



Woburn Historical Society

The Lamplighter

Volume 1, Issue 2

October - December 2007

A Letter from the President

by Cary Scarborough

First person history! The next best thing to being there!

Mom, apple pie, the flag, and now...once again after all of these years...grandpa.



What fires your imagination? I'd be willing to bet that a good adventure story, well told, ranks somewhere near the top of your list of general answers. For some of you...it might be a story based in romance; for others...mystery; yet others...science fiction, exploration, struggle, comedy, tragedy, conflict, invention, discovery and so on. The common elements of these tales include bouts of risk, urgency, drama and a score of other attributes and just enough detail to compel you to "get in the moment" and share some level of adrenaline flow with the storyteller.

The Lamplighter tells the WHS and Woburn story. In our previous newsletter, we focused our lamp on:

- ~ a prominent, contemporary, local storyteller (John McElhiney);
- ~ a statue rededicated to a prominent, local story maker from the 1700s (Loammi Baldwin);
- ~ a committee of our 18th century re-enactors who bring history to life in front of you (the Living History Committee including the Living History Guild, the Living History Players and the Woburn Militia subcommittees);
- ~ a collection of photographs that froze stories of downtown Woburn in a more recent bygone era (the Farino Collection at the Woburn Public Library); and...
- ~ our small cadre of committees dedicated to discovering, preserving and presenting all of the Woburn stories that we can collect.

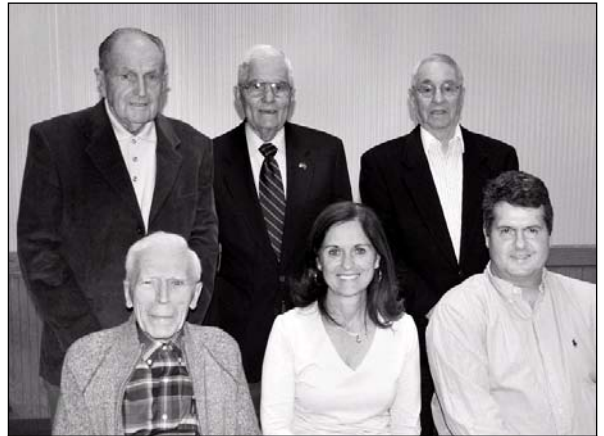
In this issue, we highlight some of our veterans who qualify as genuine, contemporary, local story makers. Not that they intended to be. I asked them at Kathy Lucero's Veterans Oral History Project presentation on Veterans Day if they ever dreamed 60 years ago that they'd get

(continued on page 3, A Letter from the President)

Woburn's Voices of WWII

by Joe Crowley

It was standing room only at the Woburn Historical Society's monthly meeting held on November 10th at the American Legion Hall. Kathy Lucero hosted "Woburn's Voices of World War II", featuring original film footage and the personal stories of four Woburn veterans who were intimately involved in some of that war's most notable battles.



Back from left: Mike McGann (Marines, 1st Armored Amphibian Battalion); Robert Johnston (Marines, 4th Marine Division); Peter Aspesi (Army Air Corp, 15th Air Force, 376 Bomber Group)

Front from left: John Lupone (Army, 101st Airborne, Paratrooper, Medic, POW); Kathy Lucero (Vice President, WHS); Brian Ouellette (Plasma Films).

Kathy, who is WHS' Vice President, has taken oral histories from over 40 Woburn veterans as part of the Society's Veterans Oral History Project. She and Brian Ouellette of Plasma Films have spent countless hours editing the interviews to create a first-class production that held the crowd of over 200 spellbound throughout the evening.

The program began with Kathy introducing a number of the veterans who have already been interviewed, followed by the first-hand stories of the four featured veterans.

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The Lamplighter is published with the purpose of sharing topics of interest, and for the education and enjoyment of our members and our community. It is published quarterly and will be posted on our website at www.WoburnHistoricalSociety.com.

We invite you, our members and readers, to send comments, suggestions on topics of interest, and contributions of relevant articles and photographs to:

LampLighter@WoburnHistoricalSociety.com

or

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Calendar of Upcoming Events

January 14th

Janis Duffy of the Massachusetts State Archives
 "Genealogy"
 7:00 p.m.
Woburn Memorial High School Auditorium

February 11th

The History of Woburn Tanneries *
 7:00 p.m.
First Congregational Church

March 10th Annual Meeting

Year in Review, Elections**
 and a performance by musician John Root
 7:00 p.m.
First Congregational Church

**Please note only dues-paying members can vote

April 26th Weekend

2nd Annual Pathway of the Patriots and Muster
Battle Road and Tarkey School Lot

May 12th

2nd Annual Living History Series
Woburn Memorial High School Auditorium

*** VOLUNTEERS NEEDED:** If you or someone you know worked in Woburn's Tanneries, please contact Melissa Davidson-Kyle at 781-491-0988 or mdavidsonkyle@comcast.net to share stories and memorabilia from your experience working in this industry that was so important to the economy of Woburn.

SPEICAL THANKS to *Gerry Kehoe* of Innitou Photo for contributing all the photos in this issue. Also thanks to *Chip MacLeod* of the *American Legion*, 194 Lexington Street for the use of their hall for our November Veteran's event; and to the *Annunciation of the Virgin Mary Greek Orthodox Church*, 70 Montvale Avenue for the use of their lovely function room and to *Great Mandarin Restaurant*, 186 Cambridge Road for providing the delicious Chinese food at the WHS holiday party in December. Many thanks to *Michael Kelly* for creating and printing our monthly flyers.

(continued from page 1, A Letter from the President)

all this attention. "No way", they said.

I believe that we are, as a culture, recapturing a process as old as language itself where history is transmitted directly from the "maker" to the "taker". The rediscovered phenomenon I'm talking about is "first-person history", where you hear the maker in his or her own words describe what they smelled, saw, heard, felt, thought, said, wrote . . . experienced at the time. This is how history was transmitted before cell phones, internets, TVs, radios, movies, telephones, telegraphs, books, scrolls, clay tablets, etc. and before families routinely scattered to the four winds instead of having three or four generations living within walking distance of each other and the in-laws. When you hear John Lupone describe parachuting onto Normandy in the dark early morning of D-Day, and then surviving his capture, transport and incarceration, now you are talking personal adrenaline. Now, you have a direct connection to what happened. Now, hearing his words, seeing his facial expressions and body language and projecting yourself into his situation, you will remember his experience, connect his experience with the history of that day and maybe even learn something lasting from it.

What a great payoff for the investment of your time! By the same token, your visit to Count Rumford's birthplace in North Woburn (see the interview with the caretaker, Valerie Schmidt) could give you a new appreciation for how humble beginnings might shape great men. Let your imagination take you back and "into the moment".

And now, a word from our sponsor...

The Woburn Historical Society is committed to bringing history to life with as much first-person history as our Veterans Oral History Project can muster and with the closest approximations our Living History Committee can provide. Our Education Committee, chaired by Kathy Lucero, is taking willing veterans into local classrooms to share their experiences interactively with students and faculty. This is extraordinary input that no book could provide.

By becoming a dues-paying member and/or a donor to the Woburn Historical Society, you are contributing much more than coffee money for our next meeting; you are helping to nourish the minds of our future. If you are not yet a member or have not yet paid your annual dues, please send in the membership form and member survey located on pages 7 and 8 and join us in our activities. You'll like it; we specialize in providing good news for the community. What could be better than that? Well, OK, how about...your check is tax-deductible!

(continued from page 1, Woburn's Voices of WWII)



Westside resident and former Marine **Bob Johnston**, spoke about his engagement in several ferocious battles in Saipan and Iwo Jima and how he witnessed injuries and death to countless other soldiers.

John Lupone, a US Army Paratrooper Medic told of his capture during the invasion of Normandy in 1944 and his harrowing experiences during ten months of captivity as a Nazi prisoner of war.

Longtime Woburn resident **Peter Aspesi** gave the large crowd a vivid portrayal of his experience as a machine gunner on a B24 trying to avoid enemy anti-aircraft fire while at times flying just fifty feet above the ground. In one year, Aspesi flew in over 50 such missions.

The final segment featured Woburn native **Mike McGann** who was a tank commander with the 1st Armored Amphibian Battalion in both Guam and Okinawa. He told many stories of death and destruction by Japanese kamikaze pilots, including his own sickness and injury, for which he earned the Purple Heart.

All of the veterans received a standing ovation from the appreciative crowd, many of whom commented how important it is to hear real live personal stories of the

tragedy of war from those who actually experienced it. "This is so much more meaningful than reading about it in a textbook; it truly makes history come alive", commented a young attendee who expressed the hope that this type of program might become an annual Veterans Day event.

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An Interview with ... Valerie Schmidt

by Joe Crowley

Valerie Schmidt and her husband Peter are the caretakers of the Benjamin Thompson House-Count Rumford Birthplace, located at 90 Elm Street in Woburn. The house is listed on both the List of National Historic Landmarks and the List of National Register of Historic Places.

Q. Tell us a bit about the history and physical layout of the Rumford House.

A. The house was built in 1714 and has been in this location ever since. There are eight rooms, four of which are open for public viewing. Everything has been carefully preserved, giving visitors a true glimpse into pre-revolutionary life in Woburn.

Q. How did you happen to become caretaker?

A. Back in 1976, my father answered a small newspaper ad thinking the position might be of interest to him. When he realized what was involved, he declined and suggested that as newlyweds, it might be a good 'starter' situation for my husband and me. Thirty-one years, two children, and one grandchild later, we are still here and enjoying every minute of it.

Q. What are your duties and responsibilities?

A. Basically to keep the home clean and neat, the grounds landscaped, and to make recommendations to the governing body concerning maintenance, etc. I conduct tours every weekend for anyone who happens to stop by. Visitors come from the world over, including Germany, Australia, and one from Korea who came specifically to see this house. Some have studied the history of the home and like to explore independently, while others prefer a narrated tour. Some are most interested in the house itself; others are familiar with Thompson's work as an inventor and scientist, and appreciate his contributions to the study of heat exchange and physics.

Q. Do you charge an admission fee? Otherwise how is the Rumford House supported financially?

A. There is never a charge for admission. Anyone is free to come by between 1:00 and 4:00 p.m. on any Saturday or Sunday afternoon. Financial support comes from the Rumford Historical Association, chaired by Woburnite Len Harmon. The Association receives no public funds, other than an occasional grant that the Rumford Historical Association must match.

Q. What are the greatest challenges facing you and the governing body in 2007?

A. As with any aging structure, upkeep is a struggle, and there never seems to be enough money to keep up with the constant maintenance requirements. We'd also love to attract more visitors, particularly school children so that present and future generations can develop a greater appreciation for Woburn's rich history.

.....



Valerie Schmidt and Benjamin Thompson in a copy of a painting by Thomas Gainsborough



Benjamin Thompson House / Count Rumford's Birthplace
90 Elm Street
Woburn, MA
www.woburnhistoricalsociety.com/rumfordhouse.html

Benjamin Thompson's birthplace contains reconstructed models of Count Rumford's scientific experiments and inventions. Also on display is a copy of a portrait of Count Rumford by Thomas Gainsborough and a library of Rumford biographies and essays.

Its governing body, the Rumford Historical Association, was founded on March 26, 1877 for the purpose of maintaining the birthplace of Benjamin Thompson as a site of historic interest.

Tours are conducted on most weekends between 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Woburn Historical Society's Past Programs

by Joe Crowley

Since its inception, the WHS has offered a wide variety of programs, from Revolutionary War reenactments to interviews with WWII veterans, to inform and entertain our members and the public. Here is a summary of our past programs:

March 2006 Our very first meeting was attended by over 70 people and after introductory remarks by President Pro-Tem Cary Scarborough, the group was treated to a tour of the historic First Congregational Church, which turned out to be the site of many of our future meetings.

April 2006 Vice President Pro-Tem and Genealogy expert Kathy Lucero led us on a detailed explanation of various resources available to anyone interested in researching his or her individual family history, something most of us needed to know in order to get started.

May 2006 The historic Tocci building hidden in Central Square and the history of the world-renowned Gustavino Tile Works once located in that building were featured in a video presentation by current building owner John Tocci and Amy West.

June 2006 Civil War author Richard Griffin held us spellbound as he related stories of several Woburn young men who fought during the War Between the States, some of whom never returned home.

July 2006 On this warm summer evening, local attorney and historian John McElhiney led us on a tour of the various Woburn Common monuments, reminding us of the immense sacrifices made by Woburn men and women in times of war.

September 2006 Members Walt Kearney, Leon Basile, Darlene Wigton and Joe Brown conducted an informative workshop on using modern technology to preserve and restore precious old photographs that might otherwise be lost or destroyed.

October 2006 Our largest crowd of over 300 attended the first annual tour of the newly renovated and rededicated First Burial Grounds on Park Street, one of the nation's oldest cemeteries.

November 2006 Continuing on the theme of the September meeting, Brian Ouellette and Rob Carbone demonstrated for us the techniques used in converting old 8mm and 16mm motion picture film into modern DVD.

December 2006 The new function room at the Greek Orthodox Church was the site of the Society's first annual holiday party hosted by members Kathy Lucero and Melissa Davidson-Kyle and included a narrated tour of the church's sanctuary.

January 2007 Appropriate to our meeting location at the First Congregational Church, stained glass expert Dan Maher fascinated all of us with an interesting and lively detailed history of the stained glass industry.

February 2007 What better way to spend a cold winter evening than to relive our days spent at old Revere Beach and Foley Beach at Horn Pond which over 150 of us did during Bob Upton and Kathy Lucero's pictorial presentations.

March 2007 Our fledging organization held its first annual meeting and elected a slate of officers and directors. We also learned about the Haverhill Historical Society from its director, Brenna Langenau.

April 2007 Despite being rained out twice, "Pathways of the Patriots", a reenactment of Woburn's role in the early stages of the Revolutionary War, was an enormous success with over 500 in attendance at old Battle Road off Russell Street.

May 2007 Astronaut Dr. Al Sacco landed at the new Woburn Memorial High School auditorium and took us on a celestial journey with sounds and sights taken aboard his orbiting space shuttle.

June 2007 Heimlich Nurseries graciously allowed use of their greenhouse as we took a trip back in time, viewing photographs and hearing stories of the many family farms that once dotted the Woburn landscape.

September 2007 Society member Sue Ellen Holland and Tom Doyle of the Woburn Public Library took us on a pictorial journey back to Woburn Center in the 1950's. We were delighted to see so many stores and businesses that once were the backbone of a thriving downtown.

October, 2007 Our second annual tour of the Olde Burial Ground was even better than last year with a much larger crowd, new actors, new stories and the appearance of two gigantic live oxen at Citizens Park.

November, 2007 During a well attended event hosted by Vice-President Kathy Lucero, four of Woburn's WWII veterans shared their fascinating stories of peril and pride in serving their country, presented by both an oral history film and live commentary.

December, 2007 In spite of inclement weather, the 2nd Annual Holiday Party, hosted by Board members Kathy Lucero and Melissa Davidson-Kyle, was a merry way to usher in the holiday season with good food and good wishes for all.

GENEALOGY

*Learn how to search your
family history with ...*

Janis Duffy
of the Massachusetts State Archives

January 14th

7:00 p.m.

*Woburn Memorial High
School Auditorium*

THE HISTORY OF WOBURN TANNERIES

Presented by
Melissa Davidson-Kyle
Kathy Lucero

and
John McElhiney

February 11th

7:00 p.m.

First Congregational Church

*Annual Meeting, March 10th at 7:00 p.m. First Congregational Church
A Year in Review, Elections and Entertainment with John Root ~ Music of the Gaslight Era*

Olde Burial Ground Tour

by Joe Crowley

Over 300 people attended and enjoyed Woburn Historical Society's 2nd annual tour of the Olde Burial Grounds on Park Street on October 20, 2007. Tour guides Ray Drapeau, Jim Dwyer, Joanna Gonsalves, Sue Ellen Holland, and John McElhiney provided general information about the cemetery and those buried there, and led attendees to five stations where entertaining stories about Woburn in the 18th century were performed by the Society's Living History Guild.

The program began at Citizens Park with the story of Simeon Reed, a farmer who traded his wife for a team of oxen. Actors Ann Catania, Chris Hurley, Chuck Provost and Carol Seitz were accompanied by two enormous live oxen, Tanner and Nick, brought from Connecticut by their owners, Richard and Jane Smith.



Simeon Reed (Chris Hurley) barter his wife (Anne Catania) to James Butters (Chuck Provost) for a team of oxen (Tanner and Nick)

At the cemetery, Town Matriarch Mary Richardson Fowle (played by Judy Cataldo) related stories to her daughters Mary and Abigail (Victoria Coots and Logan Young) of the harsh and difficult times faced by Woburn residents in the town's early years.

In another scene Loammi Baldwin (Tom Coots) defended his friend Benjamin Thompson (Dirk Mahling) against an unruly mob taking its anger out on the British loyalist. The mob leader, Ebenezer Mackintosh (Kim Carrell), confronted Thompson's mother (Lois Surrette), who boldly protected her son.

Another story involved Magistrate Josiah Johnson (Ron Sullman) who was asked to rule on the marital status and property of Ichabod Richardson (Charles Linskey) and Sarah Wyman Richardson (Robin Longendyke) following Ichabod's return to Woburn after being assumed dead for over seven years. Sarah was accompanied to court by stepdaughter Betsey (Alex Longendyke).

The final cemetery scene took place inside the Ark Tavern, Woburn's first "spirits" store where Phebe Walker Richardson (Clare Hurley) and two travelers played by Lincoln Clark III and Darlene Wigton were greeted by Samuel Walker (Joe Brown) who turned out to be a real "spirit" (a ghost from the past).

Society member Walt Kearney produced the tours and described the event as "extremely successful" because of the time and dedication of the scores of volunteers who participated in the program "I'd like to credit them all by name, but I'd be afraid of forgetting someone, so I will just give a public 'Thank You' to them all," Walt concluded.

Following the narrated tour, Kathy Lucero and Melissa Kyle-Davidson served refreshments at the First Baptist Church. They displayed various types of gravestone "art" that could be found on head stones in the cemetery, scrapbooks containing articles and photos of past WHS events, and information on the upcoming Woburn's Veterans of WWII presentation. All agreed that the afternoon turned out to be a fun and informative learning experience.

(continued from page 3, Woburn's Voices of WWII)

Veterans and the YouTube Generation to Meet in the Classroom

Kathy Lucero and the four veterans featured in November's meeting will present this same program to several history classes at Woburn Memorial High School in January 2008. Presenting to high school students achieves one of the society's overarching goals: to make local history come alive in a meaningful way for the city's students.



WHS members attending the holiday party

Second Annual Holiday Party

by Clare Hurley

In spite of the cold weather, WHS members gathered to ring in the holidays at the Second Annual Holiday Party on December 10th at the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary Greek Orthodox Church. The Great Mandarin Restaurant helped the festivities by supplying ample amounts of a variety of delicious Chinese food. The efforts of Melissa Davidson-Kyle and Kathy Lucero to put this celebration together are much appreciated. President Cary Scarborough expressed his appreciation to everyone for making this year so successful and shared his excitement for more fun and educational programs in 2008. A merry time was had by one and all as we wished each other all the best for the holiday season.

Membership Application Survey

Please fill out both sides of this form

As part of welcoming new people to the Woburn Historical Society, we survey you for expressions of interests. We are looking for members to take some leadership positions as potential Committee Chairs, Officers and Board Members. All positions are "working" positions; preferred candidates would be those who bring diverse, useful expertise, energy and experience to the table. Above all, they should be "team" players who want to make membership here enjoyable as well as informative. Please help us to direct our efforts in the most productive ways.

Please indicate your interests

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Photography/ Art/ Maps/ Books | <input type="checkbox"/> Educational Programs (to school, civic groups, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historical Clothing/Costumes | <input type="checkbox"/> Living History Guild / re-enacting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sports History | <input type="checkbox"/> Exhibit, Meeting, Event Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Genealogy | <input type="checkbox"/> Workshops (giving or going) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Publications | <input type="checkbox"/> Collecting (Coins, Ephemera, Tools, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Veteran's Oral History | <input type="checkbox"/> Refreshments |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising and Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation (artifacts, real estate, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organizational Governance (___ Board, ___ Officer, ___ Committee Chair, ___ Worker Bee) | |

Define your own interests (including "Era-related" interests e.g. Civil War, WWII, Colonial, '50s):

Skills and Interests you have to offer. Expand on any of the foregoing. Make suggestions.

A Society of Dedicated Friends



WOBURN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Woburn, MA 01801

Phone: 781-287-0260
E-mail: WoburnHistory@yahoo.com
Web Site:
www.WoburnHistoricalSociety.com

**Woburn Historical Society
Annual Membership Application**



The mission of the Society is to preserve the valuable history of Woburn by involving interested citizens in the discovery and presentation of our community's heritage and culture.

Please fill out both sides of this form

Name _____ Email address _____
Address _____ City, State & Zip _____
Home phone _____ Cell/Work phone _____

The WHS is an IRS-designated 501(c)3 non-profit organization. All donations to it are tax-deductible on your Federal income tax forms. All membership fees and donations are directly applied to the costs of our monthly historical enrichment programs and lectures.

Individual Membership \$25.00 _____
Family Membership \$35.00 _____
Student Membership \$10.00 _____
Business/Organization/Benefactor/Other _____

**Membership application also available
on
www.WoburnHistoricalSociety.com**

Please forward the membership application along with your check made out to the Woburn Historical Society and mail it to Melissa Davidson-Kyle, 68 Burlington Street, Woburn, MA 01801.