



From the President

by Bob Colt

The Winchester Historical Society has had a very lively beginning of 2010 with major programs, dinners, our Annual Meeting and a volunteer Sanborn House Clean Up Day. It is through the hard work of our 18-person Board of Directors, our new Executive Director, Rebekah Beaulieu, and our appreciative and engaged membership that all things are possible.

The Civil War exhibition of the world-renowned photography collection of our neighbors, the Medford Historical Society, brought an overflow crowd as we co-sponsored the event with the Winchester Public Library. The draw for this program, *Of the People, Faces of the Civil War*, illustrates how many people in our community are true history buffs.

(continued on page 2)

Woburn: A Leather City

By Randy Bairnsfather

It was nearly a packed house for the Society's program at the Nextdoor Theater on Cross St. on March 24. The award-winning documentary, *Woburn: a Leather City*, was introduced by Woburn historians Kathy Lucero and John McElhinney.

(continued on page 3)



The program was introduced by the Woburn team that produced the video (l. to r.) Brian Ouellette of Plasma Films, Kathy Lucero, historian, and John McElhinney, historian and narrator of the video.

Inside this issue...

From the President	1	Archive Center on the Web	4
Woburn: A Leather City	1	WHS Events	5
Tree Fundraiser	2	New WHS Board Members	6
Additional donors to Annual Appeal	4	WHS Annual Meeting	6
Donations and New Online Donations	4	At Home in Winchester	6
Host Your Event at the Sanborn House	4	Calendar	8

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Society Executive Director

Rebekah Beaulieu

(from the president - continued from page 1)

Woburn: A Leather City was an award winning documentary that again brought out a large crowd. And then the Annual April Pot Luck Dinner is always a member's favorite, with its elegant and eclectic foods and great social interaction. The May 12th program led by John McConnell, *Residential Architecture in the 20th Century Winchester*, highlighted the diversity and beauty of the houses of our fair community. John is both a talented artist and an architect. He has chosen the Sanborn House as the location of his art studio and we are proud that he is the first permanent tenant of the second floor of the historic Sanborn House.

John's lecture/ program followed the 76th Annual Meeting of the Winchester Historical Society in which new Board of Directors members, Wendy Swanton and Courtenay Williams, jumped aboard our moving train. Bob Colt and Nancy Schrock were re-elected President and Vice President of the Society and are ready to lead another great year of activities as we learn from the past and build toward the future.

On the annual Sanborn House Clean Up Day on May 22nd, we saw the Board of Directors and some key Society members scrubbing floors, washing windows and doing little fix-it projects to make this gem of a mansion sparkle and radiate its natural appeal. The Town Day activities with the widely awaited Trolley Tours, the sumptuous Strawberry Festival and the Classic Car Show further highlight why the Winchester Historical Society is a great organization to which to donate your time and resources. Make this the time that you call us at 781-721-0135 and say that you would like to volunteer your talents, make a donation and further support the many good things that are going on inside the Society and its home, the 101 year old Sanborn House.

The blossoming of the Sanborn House has been made possible by the cooperative efforts with the Town of Winchester, the Town Manager, the Selectmen and the School Committee, who have entrusted the Winchester Historical Society with the stewardship of this precious community asset.

It is never too late to decide that you want to rent the Sanborn House for that special occasion, that family function or that organizational meeting or soiree. If you have the time, we have the location. If your friends or family have not toured this unique estate, just call and come tour on Tuesday and Thursday when the House is open to the public. You will be happy that you took the step and got involved in a growing concern and a piece of the Town of Winchester's proud history.

"Tree Fundraiser" Supports the Sanborn

This spring, Peter Wild through Boston Tree Preservation, sponsored a fundraiser for the support of the Sanborn House. Peter, who is a member of the Society Board, coordinated the fundraiser to help create awareness of Winchester's oldest residents "Our Trees".

With this program, 70 new participating residents signed on to protect their trees with Boston Tree Preservation. Peter contributed 50% of the discounted promotion to the Society for maintenance and preservation of the Sanborn House. The goal is to bring the Winchester urban forest and the problems that plague it to the forefront, as well as to interest these new accounts in becoming members of the Historical Society.

With the onslaught of invasive insects such as the Winter Moth caterpillar and our changing climate, some of our most cherished natural assets are threatened. This defoliating pest has battered the trees of Winchester for the past 6 years. The moth, which spreads 30 miles per year, has no predators and eats most deciduous plants.

This successful program was just the beginning of raising awareness and educating the public on the value of our town's oldest residents!

The Society would like to thank Boston Tree Preservation for its support.

Open Hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays at the Sanborn House

The Winchester Historical Society is pleased to invite members of the community to visit the Sanborn House now that our new Executive Director, Rebekah Beaulieu, is managing the site and keeping regular hours.

Visit the Sanborn House during its open hours, 10 am to 4 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Contact Rebekah at 781-721-0135 or director@winchesterhistoricalsociety.com to schedule a tour. We look forward to seeing you soon!

(Woburn: A Leather City - continued from page 1)

Both are active in the Woburn Historical Society, having produced documentaries with Brian Ouellette of Plasma Films that are centered on Woburn: WWII and Vietnam veterans' oral histories, Woburn Police Department, Woburn's family farms, Count Rumford, and the soon-to-be-released DVD on Woburn firefighters.

Woburn's leather industry got its start in 1666 when John and Francis Wyman built a tannery. Over the years leather was king in Woburn. There were hundreds of tanneries and patent leather shops that employed thousands of mostly immigrant workers. If you didn't work in one, a relative or neighbor did. Leather dominated the political, social and economic life of the city. Activity in the industry accelerated with the opening of the Middlesex Canal in 1803 and the railroad in the 1830s which meant South Woburn (now Winchester) experienced the coming and going of raw goods and finished leather on the canal and rails as they passed through the town. The boom time was from 1850 to 1870 with increased demand for leather products during the Civil War period. An influx of immigrants from Ireland due to the potato famine met the need for cheap labor. This was followed by large numbers of immigrants from Italy, Scandinavia, Greece and eastern Europe.



Society members enjoy the "movie" program, "Woburn: The Leather City" at the NextDoor Theater.

The work was heavy, especially when the hides that had been soaking for days had to be lifted from the vats. Men suffered from strains and hernias lifting those 100lb. hides, and many had missing fingers from slicing the hides. They were exposed to chemicals, with no protection, on a daily basis. There were no health benefits, no company doctor, no unemployment compensation if they were laid off, and there was no pension. And they worked six days a week! In time of need, they relied upon family and neighbors for assistance.

Some of the tannery owners' names are familiar to Winchester – Beggs and Thompson being two. Deacon Benjamin Thompson had a tannery on what is now Manchester Field. Present day Thompson Street was an unpaved road that led to the tannery. Thompson's house is where CVS now stands. By the way, Benjamin's son, Abijah, was one of the founders of the Winchester Historical Society in 1884.

By 1890 there were four tanneries in Winchester – Beggs and Cobb on Swanton Street being one of the largest. It was in operation until 1957. In September 1959 it burned down and some in the audience remembered the spectacular blaze. The Parkview Apartments are where the tannery had stood, but there is one building that remains of Beggs and Cobb and that is a non-descript building at the end of Cranes Court in Woburn. It was the japanning or patent leather shop.

McElhiney said that his father worked at Beggs and Cobb. When he was in a social situation and those around him talked about going to this college or that, his father would say, "Well, I went to BC," and someone would say, "I didn't know you went to Boston College." He replied, "I graduated from Beggs and Cobb!"

Another prominent Winchester family that was connected to the Woburn leather industry is that of Whitney. Joel Whitney founded the Whitney Machine Company that designed and manufactured equipment for various tanning processes. The plant was located at the junction of Main St. and what is now Mystic Valley Parkway.

The lone remaining Woburn tannery closed in 1988, not that long ago. It was the John J. Riley Leather Company that figured prominently in the Woburn toxic trial, *A Civil Action*.

Thank you for your Generous Response

The Society would like to thank additional donors to the 2009 Annual Appeal; the initial list of donors appeared in the January-March 2010, Black Horse Bulletin.

Emilieanne Koehnlein
Elaine and Peter Kuttner
Alexander Mackenzie

Peggy and Jack Roll
Berta J. Swanson

Additional thanks are extended to contributors from the Pot Luck Dinner:

Randy and Bob Bairnsfather
Kate Fitzgerald and Dave Powell
Nancy and Wayne Kilker

Martha Ladd
Donna Redpath
Shannon Snapp and Edward Yau

Donate On-Line!

Donate with your credit card.

The Society can now accept donations on-line via any of the major credit cards. Go to www.sanbornhouse.org, click on *How Can I Help?* on the top menu, and then click on *Donations*. You will see an icon, *Donate Now*, to click on for on-line donations.

Office Furniture Donation

The Society would like to thank Brian and Sue Clark for their generous donation of office furniture to the Sanborn House. The gift of six Knoll Bulldog armchairs, one two-drawer lateral file, and one desk chair is a wonderful and necessary addition as we organize our onsite office space.

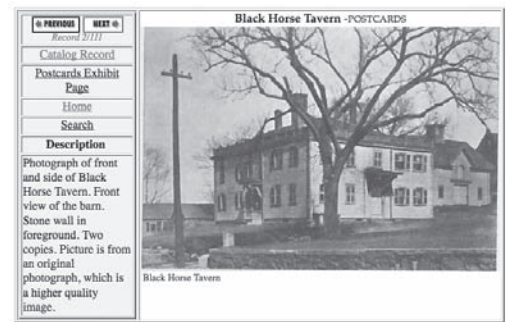
If you have office equipment and/or furniture that might be of service to the Sanborn House, please contact Rebekah Beaulieu at 781-721-0135 to discuss a possible tax-deductible donation.

Host Your Event at the Sanborn House

The Sanborn House is available for meeting and event rentals. Well-equipped with free wireless Internet connection and digital slide projector, the Sanborn House is the perfect choice for your next business meeting. The Beaux-Arts architectural styling provides an exceptional setting for special events both small and large, from a birthday party to a wedding.

The Winchester Historical Society currently holds a long-term lease and is leading the effort to restore and preserve the architectural integrity of the Sanborn House for use as the community's first historical and cultural center. By renting the Sanborn House for your event, you are supporting the restoration of this historic home.

Please visit our website (www.sanbornhouse.org) or call Executive Director Rebekah Beaulieu at 781-721-0135 to discuss how to plan a truly one-of-a-kind event at the Sanborn House.



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Winchester on the Web

by Nancy Schrock

The Archival Center in Town Hall is open 6 hours/month, thanks to the efforts of three long-time volunteers. To make collections more readily accessible, Doug Marmon of the Historical Society and Randy Bairnsfather of the Town Archives worked together to make available on the web, selections from three of the most popular collections. Thanks to volunteers Courtenay Williams, Charlene Band, Diane Donovan and Randy Bairnsfather, 41 portraits, 111 historic postcards, and 1670 house views can now be viewed on your computer at www.winchesterhistoricalsociety.org/archives/ or on the Historical Society Home page, click on Resources, which will bring up the Winchester Archives Center information page, and then click on Catalog website.

The software, appropriately called *Virtual Exhibit*, was purchased in 2005 with a grant from the En Ka Society. *Past Perfect* cataloging software makes it possible to see both image and information about the image - and search by keywords. During the coming year, the Society plans to catalog and photograph its objects, and add them to *Past Perfect* too. The web exhibit is an example of the collaboration between the Historical Society and the Archival Center.

There are many more photographs and documents that could be added. The speed that new material gets on the web depends upon volunteers. If you would like to be part of this project, please call 781-721-7146 or send an email to: archives@winchester.us.

A Busy Time

by Carol Keller

The winter-spring season was a busy time for the Winchester Historical Society. Monthly programs and events were presented; the words and photos below document some of these. In addition, see page one for the program on the local tanneries (March 24), and page 6 for the annual meeting, and lecture *Winchester's Residential Architecture* (May 12).

Of the People: Faces of the Civil War

The Society and Friends of the Winchester Public Library co-sponsored *Of the People: Faces of the Civil War* in February. This offered the opportunity to learn about the extraordinary collection of Civil War photographs discovered by the Medford Historical Society. Barbara Kerr, Director of that Society's Collections, presented the material in the absence of expected co-speaker, Jim Kiely. She described the origins of the photographs, how they were discovered, and what they tell us about the Civil War.



Barbara Kerr addresses a standing room only crowd for the talk on the Civil War photographs (Photo courtesy of T. Seigny)

Sanborn Spring Clean Up Day

A beautiful spring day offered a special environment for the now annual Clean Up Day at the Sanborn House on May 22. All three floors were given a once over cleaning, walls and windows were polished, and trash runs to the dump were numerous.

clockwise:

Jim Whitehead (l) and Doug Marmon make another trip to the dump.
Linda Whitehead vacuums the second floor's secret nooks and crannies.
Susan Keats gives the dining room a polishing touch.
Patrick Ford clears the House entrance of its winter sand and dirt.



Nancy Schrock, Vice President, explains the plans for the front entrance changes at the Sanborn House. (Photo courtesy of D. Feigenbaum.)

Potluck Dinner

The annual Potluck dinner attracted a full house to the Sanborn House on April 11th with a wonderful food buffet featuring the favorite recipes of Society members. In addition to the food, drink and lively conversations, an update on the plans to make the House ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant were presented. This work would make the front entrance handicapped accessible while restoring the door to its original appearance and provide an ADA compliant bathroom.



New Board Members and Officers Ready to Serve

by Bob Colt

On May 12th, the 76th Annual Meeting of the Winchester Historical Society saw the election of two talented new members to the 18-person Board of Directors. Wendy Swanton and Courtenay Williams were unanimously elected, have been to their first Board meeting and are looking forward to actively volunteering for the many projects and resource development aspects that the Directors participate in.



New Board member Wendy Swanton joins President Bob Colt, at the Annual Meeting.

Wendy Swanton is the Consulting Curator of the Gibson House Museum in Boston and has been involved in cataloguing the contents of the Victorian house museum, as well as organizing exhibits, assessing preservation needs and supervising volunteers. Wendy serves as a Trustee of The Schwamb Mill Preservation Trust in

Arlington and has been an active volunteer for the Winchester Historical Society.

Courtenay Williams has been deeply involved in the Winchester community through leadership in En Ka, teaching ESL (Chinese, anyone?) at the Jenks Center and involvement in the Griffin Museum. Courtenay has lived in Sydney, Australia and Hong Kong and was an



Society Executive Director Rebekah Beaulieu (l) welcomes new Board member Courtenay Williams.

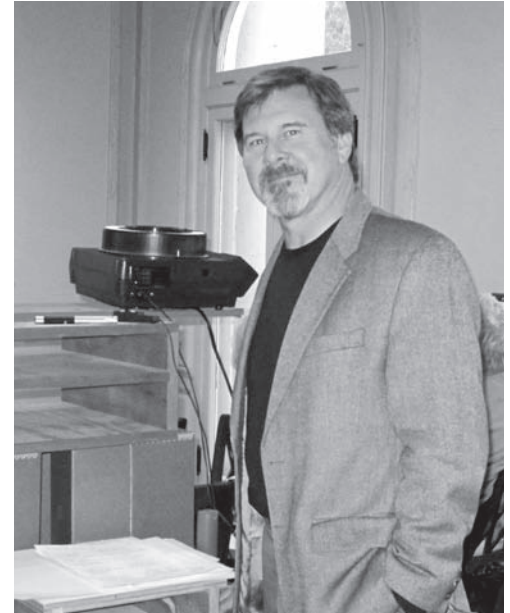
early volunteer and friend of the Winchester Historical Society and active in the restoration of the Sanborn House.

Re-elected to continue on the Board of Directors for new three-year terms were the very active Winchester Historical Society Board members Susan Keats, Laurie Minniti and Nancy O'Herron.

The members at the Annual Meeting also voted to elect to two-year terms Bob Colt as President and Nancy Schrock as Vice President of the Winchester Historical Society. Bob and Nancy have worked closely together for the last two years in leading the Historical Society and serving on the Board of Directors. They look forward to continuing to be involved in all aspects of the restoration of the Sanborn House Historical and Cultural Center and the many activities and programs of the Winchester Historical Society.

Through the Prism

By Laurie Minniti



Architect John McConnell reads his lecture for the Annual Meeting.

The Winchester Historical Society held its 2010 annual meeting on Wednesday, May 12th at the Sanborn House. The guest speaker was John McConnell--architect, college professor, accomplished painter, resident artist at the Sanborn House. He presented a visual lecture entitled *At Home In Winchester: Residential Architecture in 20th Century Winchester*, with the theme that through the prism of houses in Winchester, the history of architecture in America can be traced. As Mr. McConnell traced the development of home architecture he abundantly illustrated the new trends with slides of Winchester houses. Multiple periods are well represented in Winchester.

The field of architecture is fortunate to be able to draw on examples from the past. Beginning with Rome and reemerging during the Renaissance with the famous country houses designed by Andrea Palladio, classicism prevailed. Buildings and homes in the classical tradition are not much more than their structure--geometric perfection appealing to our sense of

reason over emotion. Thomas Jefferson's "Monticello" is an excellent example of classical architecture in America, and there are many examples in Winchester which embody this philosophy. One only has to look at a well-designed colonial home with its beautiful Palladian window and columned entrance to harken back to Rome.

During the mid-nineteenth century the industrial revolution forever changed our landscape by bringing us negative social and visual forms. However, it also brought great wealth to many industrialists who longed to escape the ugliness of their surroundings by throwing open the doors of history and drawing on examples from the past, thus leading to a plethora of architectural styles. The mid-nineteenth century can be characterized as trying to live in a time when you are not alive. People clung to the past and the age of Romanticism was born. Substituting emotion for rational perspective, architects began to design castles. The Hudson River Valley became a magnet for castles as each owner pretended he was living in the past, in a fantasy world.

In 1876, America celebrated its 100th birthday by hosting the World's Fair in Philadelphia. The famous design firm of McKim, Mead and White got the fever for American colonial architecture when it was realized that so much of it was being torn down. They documented colonial architecture and used it as a guide for the shingle style of architecture, which they developed. Although the exterior was comprised of great volumes of space and patterns held together by shingles and embodied romantic feelings, the style was, in essence, grafted on to colonial architecture. The shingle style naturally led into colonial revival period.

In 1893, the World's Fair celebrated Columbus' discovery of America. With its exhibition buildings being illuminated by electricity, it cemented the idea that classicism can truly be beautiful. In 1916 San Diego hosted the World's Fair. This spawned the mission style where escapism was the theme. People again were harkening to a different world, a different time, a different place.

With the emergence of the middle class, Gustav Stickley saw an opportunity to capture that market. He published *The Craftsman* which offered architectural and interior design plans for homes that middleclass Americans could afford. The bungalow is a great example of his design. Following on the heels of the bungalow is the 1920's cape, whose design was perfected by Winchester's own Royal Barry Wills. Examples of the cape are widely seen around Winchester.

Post World War II brought a whole change of culture to America. It was at this time that suburbia and its "industrialization" of buildings emerged. Industrial designed houses led to builders/developers who supplanted the architect. Their credo of low cost over quality sent us on a downhill slope.

Modernism, a product of Germany following Germany's defeat in World War I, was a style designed to solve our problems. It was believed that we could engineer our social problems through architecture. Americans rushed to embrace this concept, and the result can be seen in our subsidized housing units. The international style, as called by Philip Johnson, is bereft of the vision of architects. Structures are like big boxes or colliding sheds. They are nothing more than a vessel for your stuff.

The 1990's saw the birth of McMansions, dwellings where the kitchen is as large as a ballroom but serves no purpose because you call out for Chinese; where detail is eliminated and quality compromised because everything is designed with planned obsolescence in mind.

It must be remembered, however, that houses are the petrie dishes from which new architectural themes grow, so it may not be long before we see a return to another make-believe era embodied in homes that will be dotting the landscape of Winchester.



An attentive audience enjoys the "At Home in Winchester" talk.

- Meetings** Board meetings are held in the Sanborn House Historical and Cultural Center on the third Tuesday of the month (April 20, May 18, June 15) at 7:30 PM. The meetings are open to the public and all are welcome. No Board meeting will be held in July; Board meetings will resume on August 17th
- Programs** **PotLuck dinner**, Saturday, April 10, 6:00 to 9:00 PM, Sanborn House Historical and Cultural Center
- Annual Meeting: At Home in Winchester: A History of Winchester's Residential Architecture** by John McConnell. Wednesday, May 12, 7:30 PM, Sanborn House Historical and Cultural Center
- EnKa Parade** - Saturday, May 15
- Sanborn Spring Clean-Up** - Saturday, May 22
- Town Day**: Saturday, June 5
- Monthly programs will commence again in September 2010.
- Help Wanted** The Society has many volunteer opportunities. Some tasks can be done at home, others in the Sanborn House. For more information: contact Rebekah Beaulieu (781-721-0135; email director@winchesterhistoricalsociety.com) or Nancy Schrock (781-721-1229; email: ncschrock@verizon.net).

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