

Grafton Historical Society Newsletter

Fall 2010

Mission

- To foster interest in Grafton's past.
- To collect and preserve Grafton artifacts and memorabilia.
- To provide research resources for students and future generations.

MUSEUM HOURS

2nd and 4th
Sundays
of each Month
2:00 –4:00 p.m.

One Grafton Common
Lower Level

Stop by for a visit!

Board of Directors

Officers

Linda Casey, President
Theresa Michniewicz, V. President
John Stephens, Treasurer
Kathy Aberizk, Secretary
Liz Byrne, Historian
Rachel Costello, Curator

Directors

Helen Blazis
Barbara Bryant
Barbara Cleary
Mondy Hohman
June Lufkin
Valerie Mackoul
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Ralph Michniewicz
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Grafton History Awards Presented at the 2010 Annual Meeting

The 2010 Grafton History Awards were presented at the Society's Annual Meeting on April 28 at the Grafton Inn. This year's recipients were Philip Gauthier, John LaPoint and Dr. Roger Robinson. Phil Gauthier was praised for his many contributions to the Town over the years and for his instrumental role in the preservation of the South Grafton Community House and the Farnumsville Fire Station. John LaPoint was recognized for

his efforts to raise funds and develop plans to restore and preserve the Old Stone Arch Bridge and New England Village Common. Lee Robinson accepted the award on behalf of his father who served as a founding director of the Society in 1964, and along with his wife, Imogene, lead the restoration and fundraising efforts which resulted in the establishment of Willard House and Clock Museum in North Grafton in 1971.

Following the presentation of the History Awards, guest speaker and former Grafton resident, Thomas Casey, gave a presentation documenting the history of Grafton's shoe industry. Shoe manufacturing was the economic force that created Grafton Center and later, North Grafton, as thriving manufacturing communities. Tom's presentation will be developed into a formal exhibition at the Society later in the fall.

Museum Guide Training Scheduled for September 16th

A training session for museum guides will be held at the Society on Thursday, September 16, beginning at 7:00 p.m. Guides are needed to staff the Society's open hours on the second and fourth Sundays each month from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. They greet visitors, provide information about the Society's exhibits and collections, assist visitors with locating

reference materials, answer general questions and sell books and post cards. The only job requirement: an interest in Grafton history and meeting new people; in-depth knowledge about Grafton history is NOT required! For additional information or to register, please contact Linda Casey at l-casey@msn.com or (508) 839-6390.



The Victorian Tea sponsored by the Society was the place to be this past May! Here we see two well-heeled ladies exchanging ideas.

Volunteers: Many Hands, Light Work

The 2009-2010 year was a time of exceptional growth for the Society due to the efforts of a group of loyal, hardworking volunteers. Each Friday afternoon, volunteers have gathered at the museum and cheerfully taken on a myriad of projects. With the help of these dedicated volunteers, much has been accomplished, including: sort-

ing and organizing boxes of documents, photographs and records; cleaning and repairing artifacts; preparing items for display; and scanning obituaries and other news clippings. In addition, a few volunteers took a special topic of interest and created new displays and exhibits for the Society, such as the Grafton and Upton Rail Road Exhibit and

the display of 19th century wood water pipes—and the tools used to make them. Several volunteers have also donated their time as regular museum guides for our bi-weekly Open Houses and provided refreshments for the Society's monthly programs.

If you are interested in volunteering, please join us at 1:00 p.m. on Fridays!

Scenes from Grafton History Weekend—May 2010

Grafton Celebrates its 275th Anniversary

In the fall of 2009, the Society obtained the approval of the Board of Selectmen to lead the year-long celebration in 2010 recognizing Grafton's 275th anniversary. John Stephens is serving as Chairman. The committee sponsored Grafton History Day and the tremendously successful 275th Anniversary Ball in May. The Historical Society held a Victorian Tea in honor of the anniversary. The Lions Club of Grafton sponsored a circus in June and the July 3rd Concert on the Common. The 275th committee is currently working on three major events scheduled for Old Home Week this fall, including the Lions Club Golf Tournament on September 28, Old Home Day on October 2 and the 275th Parade on October 3.

How You Can Help

- Provide financial support
- Volunteer your time
- Donate old pictures, artifacts

Summer Intern assists at Museum

Again this summer the Society received a federal stimulus grant administered by the Worcester Community Action Council to hire a summer intern. Amanda Strzelowicz, a 2010 graduate of Millbury High School, worked with Linda Casey for 6 weeks in July and August. Amanda made great progress in cataloguing recently acquired artifacts. In addition, she scanned numerous fragile, historic documents which allows the original to be preserved and researchers easy access to the information. Amanda will soon begin her freshman year at Framingham State University. We are grateful for her assistance and we wish her well.



"History is not just something that happened long ago and far away. History happens to all of us all the time. Local history brings history home, it touches your life, the life of your family, your neighborhood, your community."

The Grafton History Papers Now Available to the Public

The Grafton History papers, now housed in the Society's research library, are brief research papers written between 1900 and 1940 by various Grafton citizens who were members of the Grafton History Club or the Daughters of the American Revolution. These individuals conducted research and read the papers to each other at regular meetings. As a collection, the papers form an important and irreplaceable resource for many aspects of Grafton's history and they are now

available to anyone wishing to know more about Grafton history. Mary O'Hara, one of the Society's dedicated volunteers, organized and indexed these papers so that the information is easily accessible for research by school students working on essays and research projects or by the general public interested in vignettes of Grafton's fascinating history. The documents are available during the museum's regular open hours or by appointment.

Mill Village Exhibit Grant Received

The significant but largely untold story of Grafton's industrial heritage involves the mill villages along the Blackstone River in South Grafton. Named for the mills' owners, the three small communities of Farnumsville, Fisherville and Saundersville were once home to thousands of jobs in the textile industry for Polish, Irish and French Canadian immigrants. In response to the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor's request for proposals, Linda Casey developed a compelling grant proposal and was awarded a \$3,000 grant to create an exhibition documenting the

history of South Grafton's three mill villages, the mill buildings, the people and the products they produced. Jean Deschenes, one of the Society's loyal volunteers, has been working for several months on a scale model of the Saundersville Mill. With only the smokestack and a few other remnants of the mill still remaining, it was a real challenge to create a three-dimensional replica, but one that Jean—an expert model maker—successfully achieved. The scale model, complete with landscaping, is now on display at the museum.



The 45th Annual Grafton Antiques Show and Sale Is a Great Success

On June 19, the Society's 45th Annual Grafton Antiques Show and Sale on the Common was blessed with ideal weather, blue skies, great dealers and approximately 600 visitors. The show is the Society's major fundraiser for the year, and numerous volunteers contributed to its success doing everything from baking, setting up and breaking down, to working the gates, counting money and making coffee. John Stephens chaired the event, and Genevieve Mahassel served as Show Manager. After many years of dedicated service to the Society, Genevieve announced that she was retiring from the Show and will be spending more time with her four grandchildren during her much-deserved time off. The Board of Directors would like to extend its sincere thanks and appreciation to "Gee" for her tireless efforts to grow and improve the show each year; filling her shoes will be a difficult task!



WANTED

Old pictures of Grafton

We will scan them and return them to you .
Call (508) 839-6390.