

Grafton Historical Society Newsletter

Winter/Spring 2013

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

Now Open
Every Sunday
Afternoon

(except holidays)
2:00 pm –4:00 pm

One Grafton Common
Lower Level

Board of Directors

Officers

Linda Casey, President
Nancy Deschenes, Vice President
David Therrien, Treasurer
Barbara Bryant, Secretary
Joe Schilke, Curator

Directors

Helen Blazis
Rachel Costello
Carolyn Jakubiak
John LaPoint
June Lufkin
Nancy Therrien
Jayne Wilson, Scribe



Grafton History Day– Saturday, May 18



This year's Grafton History Day celebration, set for May 18th, will feature a full day of great activities for the entire family. The Historical Society will hold open hours from 11-2 and will feature a display on the history of the Town House. We are celebrating the 150th anniversary of both the Town House and the Unitarian Church, both of which were destroyed by fire on September 11, 1862, as the Civil War was raging.

Both structures were rebuilt in 1863, 150 years ago. The Unitarian Church will host open hours with costumed interpreters and will distribute brochures about the architect who designed both buildings and aspects of their church history. The Grafton Garden Club will hold their annual plant sale that day and the Massachusetts 13th Volunteer Infantry Regiment will recreate an authentic Civil War encampment on the common. The regiment will hold a ceremony rededicating the Grafton Civil War monument. The day also will include various activities for children, food vendors and music. Capping the festivities will be a costume ball and silent auction to be held that evening at Pleasant Valley Country Club in Sutton. Tickets are available at the society office for \$50/person. Tables of 10 may be reserved by calling (508)839-0000.

Antique Clothing Among Recent Donations

The Historical Society recently received a generous gift of antique clothing donated by Jean and Dick Anderson and Joy Nicholson. The large and varied collection includes clothing from the 1860s through the 1940s. It includes Civil War era dresses, capes, and coats; a beaver skin top hat; men's woolen swim trunks from the 1920s; and turn of the century women's suits and dresses, among numerous others. Many of these items were worn in the fashion show presented as part of Grafton's 250th Anniversary celebration in 1985.

To ensure the preservation of this precious collection, it is being evaluated, cleaned, and repaired by conservators specializing in antique textiles. When these processes are completed, the clothing will be placed on display at the Historical Society museum. The society is asking for donations of dress forms and/or mannequins to be used for displaying the clothing. If you would like to donate any of these items, please contact Linda Casey at l-casey@msn.com or 508-839-0000.



What's Happening at Your Historical Society

Historic Grafton Center Shoe Industry on Display in New Exhibit

The Grafton Center shoe industry, which began in 1795 and flourished through the 1880s, is the subject of an exhibit currently on display at the Historical Society museum. The centerpiece of the exhibit is a detailed scale model, created by Jean Deschenes. It depicts the center in 1887, encompassing Grafton common and the surrounding buildings, and extending to the Baptist Church on South Street and to number 10 North St. (then the site of the Bigelow and Dodge shoe factory). Grafton's shoe industry, which produced ready-made shoes, gradually phased out the crude, home-sewn



footwear common in earlier times. With an eager market for the new products, numerous shoemaking businesses sprang up in the center of town, primarily along North and South streets. By 1837, Grafton Center led Worcester County in shoe production, leather tanning, and currying. The industry in the center did very well until the 1880s, then gradually lost ground to larger, more mechanized manufacturers (such as J.S. Nelson Co. in North Grafton), and by 1925, had effectively ended.

It is with great sadness that we report that Jean Deschenes, architect of this display, passed away in March leaving the society with a legacy of models that will be preserved in our collection for future generations to enjoy. We will be forever grateful for his dedication, his talent and his long hours of labor in producing this model as well as models of the three textile mills of South Grafton.

Another Successful Members-Only Potluck Dinner

The Historical Society held its annual members-only potluck dinner on January 20 at the Brigham Hill Community Barn. The dinner, which has been held for several years, has become a much anticipated event for society members. As in previous years, this year's dinner was a



great success. Twenty nine members attended, bringing a variety of delicious dishes to share. The "Just Us" guitar and mandolin trio provided music to accompany dinner. Society members enjoyed the opportunity to get together in good company, sample everyone's best recipes, and listen to some wonderful live music.

Historical Society Museum Expands into New Space

The Historical Society is happy to announce the expansion of its museum into additional rooms located across the hall from the current space. The new rooms will provide much needed capacity for the society's growing collection. In addition to housing permanent exhibits, the new area also will provide room for audio visual displays and programs for children and adults.

The permanent exhibits will be interactive, thus allowing young and old visitors alike to experience history hands-on. These exhibits will include the Grafton Center shoe industry; the South Grafton textile mills; the Nipmuc Indians; and Grafton in the agricultural era. The new space also will include a small "theater" where visitors can view a selection of films and oral testimonies on the history of Grafton. The society currently is seeking donations of display cases as well as financial donations to help with the renovations for the new space. If you would like to contribute, please contact Linda Casey at l-casey@msn.com or 508-839-0000.

Don't miss the Victorian Tea

Sunday, April 14 at 3:00pm
Polish National Home
7 Main Street, South Grafton
Tickets: \$18.00



Do You Have Interesting Pictures of Grafton?
We will scan them and return them to you .
Call (508) 839-0000