

April 2013



Quaboag Historical Society

Quaboag Historical Society Spring Newsletter

April Hath 30 Days

It is very strange that our pulses thrill
At the sight of a voiceless thing,
And our hearts yearn so with tenderness
In the beautiful time of Spring.
(Farmer's Almanac, 1866)

President's Message

Greetings Everyone! Spring has sprung and although there is still a touch of late winter in the air, the crocuses blooming in my garden tell me that warm temps will be here for good in no time at all! The next few months will be busy ones for the Society. The Annual Meeting will be held on April 28th and the museum will open its doors again on May 4th. The Executive Board will begin planning the summer/fall picnic very soon as well and we hope to host a few events at the museum over the next several months. We are currently in the process of organizing traveling history programs, such as the "History on the Road" series from OSV, for all the Elementary schools in the Plantation. One of the Society's goals is to educate people about our regional and local history and the children of our area are a good place to start. We are always open to ideas from our membership, so if you know of a good speaker, activity or program, please don't hesitate to contact someone on the Board. We would love to hear from you! Hope to see many of you at the Annual Meeting...it should be a great one!

Amy Dugas, Co President

Lucy Stone Achievement Award and J. Irving England/Jane L. England Award

Every year, the Society likes to acknowledge individuals in the Plantation who give back to their community through active volunteerism. Our towns would not be as wonderful as they are if we did not have so many great people who generously donate time and energy at their churches, schools, on town committees and at many of our favorite local events.

This year, the **Lucy Stone Award** will be presented to two deserving individuals-**Lois O'Leary and Wilfred Steadman**. Both have dedicated many years to making their town a better place for everyone who lives there. The **Irving England Award**, which is given to a citizen of West Brookfield in recognition of outstanding community service will be presented to **Lee Lyons**. Ms. Lyons has significantly contributed to the betterment of West Brookfield through years of volunteerism. All will be presented with their awards at the Annual Meeting. Come by and show your support!

The Dorcas Society: A Little Known Group with A Lot of Heart



While going through the museum collection a few years ago, I came across a large basket and a few linens with a note attached stating that it was from the Dorcas Society. I had never heard of this Society and was curious about its background but never investigated further. While thinking of a topic for this newsletter, I decided to revisit the relatively unknown group known as the Brookfield Dorcas and Reading Society.

The internet describes a Dorcas Society as a local group of woman, usually based in a church, with a mission of providing clothing and aid to those in need. The society is named after a woman named Tabitha, also called Dorcas, whose life of gener-

osity and good will is described in the Acts of the Apostles. Dorcas was well known for her good works and charitable deeds in her community and her church. She was a strong woman with deep religious beliefs and she helped many widows and their children by sewing warm garments for them to wear. Her selflessness was appreciated by many and she was commonly known as the “Queen of the Needle”.

When Dorcas died, she left her community grief-stricken. The church called for the Apostle Peter, who was in a neighboring city, to come to them. They obviously had heard of Peter’s supernatural power and hoped that he might return their greatly-loved patron to them. When he got there he found that the widows Dorcas had helped had laid her out and prepared an eloquent eulogy on her life and character. Apparently this scene touched Peter’s emotions because he prayed and raised Dorcas from the dead.

While Dorcas was greatly loved and respected among her people, it seems that she wasn’t conscious of the significant work she was doing and of its far-reaching consequences. Her tireless efforts helping those in need influenced many other woman throughout time to establish their own Dorcas Societies.

The Brookfield Dorcas and Reading Society followed many of those same principles and activities mentioned above. The Society was established on October 22, 1818 as an all-female society whose goal was to “contribute of our mite (sic) for the benefit of the poor and necessitous at the same time to improve the manners, cultivate the mind and reform the heart”. They formed a Constitution and elected officers. The first president of the Society was Charlotte Holt and Caroline Field was the Secretary and Treasurer. Each meeting was closed in prayer, “As we wish to be directed by infinite wisdom that whatever we do may be for the Glory of God and the edification of our immortal souls”.

(Information taken from <http://www.historyswomen.com/womenoffaith/Dorcas.html> and from papers on file at the Quaboag Historical Society Museum)



Dorcas Society-1927 Back Row: Mrs. Loveland, Mrs. Walker, Mrs. Sanford, Mrs. Bennett, Nellie Hayden, Mrs. Donaldson, Mrs. Bell, Mrs. Altheda, Mrs. Holmes, Hattie Spooner, Mrs. Julius Thompson, Mrs. Hair, Mrs. Reed, Miss Taylor, Mrs. Richardson **Front Row:** Mrs. Tinker, Tammy Foster, Mrs. Bell

If anyone has any more information or images associated with the Brookfield Dorcas and Reading Society please contact Amy Dugas at amydugas@charter.net or at 508-867-5428

Creating Authentic Historic Landscape Settings

I am constantly adding new plants to my flower beds and lately I have really tried to focus on native species and plant varieties that are beneficial to butterflies, bumble bees and hummingbirds. Recently, I came across a really fun book that I had picked up a few years back entitled “Landscapes and Gardens for Historic Buildings” by Rudy and Joy Favretti. It covers all areas of American landscape design but also includes a listing of authentic plants for period landscape settings. So, with spring upon us and visions of flowers and gardens in my head, I figured I would end this newsletter with a brief listing of historic plants that you just might want to add to your garden this year.

Annuals and Perennials: 1776-1850

Anemone, Columbine, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Goat’s Beard Spirea, False Indigo, Bell-flower, Centaurea, Cleome, Delphinium, Dianthus, Foxglove, Echinacea, Gentian, Sunflower, Iris, Liatris, Lily, Lupine, Narcissus, Phlox, Valerian, Sedum

Annuals and Perennials: 1850-1900

Acanthus, Yarrow, Monks Hood, Agapanthus, Hollyhock, Alysum, Anemone, Aster, Clematis, Coreopsis, Dahlia, Delphinium, Snowdrop, Baby’s Breath, Hellebore, Hosta, Liatris, Lily, Bee Balm, Evening Primrose, Poppy, Scabiosa, Thyme, Mullein, Dusty Miller, Coleus, Pansies



Take Care and See You All at the Annual Meeting!

er great event with food, music, kid's events and upwards of 100 vendors.
Time to celebrate spring! What better way to do that than by enjoying a beautiful day on the West Brookfield Common with friends and family. It will be another great event with food, music, kid's events and upwards of 100 vendors.

18th, 10-4

Asparagus Flower and Heritage Festival: West Brookfield Town Common, May

This year we will have another exciting speaker. Ann Marie Shea, author and actor, will present "Madame Secretary, Frances Perkins"; a program about the first woman to be appointed to a Presidential Cabinet position. Ms. Shea is Professor Emerita at Worcester State College and has a Ph.D. in Educational Theater from NYU. The reviews have been excellent! Reservations need to be received by April 19, 2013. Cost: \$30.00/person

QHS Annual Meeting: April 28, 2013 at Salem Cross, 12:30-4:30

Upcoming Events:



Quaboag Historical Society
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