

# CHEQUAQUET LOG

The Newsletter of the **CENTERVILLE**  
**HISTORICAL MUSEUM** [www.centervillehistoricalmuseum.org](http://www.centervillehistoricalmuseum.org)

## REFLECTIONS ON THE YEAR PAST AND THE DAYS AHEAD

This past year, 2020, has led many of us to have a bit of leisure time. Aside from reading a plethora of books, cleaning silver, talking to family on Facetime or texting friends and sending hilarious cartoons across the miles and, yes, maybe helping others in their time of need, there has been a moment, perhaps two, when one can look back and just think about any number of positive things that allow us to retain our sanity.



The museum has been a bright spot for the Centerville community. It chose to stay open to visitors the same as any normal year. Visitors saw the red, white and blue flag in its spot, cheerfully announcing that all were welcome. As long as masks were worn and social distancing was observed, plus keeping hands clean with

sanitizers and leaving contact information, everything was pretty much the same. After the usual hiatus in December and January, the doors are once again open as expected.

New exhibits have received kudos from our year's visitors. Docents have told their stories of the speakeasy on Main Street during Prohibition. They have pointed out the changes in fashion styles in the last hundred and fifty or so years, both in their gowns and daily wear as well as the changes from one century to the next in what was underneath that gorgeous frock in order to keep it and its wearer looking put together properly.

Our energized bunch of volunteers have done everything in their power to think up new display ideas, to decide what pieces and assorted accessories would round out those new treats for the public, visitors and locals alike. The museum continues to be rewarded with thanks and congratulations from perfect strangers and neighbors for jobs well done. There is nothing like our enthusiastic volunteers when it comes to planning, producing and putting the finishing touches on an original show from scratch. There are

also the computer tasks galore and other unseen but necessary work done by the few that the visitor never sees.

Yes, the museum has had to delay expected popular events such as its themed dinners, both outdoor and indoor, the Halloween children's get-together or the very popular ghostly night walking tours. These fun occasions are merely waiting until the right time comes along to return. Despair is not permitted. Anticipated doings are on the docket. With them, a few new ones may make their debut. Keep checking the Newsletter and email to see what will be coming, if only the dratted pandemic will leave and allow normalcy to return. The phrase "positive thinking" definitely seems apt right now, so let us think it.



Masked Manniquinns in What's Underneath Exhibit

Yes, The CHM misses all those who gather in the many happy partakings that heretofore keep us all in touch. We want those Saturday movies. We need visitors and people selecting gift shop specialties. We would surely enjoy a lecture or two, the ooohs and aaahs of children with their parents or school groups as they view history at its best. Hang in there everyone. The past and present will come alive again for all in 2021.

**Museum opens for the year on Tuesday, February 2nd.**  
**Regular hours: Mon - Sat. 12 - 4PM**

# W O R K O N T H E C O L L E C T I O N

## AN AD IN THE PAPER HAS BROUGHT A NEW GROUP TO THE MUSEUM



There has been a growing concern at the museum that too many antique fabrics, especially in clothing, were in need of repair. What to do? The question bounced around for a while until a volunteer suggested that an ad be placed in the local newspaper asking if people with sewing ability would offer their knowledge and skill to help solve the problem.

Surprisingly, well over a dozen stitchers answered the ad and volunteered to attend meetings to discuss and discover if their skills were what the museum needed. Out of those meetings, there are now two sewing groups already working to repair the delicate fabrics that have worn or split or are missing bits and pieces. These groups have professional, conservator knowledge and status among them to share with each other and to use their talents as they restore

antique materials to their former lustre.

On successive afternoons, the women sit in the Ayling room, masked and socially distanced. Bright lamps shine on their individual tasks. The conversation runs from what color pure silk or cotton thread to use, to how to correct a black crepe de chine cocktail dress hem, which at some point in its past had been glued into place rather than sewn.



One woman has an adorable child's frock in front of her. The off-white cotton dress is in excellent condition, except the cuffs, made of a lacy fabric, have been torn so much that something must be done. Luckily, material from another piece of clothing, long deaccessed due to its very poor condition, has been found and its color and style match perfectly. The worn cuffs can be replaced and the child's dress saved.

Another sewist has a black velvet woman's cape before her. The neck area, something akin to today's mandarin style collar, is heavily beaded. Unfortunately, a noticeable amount of beads are missing. The perfect bead match must be found. Luckily, in a box with many samples of beads from saved unusable clothing pieces, a cluster of the beads is found. Work can proceed on the cape's decorative collar, restoring it so it can be shown as it was originally.



A Paris designed evening gown of silk and netting with an attached train, made exclusively for a client in 1925 by the renowned Boue Sisters, sits on the table and is being contemplated by its volunteer conservator. Parts of the dress are not in good condition but it can be made beautiful again with careful planning. The lining of the bodice is removed ever so carefully. That bodice will be dismantled and remade with new identical color and weight silk before it is restitched into the dress. Other repairs will eventually allow this dress to resemble its original style and condition.

A third woman is inserting a missing stay into the bodice of a 1930's black taffeta dress, one of almost a dozen giving the dress support. Each stay had been sewn into a pocket of material and that cloth has frayed. A zip tie is used to take the place of the missing stay, a clever solution, and the frayed areas of the stay pockets are reinforced with comparable fabric. After fixing the dress, it is inspected and declared finished. Another needy garment replaces the repaired one.



The stitchers exchange advice and explain repairs and how that repair will be made as they work. Slowly, hand stitch by hand stitch, the past is coaxed back to its original glory. Congratulations to our volunteer restorers.

# V O L U N T E E R I N G

## A VISIT TO THE MUSEUM LED TO BECOMING ONE OF ITS VOLUNTEERS

You can usually spot Diane Spencer easily. She's the one in a pink face mask. And probably a pink sweater as well on these cold winter days. Pink is her favorite color and it suits her. She is a woman with a welcoming smile as well as a love of history, two requisites necessary when engaged in the many projects and happenings volunteering requires.

History and the museum's collection of its 16,000 objects, but especially its clothing collections, which she describes as "elegant handmade pieces," first drew Diane to make a visit to this charming 1854 building. She was delighted and amazed with what she saw and the variety of exhibits immediately grabbed her attention. Within days she had become a member and currently volunteers her time and talents a couple of days a week.

Talent she has. Already she and others have delved into the myriad of papers for a recently completed exhibit, then has helped choose and place a variety of those interesting and delicate antique papers in cabinets where they can be viewed and enjoyed. Other tasks include computer research and working with the Membership Committee. Lately the new sewing circle formed to repair and maintain the beautiful clothing collection has received her attention. Who knows what else will strike her fancy or require her attention and organizational skills.

Speaking of the new sewing group, it was Diane's idea to write a question to the local paper asking if anyone, especially with highly extolled abilities and knowledge of antique fabrics and styles, would be interested in coming to the museum and form a sewing group. Lo and behold, two (and a third group in the works) of talented women have already set up shop and begun their needed delicate needle tasks.

A Braintree native, Diane has been involved in a variety of work-related endeavors. She taught communications at Bridgewater State University. Before that she was employed by Nynex, one of the original Baby Bells split off from AT&T in the 1980's, working in training and advertising and on the then innovative online Yellow Pages. She was one of the first to set up online advertising on the new World Wide Web. She is the author of a mystery thriller, "The Secret Language of Vikings." On top of that, before moving to Cape Cod more than a decade ago, Diane produced architectural themed shows for local television stations in the area, plus she produced videos for the Coast Guard, enlarging her use of communication skills.

In her spare time, Diane enjoys walking the many paths in and around her Cape neighborhood. She enjoys reading. It is the museum though that has presently captured her interest and enthusiasm. From finding a pair of 19th century spectacles for an exhibit, to voicing a character or two in a newly written play script, her interests are abundant. Plus, reveling in the warmth and friendliness of the other volunteers, along with what she describes as their "team spirit," has convinced her she has many roles to play well at the Centerville Historical Museum.



# I N T E R E S T I N G   H I S T O R Y

## THE US POSTAL SERVICE AND ITS WORK TO DELIVER THE MAIL AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

Isolation from the effects of Covid-19 has called for the country to be extra demanding of its postal service. Cutbacks versus delivery is creating headlines across the country.



A British courier system in the mid 1700's was vastly improved by Benjamin Franklin when he was appointed overseer of mail to the thirteen colonies. Under his watch, mail delivery from Philadelphia to New York City took less than 33 hours. Franklin, as a sympathizer of the rebellion against the mother country and as head of the postal service, helped create the Post Office of the United States, in 1775, under the auspices of the Continental Congress, the first creation of the new government.

In 1792 James Madison created a system whereby expensive postage rates of businessmen and lawyers subsidized cheap, uncensored newspapers. This Robin Hood scheme helped speed communications drastically among the states. Steadily, information and political culture was spread. By 1831 it was noted by Alexis de Tocqueville that mail delivery was five times faster in states and territories than it was in his native France. There were many more post offices, too. Newspapers and mail were tossed from wagons to the people along public routes everywhere.

The postal service did run into problems in the 1840's with high prices being the largest complaint. Congress rose to the occasion when it converted the institution into a public service that no longer needed to break even. In so doing it slashed rates. Stagecoaches and railroads in the next decades took over from individual riders, steamships and wagons. The completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869 proved modern delivery could be a lifeline all across the country.

The Civil War did halt mail delivery in the southern half of the nation. President Lincoln's postmaster, Montgomery Blair, used the savings from Confederate areas to expand the Union mail service by way of the Railroad Mail Service, introducing money orders and home delivery. He also began hiring women and African-American employees.



Rural Free Delivery began in 1896 and the introduction of Parcel Post in 1913 allowed better rural mail access. After World War I, air service became a remarkably resilient and swift postal service asset. Daring pilots, men and women, flew in fair and foul conditions to complete their missions. World War II and afterward created a doubling of mail. This led to another era of monetary losses to the Postal Service, but it was remedied when in 1970 Congress made the entity a government business hybrid that received no tax dollars starting in 1982, but still remained under congressional oversight. The 2006 Postal Accountancy and Enhancement Act, has caused billions of dollars in debt by requiring postal service prefunding of retirees' health costs.

Through all its ups and downs, the postal service is the most highly rated of government institutions by its citizens. The Covid pandemic has isolated vast numbers of Americans who have gratefully depended on the post office to deliver needed medicines, critical supplies, government checks and their daily mail. Its service strives to keep its mission.

# C U R R E N T E X H I B I T

## A NEW EXHIBIT ADDS TO THE STORY OF THE CROSBY FAMILY'S ROOTS IN CENTERVILLE

Crosby family historian, Melvina Herberger Brock, or Bebe, lives in the same house on Main Street in Centerville where four generations have lived before her. In its attic were papers galore, stored away for years before being remembered and brought to the museum for a new display. So many handwritten and printed papers exist because Bebe's dad, Charles F. Herberger, and her great aunt wished to write a family history. That history was eventually written by Charles.

Parts of this remarkable display now sit in glass cases in the Ayling Room. After perusal of an amazing array of daily and business life of one family in Centerville, it is apparent the Crosby family's instincts have served the town well throughout its several generations.

The first Crosby arrived in Boston in 1635 aboard the ship "Susan and Ellen." A century later, Jesse Crosby settled in what is now Centerville and built the village's first grist mill. Descendant Gorham Crosby, (1809-1883), with his wife Sarah, lived on Main Street in a four room Cape. They opened their home to visitors. Then the nineteen room Crosby House, built in 1859 by builder James Crosby, replaced the Cape house; the Cape was moved next door.



Gorham and Sarah are Bebe's great, great grandparents on her mother's side. Gorham's brother Oliver and brother-in-law, John Freeman Cornish, helped Gorham run the mail coach to and from Sandwich from the Crosby home starting in 1844. The stagecoach route gained instant success and when the hotel was built, it was just what a growing Centerville needed. Gorham was primarily a farmer with several acres of land behind his home. Outbuildings housing horses, hay and chickens dotted the farm, all pointing to an ability to succeed in various enterprises. A dentist and a doctor alternated space for their practices at Crosby House. Cranberry farming led to transporting barrels of cranberries to the Boston market. Investments in coastal shipping by Centerville captains also added to Gorham's business acumen. The Crosby family was known for its pride in hard work.



Aaron Crosby, Gorham's son, (1842-1918) and his papers are also part of this personal and inviting exhibit. Aaron shared the family's commercial ventures with his father. Both Crosbys lived with their wives and families in Crosby House. Known for its cleanliness and friendliness, Crosby House served meals and greeted visitors and friends to its front porch, two parlors, large dining room and gracious lawns. There was hired help for chores such as housekeeping and cooking. Daily woodchopping was paramount as there were three fireplaces alone on the first floor plus woodstoves in the kitchen. The ice room held blocks of ice to keep food fresh.

Through the years many Crosby descendants lived side by side or nearby in Centerville. Bebe is the fifth direct descendent to live in the same house her family built. She hopes to keep the house in the family. The Crosby name is intertwined with several others on Cape Cod and in other states across the country. Their roots though, began in Boston and Centerville and has continued through time and generations.



# MUSEUM MEMBERSHIP

Dear Friend,

The Centerville Historical Museum is a special place, and we are asking you to become a member. If you have visited our museum, read our newsletters, view our website, or seen postings on Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest, or seen videos on YouTube; I think you'll agree that we have many interesting things to offer.

## We are starting the 2021 new year with discount memberships for NEW MEMBERS ONLY

Join our membership and receive this one time only discount.

Fill in the form below and send it back to us.

Centerville Historical Museum  
513 Main Street  
Centerville, MA 02632  
508-775-0331

### MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES & BENEFITS before discounts

**INDIVIDUAL** (\$35) annually. Free admission, museum store discounts, newsletters, free or discounted admission to events, discounts on workshops, lending privileges of library books.

**DUAL/FAMILY** (\$45) annually. All the benefits of an Individual membership extended to 2 adults and children under 18 yrs living in the same household.

**PATRON** (\$80) annually. All the benefits of Dual/Family plus free museum admission for up to 6 guests, (\$42 value).

**BENEFACTOR** (\$125) annually. All the benefits of Dual/Family plus free museum admission for up to 10 guests, (\$70 value).

**BUSINESS GOLD** (\$150) / **BUSINESS PLATINUM** (\$200) annually. Business acknowledged in newsletters, website and web links, plus free museum admission and member rates to any museum events for up to: 12 guests, (\$84 value) / 15 guests, (\$105).

Below is the same membership benefit with discount.

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Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Tel (    ) \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Email ( for newsletter and events) \_\_\_\_\_

### MEMBERSHIP LEVELS

INDIVIDUAL (\$30.00) \_\_\_\_\_ DUAL/FAMILY (\$40.00) \_\_\_\_\_ PATRON (\$70.00) \_\_\_\_\_ BENEFACTOR (\$110.00) \_\_\_\_\_  
BUSINESS GOLD (\$130.00) \_\_\_\_\_ BUSINESS PLATINUM (\$170.00) \_\_\_\_\_

Please make check payable to: Centerville Historical Museum  
or Charge my membership to: VISA      MASTERCARD

Account# \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Please detach and return this form with payment - **offer valid until March 31, 2021**

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website: [www.centervillehistoricalmuseum.org](http://www.centervillehistoricalmuseum.org)