



## President's Overview



**A New Name for the Society!** The Board of Directors has decided to change our name to "Medford Historical Society & Museum (MHSM)." There are many good reasons for this change. In the last few years we have increased our emphasis on our collection, including cataloging, research, and rotating exhibits in our main hall. You may recall that the most significant part of our collection, General Lawrence's collection of Civil War photographs, was actually "lost" in the building for many decades until its rediscovery in 1990. More recently, additional amazing discoveries have been made as we systematically catalog our collection.

We are still a "Society" of people with an interest in history, but adding "Museum" to our name emphasizes our value to the community. We are a repository for Medford's history and seek to preserve and enhance our collections for future generations. As we have found with our programs for elementary school students, historical objects speak much louder than just words on a page.

**Peter Tufts House – Progress Continues** Under the leadership of Beth Hayes, we have completed stabilization and protection of the property. Improvements include upgraded locks, sealing air leaks, and installing a security system.

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### Society Officers

President **John Anderson**

Vice President **Kyna Hamill**

Treasurer **Ruth Roper**

Assistant Treasurer **Mike Oliver**

Recording Secretary **Jay Hurd**

Corresponding Secretary **Susan Fedo**

Director of Collections **Barbara Kerr**

### Directors at Large

**Stanley Eckstein**

**Luke Pomorski**

**David Fedo**

**Joan Quigley**

## Scandal and Intrigue! Railroad Line Extension Threatens Medford!

by John Anderson

One hundred years ago the Medford Historical Society *Register* reported on a dispute that was already 60 years old. With our municipal elections this fall, I think this makes interesting reading.

People often complain that politics sometimes becomes personal and bitter and political feuds continue for decades. Surely, there was a more polite, genteel age! This is not so, as revealed in the October, 1913 *Register*. This dispute from 1853 is also reminiscent of the recent controversies regarding the extension of the Green Line to Medford.

In the 1850s, developers were interested in connecting the railroad in Stoneham to either the Lowell line in West Medford or the Medford Branch in East Medford and the square. In 1853, work began, and it was graded from Stoneham well into Medford when its construction was suddenly stopped. What happened?

The October, 1913 *Register* published a rather bitter and partisan account by Caleb Swan, written in 1856, a brother of the two Swans to whom he refers:

"The Stoneham Rail Road was intended by its projectors in Stoneham only to go to Winchester, where the Lowell cars go to Boston 11 times a day, —in an evil hour the route was changed, to come down through Medford...coming through the heart of town.



*View of Stoneham branch of the railroad, which had been graded into Medford as far as Sugar Loaf Hill/Winthrop Street.*

The Town was entirely opposed to it and at a Town Meeting a vote was passed intending to instruct the Selectmen to oppose it – but the vote was worded...for the Selectmen 'to do what they thought most for the interest of the town,' and, under this wording they favored the road, Mr. P.C. Hall being chairman of the selectmen.

In locating the road through Mr. Swan's land...*it laid out down through the garden, within thirty feet of the house...* when the proper and natural route, was along through the meadow not Six Rods distant from the garden, —more level and as short a distance.

To protect their property from this wanton destruction, Dr. Swan...and B. L. Swan brought suits in the Supreme Court against the road on the ground that the [Railroad] Stock had not been taken by *responsible parties*, as required by the Charter.

Cahill, of Worcester, the contractor who took \$55,000 of the Stock was proved to be

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## President's Overview *continued*

ty system that will guard against break-ins, freeze-ups, water in the basement, and fire. At the same time, we are creating a project list with associated costs to be used for grant applications.

The committee is also discussing alternative uses for the house, including reserving portions of the house for antique house research or display space. We are investigating what can be done within the City's zoning laws and how we can provide the off-street parking which is currently lacking.

**Garden Club Initiative** We are grateful to the Medford Garden Club for their efforts in replanting our front garden. A volunteer work crew of Tufts University freshmen got things started in early September, digging up a number of plants that were saved from the "big dig" which followed a few weeks later. We contracted with Steve Tuden, a local landscaper, and his crew removed stumps and many of the plants that have become overgrown in the past few years. The Garden Club designed, purchased, and installed the plants you now see in our front yard. We are very grateful for their efforts!

**Jingle Bell Festival House Tour** Just as we benefited from the work of the Garden Club, we are helping other local organi-

zations. We are decorating and opening 10 Governors Avenue for the Jingle Bell Festival House Tour, organized annually by our long time member, Judy Lonergan, and her committee of volunteers. Over the years, this event has raised thousands of dollars for local charities, and we are delighted to be able to support their work.

**A Problem at 10 Governors Avenue** Our "historic" oil-fired furnace has failed with a cracked heat exchanger. It could be worse; it could have happened in February, but it is still a serious problem. Electric space heaters are doing the job, more or less, for the moment. We are obtaining bids on replacement equipment and analyzing our options. As anyone who has updated their heating recently knows, this is shockingly expensive. This is a good way to transition to the next topic in my column.

**Annual Appeal and Membership** Our annual appeal letter will be coming out shortly. Please give as generously as possible so our work can continue. For those of you who haven't renewed for 2013, this is a chance to do it all at once!

—John Anderson

## Historical Fells Slides Viewed at St. Botolph Club Again After 120 Years

by Kyna Hamill and Mike Ryan



*Kyna Hamill and Mike Ryan showed lantern slides of the Fells that had not been viewed at the St. Botolph Club since George Davenport presented them in 1893.*

History came full circle on the evening of September 25, 2013 when twenty-two members of Boston's St. Botolph Club viewed a slideshow of images from the Fells. These images were previously presented to the Club during a Wednesday-night "Smoke Talk" by George E. Davenport on May 10, 1893.

The up-to-date presentation, entitled 'How the Lantern slides of George Davenport helped create the Fells Reservation', was presented by Kyna Hamill and Mike Ryan at the Club's headquarters on Commonwealth Avenue. This slideshow was also given at the Medford Public Library in April, 2013.

According to the Medford Historical Society *Register* of December, 1936, Davenport, a Medford resident, botanist and cofounder of the Medford Historical

Society, led the cause for the creation of the Fells as a protected reservation following the death of Elizur Wright in 1885. It is an interesting coincidence that the St. Botolph Club and the Middlesex Fells Association were both founded in 1880.

Davenport began presenting his 'Lecture on the Middlesex Fells', advocating for Fells preservation to groups such as the Mystic Camera Club, the Fells district cities, and in Boston before the Appalachian Club and the St. Botolph Club. In 1893, Davenport's lecture on the Fells was published with images from the photos he and the Mystic Camera Club took between 1890 and 1891. Members of the St. Botolph Club were delighted to learn about the historical context of the slideshow as well as the history of the Middlesex Fells.

Following the presentation, Club members stated that they were pleased to learn that their original members had played a role in the land preservation of the Fells, which had, in turn, led to the movement to create the Metropolitan Park System.

During dinner festivities, Roger Howlett, Chair of the Program Committee at the St. Botolph Club, offered a toast to "every rock, leaf and flower" in a limerick he quickly improvised from a reference to Elizur Wright's essay "The Voice of a Tree from the Middlesex Fells" quoted during the presentation. All in all, it was a delightful evening with great conversation and enthusiastic support for the continued preservation of the Fells.

Kyna Hamill is vice-president of the Medford Historical Society & Museum; Mike Ryan is Friends of the Fells executive director.

# The Medford Historical Society Garden: A Collaborative Project

by Stephanie Leonard

Reprinted by permission from the Medford Garden Club

The Medford Historical Society's garden has a new look! Gone are the thorny, overgrown quince shrubs, the old tree stumps, and the tangle of invasive weeds; these have been replaced by a combination of easy-to-maintain shrubs and perennials. This transformation began back in August of 2012, with a discussion between Garden Club members Sarah Cummer and Maryann Langen about what the club could add to beautification efforts in the city. Sarah and Maryann maintain the club's garden sites at the Library and at the West Medford Post Office (along with Carol Atkinson), and taking on a new site would require volunteers who could commit to ongoing maintenance.

After noticing the overgrown garden in front of the Medford Historical Society (MHS), Maryann suggested that the club might offer partial funding and an initial volunteer effort to "renovate" the MHS garden by installing plantings chosen for low maintenance. Ideally, MHS members would partner with us to monitor and maintain the garden. I agreed to help with the design—it would be fun to put into practice that design certificate I had earned at The Landscape Institute program at Boston Architectural College.

One Sunday last September, Maryann and I met at the MHS to check out the garden. There we talked with Fred Schlicher, a MHS board member, who liked the idea and encouraged us to prepare plans to present to

the MHS board. Over the winter, Maryann, Kate Lavine, and I put together some suggested designs.

In April we met with MHS president John Anderson, Heather Anderson, Allison Andrews, Beth Hayes, and Sue Gerould of the MHS to present our ideas. Allison, Beth, and Sue are also club members, and John and Heather are avid gardeners, so there was much excited talk about plants.

**Putting the finishing touches on the initial structural plantings.**



**Volunteers from the Medford Garden Club (left to right) Sarah Cummer, Stephanie Leonard, Cambia Davis and Maryann Langen led the effort to create a beautiful and manageable landscape plan for the front of the building.**

We decided

- to keep all existing trees, except perhaps the cherry, which some of us thought looked too bedraggled and unkempt. Others felt strongly that it should be kept.
- to "lay waste" to the rest of the bed, after first digging up any plants that we might be able to reuse.
- the new plants would be drought-tolerant, non-spreading, and require minimal pruning.
- the "laying waste" of the bed would require more muscle power than club volunteers could supply—in addition to large, thorny shrubs and invasive weeds, there were several old tree stumps that needed to be removed.
- the actual planting would take place in September. This would give us time to get the space cleared out, and it's the best time for planting shrubs because they can get their roots established before winter without having to deal with the stress of summer heat and drought.

John offered to get bids on the "laying waste," amid worries that it would turn out to be too expensive. In the meantime, volunteers from the club and MHS helped with a basic spring clean-up to make the garden look more presentable through the summer. Will Tenney leaned out a second floor window and pruned pine branches away from the building. Sue and Maryann did bloody battle with spiky quince bushes and an invasive rose. Beth Hayes brought her two grandsons, Tim and Matt MacDonald, and directed their weeding. Kate and I weeded with them. John later got mulch put down to control weeds for the summer.

The garden club contingent remained hopeful that we could find the perfect small tree to replace the

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sad-looking cherry, but we were hesitant to make a recommendation without professional consultation.

So I contacted Laura Eisner, a landscape designer in Saugus. In addition to her business, Laura teaches at the Landscape Institute and speaks at other venues throughout the area.

You may remember her excellent talk on “Rejuvenating Your Home Garden” at our October 2011 meeting.

Maryann, Kate, and I met Laura at MHS on a June Sunday. As President of the Saugus Historical Society, Laura took a special interest in our project. After surveying the site, she drew an impromptu design, and then she could hardly drag herself away from exploring Medford’s history.

Laura said that the weeping cherry (*Prunus subhirtella*) is a good size and seems to be doing well in its spot; she pointed out that it would look better with the rogue, non-weeping leader removed. Laura’s design called for broadleaf evergreens such as PJM rhododendron, andromeda (*Pieris japonica*), and japanese holly (*Ilex crenata*). These would provide winter interest and foundation screening. The tall grass, *Miscanthus sinensis* ‘Morning Light,’ would screen the oil fill in summer, could be cut to expose it for winter use, and would vary the height and texture of the background layer. Her recommended small shrubs and mid-sized perennials for the middle layer were: *Spiraea japonica* ‘Magic Carpet,’ Sedum ‘Autumn Joy,’ Siberian Iris, and Stella D’Oro daylily. She noted the existing daylilies and iris that could be lifted and saved. Close to the sidewalk she recommended these tough ground huggers: snow in summer, basket of gold, arabis, catmint, and rock phlox.

We anxiously awaited the bid for clearing the plot, and when Steve Tuden of Brickworks Landscape Design came in with a bid that MHS could afford, we all heaved a sigh of relief. Before the September “laying waste,” Tufts students came to MHS for a volunteer work day. Allison Andrews and Beth Hayes supervised as they dug and bagged plants we would reuse in the new garden. John removed the cherry’s rogue stem, greatly improving its form, so we crossed an expensive replacement tree off our shopping list.

### A Special Thank You to a Local Professional

MHSM would like to thank Attorney Mark O’Connor for his pro-bono advice and assistance on legal issues we recently encountered. He’s a friend as well as a neighbor with offices at 1 Shipyard Way, about 50 feet from our building on Governors Avenue. He specializes in civil litigation, real estate, and probate. It was a pleasure working with him and we sincerely appreciate his help.

The laying waste was quite impressive! Steve and his assistant yanked, dug, and chopped thorny stems and stumps for hours, and then rototilled and raked the entire property. As they were working, Aggie Tuden, Steve’s wife and business partner, and Medford’s Tree Warden, stopped by to visit. Aggie knows Laura and commented approvingly on her design suggestions. Aggie also volunteered to prune the cherry—now done, leaving the little tree proudly coiffed.

Soon after, Maryann and I, with Laura’s design in hand, purchased ten shrubs, which would form the “backbone” of the design. These included two taller shrubs for the back—*Ilex crenata* ‘Steeds’ for the left corner and *Ilex crenata* ‘Hetzii’ to hide the screened area on the right—and rhododendron ‘Olga Mezitt’ for the center. For the middle layer, we got *Ilex crenata* ‘Helleri’ and spiraea ‘Magic Carpet’ and ‘Double Play Gold’.

We were finally ready to plant! On October 6, Sarah Cummer, Cambia Davis, Rowena Hodges, Carol Kuehnoff, Beth Hayes and her grandson Tim joined Maryann and me to brave intermittent rain and get the new shrubs, plus amendments, in the ground. We replanted several of the plants the Tufts students had saved, including a PJM rhododendron and hostas. With many hands and shovels, we managed to finish in a couple of hours, just as the rain started in earnest. We left a job well done at MHS to face clean-up of muddy gloves, boots, tools, and clothes at home.

The following Sunday, October 13, just a little more than a year since the first planning meeting, club volunteers met at the MHS for our final task for this fall—creating a wet newspaper weed barrier and covering it with mulch. Our thanks go out to Aggie and Steve Tuden for the barrier idea and instructions, for delivering the mulch, and giving us their professional discount towards its purchase. The work crew that assembled for this task included Sarah and her daughter Clementine, Beth and Tim, Sue Gerould, Will Tenney, Gail Barry, Maryann, and myself. We planted some donated and saved perennials, then layered and sprayed newspapers and shoveled and spread mulch until the garden was snugly dressed and bedded down for the winter.

If you go to the MHS Facebook page, you can see great before, during, and after pictures of the project, taken and posted there by Kyna Hamill. There are also appreciative “likes” posted by members of the community. Thank you, Kyna and MHS, for “loving” [liking??] the Medford Garden Club on Facebook!

As you can see, this project has been a truly collaborative effort. If you’ve not yet been able to participate, don’t despair. There are currently openings for two or three summer “caretakers” who will make sure the garden is watered during dry periods and do occasional weeding and pruning. Contact me if you are interested! (781-396-1402 or slenben@comcast.net) And, come spring, we’ll be looking for donated border perennials (snow in summer, basket of gold, arabis, catmint, and rock phlox). There will be more opportunities to work together to beautify important places in our community.

## Scandal and Intrigue *continued*

bankrupt... Yet Judge Myrick's decision was 'that Cahill might comply with this [contract] and be able to pay for the stock' !! and therefore was a *responsible person*.

But although the relief...was not obtained from the Court, yet it was obtained from public opinion—for after the disclosures made on the trial, of the entire bankruptcy of Cahill, and of the whole concern, they could not borrow or fleece the public out of another dollar, - they could get no more money to pay the laborers, and they consequently broke down and failed...just as they were on the point of entering Mr. Swan's land. He had accidentally heard in Boston (not from Mr. Perry his lawyer) of a late law requiring a road to fence the land, before entering upon it, - and on demanding this of them, they could not get money to buy materials to do it and had to stop work; the next day they would have entered upon Mr. Swan's land and commenced destruction of his garden.

Mr. Peter C. Hall and Mr. Hastings wanted the road to improve the value of their land for house lots - and to effect this they were willing to see their neighbor's farms broken up and destroyed."

The *Register* article discusses the traces of the railroad work done in Medford still evident in 1913, 50 years later. It would be interesting to find what traces, if any, still remain. As best as I can tell from the article, most of the work was done in what is now the Fells, ending to the west of the present High School and near Whittemore Brook. There could still be evidence of grading and stone bridgework.

Too bad we don't know the other side of this controversy. I'm sure the villains of this account (Mr. Hall and Mr. Hastings) would present a very different story!

***In September Doug Carr led bicyclists on a Brooks Family Heritage Ride. Brooks Pond provided a place to learn more about them. photo by Patrick Bibbins***



***Some Tufts students who volunteered to help clean up the Society in August survey the Society's historical newspaper collection with Kyna Hamill.***

## MHSM Programs Events – December 2013

***Saturday, December 7, 4:00 PM & Sunday, December 8, 12:00 PM Jingle Bell Festival House Tour***

The Medford Historical Society & Museum is excited to be a site on this year's Jingle Bell House Tour. Come by to see holiday decorations and artifacts from the time the original song "Jingle Bells" was composed. For more information or tickets visit [www.jinglebellfestival.org](http://www.jinglebellfestival.org), or call 781-475-2162.

***Saturday, December 14, 2:00 - 4:00 PM***

***"Do come in for a cup of tea": An Emily Post Fundraiser for MHSM***

Enjoy tea and cakes and an etiquette lesson from the pages of Emily Post. As she wrote in her chapter on *Teas and Other Afternoon Parties*, "a 'tea', even though it be formal, is nevertheless friendly and inviting." Join us for cakes, tea and conversation and learn about Emily's informative and sometimes hilarious ways of social etiquette. Special guest in attendance. Medford Historical Society & Museum, 10 Governors Ave. Tickets are \$15. Seating is limited. Reserve tickets at [kynahamill@yahoo.com](mailto:kynahamill@yahoo.com)

For more information on the Medford Historical Society and Museum visit [www.medfordhistorical.org](http://www.medfordhistorical.org).





*A view of the old West Medford train station on High Street looking toward the crossing at High and Playstead Streets.*

## ***Your Medford Historical Society & Museum Newsletter***

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