

STOW-INFO

Newsletter of the Stow Historical Society

Stow, Massachusetts

March, 2002

Harvard Map Curator To Be SHS Speaker At April 18 Meeting

David Cobb, curator of maps at Harvard, is on a quest for every map ever made of New England.

On Thursday, April 18, at 7 p.m. Cobb, who is a resident of Stow, will be the guest speaker at a meeting of the Stow Historical Society at the Town Hall.

The maps in the Historical Society collection of early Stow are well known to Cobb but he does have some surprises in store for local historians.

One of Cobb's ambitions when he joined Harvard in 1991 was to form a Center for the History of New England Cartography. Cobb is co-editor of "Mapping Boston," a treasury of maps of Boston over the centuries. This beautiful book is available at Randall Library and will be on display at the meeting.

Cobb has been curator of the map collection in the Harvard College Library since 1992. He's never been far from maps, with related positions in past years at the University of Illinois, Indiana University and the University of Vermont.

His current research involves the evaluation of geographical information systems in research libraries and manuscript maps in the Harvard map collection. He and his staff are experts in the technology of combining computerized statistics with geography, called Geographic Information Systems or GIS.



David Cobb

Gala Open House Set for Dedication Of New Town Quilt

Stow's new town quilt will be dedicated on Saturday, May 11, at 2 p.m. at a reception and open house at Town Hall, marking completion of long-awaited renovation projects at the historic 1848 structure.

The public is invited to the celebration, which will officially launch Springfest Week. All other Springfest

festivities will be held Saturday, May 18, and Sunday, May 19.

The large quilt, which will be the focal point in the main hall, was designed by Rosaria Colosi, quiltmaker and designer. In the center is a medallion of the Town Hall surrounded by blocks naming early landholders and others prominent figures in early Stow history. Other blocks feature designs representing local and state history. Reproduction fabrics in patriotic shades of red, white and blue depict designs produced in the 1800's in the mills in Lowell, Massachusetts.

The quilt was commissioned by the Town Hall Improvement Committee in 1999, and local quilters devoted more than 1,500 hours to the creation of the masterpiece. The quilters will be recognized at the celebration,

The celebration is a joint venture of the Quilt Committee, Town Hall Improvement Committee, Stow Historical Society and the Stow Historical Commission. An article about the Town Hall renovations is on page 2.

IT COULDN'T BE MORE BEAUTIFUL

The Town Hall is sparkling inside and out these days. Have you noticed the work going on in the old structure?

On the outside are new disability ramps for the lower level and the main hall. New lavatory facilities, fully handicapped accessible, have been installed. In the past few years, new lighting, fans, quality sound system, decorative woodworking and storage closets have been added to the main hall. Projection screens have been added upstairs and downstairs.

To complement the newly refinished floor, a new coat of paint will be added. Window shutters and swags will enhance the beauty of the stately old hall. A digital piano was provided through a grant from the Fieldstone Foundation.

These improvements have been orchestrated by the Town Hall Improvement Committee, and most of the physical labor has been done by members of the committee at no cost to the town except for material. The hard workers have been Ernie Dodd, Lew Halprin, Newell Dearborn, George Scraggs, aided and abetted by Richard Roggeveen, building inspector. Funds for the most recent improvements were voted at Town Meeting.

TOWN VAULT ARCHIVISTS STAR IN GLOBE ARTICLE

"The Town Vault may not be beautiful," the Boston Globe wrote in a feature article on February 14, 2002, but inside are countless hidden treasures and stories untold, say Stow's buoyant band of historical archivists.

Commenting on the 10-member Ancient Documents Committee, founded in 1973, the Globe said that local archivists are a rare breed—meticulous and single-minded, curious and filled with civic pride. "They don't try to contain their enthusiasm for preserving the town's past, and couldn't hope to anyway."

The Ancient Document Committee meets the first three Fridays of each month, January through June, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the COA office on the lower level of the Town Building. This town-appointed board is charged with acquiring, cataloging and preserving town

records. Each member pursues a specialty: maps, photographs, special projects, genealogical research, financial records, and family, church or school records. Interested townspeople are invited to call Barbara Sipler, chair, 897-5996.

GIFT FROM WARREN FUND

A beautiful display cabinet was given to the Stow Historical Society by the Warren Memorial Fund last spring in time for Springfest 2001. The glass cabinet is located in the historical meeting room on the lower level of the Town Hall. The first display traced the history of celebrations of the incorporation of Stow in 1683 at the centennial in 1783, bicentennial in 1883 and tercentenary in 1983. All materials were from the Town Vault collection. A new display will be prepared for Springfest 2002.

DO YOU HAVE AN OLD HOUSE?

Have you ever been to Randall Library to look up information on your old house? Karen Gray of the Stow Historical Commission has recently made the town's records of old houses much more user friendly.

Photographs and other data on period homes can be found in the newly recatalogued Inventory of Historic Resources. You will find this information in two blue three-ring binders in the library's reference room.

This inventory, compiled in 1982, was funded jointly by the town and the Massachusetts Historical Commission and was carried out by Architectural Preservation Associates. The time period covered is from Native American settlement to 1925.

Additional information on specific old homes can be found in the alphabetical files maintained by the Stow Historical Society at the library.

PRESERVING THE PAST

The Stow Historical Society and the Town Clerk worked together this month to preserve town records, an ongoing process. Town Reports for the past five years were bound. Also bound were Census Records, Vital Records, and copies of the new picture books on Lake Boon and Stow. The town sets aside funds each year for binding records, and the Stow Historical Society also contributes to the cost.



PUZZLE: Can you name the building in this 1900 photo of Lower Village Cemetery?

Stow Historical Society Receives Gifts

You never know where a treasure will turn up for the Stow Historical Society. This time it was in a Goodwill Store in Connecticut, and it is a Hale High School Reunion program from 1893. The program had the initials H.H.S.A only. The determined finders, a mother and daughter, used internet to locate our town, and the gift is now in the Town Vault.

Other donated treasures include photographs, maps, books, and other memorabilia. Many thanks go to the family of Jack and Bobby Head, Betty Holly, Dorcas Sefton, Ralph Case, Ralph French, Ray Frost, Montrese Jeffries and her daughter Vickie Jeffries-Rogers, Bill Woodhead Phil Moseley and John Makey.

A collection of photographs and other memorabilia from Indian Mill Farm, home of the butternut squash, has been used for the cover story in the 2001 Stow Town Report. This material is from Dorothy Leggett. Each year the Stow Historical Society selects the photographs and contributes an article for the annual report.

A listing of all Town Report cover photographs (1962-2000) has been compiled by Jody Newman for the photograph files in the Town Vault. These covers and accompanying histories are invaluable additions to the manuscript collection in the Town Vault.

WHAT'S IN THIS PHOTO?

If you look closely at an old picture, there's sure to be something puzzling or curious. And that's exactly what the photo of the old car in front of Lower Village Cemetery evokes. Are we in the wrong cemetery? What is that building?

And now we know. Going through old cemetery records in the Town Vault, the answer popped out. It's the old hearse house, which stood in the Lower Village Cemetery with the doors opening onto Great Rd. near the steps later given by the Whitneys.

Research revealed that the hearse house was built in 1850 at a cost of \$110 by T. Walcott, and R. Smith was paid \$3.27 in 1851 for hanging the doors at the hearse house. J. Brown was paid \$128.80 for building the hearse the same year. This information comes from the Annual Reports of the Selectmen in 1850 and 1851.

The reports noted that Wm. F. Goddard was paid \$3.75 for ringing the bell for 7 deaths and funerals and L. Taylor, \$3.00 for ringing the bell for 2 Town Meetings and 5 deaths and funerals

In a letter dated 1962, the late Mrs. Marshall Lewis explained that the sexton of the Meeting House rang the bell when a death occurred. He tolled the bell at sundown; if for a male two strokes were given, for a female, three strokes. Then the bell was struck telling the age of the deceased. It was the custom to toll the bell from the time the hearse and carriages of mourners left home in procession to the burial place.

Lower Village and Hillside cemeteries are town treasures and a magnet for genealogical researchers. Lower Village Cemetery was established soon after the incorporation of the town in 1683 and Hillside Cemetery in 1812. Maps showing burial plots and information on each stone can be found in the Town Clerk's office and Randall Library. Computerization of these vital records was a major project of the Ancient Documents Committee in the 1980's.

THE STOW HISTORICAL SOCIETY WANTS YOUR ATTIC TREASURES—OLD PHOTOS OF STOW OR YOUR OLD HOUSE, OR ANY OTHER HISTORIC ITEMS. WE CAN COPY YOUR PHOTOS OR PAPERS AND RETURN THEM. PLEASE CALL 897-5996

STOW HISTORICAL COMMISSION PLANS THREE SUMMER EVENTS

Three summer celebrations are in the planning by the Stow Historical Commission, each to take place at the Stow West School on Harvard Rd.

The first, on Sunday, July 14, will feature the Stow Minutemen dressed in uniform, complete with music and demonstrations. Children also will be invited to participate in a variety of school activities, appropriate to the 1850's.

The next event, Sunday, August 11, will feature Patty Selin as the costumed teacher re-enactor, and Dorothy Sonnichsen, also in costume, playing the harp as musical entertainment. Children again will take part in school activities. This event will be partially sponsored by the Stow Historical Society.

The last event is scheduled Sunday, September 8, and plans are being worked out.

The Historical Commission is in charge of the old school, a brick one-room schoolhouse used by Stow through most of the early 1800's and beyond. These special expanded summer programs will replace the practice in the past of having the school open every Sunday in the summer. It is expected that these special events will attract a larger crowd, especially children, to visit the school, one of few well preserved old school houses in the state.

Funds for this project have been obtained from the Stow Cultural Council, and partial support will come from the Stow Minutemen, Stow Historical Society and Boy Scout Troop 1.

**Stow Historical Society
380 Great Road
Stow, MA 01775**

DATES TO REMEMBER

- Thurs., April 18:** Stow Historical Society
7 p.m., Town Hall
Speaker, David Cobb
Harvard Map Curator
- Sat., May 11** Quilt Dedication
Reception, Open House
2 p.m., Town Hall
- Sat., May 18** Springfest
10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Displays
Historical Room, Town Hall
Stow Historical Society and
Stow Historical Commission
plus Stow West School
- Sun., May 19** 1 p.m., Town Hall
Old-time Music Concert
- Three Sundays** Special Events
July 14, Aug. 11 Old School Days
and Sept. 8 Stow West School
Sponsored by Stow Historical
Commission

SPECIAL SPRINGFEST MUSIC

On Sunday, May 19, Billy Novick, clarinet, and Guy Van Duser, guitar, will entertain at 1 p.m. at a free concert as part of Springfest. They will play old-time music accompanied by projection of old photos of Stow from the collection of the Stow Historical Society. The program is part of the Robert Johnson Jazz series sponsored by the Stow Cultural Council. Lew Halprin has arranged the program.