

# News from the Stow Historical Society

A newsletter for all friends of Stow history.  
Please feel free to pass it along to others who might be interested!

December 4, 2021

## In this issue:

- 1883: Civil War Tablet now online
- 1895: Women are registering to vote
  - *Celebrating Stow's Women*, published by the SHS
- 1903: Stone from Mt. Tom, Holyoke, MA – a story
- 1950's: Reminiscences and donations from Judy McConnell Anderson
- 1976: The formation of the Stow Unit of the League of Women Voters, donation from Kathy Borofsky
- Meet Stow's Alan Ferguson (1920-2002), donation from Jack Head
- SHS is seeking individuals to help facilitate planning, programming, and writing.

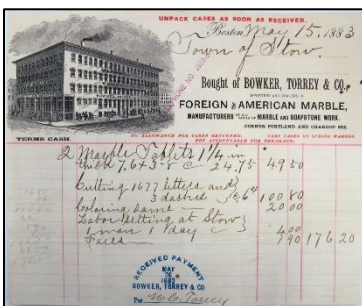
## 1883: Honoring Stow's fallen soldiers during the Civil War

On October 10, 2021, the SHS received an email from Patrick Browne.

"Yesterday I added a brief article on Stow's memorial tablet to the "Massachusetts Civil War Monuments Project." I thought it might be of interest to you. Feel free to share the link with anyone who you think might enjoy it.

<https://macivilwarmonuments.com/2021/10/09/stow/>

And thank you for allowing me access to the library back in 2019 (could it possibly have been that long ago?) to photograph the tablets."



Special thanks to Cyndy Bremer and *The Stow & Bolton Independent* for printing out the tribute in its entirety on October 20, 2021.

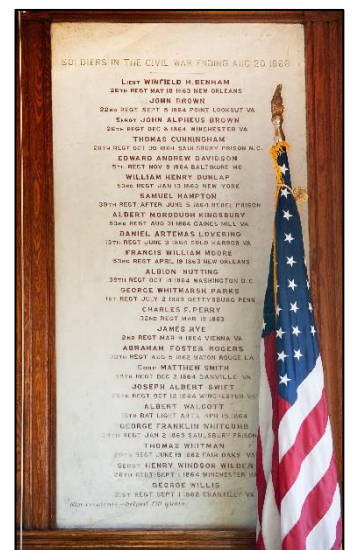


Photo by Dwight Sipler

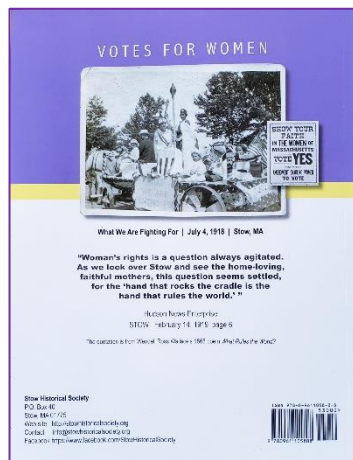
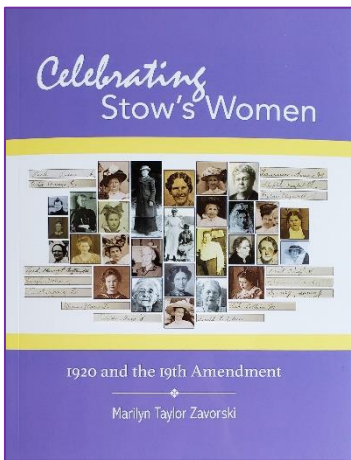
← The Town of Stow's bill from Bowker, Torrey & Co., Boston, May 15, 1883, for the American Revolution and Civil War Memorial tablets.

125 years ago, seven Stow women registered to vote in the 1895 Massachusetts Referendum to allow women to vote in municipal elections. They were listed on page 70 in the *Stow's Registry of Voters 1884-1934* stored in the Town Vault. Their registration was unrecorded in Stow's history.

How were these records located? The idea of researching *Stow's women who registered to vote in 1920* began during the summer of 2019 when Freedom's Way National Heritage Area presented to area towns a platform for a 2020 celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, the mandating of equal voting rights.

The Stow Historical Society was eager to bring Stow's story to the public. It was not straight forward. The challenge morphed into a quest beyond all expectations. Slowly, a basic outline emerged. The research developed into stories within stories within stories, as the untold history of Stow's women and their right to register to vote was researched and written for the first time.

The SHS vaulted major obstacles. The first hurdle was that none of the Stow history books included any mention of Stow 1920 and the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment. There was no foundation upon which to build. The next hurdle was the closure of the Stow Town Vault from the summer of 2019 to the end of that year. The Stow Town Building was being refitted with a much-needed, new cooling and heating system. Nevertheless, planning was inching forward with programming tentatively scheduled for spring, summer, and fall of 2020. Then the epic of all obstacles, the coronavirus pandemic, stopped onsite research and in-person collaboration.



Nevertheless, the research and collaboration continued and after two years *Celebrating Stow's Women* was published in April 2021. The SHS continues to look forward to the time when in-person programming will be an actuality to truly celebrate Stow's women.

This limited-edition, 146-page book is printed in color and priced at \$20 – cash or check made out to the Stow Historical Society. Reply to this email or to [info@stowhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:info@stowhistoricalsociety.org). The books are also for sale at the Stow COA Gift Shop and the Randall Library.

Below are the names of these women who set the stage for the future.

Name	Age	Place of Birth	Birth/Death Dates	
Susan Ann Gates Peck	54	Stow	1841-1922	} Susan Gates Peck is John H. Peck's great grandmother.
Isabelle Leland Staples	54	Westborough	1840-1933	
Mary C. Parks Lewis	48	Stow	1847-1918	} These women are all related by marriage.
Susan Proctor Lawrence	51	Carlisle	1844-1927	
Elizabeth Gillespie Bolam	44	Scotland	1851-1923	} school teacher and 1 <sup>st</sup> Randall librarian
Annie C. Gates	34	Stow	1861-1940	
Fannie Robinson Gates	23	Groton	1872-1945	} related

**There are no known voting records for Stow between the years of 1895 and 1920.**



To immerse oneself into this era of women's suffrage movement local newspapers help relate feelings of the community. The October 31, 1895, *Concord Enterprise* (page 4) recorded that in Acton, "Five brave ladies of this village faced the registrars last Tuesday night, answered the usual questions and are now qualified to vote on election day on the question of woman suffrage."

The headline of the October 12, 1895, issue of the *Boston Daily Globe* (page 8):

**WOMEN ARE REGISTERING**

So Far About 900 Names  
Have Been Entered.

Most of the Prospective Voters are Women  
of Some Means.

"Housewife" is the Occupation of a  
Majority of Them.



The unnamed *Globe* correspondent clearly stated community thoughts. Here is an excerpt:

To judge from appearances the applicants have no peculiar traits to mark them from their sisters; they are neither eccentric, distinguished, erudite, nor droll, only just ordinary. It can easily be guessed from their gowns that they are neither rich nor poor, but belong to the solid, comfortable middle class. Their average age is 34.

Strange as it may seem the aggressive "new woman" has not, with a few exceptions, made her appearance yet at the old state house. Of course, they are all "new women" of a modified type, but they arn't horsey, and they

don't wear bloomers or do anything else to shock the officials.

"Housewife" is the occupation most of them are given to; of course some are wage earners, like the school teachers and bookkeepers, and there is also a good smattering of professional women, but both classes are very much in the minority. The bulk of the 900 so far registered are home makers.

There is a serious side and a humorous side to this registration business.

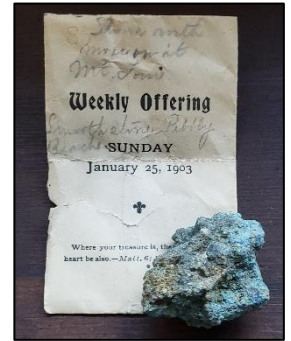
The sight of so many earnest women—not a few of them gray haired—eager to use their franchise is enough to make one put on his thinking cap. What do they want to vote for? Are they merely tired of sex restriction, or do they think it cruel and unjust? Is it for the pursuit of novelty or the cause of reform that they are going to the polls?

“they arn't horsey” could mean in a rude way that the women's faces remind one of a horse or characteristic of manners of horsewomen

Stow's mighty seven women's average age was 44. They all recorded their occupation as either housewife or housekeeper. Interestingly, Susan Proctor Lawrence was Stow's librarian, Stow's first, yet she stated her occupation as housewife. Five of these women went on to register again in 1920, even though that was not necessary. Mary C. Parks Lewis died in 1918 and Fannie Robinson Gates had moved to Hudson. Susan Gates Peck, Isabelle Leland Staples, Susan Proctor Lawrence, and Elizabeth Gillespie Bolam are featured in *Celebrating Stow's Women*.

## Whitney Historical Room of the Randall Library

Since 1924 when the bequests from the four Whitney siblings funded the building of this addition to Randall Library, *Stowites*, their extended families, and their friends have been adding artifacts to vintage oak display cases. In 2017 as the artifacts were packed up for storage before the restoration of the historic part of the library, a collection of shells and minerals caused the SHS and SHC to pause and question why these were here. There were most definitely relevant stories behind them when they were added, but they have been lost to time. Recently, the SHS revisited the minerals, which have been sitting on a shelf offsite. One caught our attention. ➡



**Stone with  
moss on it  
Mt. Tom**

### 1903

Whoever collected it wrote the stone's label on a *Weekly Offering* envelope for Sunday, January 25, 1903.

There could be a story here. First, Mt. Tom, Holyoke, MA was not truly accessible in January. So, was this specimen collected in 1903? It certainly is a possibility, since the Summit House on Mt. Tom was a major attraction then. A traveler from Stow might have taken the train from Worcester to Springfield to the Connecticut River Railroad north to Holyoke. At the base of Mt. Tom, the Holyoke Street Railway (trolley) built Mountain Park, which included a dance hall, a restaurant, a roller coaster, and carousel among its attractions. At the top of Mt. Tom was the Summit House!

In Central MA the Fitchburg and Leominster Street Railway built Whalom Park in Lunenburg in 1893. This Park featured gardens, walking paths, and an amusement park. Stow residents took advantage of the trolley car service to Lunenburg.



“A special car” means a trolley car

**STOW 1909**

The Unitarian Parish will hold their picnic, July 29 at Lake Whalom. A special car will leave Stow Center at 8.30 a. m., which will accommodate all having tickets. The tickets will be sold to members of the parish at .50 round trip. All children enrolled in the Sunday school 12 years of age and under will be given tickets. Only 75 adult tickets will be sold for the special car. All friends of the parish not procuring tickets will be welcomed to join on the regular cars. Tickets may be had for members of the parish up to the number of 75 from Miss Evelyn Hearsey, Miss Bertha Lawrence, Miss Priscilla Harriman, Miss Ethel Fletcher.

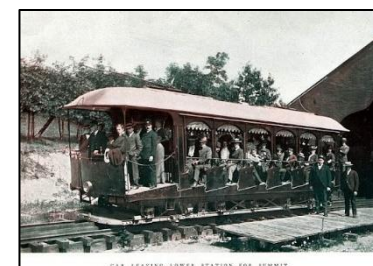


Unitarian Parish members at  
Whalom Park



The Summit House, Mt. Tom

To reach the Summit House one took the “Mount Tom Railroad,” which was a [funicular](https://lostnewengland.com/2014/04/mt-tom-summit-house-holyoke-mass-1/) railroad to the summit which was completed in 1897.



President and Mrs.  
McKinley, 1899 at  
the Summit House

YES, a person from Stow just might have been at the summit of Mt. Tom in the early 1900's.



**Stow, the 1950's**  
**Reminiscing with Judy McConnell Anderson, October 28, 2021**

“My family lived on Packard Road. My mom, Ruth McConnell, taught 1st grade with Mrs. Perkins and Mrs. Jenness at Pilot Grove, then Center School when it was built, and then Pompo...”

“When we moved to Stow in 1954, Franny Warren delivered milk to our house - he'd open the unlocked door and put it into the refrigerator. Mary Warren was not yet Librarian - that was Eleanor Smith, who lived across from where Center School is now.”

“Ellie Warren and Posie Peck took our Girl Scout troop for an overnight in the old cabin at the top of Pilot Grove Hill on the first weekend in November one year - Grandma Ethel Herrick was a troop leader, but she wasn't up to climbing the hill.”

“I only lived in Stow for a little over 5 years - 1954-1959 - before I went off to college, but Stow has always been my hometown...”



Pilot Grove Farm milk bottle,  
an artifact in the  
Whitney Historical Room

Note: Both Eleanor Smith (1891-1986) and Ethel A. Herrick (1888-1984) are featured in *Celebrating Stow's Women* as two of the first twenty-eight women to register to vote in Stow on August 14, 1920.

Judy donated to the Stow Historical Society a broad selection of documents and books. Included in these was an excellent copy of *Forever Oatmeal, The Way It Was*, by Emily Neilson Power, 1999. This copy is in a binder. The Randall Library has a copy on its shelf. She also included unlabeled photos from her mother's classrooms.

Please contact the SHS if you recognize the students and locations.



Classroom A



Classroom B



1976

## The formation of the Stow Unit of the League of Women Voters

October 2021 Kathy Borofsky, a long-time former Stow resident, donated to the SHS a file box of documents about the 1976 formation of the Stow Unit of the League of Women's Voters. Included in with the documents was a photo album. Let's take a look!



League of Women Voters marching in Stow Tercentenary Parade  
May 15, 1983 – a wet SpringFest day



Pam Resor and  
Pat Walrath  
Candidates Night  
Spring 2002



Carole Makary Ellen Sturgis Janet Wheeler



Candidates Night  
Spring 2004

Nancy and Don McPherson



## Remembering Stow's Alan Hearsey Ferguson

Son of Whitney Thorne Ferguson and Helen Elizabeth Hearsey

Born: December 12, 1920, Stow

Died: July 25, 2002

Setting the scene: Thomas and Maud Ferguson, the parents of Whitney T. Ferguson, moved to Stow in 1915 from Milwaukee, WI, buying the farm at Whitman's Crossing then known as the Beebe place and now known as Honey Pot Hill Orchards. In 1919 Whitney T. Ferguson married Helen Elizabeth Hearsey of Stow, a teacher at Newton High School. Maud L. Whitney Ferguson (1862-1924) and her daughter-in-law, Helen Elizabeth Hearsey Ferguson (1894-1987) registered to vote together in Stow on September 9, 1920.

November 2021 former Stow resident, Jack J. Head, donated an inch thick binder of cartoons and writings of his former neighbor Alan Ferguson. What a treasure this collection is! Alan with his keen sense of humor and artist flair not only was an artist, but a writer of hilarious plays. These plays were a source of anticipated delight for the residents of Stow. His cartoons were published in the *Castine* (ME) *Chronicles*, where the family summered, in *Yankee Magazine* and many others.

### How Cartoons Take Us Back to Square One

(Alan Ferguson lives in Stow — about a hundred yards from the farmhouse where he was born — with his wife, Martha, an artist and former school teacher, who critiques his work with "the fresh eye that finds the little things not quite right." As a child, he was always drawing when the other kids were out "pushing model cars around in the dirt." He had no particular vision. But then, no kid does. He just drew, he says, without thinking too much about it. His parents were just pleased that he wanted to do something. After high school, he enrolled at the Art Institute of Boston (now the Massachusetts College of Art) and then served in the Air Force during WW II in the Pacific — occasionally drawing cartoons for "Yank" magazine. Later, he picked up a teaching degree and taught art — alongside his wife — until 1973 in Stow schools. His cartoons have been published in *Esquire*, *New Yorker*, *Harper's*, the *Christian Science Monitor* and the *Boston Globe*. Two popular characters he drew for *Yankee* magazine — Earl and Waldo — are probably (although Alan refused to say) based on *DownEasters* from *Castine*, Maine, where the Fergusons spend summers. Alan describes himself as a "moderate talent. Creative, in my own way. I've learned to draw fairly well, but I'm no commercial artist. I can't draw pictures of chairs and shoes." A conversation with Alan Ferguson is full of intricate loops, quick leaps and unexpected tangents. For the interview, Jay McManus was advised to bring a tape recorder. Fortunately, he did.)



Alan Ferguson

**Q — Could you give us your definition of humor?**

A — I've been waiting for years for somebody to ask me that! To me, it's logic advancing on a very wide front. Now you can't laugh at totally illogical nonsense. It's too crazy. But you can travel out a little bit from the center. You say: if these two things are true, then this third thing ought to be true. And you laugh, because you never thought of it that way. You can travel further and further out, as long as you relate to some center of truth. Something that people know already.

**Q — In practice, how does a cartoonist achieve that?**

A — There are two basic techniques. You take a standard situation, and make a ridiculous application of it. Or you take a ridiculous situation, and tack a standard

application onto it. Here's an example of the first: you draw an igloo, a tiny outpost in the midst of this huge expanse of ice. Husband and wife greet a visiting couple, and the two men are talking. The visitor says: "Nice little place you got here." Now that's something everybody says, but the context makes it funny.

**Q — Then even a cliché can still be funny?**

A — Sure. Cliches work, as long as they're done well, because they parody themselves. The old "Desert Island" gag is a good example. It's a whole world in itself. Civilization in microcosm.

**Q — Where do you get your ideas?**

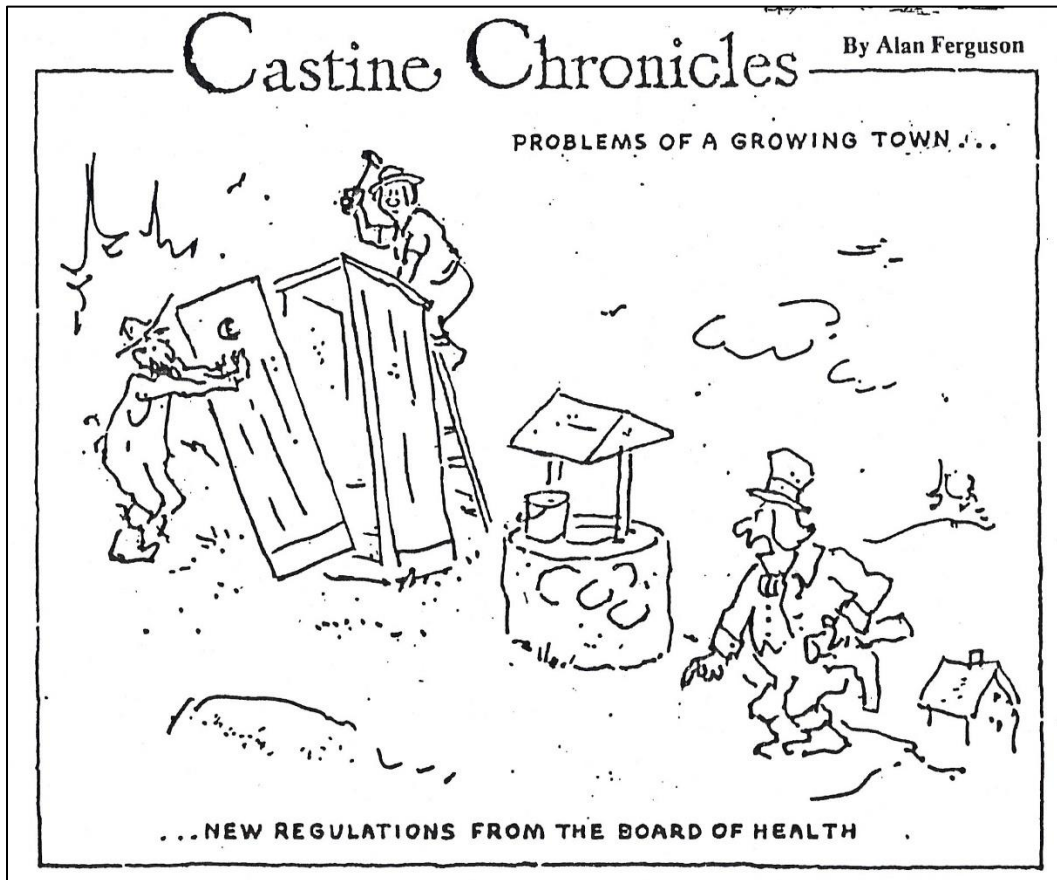
A — Some come from direct experience: digging clams, driving snowmobiles, attending church suppers or watching volunteer firemen. Some come out of conversation. Here's one: I drew two chess pieces, a king and queen. No legs, just bases, the way they appear on a chess board. They're arguing and the queen — obviously exasperated — says "Oh great! Now we're back to square one!" When I first heard that line, I immediately thought of squares. It's a flash thought. I seldom — if ever — say to myself "Aha! There's a cartoon in there!" It comes right away, or not at all. I have no trouble coming up with ideas. Most cartoonists don't. Well, some do — so they hire gag writers. But I want to create it myself. Otherwise, it's no fun. I'd just be an illustrator.

An undated newspaper article about Alan, which is in the binder.

*The Pompositticut*  
Hale High School yearbook  
1960

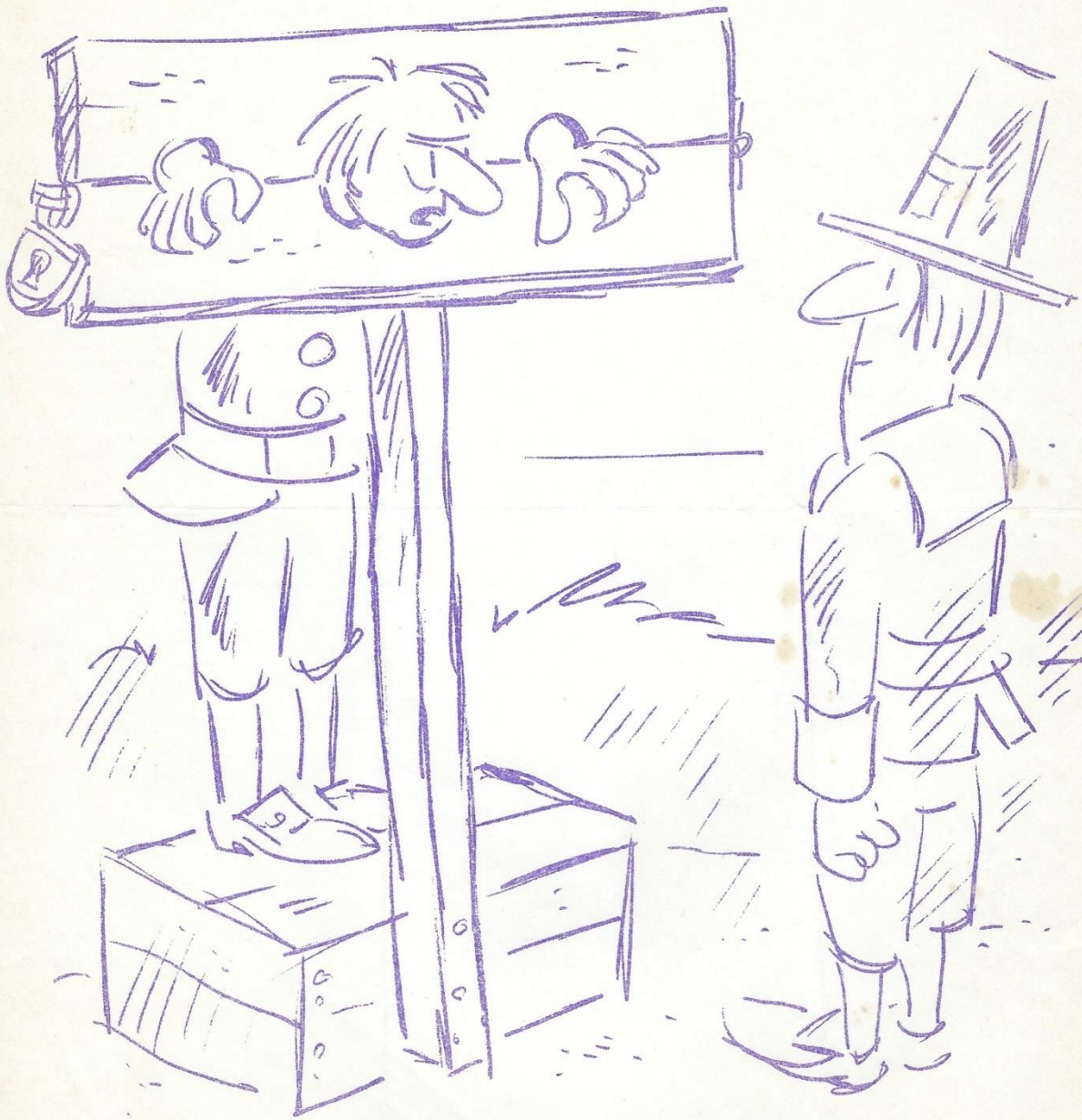


ART  
MR. ALAN FERGUSON  
School of Practical Art  
Mass. School of Art, B.F.A.





"IT ALL STARTED WHEN SHE SAID,  
"SPEAK FOR YOURSELF, JOHN!"



The ditto machine and the purple spirit masters!

This 1983 play had the cast and audience continuously laughing.



**FERGUSON PRODUCTION.** For many years, local resident Alan Ferguson wrote and produced a series of plays starring local aspiring actors. Here Bob Glorioso plays the Town Crier in Ferguson's production of Pompositicut Follies. Written in honor of the town's tercentenary, the play told Stow's history in only the way Alan Ferguson could tell it. It was staged in the First Parish Church.

*Images of America, STOW* by Lewis Halprin and Barbara Sipler, page 125

**Jack Head, thank you for this wonderful collection of cartoons and writings, celebrating Alan Ferguson.**

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**The Stow Historical Society encourages interested Stow residents to join our core group to help facilitate planning, programming, and writing.**

**The SHS is seeking a treasurer and a webmaster.**

**Wishing you all the happiest of holidays and New Year.**



A 1907 postcard