



# Woburn Historical Society The Lamplighter

Volume 2, Issue 2

October - December 2008

## A Letter from the President

*from Kathy Lucero*



The end of 2008 is rapidly approaching and the year really has flown by. This fall marked the beginning of the Society's third year of programming and we're off and running. As usual, it has been a busy quarter.

We started in September with a joint lecture with the Woburn Public Library and followed that up in October with a wonderful tour of Olde Woodbrook Cemetery. The sky was clear and the foliage was glorious, so it more than made up for the cold weather we had that day. Our November program on World War I was especially near and dear to my heart, since I am an admitted WWI buff. If I had been left to my own devices, the film would probably have been three times as long!

In October, Pat Hughes and I had an opportunity to meet with a number of local historical societies during an Idea Exchange day. The meeting was sponsored by a state grant and hosted by the Marlborough Historical Society. We made many new contacts and were able to talk about the challenges we face, especially in light of today's economy and the impact it has had on fundraising. Pat and I came away with many new ideas that we hope to explore in the coming months.

In spite of how busy we are, the holidays are also a time to reflect on the blessings in our lives. To all of you, old friends and new, thank you for your support of the Society and its mission. We would not be here if I weren't for our members and sponsors. On behalf of the Society and its board, I would like to extend the warmest wishes of this holiday season and hopes for a fabulous 2009.

On a personal note, as some of you know, I had surgery in December. Thank you to everyone who sent their prayers, positive thoughts and good wishes. They were very much appreciated and helped to speed my recovery. I plan to see you all at January's program.

## Winters in Woburn



*Photo courtesy of John McElhiney*

**Please join us for an evening of  
warm memories from Woburn's  
past winters**

**Monday ~ January 12th  
Woburn Memorial High School Auditorium  
88 Montvale Avenue, Woburn MA  
Program begins at 7:00 p.m.**

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Please visit our website at [www.WoburnHistoricalSociety.com](http://www.WoburnHistoricalSociety.com)

*The Lamplighter*, Woburn Historical Society's quarterly newsletter, is published with the purpose of sharing topics of interest, and for the education and enjoyment of our members and our community. You can find this issue along with all back issues posted on our website at [www.WoburnHistoricalSociety.com](http://www.WoburnHistoricalSociety.com).

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**Calendar of Upcoming Events**

**January 12th**

***Winters in Woburn***

7:00 p.m.  
 Woburn Memorial High School Auditorium  
 88 Montvale Avenue, Woburn MA

**February 9th**

In recognition of  
**Black History Month**  
*"Against All Odds -  
 The Amos Fortune Story"*

7:00 p.m.  
 Woburn Memorial High School Auditorium  
 88 Montvale Avenue, Woburn MA

**March 9th**

**Annual Meeting**  
***An Evening with Nick Paleologos***

7:00 p.m.  
 Woburn Memorial High School Auditorium  
 88 Montvale Avenue, Woburn MA

**Special Acknowledgements**

Unless otherwise noted,  
 all photographs are courtesy of  
***Gerry Kehoe of Innitou Photo***

Special Thanks go to  
***Gerry Kehoe***  
 for organizing our  
**1st Annual Holiday Raffle**



# MARK YOUR CALENDARS

## You won't want to miss these upcoming events

**DID YOU KNOW** there was a thriving ice-cutting business on Horn Pond for over eighty years? Join us for “**Winters in Woburn,**” on January 12, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. at the Woburn Memorial High School Auditorium to learn more about it. Enjoy the winter evening by taking a trip back in time to view winter scenes and activities from Woburn’s past. Presented by John McElhiney, this PowerPoint presentation and discussion will utilize archival photos, maps, and newspaper accounts to highlight old winter scenes, the thriving ice cutting business on Woburn’s ponds, and even skiing and other recreational activities on “Mt. Towanda” (Horn Pond Mountain).

**DID YOU KNOW** that slavery existed in Woburn? Join us in recognition of “Black History Month” for our February program, “**Against All Odds,**” to be held on February 9, 2009 at a location to be announced in a future mailing. The night will feature a talk by local resident and author, Robert E. Maguire, on the remarkable life journey of Amos Fortune, born free in Africa, captured and taken into slavery, raised and employed in the leather industry in Woburn, and achieving freedom once again.

**DID YOU KNOW** that the Woburn Historical Society belongs to you, the members? Join us in March for our third official “**Annual Meeting of the Woburn Historical Society,**” to be held on Monday, March 9, 2009, at 7:00 p.m. at the Woburn Memorial High School Auditorium. Take stock in the accomplishments of the past year, and take an active role in shaping the future programming and direction of your Society. The evening will also feature remarks by Woburn native **Nicholas Paleologos**, a long-time former state representative, a noted producer of film and Broadway plays, and currently the Executive Director of the Massachusetts Film Office.



## 1st Annual Holiday Raffle



The Woburn Historical Society would like to extend our sincere **THANKS** to those who donated prizes to our first Holiday Raffle and **CONGRATULATIONS** to those who won:



- Three DVDs donated by Woburn Historical Society:
  - \* Woburn “Over There” – World War I won by **the Connor Family**
  - \* History of the Woburn Police Department won by **Lois Surette**
  - \* Woburn: A Leather City won by **Jim Dwyer**



- *Cape Cod* gift basket donated by Judy Woods won by **Pat McCuish**
- *Country Breakfast* gift basket donated by Gerry Kehoe won by **Rosa DiTucci**
- *Woburn in Pictures/Past & Present* gift basket donated by The Woburn Historical Commission and Innitou Photo won by **Dick Haggerty**



- Signed copy of *Woburn-A Past Observed* donated by John McElhiney won by **Joe Bell**
- Signed copy of *Woburn-Hidden Tales of a Tannery Town* donated by Marie Coady won by **Mark Swymer**



- And the following local area restaurants donated generous gift certificates:



- \* Bertucci’s won by **Elaine Lloyd**
- \* Ixtapa won by **Brett Dexter**
- \* Polcari’s won by **Dot McGann**
- \* Sichuan Garden II won by **Rita Marshal**
- \* Tanner Tavern won by **Bud Fowle**
- \* TGI Friday’s won by **Gerry Kehoe**
- \* TreMonte won by **Elaine Pryne**



## Veteran's Day Program a Great Success

On Monday November 10th, a large audience viewed the film, *Woburn: "Over There" – World War I* at the Woburn Memorial High School Auditorium. The movie described the stories of the young men and women of Woburn who served our country in World War I.

The evening began with an introduction from Kathy Lucero, who told the assembly that working on this film was particularly meaningful to her since World War I is her favorite historical period.



Authentic WWI uniform and memorabilia

A wide selection of WWI memorabilia was displayed in the lobby.

Among the interesting objects were a "wall of names" of the men and women of Woburn who served, photographs, medals, a full uniform complete with gas mask, and a collection of trench art. The uniform was on loan from the Society's own John McElhiney, whose grandfather wore it during the War.

Many people were unfamiliar with trench art, which consists of decorative items made by the WWI soldiers on the front or serving in armed conflict. Trench art is usually made of anything that was handy to the soldiers, such as wood, metal casings and animal bones. Wonderful examples of

trench art made from decorated shell casings and cigarette lighters were on display that evening. They looked as though they had just come from the hands of the young soldiers who made them.

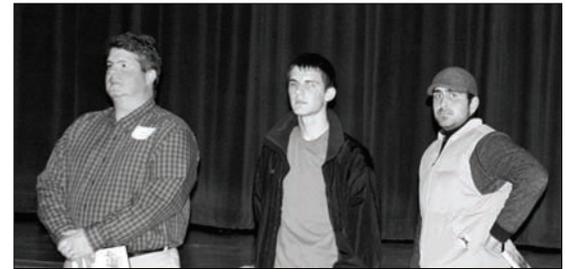
The film was written by Kathy Lucero and John McElhiney, who also narrated. Brian Ouellette of Plasma Films did another outstanding job of creating and editing the movie. Jared Fallon, Brandon Kuhnse and Jon-Paul Lucero brought the voices of the young soldiers to life as they read excerpts from the soldiers' letters home to their loved ones.

Many thanks go out to them and to the people who helped identify unknown soldiers in pictures, loaned photographs, letters and memorabilia, and who helped the Society shed light on this important era in Woburn's history.

If you missed the movie and would like to purchase a copy of the DVD, an order form is available on page 7 or at [www.WoburnHistoricalSociety.com](http://www.WoburnHistoricalSociety.com).



Two friends catch up on old times...



Videographer Brian Ouellette with audience members.

### *4th Graders learn of WWI and help support Society Programs*



The fourth grade class at the Reeves Elementary School collected \$168.00 for the Society's Veteran's Programs by selling poppies during their annual Veterans Day Agenda. The donation will support the Veteran's Oral History Project.

Red paper poppies became a symbol of those who died during WWI when in 1915 the poet John McRea, a Canadian doctor helping soldiers in France, wrote "In Flanders fields the poppies blow/Between the crosses row on row..." The red poppy was the only thing that would grow in the aftermath of the devastating battles. When Moina Michael, an American poet read the work she got the idea to sell poppies to help needy ex-soldiers. The first official poppy day was organized by the Royal British Legion in 1921. Since then, sales of the red paper poppies have gone to help needy ex-soldiers and promote Veterans Programs.

The Woburn Historical Society would like to extend a sincere thank you to the Reeves fourth grade class as well as their teachers Danielle Macdonald, Meredith O'Keefe and Karen Dines.

## Old Battle Road update

Discussion between the Historical Society, the Woburn Historical Commission, city officials and the developer who was planning to build a ten home subdivision next to Old Battle Road, continue on a positive note. After a number of meetings, the developer is proposing to sign over to the City of Woburn, ownership to the two house lots at the Wall Estates subdivision that are adjacent to the Battle Road that would have been excavated and blasted. They would remain untouched under this new proposal.

In addition, he is also proposing to give the City a 35-foot easement along the entire length of the property that he owns down to Cambridge Road. This is a terrific plan and goes a long way to ensuring the preservation of Old Battle Road in perpetuity along this stretch!

In return, the developer will ask the City for a zoning change on a parcel of land he currently owns on Lexington Street. Although this proposal still requires significant input from neighbors, abutters and the city, it is hoped that we can have a resolution before long.

## 3rd Annual Cemetery Tour a Big Hit

*by Joe Crowley*



Christopher and Clare Hurley portray Captain Thomas Sullivan, intrepid sailor and founder of the YMCA, and his wife Elizabeth.

One of the Society's most popular programs was the third annual cemetery tour which was conducted this year on Sunday, October 19<sup>th</sup>. Sponsored by Century 21 Crowley and Northern Bank & Trust, this year's event was held at the old section of Woodbrook Cemetery on Salem Street, which was first opened in 1845 and contains gravesites dating back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Under clear, but chilly skies, the 200+ people who attended were split into several smaller groups and were delighted by the stories narrated by individual tour guides John McElhiney, Sue Ellen Holland, Jim Major and Kathy Lucero.

During the well-organized tours the guides pointed out not only the backgrounds of the old Woburn families buried there, but also discussed the many unusual symbols engraved on the monuments and their meaning

Additionally, a number of sites hosted actors dressed in period costumes who brought the narratives to life with humorous yet poignant first-person anecdotes.

Once restricted to Protestant burials only, the oldest sections of Woodbrook represent an era that saw Woburn change from a rural-based economy to a bustling industrial center. Its monuments and gravestones stand as a testament to some of its most famous citizens.

For those of us who have driven past many of these monuments and briefly wondered about their background and meanings, the tour provided a wonderful opportunity to have these questions answered and to gain a further appreciation for the city's rich history.

*A DVD of the tour is now available! See page 7 for the order form.*



John Paladino and Lois Surrette as patriot Sylvanus Wood and his wife Deborah.



Richard Griffin, author of *Three Years a Soldier*, portraying his great grandfather, Civil War Veteran George Perkins.

## An Interview with ... William Campbell

by Clare L. Hurley



William C. Campbell was appointed City Clerk of Woburn in 1997. He is a member of the Executive Board of the Massachusetts City Clerks Association and its immediate past President, as well as Massachusetts Local Election Official of the U.S. Election Assistance Commission Standards Board where he is past Vice Chair of the Executive Board. Mr. Campbell is a member of the New England Association of City and Town Clerks, the Middlesex City and Town Clerks Association and The Election Center. He is a Justice of the Peace, a Director of the Burbeen Free Lecture Fund, Chair of the Woburn Student Government Day Program, and a former Ward Two Alderman and President of the Woburn City Council. He is a graduate of Boston College, the University of Bridgeport School of Law and Woburn Senior High School. He has been a member of the Massachusetts Bar since 1985. Prior to his appointment as City Clerk, he practiced as an attorney in Boston and Woburn. He and his wife Joanne Campbell, who has shared her singing talent at many community events, have two children; Elizabeth and John. He is also co-author with John McElhiney, Robert Maguire and Thomas Smith of "Woburn: Forgotten Tales and Untold Stories."

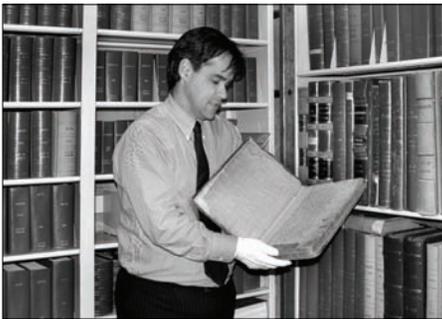
**Q.** What is the location, content and scope of the city's historical and genealogical records in City Hall? Are there other sources of such records?

**A.** The most important historical records in the city's possession are located in a small vault in the city clerk's office. Keep in mind that the city was settled in 1640 and that the present City Hall was not constructed until 1931. We are fortunate to have a complete and continuous set of books containing town and city records from 1640 to the last city council meeting in that vault.

It is testament to the dedication of past town and city clerks. About ten years ago, new shelving was installed. This allows all of the birth, marriage and death records, along with other important city records, to be stored in a safe and organized manner. All vital records prior to 1916 are available at the Massachusetts State Archives.

**Q.** How does the public gain access to these records, and how are they typically used?

**A.** Special care has to be taken when handling the city's records as most are one of a kind. However, if no one can ever gain access to those records, they really in a sense have no value. The office tries to accommodate requests to view particular records by appointment. One distinction is our vital records, which are integrated records. That is, although all records for one year are bound in one book, some of the records are not open to inspection for a number of reasons, such as adoption or being born out of wedlock. It would be impossible to allow the book to be open to public inspection without unavoidably disclosing these impounded records. That is why requests for vital records are made on an individual basis with the research conducted by the staff.

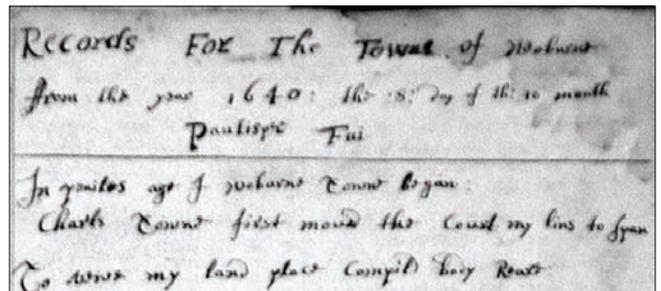


**Q.** What is the process for viewing/obtaining copies of these documents, and to what extent can your office provide assistance?

**A.** For vital records prior to 1900, an excellent resource is available at the Woburn Public Library. The vital records from 1640 to 1900 are listed alphabetically by last name and then chronologically under the name. A list of records can be composed by referring to that book and then left with the city clerk to pull the records and produce the certified copies. Some of the records are simply ledger entries and early records have little data. If there is a document in existence, it is copied onto a certificate template. The office maintains an index of all vital records from 1900 to present, which the staff consults to fulfill requests.

**Q.** What improvements can be made to protect historical records and increase their availability for research?

**A.** The preservation of local records is left to local communities using private preservation companies. There are a number of communities that have invested in excess of \$200,000.00 cleaning, de-acidifying, rebinding, microfilming and digitizing their records. Although there are security measures, it can be disquieting for a clerk to give up records for several weeks. The cost can be great as well, as much as \$1,500.00 for one book is not untypical. The Secretary of State should muster resources to establish a mobile preservation program. A secure and properly equipped vehicle could visit communities over a period of time so that records can be repaired, preserved and duplicated within the confines of the community. Even if the costs cannot be fully borne by the State, the economy of scale would certainly reduce the costs to the communities.



**Happy Holidays to Our Friends and Members!**

**Seasons Greeting**

**from all of us at the Woburn Historical Society.**

**Our Best Wishes go out to all for a New Year filled with  
good health,  
good fortune and  
happiness.**

**Thank You**

**for your continuing support and  
we look forward to seeing you in 2009.**



**WOBURN HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
www.WoburnHistoricalSociety.com  
Info@WoburnHistoricalSociety.com  
(781) 287-0260

**DVD ORDER FORM**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_  
City, State Zip \_\_\_\_\_

TITLE	PRICE	QTY	TOTAL
Family Farms of Woburn 1860 - 2007	\$18		
History of the Woburn Police Department	\$18		
Narrated Tour of the First Burial Grounds - 2007	\$18		
Pathway of the Patriots - 2007	\$18		
Pathway of the Patriots - 2008	\$18		
Third Annual Cemetery Tour - 2008	\$18		
Woburn: A Leather City	\$18		
Woburn: "Over There" - World War I	\$18		
<i>Prices include shipping and handling within US</i>			<b>ORDER TOTAL</b>

Make check payable to: Woburn Historical Society  
Mail to: PO Box 91  
Woburn, MA 01801



**WOBURN HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
**A Society of Dedicated Friends**

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**Woburn Historical Society**  
**2008/2009 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.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City, State & Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell/Work phone \_\_\_\_\_

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

Individual Membership \$25.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Family Membership \$35.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Student Membership \$10.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Business/Organization/Benefactor/Other \_\_\_\_\_

Membership application also available  
at  
[www.WoburnHistoricalSociety.com](http://www.WoburnHistoricalSociety.com)

*Please forward membership application along with your check made out to "Woburn Historical Society" to  
PO Box 91, Woburn, MA 01801*