

CHEQUAQUET LOG

The Newsletter of the **CENTERVILLE**
HISTORICAL MUSEUM www.centervillehistoricalmuseum.org

NO ONE KNOWS WHAT THE DAY WILL BRING AS A VOLUNTEER AT THE MUSEUM

Our museum is fortunate in its volunteers. But then, perhaps that is the way of those who do something worthwhile-for absolutely no compensation. Being a volunteer is worthwhile. As the newer addition to the group, given a task and asked can one do it deserves an honest answer. "yes, maybe and no" are all good replies and "I'll try" is a definite thumbs up.

Soon one realizes that there is little reason to be experienced in every possible notion that goes into doing what is asked. For one thing, there is an extremely capable director who is always available to solve, change, advise, deny, put forth, laugh or shake his head when hiccups arise in a particular situation.

For instance, in the past few months, at least four new exhibits have been mounted. They are varied, yet all of them feature what this museum's collection contains and all of them have qualities both unique and collectively similar to them. An individual display must be authentic. One cannot display an item incorrect to the time or story. For one new presentation, the clothing items span a decade. In another, the background is Centerville and its connection to the entertainment industry. In a third, each item is being debuted

as a new acquisition. This shows that being a volunteer is not merely ironing a skirt for a particular mannequin. Heads come together, possible themes are discussed, items suitable for that display are found, accurate historical information on local, regional and national topics are researched, and plans are made to carry the project forward.

The celebration of history is the important thing for each exhibit. The displays draw the audience, but behind all that glam stuff are the nibbles and bits of perfection. A dress needs repair, an item must be carefully handled, the background requires change, the exhibit area is to be cleared of the old display, every item shown must be recorded in the computer. Titles need placing, summaries of historical and educational interest printed for the viewer - the total picture is required in order to be put forth in a clear and engaging way.

The above has to do with designing, choosing and researching for the benefit of both the volunteer and the audience. There is also a behind the scenes part. A volunteer keeps the books, a volunteer board maintains by-laws, policy and governance that permits availability to the community, a docent greets visitors and offers tours. The

newsletter is put together. Lectures, films, dinners, plays, holiday events are necessary to the scenario-whether to entice the public or to raise funds for the museum. A professional artist paints display backdrops. A playwright writes comic mysteries for audience participation and old movies and ghostly walks and barbecues and many lively happenings make this museum important to Centerville's very core.

The camaraderie enjoyed among our volunteers is way beyond what is written here, but a willingness to try, to express, to learn new things and have a laugh or three, outweighs any doubts. How about it! Have a few hours free in a week? Come, join the fun.



COMING EVENTS

July 2022

Mystery on the Steps of Craigville. Friday, July 15, 7PM

Staged reading of a one act radio mystery play by Jane Hattermer-Stringer. \$8M, \$10NM

August 2022

Annual Vintage Car Show, Saturday, August 13, 8AM - 2PM, free

Arts, Crafts and Collectibles Sale, Saturday, August 13, 9AM - 2PM, free

September 2022

Murder Mystery Evening Fundraiser, Saturday, September 17, 6PM - \$50M, \$65NM

Mystery on the Steps of Craigville

A dead body is found on Craigville Beach. A mysterious singer sings arias at the top of the Craigville steps in the middle of the night. Could all of this occur in the sleepy little village of Centerville in 1920? Yes it could and did. The famous Irish detective, James O'Callahan, is on the case.

Mystery on the Steps of Craigville by Jane Hattermer-Stringer



Annual Vintage Car Show

The 2nd Annual Antique and Vintage car show will feature those wonderful treasures from the past. They will be on display in the front and the rear of the Recreation building and outside the museum.



Arts, Crafts and Collectibles SALE!

The museum is hosting a gathering of local vendors to set up and sell their art, crafts and vintage collectibles for visitors. They will be outside and inside the museum. Come see what treasures they have to offer.

**ARTS,
CRAFTS
and
COLLECTIBLES**

*"Murder in
Centerville's Post Office"*

**A MURDER
MYSTERY
EVENING**

Murder Mystery Evening

It's happened again! This time it is the 1940s and someone is found murdered in the Post Office at Henry Place and Monument Square. Everyone is shocked and baffled. The authorities once again need to call in the immutable private detective Miss Tweed and YOU to help solve the case.

A variety of abundant edibles and dessert with red and white libations will be provided.

V O L U N T E E R P R O F I L E

DAVE FARNHAM: CAPE COD NATIVE, LOYAL TO BOTH CENTERVILLE AND ITS MUSEUM

Although he did not live his first five years in Centerville and resided several years in other New England communities, Dave Farnham calls this village his home. He lived in Hyannisport those first five years before moving to Centerville, went to college in New Hampshire, spent more time in Burlington, Vermont, but when he retired from his job, he came back to Cape Cod and Centerville, the area he loves best. "I missed Centerville when I was elsewhere and when I returned, I knew I had missed it."

Today he is attending a museum monthly board meeting. Which brings us to how he has maintained a deep interest in the museum for decades. The reason was his mother, who was a member and advocate of the museum for years, was a native Cape Codder, who loved quilting and history, and who, with her husband, had an antiques business. When Dave and his brother were around and there were heavier items to be moved or taken down or put up at the museum, Mom volunteered her two boys to pitch in. The place and its mission to tell the story of Centerville and history in general has always stayed in his mind.

Fellow board member Scott Peacock, a long-time friend, was also highly influential in keeping Dave's interest in the museum. Peacock invited the Farnhams to a fundraising event, a country and western dinner held on museum grounds. Dave soon became a museum member. "I am so glad I did," he says. Eventually Dave was asked to be a board member and he accepted. He says "There is such a rich history in this community. My grandfather had a farm here. Many times a barter system was used, trading one thing for another, instead of money. So, with farming and the sea and the salt and cranberry industries, all that we came from is what we have today."

Besides an admiration and interest in history, both local and worldwide, Dave says he has a passion for automobiles. That passion shone this past year when he and Peacock staged the museum's first annual antique car show during the village's Old Home Week. It was a huge crowd pleaser and the plan is to continue the venture annually.

Dave credits a high school history teacher's ways of telling history as a reason for his fascination for the subject, especially both World Wars and maritime. Although it has become more difficult to make school field trips, he would like to see more students from all grades visit the museum to learn about the community they came from and to learn about the world's past. "The volunteers are unbelievable," he says. "Many people have no idea what is available here. I would like to encourage more interest in the museum and to encourage all ages to get involved with it."

"It would be nice to have more men volunteers, too," Dave says. "Years ago, when my mom was involved, there was much more involvement. We also need to increase membership and continue to build on ways to raise funds with our current public events and with new ones."

Dave Farnham is emblematic of the volunteers who have in the past, now and in the future will continue to support a vital piece of Centerville's story, both historical and current. Thanks, Dave.



COMING EXHIBIT

150th Anniversary of CRAIGVILLE

The CCMA (Christian Camp Meeting Association) of Craigville, which held its first camp meeting on July 29, 1872, will be presenting an exhibit of the history of Craigville. The exhibit traces the development of this historic religious community from its founding as a camp meeting ground through its transition to Camp Christian. The community continues today on the bluff above the beach now known as Craigville. The story of the last 150 years is told by utilizing historic maps, photos of the Craigville Beach Association, the Tabernacle, historic houses, former residents and Retreat Center buildings.

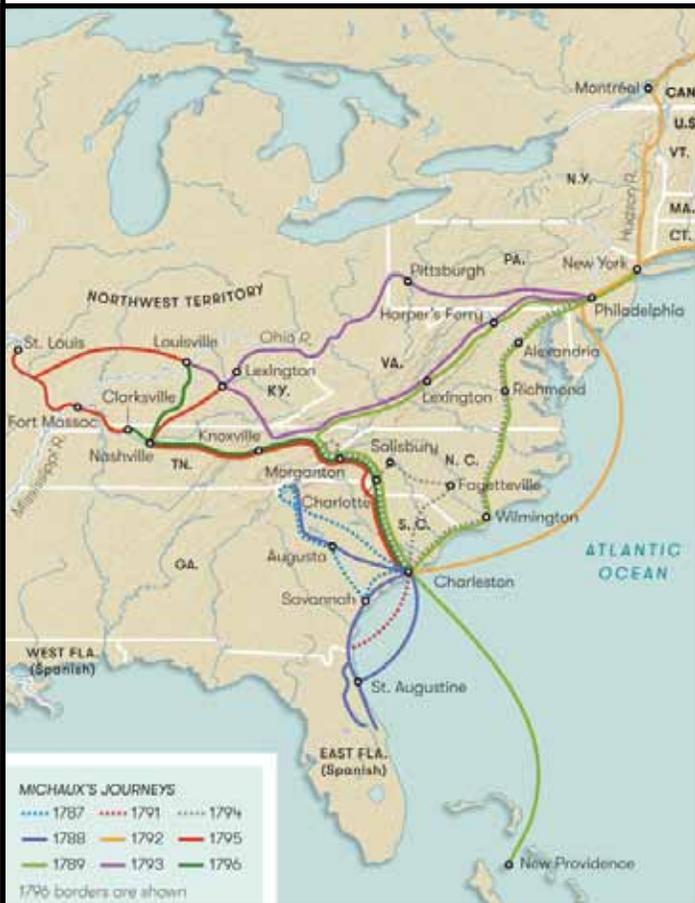
Exhibits runs from mid - June to the end of August.



INTERESTING HISTORY

A FRENCHMAN, UNKNOWN TODAY, WAS WAY AHEAD OF HIS TIME IN EXPLORATION

There was a Frenchman, Andre Michaux, and he went to Philadelphia in 1792 to approach its American Philosophical Society, with a novel notion to explore west of the Mississippi River and the best way to the Pacific Ocean. Michaux had been in the colonies since 1785, and along with his son, Francois, had purchased a plantation in South Carolina. The weather there was excellent for gathering plants, seeds and trees that he thought would do well in France and both father and son had already traveled widely around southern areas of America collecting specimens.



Thomas Jefferson was vice president of that society. When he heard Michaux's idea, he pondered whether exploration by foreigners to lands held by the Spanish would be welcomed or considered an act of war. But who would deny a forty-six year old French naturalist? Michaux had come to America as King Louis XVI's royal botanist, with monies to travel the world. With the American government's backing, Jefferson gave the go ahead for Michaux to see the unknown West.

Michaux had an exemplary background. Before visiting America, he had been to the Middle East and had collected hundreds of undiscovered plant specimens that he catalogued and shipped back to France.

But there were two problems. Before Michaux and his son were to begin their journey in 1793, France's king was beheaded, leaving Michaux without money or country. And there was a penniless American Revolutionary War hero, George Rogers Clark, who wrote the French saying he would raise an army of Native Americans and settlers to drive the Spanish from the West in order to open the port of New Orleans, the Mississippi River and the territories to French and American commerce and settlement.

The French sent an envoy, Edmond-Charles Genet to Philadelphia, to give support to the venture. Michaux applied to be the botanist for it and although President George Washington and his cabinet had resolved that America remain neutral,

Michaux crossed Washington to join Genet. He was promised a handsome stipend for the trip, not realizing his job was to spy for France. The story gets murky from there, with two versions, one saying that Thomas Jefferson opposed the venture, the other saying he secretly approved of it because he wanted France to control the new lands. Napoleon did acquire the Louisiana Purchase and then sold it to America in 1802, a windfall for the Americans.

Events went swiftly downhill. Genet badgered the Americans and the government ditched him. Michaux, writing to George Clark of the expedition's plans, found that Clark had never been told that the trip would go forward. The Spanish learned of the expedition and placed gunboats on the Mississippi River. Michaux's reputation was nearly destroyed, but he ventured on. Altogether, Appalachia and the Blue Ridge Mountains (where he was the first to climb North Carolina's Grandfather Mountain), Florida, South Carolina, Missouri, Kentucky, West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Canada were all part of his American explorations.

Although Michaux is virtually unknown today, there are those who strive to give him his due, which is difficult. He wrote his findings in French only. He never lectured or taught at universities. No one knows what he looked like. Yet he was the greatest explorer of his age.

THOUGHTS FROM OUR WRITER

REMEMBERING THE DAYS WHEN TV DINNERS BECAME THE NEW THING

Convenient food has been around for a long, long time. In the 6th century, Indian pancakes were made from fermented rice and lentils and they are still on hand today. Roman street markets sold ready-to-eat lentils, meats, cheese, fish sauce and nuts to shoppers. Spanish priests discovered tamales made from corn and rabbit in Aztec street markets and The Earl of Sandwich slapped meat between two slices of bread so he could eat at the card table.

Clarence Birdseye invented a machine in 1925 that froze and stored fish, thus revolutionizing the food industry. Maxson Food Systems took Birdseye's idea and sold complete frozen dinners to airlines, but the death of the company's owner

canceled any further distribution of its product to grocery stores. In 1953, Gerry Thomas, a food salesman, had an idea because 250 tons of leftover frozen Thanksgiving turkey sat in railroad cars going nowhere and if the boxcars did not move, keeping everything frozen, all would be spoiled. Eventually, research on how to add staples such as a vegetable, potatoes and dessert to meat, with all served on an aluminum tray, paved the way for the Swanson TV dinner, which launched in 1954 and was an instant hit, selling 10 million trays.



Several factors contributed to this innovative, easily accessible, time saver. It was the 1950's and more women were entering the workforce. They didn't have time to cook elaborate meals. Television, appearing in households by the late 1940's, were in about ten percent of

homes by 1950, then in 64 percent by 1955, setting a new trend for heating up a TV dinner and eating it in front of the TV. By 1967, at least one television was in 87 per cent of American dwellings. Swanson, plus additional names such as Banquet Foods and Morton Frozen Foods, were available at a reasonable price, around sixty-five cents per full meal.

Another factor was the food amount of each frozen dinner. Dieters bought TV dinners by the armload for their portion control. There were critics, of course. One national newspaper stated that frozen dinners had absolutely no taste. Competition among the TV dinner makers grew fierce but some new selections such as Swanson's "Polynesian Style Dinner" were not the public's favorite by a longshot.

A new crinkle in frozen meals happened about in 1986, when the Campbell Soup Company came up with microwave-safe trays. Instead of cooking an aluminum tray filled with food for twenty-five minutes, the time cooking by microwave was lessened by at least half.

Although names such as Swanson and Banquet are no longer at the forefront, others have filled the freezers of grocery stores and markets. Due to Covid, the need for pre-prepared dinners and lunches has risen drastically. We Americans are eating more varieties of frozen meals, available in stores everywhere. Williams Sonoma stocks gourmet frozen TV dinners, stores are offering artisanal specialty dinners and restaurants have kept up with the trends by offering their own foods in frozen form for takeout. Experts see that trend continuing beyond Covid while many view the old TV dinners as either a form of nostalgia or as a look to the future.



From the deck of newsletter writer Lois Lane

PHILANTHROPY

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and ask you, our members, to support these businesses that support us.**

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