Sanborn House lease.

- Nancy Kilker, the newest addition and computer/database wizard of the Membership Committee, works full time at BTU Ventures in Waltham. In addition to the Society, Nancy volunteers at Winchester Hospital and the Jenks Senior Center. Nancy is a long-time Society member whose interests include gardening, reading, traveling, and her family. The mother of three, step-mother of two, and grandmother of four is married to Wayne, who works at Shaw-Stone & Webster, and who leaves for a year-long assignment in Korea in June.
- Cynthia Latta, 35-year resident of Winchester, recently retired from Global Insight, an economic forecasting and consulting firm, where she was the director of the U.S. economic service. As an empty-nester, Cynthia joined the Finance Committee, serving 8 years, two as chairman, then moved on to the Educational Facilities Planning & Building Committee (EFPBC), the committee responsible for school buildings. Cynthia credits her involvement in the new Ambrose with piquing her interest in the Sanborn House and Historical Society

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(continued from page 2, President)

activities. Cynthia's hobbies include ice skating, hiking and bird watching. She says her first house in town was of the same vintage, but had less grandeur than the Sanborn House. Her love and knowledge of old homes is apparent as Cynthia is the driving force behind the Sanborn Building and Grounds Workgroup.

- Thomas Michalak, who was first appointed to fill a vacant Board position this past fall, wasted no time, jumping right in as the leader of the Sanborn Fundraising Workgroup. Tom recently retired from Harvard where he founded the Open Collections Program (<http://ocp.hul.harvard.edu>) dedicated to creating digital library collections from across the Harvard Libraries. He previously served as the Director of Baker Library at the Harvard Business School. Working in libraries has turned Tom and his wife Jo-Ann, Director of the Tisch Library at Tufts University, into collectors of "lots of stuff." Fourteen-year residents of Winchester, Tom and Jo-Ann have brightened Winchester with the creation of extensive gardens around their Glengarry home.

This promises to be an exciting year for the Society, and I'm sure you share my enthusiasm about the strengths they bring to the Society. Please join me in welcoming them to the Board.



### Corporate Sponsors

Hall & Sullivan, Attorneys at Law  
Mary McKenna and Associates, Inc.  
Children's Own School

(continued from page 2, April Program)

is now a private home, it still shows some vestiges of the early school building. Malcolm remembered how the children from the West Side Hill came to school by way of a "barge" as they called it, an old truck used as a school bus. He took up canoeing while in the Boy Scouts and reminisced about paddling on the Aberjona, listening to the band at the summer concerts, and going down to the Mystic Lake to swim. In Masters' day, the Aberjona was on the east side of the current Mystic Valley Parkway, close to Manchester Field, where the bandstand stood. Masters moved away, attended college and married, but eventually returned to raise a family in Winchester. Upon his return, Malcolm Masters gave back to the community, becoming an active member of the Conservation Commission and later, a member of the Council on Aging.

**Robert Sanborn** was interviewed in 1981 by Randy Bairnsfather. He was 76 at the time. Dick Santos and Randy played the parts for this interview.

Bob Sanborn was born in the house in which he was interviewed, on Black Horse Terrace. His father was from Boston, his mother from Woburn. They lived in Boston, but summered in Winchester, a common arrangement for the well-to-do in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Many summer folk ended up making Winchester their permanent home. Bob married (literally) the girl next door, Mary (Suzi) Cutter, who sat in on the original interview. Together, they provided detailed descriptions of the land around Black Horse Terrace, passed along their parents' memories of the Black Horse Tavern, which was torn down in 1900, and reminisced about the Prince, Gifford, and Wadleigh schools, none of which is still in existence. Bob and Suzi were also active members of the Winchester community, involved in the historical society, church, and other philanthropic activities in the town.



Annual Meeting

## State of the Society and John Kutts, Too

by John Minniti

On May 17th, 50 members and friends of the Winchester Historical Society met in Hadley Hall at The Parish of the Epiphany to hear about the state of the society, elect new officers, and listen to Roger Reed's informative presentation about the Robert Bacon House on Mystic Valley Parkway.

President Gail Sjo recapped a successful year of programs, both public and private:

- Winchester's Growth: The Impact of the Railroad 1820 to 1890, by Bill O'Connor.
- Architecture of Winchester's Homes, by John McConnell.
- Winchester's Robert Bacon House and the Architectural Profession in 1830, by Roger G. Reed.

- In Their Own Words, oral history readings by Dot and Dick Santos.

- New Year Celebration at the recently restored Lexington Depot.

- Spring Reception at the Sanborn House.

She summarized the events surrounding the Society's lease of the Sanborn House, including:

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- ❑ Approval by Town Meeting of the long-term lease (50 years, with an option for two 25-year extensions).
- ❑ Signing the lease with the Board of Selectmen.
- ❑ Formation of Sanborn workgroups, including publicity, building and grounds, finance, fundraising, legal, business development, and Internet presence.
- ❑ Introduction of the Sanborn Reborn logo.
- ❑ Spring Cleanup Day.
- ❑ Boston Architectural Center program (BAC used the Sanborn House for design projects).
- ❑ Establishment of the Society office at the Sanborn House.



Roger G. Reed, author of three articles in the Architects of Winchester series, describes the contributions of Robert Kutts, including Winchester's Robert Bacon house.

On the digital front, Gail mentioned the society-sponsored web sites (see the masthead on page 1) and reported that the 362 member addresses have been entered into the new computerized data base.

The fiscal year has been changed from May-April to January-December to facilitate reporting to the Commonwealth and the IRS. As of December 31, 2005, the Society had assets valued at \$27,180; the first annual appeal realized generous contributions from 84 members totaling \$5,670.

She also reported that during the first fiscal quarter of 2006, the Board of Directors and members of the Sanborn working groups had contributed and pledged a total of \$73,175 to offset initial expenses associated with the restoration of the now renamed Sanborn House Historical and Cultural Center.

The final business item was the election of Patrick Hall, Nancy Kilker, and Cynthia Latta to the Board of Directors, and the election of Beverly Treen as Secretary.

Following the business meeting, Roger G. Reed, preservation planner, architectural historian, and author of the Society's recently published *Robert Kutts: Rare Drawings and Records for an 1830 House*, traced Kutts' time as an architect in Boston, and his role in designing the Robert Bacon House on Mystic Valley Parkway.

Some of the interesting facts about Kutts included:

- ❑ Kutts was one of a small group of men listed in Boston city directories between 1828 and 1838 who advertised themselves as "architects," a newly emerging profession in the United States at the time.
- ❑ Little is known about any of the early architects, but architectural drawings of the Bacon house exist enabling Reed to conduct his research.
- ❑ Kutts was known to have designed at least one store and some houses in Boston; one other structure, on Beacon Hill, survives.
- ❑ After leaving Boston around 1840, Kutts submitted proposals for the design of buildings in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Columbus, Ohio. He did not win any of the contracts.

(continued on page 5, Annual Meeting)



## Welcome

by Nancy Kilker & Dinah Voorhies

We welcome the following members who have joined the Winchester Historical Society recently:

Tom and Gina Mahoney

Sean Rynne

Elizabeth and Ahmed Ghoniem

The Hale Family

Paul Pinella

If you need a Winchester Historical Society membership application or have membership questions, please contact Nancy Kilker (e-mail: phadas@comcast.net) or Dinah Voorhies (e-mail: dinah@rcn.com; tel: 781-526-8058), or see the Society Web Site.



## Thanks for Your Generous Response

by Nancy Schrock

The Society extends a "thank you" to those who have donated services, furniture, and supplies to the Sanborn House Historical and Cultural Center:

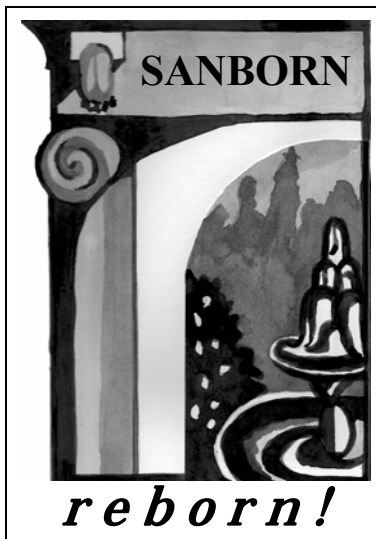
- ❑ Sam Seidman – for five oak desks and chairs for the office, as well as a stove.
- ❑ George Nowell – for delivering the desks and chairs to the Sanborn House.
- ❑ Celena Bradley – for an antique horsehair sofa and folding table for the library.
- ❑ Nancy Schrock – for a Hobo Datalogger and software to record temperature and relative humidity of the storage areas.
- ❑ Gaylord Brothers – for a large number of archival storage boxes for textiles and documents.

## Thanks to Sanborn House Cleanup Volunteers

by Cynthia Latta

On April 22, the Sanborn Reborn! Building and Grounds committee ran its first general cleanup day at the Sanborn House Historical and Cultural Center. The Society wishes to thank the following volunteers who gave so generously of their time and talent to help the Society prepare the building for its Annual Potluck (see "Time to Celebrate!" on page 6):

Paula Swartz  
Ed Davis  
Cynthia Latta  
Courtenay Williams  
Nancy Schrock  
Richard Schrock  
Carol Keller  
Peter Engeldrum  
Sean Rynne  
Selina Woods  
Evelyn Trageser  
David Stirling  
Hodges Family:  
Rhonda, Jerry, Henry, Ben,  
and Ellen  
Tom Sevigny  
Tom Accardo  
Karen Fullerton  
Fred Yen  
Dan Pennachio  
Bill Swanton  
John Delurey  
Brendan Pulsifer  
Peter Pulsifer  
Ron Castignetti  
Wayne Kilker  
Bradley Ross



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- ❑ Although he never became a leading architect of the period, there is documentation that suggests he was relatively successful.
- ❑ He died in Philadelphia in 1860, having contracted scarlet fever.

As for the Robert Bacon house, Reed pointed out that Bacon bought the land, adjacent to both the Middlesex Canal and the Lowell Railroad. A successful merchant, Bacon controlled two patents for manufacturing felt used to produce hats.

He bought the property from John Symmes. The project included a factory building and

other housing units. Its access to both the canal and railroad assured Bacon's success as a businessman.

According to Margaret "Margie" Colony, who owned the home with her husband for much of the latter part of the last century, there have been four owners since Bacon built the original home.

An early example of the country houses being built during the 1830's, when Greek Revival was taking over from the Federal style, the Robert Bacon house is a Winchester treasure that is enjoyed by all the people who attended the meeting and, indeed, the entire community.



Sanborn Cleanup

## Sanborn Reborn: A Progress Report

by Cynthia Latta

Although not visible to the casual observer, the Sanborn House is slowly coming back to life. Old carpets have been ripped up, loads of trash removed, bathrooms cleaned, broken windows repaired, most of the first floor woodwork and windows washed, light fixtures cleaned, burned-out bulbs replaced (many with new energy efficient bulbs), and sealed interior doors re-opened. By the end of June, the security system required to allow removal of the boards should be installed. Grading around the foundation should be complete and replacement of the water table boards underway. Depending on work schedules, the air conditioners protruding from the second-floor walls may also have been removed and the holes repaired. Stripping and priming of the exterior wood trim should follow. This work will go a long way toward restoring the "curb appeal" of the house. One other important change, replacing the existing front door with a replica of the original French doors, may take a bit longer but is on the priority schedule.

Inside, the Historical Society has set up an office on the second floor and is collecting the records and materials that have been scattered around various members' basements and attics. Office furniture was provided by Sam Seidman, who also donated a stove for the first-floor kitchen. A period sofa, courtesy of Celina Bradley, graces the library. For a list of contributions received so far, see "Thanks for Your Generous Response" on page 4.

All this has been accomplished by the Building and Grounds Work Group, assisted by a bevy of volunteers (see "Thanks to Sanborn House Cleanup Volunteers" on page 5) who came out on April 22 to scrub, grub, and lug. Thanks to all the volunteers, we were able to open the house the next week for the annual pot luck with two working bathrooms. But progress has not been restricted to official work days. Others have

(continued on page 6, Sanborn Progress)

(continued from page 5, Sanborn Progress) volunteered time and energy to accomplish fussy and pesky but necessary tasks. Particular thanks go to Bradley Ross for help in removing broken windows and old air conditioners, Dick Schrock, for repairing window sashes mutilated by the installa-

tion of air conditioners, and Peter Engledrum for patching the hole in the Oak Room wall. Over the summer, we hope to round up volunteers to repair the screens for the French doors, repair hinges, door hardware and windowsills, and do some temporary landscaping.



Annual Potluck

## Time to Celebrate!

by Carol Keller

"A wonderful, elegant home!" That was the feeling generated by the Sanborn House as over 75 members and friends of the Historical Society gathered on Saturday, April 29<sup>th</sup> for a celebration of the lease signing combined with the Society's annual Pot Luck. The event this year was held as a 4 to 7 p.m. party to accommodate the current limitations of the Sanborn House - rocky driveway, little outside lighting and no kitchen. But "what a beautiful home." For the first time the complete first two floors of the house were available for viewing. The clean-up crew had done a great job the previous Saturday, preparing a sparkling interior and cleaning up the walkway. Volunteers removed the boards from many of the ground floor French doors, letting in a light breeze and allowing the beauty of the public rooms to show in the sunlight. One realized that the wonderful timeless features of the house are easily forgotten in its boarded up state. They jump back to life, though, when offered a little encouragement and a friendly gathering of folks.



Members and guests celebrate the signing of the lease at the Sanborn House.

As always, the pot luck brought forth everyone's best appetizers and desserts, and if words were needed in addition to seeing the progress, the brief tours and talks brought everyone up to date on the Sanborn House. Dinah Voorhies, from the Fund-

raising workgroup, spoke about the early history of the house, the Sanborn family, and Chase and Sanborn coffee, showing pictures from the Fall 2005 Winchester Library exhibit. To accommodate the interest in what the renovated building and grounds would look like, Gail Sjo, President, reviewed the architectural drawings from the Feasibility Study, commenting mainly on the grounds design and proposed changes to the basement. She also spoke about the many uses envisioned for the property. Nancy Schrock, Treasurer, thanked the membership for their generous response to the first annual Society appeal, which brought in over \$5,000 to assist with operations and establish a Society office in the Sanborn House. Cynthia Latta, chairman of the Building and Grounds workgroup, reviewed the work

(continued on page 7, Celebration)

## From the Archives

by Nancy Schrock

Would you like to know more about the photographs in the Town Archival Center? The Archives is looking for volunteers to scan and catalog its postcard collection so that it can become our first internet-based exhibit.

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.



## Thank You, Town Day Volunteers!

Every year members of the Winchester Historical Society volunteer to help run the booths and lead the trolley tours on Town Day. This year, given the inclement weather, rain-date changes, and persistent showers, the Board extends a special "thank you" to the following volunteers:

- ☐ Society booth: Carol Keller, Jean Twitchell, Cynthia Latta, Courtenay Williams, Dinah Voorhies, Gail Sjo, Laurie Minniti, John Minniti, Nancy Schrock, Susan Vrotsos, and Tom Michalak.
- ☐ Trolley booth: Jim Donovan, Diane Donovan, John Minniti, Laurie Minniti, Pam Boerner, Carl Boerner, Geof Cohler, Mary Cohler, and Walter Ogier.
- ☐ Trolley tour leaders: Bill O'Connor, John Clemson, Marge Harvey, Susan Keats, Maureen Meister, Ellen Knight, and Peter Wild.



(continued from page 6, Celebration)

that her group had done, discussed some of the upcoming projects, and called for more volunteers, particularly for the “grounds” aspect of the work. The current focus of the group is to restore the home's “curb appeal” and to continue to “freshen” the inside. Gail also introduced a special guest, Pixie Tinmouth, granddaughter of Mary and J. Edward Downes, the second owners of the House. Tinmouth commented

that her grandmother loved the house so much that when they moved, it was to the nearby “Baby Sanborn,” a similarly designed house by Hill & James.

Sadly, at the end of the event, the boards went back up on the windows (for security), leaving the darkened rooms with thoughts of what is to come – other celebrations, community gatherings, group meetings, art and historical exhibits, concerts – a return to the House's glorious past.

### Town Day 2006



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## Notices and Upcoming Events

**Meetings** – Board Meetings – Third Tuesday of the month (September 19, 2006): 7:30 P.M., Sanborn House. 15 High Street, Winchester. The Board does *not* meet during July or August.

**Programs** – The Society does *not* conduct programs during July or August.

**Plan ahead** –Ellen Spencer, “Winchester Houses of Architect, Robert Coit” (Date to be determined; watch for the meeting notice).

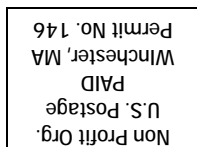
October 14: Historic House Tour.

**Help Wanted** – 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: jminniti@comcast.net), Charles Harris (e-mail: charleyharris@yahoo.com), or Cynthia Latta (e-mail: cynthia@chickadee.us).

The Town Archival Center needs volunteers to scan and catalog its postcard collection. 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).

**Sanborn Wish List** – Can you help the Winchester Historical Society? We’re hoping members and friends can donate the following items to support our new office at the Sanborn House:

- PC-compatible computer, multi-purpose printer, computer work table,
- 2-drawer file cabinets
- Dishwasher, refrigerator, microwave, kitchen cabinets
- Area rugs (in good condition), folding tables, interior paint.



WINCHESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
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