

Quaboag Historical Society Summer Newsletter

September 2014



Quaboag Historical Society

President's Message

Greetings everyone ! I hope the newsletter finds you all happy and healthy. Fall is upon us once again...the summer just flew by as always! There are a few fun events included in this newsletter so mark your calendars. The museum will also be open most Saturdays until the end of November, 11-2, so stop in and visit sometime. On October 25th there will be fall event at the museum (see inside) so I hope to see many of you there. Take care....

Amy Dugas , President

Fall Event at the Museum

The Society will be hosting a fun-filled fall event at the museum on Saturday, October 25th from 11-3. There will be music, snacks, a historical-themed scavenger hunt and "yard" sale. Books, old newspapers and items not related to the Plantation will be for sale along with recently published books by local authors. The scavenger hunt will take people to 5 locations in West Brookfield where they can learn about local history. Maps and small stamp books will be available at the museum and stamps will be placed at each location. Prizes will be given to those who visit all 5 areas and stamp their booklets. Come on by!

Wheelers Surprise" unveiled at New Braintree Historical Society fete -By Ruth M. Lyon

The public was invited to "a special afternoon visit with Russell Buzzell" and a very special Sunday afternoon it was. The New Braintree Town Hall was alive and abuzz with excitement; there were empty seats, but only because all of the people were on their feet, perusing the walls filled with a dazzling display of one man's works, spanning nearly half a century. Eager buyers lined up to purchase prints of numerous of his works., including this latest opus.

Russell Buzzell, an artist of national stature, has devoted much of his time over a period of five years to his painting of New Braintree's epic moment, Wheeler's Surprise. On Saturday, August 2, the 339th anniversary of the ambush that commenced the Nipmuck Indian attack on Quaboag Plantation, the long-awaited painting was unveiled.

And there they were, the Indians, concealed among the leaves and ferns before a stone wall, wearing hides and feathers and beads, muskets and arrows at the ready. Riding in single file beyond the wall are five of the about twenty horsemen led by Captain Thomas Wheeler and Ephraim Curtis. The men are watchful; there is tension in the air. From the audience, silence. Then, the applause, a thundering roomful of friends and admirers' tribute to a local man whose unassuming manner belies a huge talent.

But, that wasn't all. The "afternoon visit" was still to come, and a splendid visit it was. With wit, humor, and boyish charm, the self-effacing artist held the audience in thrall as he recounted his life on the family farm, his early introduction to art, his lessons in life - a stunning, memorable story. His listeners' faces revealed sheer delight as they laughed, shed a tear or two, and applauded in recognition of a man who'd mastered the art of living as he'd fine-tuned his giant ability to capture, with authenticity, verve, and appreciation, the world around him.

Russ Buzzell ambushed us, and we loved every minute of it.



North Brookfield has cause to celebrate. Again. A few months ago, the townfolk gathered on Main Street to witness the replacement of the bell tower to the Town House. Its gilt surface glittering in the sun, it inspired hope among many delighted watchers that something could finally be done to the storied remainder of the aging building.

Master carpenter Jeff Samuelson had taken on the job, a three year labor of love following hurricane damage to an already endangered structure. Insurance money helped with the estimated \$225,000 project, he said, adding that the cost of the gold leaf on the finial was donated by the family of the late John J. "Buddy" Lane.

The historic building, once the pride of a booming community, is a three and one-half story wood frame building, built in 1864 to a design by Elbridge Boyden and Son. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and has been the focus of more than one group seeking plans and funding for restoration. Over the past several years, Friends of the Town House has appealed for grants, donations, ideas, and memories from residents, staunchly maintaining before the public a positive attitude despite significant setbacks and a down economy.

A few days ago, retiring Massachusetts State Senator Stephen M. Brewer dropped by the Haston library and, in a well and happily attended gathering, presented a check for \$1 million toward the restoration. "No matching funds required," he smiled.

According to "Friends" spokesperson, Trish Miller, there is much to be done, many decisions to make, more dollars to be raised, and the committee is already moving forward.

But this month, it's the 150th birthday of the town's centerpiece. Is there going to be a party? You bet. The party begins at 1:00 p.m. on Saturday, September 20, on Main Street, in front of the birthday building - a block of pleasantly prominent proportions.

The intent, according to planner Simone Trela is to bring history to life in a manner meaningful to North Brookfield residents and a tip of the hat to the building that has long centered the community. Union Army recruits bid their family and their town farewell in front of the Town House when it was new. That occasion and others will be recognized in what well could be a series of Norman Rockwell moments.

A formal welcome will be accompanied by song and story in the form of historical music and addresses by prominent people. A Civil War Militia encampment will be present, vigilant, and who can resist a man in uniform? Youngsters may enjoy visiting the brave men, admiring the weaponry and military accouterments, or participate in numerous activities and games planned with them in mind. A horse-drawn wagon will convey visitors throughout the afternoon.

What's a party without music? Choral groups will perform period music - several periods - and a DJ will be there to enliven the occasion. Be sure to take time to participate in the "prizes for chance", a raffle to benefit the Town House Fund. You might want to wear a duster and a nice hat if you're participating in the car show, or just for fun. Parasols are acceptable.

Since it's a birthday, there will be cake and ice cream; take the time to sign the giant birthday card. Stay and enjoy the party until 5:00 p.m.

But that's not all. In a nod to the mid 20th century life of the Town House,, the evening will bring to life, this time at the North Brookfield Sportsmens' Club, the well-loved Town House Dance. Residents of a certain age will recall the weekly dances held in the ball-room of the then still-elegant building. They were the stuff of fluttering hearts, pretty dresses, and daring new moves by boys who knew there never was a blue suede shoe manufactured in North Brookfield.

The band, "Class Reunion," will play as you meet with old friends, enjoy the cash bar, and party hard at the 1960s ticket price of one dollar. Playing in the band will be a name of fame, Jack Mulhall, who played in the original Town House dance band, "The Kodels."



Jack and the present band's members credit one man, the late Carl Stoddard, with instilling the spirit and effort in the younger musicians to make possible the band of today.

The party, a fitting tribute to the town's grande dame of buildings, is being planned and presented by the North Brookfield Historical Society and the Friends of the Town House.

In the event of rain, the afternoon activities will be held on Sunday, September 21; the dance will be held as originally scheduled.

A 19th century photograph of North Brookfield Town House. This wonderful photo hangs in the window of the present town clerk's office. Sheila Buzzell said it was given to her by John Murphy.

WEST BROOKFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

Originally a part of Quaboag Plantation, the town of West Brookfield became independent by incorporating in 1848. Early industries included brickyards and factories for bookbinding and the manufacture of boots, hats, corsets, and condensed milk. The community's earliest days were also committed to education as rural school districts were established, boasting original school buildings that were able to be used through the 1950s. Over the years, many notable residents emerged, including Judge Jedediah Foster, who assisted in drafting the Massachusetts Constitution, and famous suffragist Lucy Stone. Brothers Daniel and Ebenezer Merriam established a printing house and bookstore in West Parish Brookfield. Today, residents and visitors enjoy West Brookfield's most popular attractions: the Rock House Reservation features 196 acres of boulders and stone outcrops and the 315-acre Lake Wickaboag is the scene of winter and summer activities, from icehouses to a nationally recognized water-ski club. The Quaboag Historical Society was founded in 1895, and 120 years later is still a vital part of the community.

Brenda Metterville, director of the Merrick Public Library, coauthored *Images of America: Brookfield*. William Jenkins's interest in local history began in the 1960s, initiating his collection of West Brookfield images, which is featured in this volume.

The *Images of America* series celebrates the history of neighborhoods, towns, and cities across the country. Using archival photographs, each title presents the distinctive stories from the past that shape the character of the community today. Arcadia is proud to play a part in the preservation of local heritage, making history available to all.



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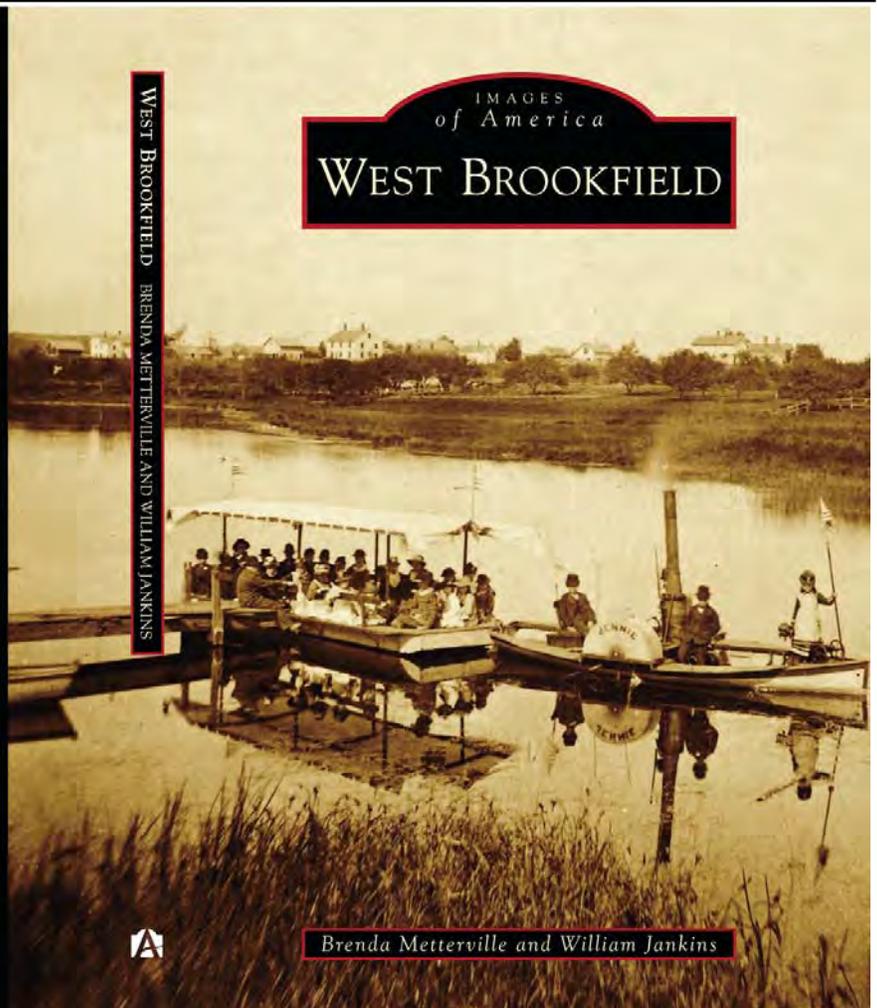


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IMAGES of America
WEST BROOKFIELD

WEST BROOKFIELD BRENDA METTERVILLE AND WILLIAM JANKINS



Brenda Metterville and William Jenkins

Look for this book, to be out soon. *West Brookfield*, by Bill Jenkins and Brenda Metterville, Arcadia Publishing's *Images of America*. 127 pages of photos and descriptions of West Brookfield people and places from the dawn of photography to mid-20th century.

West Brookfield's Bill Jenkins is known throughout New England for his knowledge of local history and his huge collection of photographs, dating from the dawn of photography.

Brenda Metterville, long time librarian at Merrick Public Library, has devoted hours of her time documenting and scanning the library's collection of vintage photographs, gathering the history behind them, and making them available to the public. That activity attracted the attention of Arcadia Publishing, publishers of the popular "Images of America" series. In 1912, "Brookfield," a highly readable and appealing book, appeared in bookstores, libraries, historical societies and other venues. In accordance with the Arcadia formula, each of the hundreds of photos are accompanied by no more than eighty words of copy. The book is divided into ten chapters, headed by titles such as "Business", "Disasters", and "Families, Farms and Homes", and offers a glimpse into the life and history of the New England small town, famous as the home of Elsie the Cow, between the late 1800s to mid 1900s. Brenda was assisted in her research and preparation by library assistants Andrea Simpson and Andrea Faugno. As news of the project spread, they say, people came forward with photos, oral histories, and other forms of assistance. The book is still available in limited quantities.

Fast forward to this year. Bill, who had loaned several of his photos for Brenda's project, decided the time had come to put his vast collection of West Brookfield photos, resource material and research into a form available to the public. Since then, he and Brenda have collaborated with Arcadia Press on this important and valuable work.

The two agree that it's tedious, it's exciting, it's exasperating, and it's almost ready to print. Selections, from among thousands, have been made and agreed upon, those eighty-word captions have been composed. The cover, shown here, has been agreed upon. Now, there's the final editing, the final agreement between all parties, and sales arrangements. Contracts with local distributors will be finalized.



Bill Jankins and Brenda Metterville, surrounded by reference material and photos. The cover of their book, "West Brookfield" has been prepared and approved. The book may be available in time for holiday gift giving.

If all goes well, they say, the book may be available in time for holiday gift-giving. When the books, filled with long-ago photos of the people, places and scenes we all know and love, are printed, local venues will have them on their shelves. That may include our own Quaboag Historical Society, where history begins in 1660 and is still being made.

Louise Jankins says she has grown accustomed to Bill's accumulation of postcards, papers, photos, books, atlases, t own reports, and other treasures. "We'll be heading to Brimfield soon, looking for a few more postcards," Bill said. "There are never enough; I'll never find all of them, but I have to keep ahead of Joe Shepard."

Keep an eye out for announcements about "West Brookfield." It could solve all of your holiday shopping problems.

A Brookfield Soldier's 1861 letter to his huggable Lucy in South Brookfield.

By Ruth M. Lyon

On November 16, 1861, George Adams, a 24 year old Army Private from Brookfield, wrote a fond letter to young Lucy Slayton, age 18, in South Brookfield. His occupation upon enlistment had been listed as "farmer". He joined Company I, 24th Mass. Volunteer Infantry on September 19, 1861. He wrote from Annapolis, Maryland, with barely two months of service behind him.

In his letter, to which I've added minor punctuation for ease in reading, he expresses his concern for her well being, his thoughts on the South and slavery, and his ideas concerning officers in the U.S. Army.

Sadly, he never returned home. He died of typhoid fever on May 24, 1862, at Newbern, North Carolina. His burial is not listed among burials in Brookfield Cemetery, which suggests that his body was interred in Newbern. His mother applied for a pension in 1880, and evidently received one. A local collector has allowed QHS the use of this poignant letter:

"My Dear Lucy,

I received a letter from you last Friday noon & a paper. I am glad to hear that you are better. I should think it was rather hard to go home sick and then have the work to do & have it to do with a sore thumb too, but you say that you have not had much scolding since your Mother went away, & that is some comfort aint it. I feel better today than I have since I was first taken sick. I am in hope I shall get smart again soon. The 25 & 27 have been in the front yard and staid over night. they are encamped about a mile and a half from here. I hope the 24th will come hear for I want to see the boys. I found 5 in the 25th that I knew that paper you sent me has been pretty well red. I see by that there is a number missing that I know. there seems to be two storys about Lyman Doane. One says he is among the missing and the other says he is wounded in the head. I think it must make Emma feel bad. It was a cruel thing to be cut up so they stood their ground as long as they could and fought like true Mass boys. The paper stated that General Scot has resigned & now the command is with General McClelland. I trust he is a good man and a good officer. I think we shall come out right in the end.

I was in the city the other day and I went in the old State House. I saw the picture of Washington and his staff. It represented him resigning his commission. The chairs and writing desks stood the same as they did when he resigned. The Southern citys do not look much like the citys in the North. I think it shows very plane what Slavery does for them.

It is Sunday here today and I suppose it is in Mass. If I was there you can guess where I should be tonight. I think there would be some comfort in hugging somebody. I think you can guess who it would be. I don't believe Martha will be content when she gets moved.

One of the boys just came in swearing about the Capt. because he made him do something that was useless but he had to do it just for the looks of the thing. We must do as our officers tell us and when we get into action why then we must fight for them but there is one thing about it we shall not be under them always. There is them that if they ever do get home they will be pretty apt to remember their officers. All they care for is to look out for them selves and the Devil take the hindermost . You must excuse me but it is just so.

Give my love to all the folks. My love to you Lucy. God bless you my dear girl.

From your friend George.

Please write as often as you can."

Lucy Slayton, born August 9, 1844, in Brookfield, was the daughter of Reuben and Louisa Slayton. The young soldier's letter suggests that her childhood may have been less than ideal.

The Martha who wouldn't like being moved was Lucy's sister. Emma remains a mystery.

In May of 1862, Jerome Nichols was on trial for adultery with Lucy Slayton. (Massachusetts Spy, May 28, 1862.) We haven't learned the disposition of that trial.

On Valentine's Day, 1864, she married George Ward, a soldier also from Brookfield, in Charlton. (His military record shows that he was discharged as a sergeant on December 2, 1863, re-enlisted on January 1, 1864, was wounded on June 2, 1864 at Bethesda Church, VA, and was discharged on September 24, 1864.) The couple had several children, including a son, Walter, who died of appendicitis at age 17. Her daughter, Carrie Rebecca Ward, was married to Lindsey Tyler Smith.

Lucy died of Consumption in Brookfield on September 6, 1863, at age 39. Lucy and George and other family members are buried in Brookfield Cemetery.

The friend George mentions, Lyman Doane, was also from South Brookfield; occupation, clerk. According to the National Aegis, (Worcester, MA, 9/21/1861) he married Carolyn F. Baldwin of Bristol, CT on September 12, 1861 in East Brookfield (still a part of Brookfield on that date.) He had enlisted prior to his marriage, and was a newlywed, age 26, when he was wounded on October 21, 1861.

He served in Co F, 15th Mass, was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in January 1862, and resigned holding that rank in July of that year.



Jim DiMaio, town forester, stands before a red maple tree on Collage Street. He assures us that this is one of the 43 trees planted by the Grange on November 11, 1919, in honor of West Brookfield's returning WWI veterans. The trees were planted on several town streets and on the common.

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Upcoming Event:



Quaboag Historical Society
PO Box 635
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