

CHEQUAQUET LOG

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

AFTER A PAUSE, NEW EVENTS STARTED ONCE MORE AT THE MUSEUM

It seems as if the Centerville Historical Museum was awfully quiet this year without its variety of popular events of the past. There were visitors who came and oohed and aahed and thoroughly enjoyed the older and newer displays in the twelve rooms that held an array of historical settings. Crowds were small but steady and the museum's volunteers, all dolled up in their masks, carried on showing proudly what this place offers so well--interesting history.

With the end of summer around the corner, the board approved a weekend for the museum to open its doors to all for two special events. On Friday, August 13th, beginning at 7 in the evening, free to all, a lecture on The History of Centerville was presented. Close to 50 people attended this evening's talk. The first part of the lecture featured the earliest settlement around Wequaquet Lake in the 1600's. Agriculture was the main industry then. As the settlement expanded, homes, a few still here today, were built southward toward Nantucket Sound. Although some scattered homes were located on what is Main Street today, that area was not more heavily populated until the 1830's when fishing and coastal sea trading became the dominant industries.

Also in the 19th century, Phinney's Lane to the beach was settled, the church and the local school relocated to Main Street from their original more inland locations and shipbuilding helped the town to grow. Auxiliary businesses such as Gorham Crosby's hotel and stagecoach route and Ferdinand G. Kelley's Centerville Trading Company flourished. Kelley also became the town's first postmaster. As time passed, the community planted beautiful elm trees along Main Street and other social and business ventures solidified the town, still so charming today.

On Saturday, August 14th, from 8 am until 2 in the afternoon the museum sponsored an Antique and Vintage Car Show that was also free to the public. Two fire trucks sat on the lawn of the museum and the shiny and well-preserved cars were located across the street in the Recre-

ation Center's parking areas. What caught the eye was the multitude of bright colors the autos sported; yellow and red and blue, so different from today's cars that are mainly white, black or gray. The colors and the old styles, more than 40 of them, instilled a sense of auto nostalgia. Visitors were very pleased to stroll among these polished gems and note the classic lines, the huge pointy fins on some, and the excellent condition of each. Children were so excited to sit in the fire engines and adults remembered



their youth while viewing a Ford Mustang and a Ford Cobra, several vintage Jeeps and all sorts of other vintage cars. The younger set commented on all the white-walled tires, the spit shine of each vehicle and the large steering wheels so prevalent in their day. These well-preserved vehicles were a delightful show down memory lane.



Thanks to fine weather, the event went well. Thanks, too, to board member Scott Peacock, who along with fellow board member, Dave Farnham, organized this event and to Scott for providing hot dogs and hamburgers and bottled water for the many spectators.

THOUGHTS FROM OUR WRITER

IT HAS ALL HAPPENED BEFORE

At the Centerville Historical Museum exhibits include all sorts of items that encompass past world events as well as local events. Along with a particular theme is a fairly inclusive written history that explains the context and conditions of the time. It would be foolish to create authenticity in costumes, for instance, in a display such as our current one on Prohibition, if there was no information on it. Research contributes and explains the causes and results of a particular event to give the visitor a rounded picture of what life was like in that period.

Thoroughness is required. It is done humbly and proudly. It is a way to invite in the public, to a good story, to come and see and hear and learn. We hope they return to their homes and remember what was said by the older members of their families or rediscover what might be packed away in boxes in the attic. We want them to be aware of who and what they are.

Which also leads us to our daily lives and why we must understand history, whether in huge catastrophes or in small doses. James Michener, the author of fictional novels based on true historical events, once stated that the plays of the ancient Greeks depicted every emotion and circumstance that has happened to humans. Aristophanes wrote the play *Lisistrata* to deride war by having soldiers' wives shut the walled city gates against their men until they stopped going into battle. Today, our lives are more complex, but war, peace, love, hate, decisions, triumphs, failures, sacrifices, betrayals, all the human elements still exist. Our world has lived life from the beginning, forming history.

In so doing, we have lived. We have suffered. We have gained from the past. Our colonies' revolutionary uprising was tragic and unnecessary (if only the king had listened to us). But without it our nation would have probably never had the Declaration of Independence and Constitution written by a group of flawed yet visionary men.

The Civil War rent our country in two, killing hundreds of thousands. It almost destroyed what we stood for. In the end, though, right won over wrong and human beings were freed from slavery. Today, past wrongs are still being addressed. Today, the United States is a world leader in democratic thinking, medicine, technology, education, science and much, much more.

The two World Wars were terrifyingly brutal. Again, right defeated a political theory of the purity of one race. Yet the inventions out of war's necessity have made people's lives freer, healthier and more advanced: space exploration and medical discoveries are good examples.

History is our diary. Open any page and the past is the clue to the present. This diary guides us to see the consequences of tomorrow because, as James Michener noted, it has all happened before. We have our history books, our philosophers, our writers, our historians, our researchers and our museums to help us see ourselves, the noble and the tragic.

And our diminutive but mighty Centerville Historical Museum plays its part in the fabric of the past by relating the stories of a community while entwined in all of history's contradictions.

From the deck of newsletter writer Lois Lane



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

ABOUT THOSE CAR KEYS

For a long, long time, car drivers have had bad memories of lost car keys, of frantic searching of pockets, bags, laundry machines, the trash, sofa cushions, anywhere they could think of—all in a rush when the need to start a car and travel somewhere arises.

But the time of the physical car key may be coming to an end. New technology has allowed us to not just improve the use of the physical key to start a car, but the ability to render that element irrelevant and obsolete just like the car ash-tray and the crank window.

In 1910 the car key did not start an automobile's engine. It only controlled its electrical circuit. Using a key, car owners switched off its electrical flow, making starting a vehicle impossible. Once switched on, the ignition could be activated. The driver could then use the hand crank to start the engine.

A short time later, the car key was made to both lock and unlock both the electrical current and the ignition together. It was still impossible to start an engine without a key, so theft of an automobile was not a problem. No one even locked cars then as automobiles were mostly roofless and some were without doors.

By 1949, Chrysler unveiled the first car key that started the engine on its own, done by an ignition tumbler or ignition lock cylinder. In 1965 Ford introduced double-sided keys that could be inserted into a tumbler either way. This invention was in use for decades. Also new was the dual key. This allowed the driver to both open locked car doors and start the car's engine.



In 1998 the key fob made its debut. Remote entry key fobs locked and unlocked doors from several feet away by emitting a coded signal from it to a receiver in a car. Key fobs could also open trunks, sliding doors and start car engines. (Fob comes from the German word “fuppe” which means pocket.)

Today the mechanical car key is becoming obsolete. Almost all new autos have keyless entries and push-button starters. The newest car key is not a key. Apple's wallet app can have a car app. One only needs a compatible car and an iPhone or Apple watch. Once installed, the user places a phone or watch next to the car's door handle to unlock the car. The phone or watch is next placed in the car's key reader to press the start button. If an auto owner wishes to share a key, he sends a message to the new user, which relates how to add and use the car key.

Tesla drivers apply the company's smart phone app to do the same thing. The app can track a driver's smart phone from 30 feet away to automatically unlock doors. The app can also adjust heat or air conditioning and many other things while at a distance from the vehicle.

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

A PATCHWORK QUILT THAT HAS NO THEME-YET IT DOES

“This quilt is a patchwork on steroids.” Says Caroline Howard. “It’s hard to find a repeat in the pattern.” Well, Caroline Howard is quite knowledgeable about quilts and she says she has never come across one as “busy” as the one she is repairing at a table at the Centerville Historical Museum.

Learning about, figuring out and repairing antique quilts is a passion of Caroline Howard’s. She knows whereof she speaks and with this particular piece she has had to use all her knowledge and skills to figure it out. Yet, she still has questions and admits some of those questions may remain unanswered.

Caroline’s background is far from quilts. A Harvard graduate, she has been a writer and editor and has also assisted Harvard’s president with his correspondence. Originally from Wayland, she lives on Cape Cod and has always been interested in antique materials. She has restored baby dresses, made a few of her own quilts and expanded that by corresponding with other quilters and made and exchanged squares with them to go in what she calls her “friendship quilts.” Quilt squares have been exchanged from as far away as Africa and Australia, plus many states in the USA.

She has also enjoyed needlepoint. For one thing, the art of different stitches and the use of colors, especially when she chose her own combinations of shades rather than standard ones, has been fascinating, especially after she inherited an aunt’s unfinished piece and decided to add her own touches to it and to others.

The museum here has learned so much from Caroline’s expertise. Especially since she is working on a quilt that may be close to 150 years old since it is all hand-sewn, except puzzlingly, the quilt has been machine stitched around its outside edges. Perhaps the original quilt was left unfinished for a time or perhaps the edges had been handstitched but had frayed so much new edging was needed.



There is no name for the pattern used in this quilt, although a rough term could be “mosaic.” It is entirely made up and is never quite the same throughout, although there is a sort of general idea behind it. One can only think that the person who made this sturdy blanket had heaps of leftover small pieces of cotton material, probably long collected. She made up her mind to use as many cut up small squares, circles, triangles, five-pointed, stripes and ovals as she could. The “design” is so unusual that it works somehow.

The quilt could have been started by one person and passed on to others. Unfortunately, there is no known story behind this interesting piece. Caroline is repairing what she can. She has made a template of some of the scraps, yet not all are the same size. Another unusual thing is that a Velcro strip had been sewn on to the back of the quilt so that it could be hung. That has been removed.

Whatever was behind this startling quilt, it was used and it was loved. And it is complicated and original, whether crafted by one or with others’ help. Either way, Caroline Howard is lovingly repairing small tears and replacing worn out bits of cloth that was diligently done not by pattern but for utility with what was at hand.

E V E N T A T T H E M U S E U M

IT WAS ONE HECK OF A FUN NIGHT



Miss Tweed stole the show. On a lovely summer evening, the Centerville Historical Museum, that staid quiet haven of history, became a raucous, laughing, quivering entity, with its guests for the evening taking part in a murder mystery. Yep, all who were fortunate enough to attend the packed room, just about broke a corset stay trying to figure out who killed the actor Richard Bennett at Centerville's Mary Young Theater in 1937, also known as Howard Hall.

Thanks to Miss Tweed, who is actress Jane Hattemer-Stringer, the evening was a total success. Hattemer-Stringer had written a radio mystery play earlier in the year that the museum thought it could produce, but it was not to be. Not to worry. The idea of a total audience participation murder mystery bloomed and slowly took

shape. Miss Tweed, played by Hattemer-Stringer, was a Scotland Yard detective on loan to the local authorities to help solve the case of actor Richard Bennett, who was discovered by the stage manager, Flint, dead on the set just before the drama "Stop Thief" opened. Local actors played the roles of Bennett's French secretary, Lala Fauxpa, play investor Lord Bottomly, actor Carlyle Moore whose big ambitions matched a large knife collection, gossip columnist and huge hat fancier, Wata Gabbler, local retired sea Captain, David Kelley and John Davis, understudy and financially dependent on Bennett.

The audience sat at tables that were furnished with printed clues, local news articles giving details of the murder and a Barnstable Police Report listing what it had in the way of circumstances and details found from its inquiry into the crime. Pads and pens were provided to each table to write down ideas and questions. Miss Tweed encouraged her suspects, all clad in period costume, to visit each table and answer questions posed them. Each also spouted that they were, every one, totally innocent of this horrid tragedy. The audience loved participating. They laughed and wrote notes, enjoyed their wine and absolutely amazing hors d'oeuvres and during intermission were served a yummy chocolate concoction, all made and served by Board President Bob Wenger, his wife Bonnie and daughter Kristen. This is noteworthy as no one had to leave a table to get food or drink, thus keeping the evening's purpose and enthusiasm on track.



The moment of truth arrived. The eight tables added up their votes and noted who was the villain and why. All the decisions were handed to Miss Tweed, who had her suspects lined up, still pushing their innocence and pointing to others as the murderer. After she read all the tables' guilty names and motives a telegram arrived. Scotland Yard had discovered who the killer was. The foul deed had a twisted, convoluted, near impossible reason for the murder, but in the end it all made sense and the audience itself had, on its own, come near to a similar conclusion. The murderer was handcuffed, protesting mightily, and led off to an unhappy fate.

The evening's success showed when the audience rose and gave all a standing ovation for an evening's entertainment treat. As the saying goes, "all's well that ends well." Hear hear.



COMING EVENTS



Art and Wine Evening

Experience an evening of fun and creativity. Enjoy spirited conversation and tasty dessert hors d'oeuvres while making a finished take home artwork. All materials are provided and no experience necessary. Bring your own bottle of wine or favorite libation.

Friday, September 24 from 7 -9 PM

Limited seating – reservations required.

\$30 members / \$40 nonmembers

History of Ghost Haunting in Centerville

A talk and presentation on hauntings of Centerville's historic houses, their reported ghosts and haunting stories.

Friday, October 15 from 7 -9 PM

Light refreshments served.

\$10 members / \$15 nonmembers



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

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website: www.centervillehistoricalmuseum.org

P H I L A N T H R O P Y

SUSTAINING SUPPORTER: How you can help us!

Please consider becoming a Sustaining Supporter. Someone who sustains is one who stands, endures and nourishes another. Our museum needs more people who will do just that and stand with us as we preserve and interpret our shared history. Become a Sustaining Supporter of the museum for as little as \$20 per month. Relying on predictable monthly support will enable us to plan with much greater certainty how to provide a place where the past and present meet the future.

We encourage you to make monthly contributions as a Sustaining Supporter. Please use the donor cut-out below. As a Sustaining Supporter you receive all the benefits of Sponsor membership and more.

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PLEASE PUT THE CENTERVILLE HISTORICAL MUSEUM IN YOUR WILL

After providing for their families and loved ones, museum members and others may want to put the Centerville Historical Museum in their wills, thus helping to assure the long-term future of this museum. Such bequests are free of estate tax and can substantially reduce the amount of your assets claimed by the government. You can give needed support for the Centerville Historical Museum by simply including the following words in your will: *"I give, devise and bequeath to The Centerville Historical Museum, 513 Main Street, Centerville MA 02632 (insert amount being given) to be used to support the programs of the Museum."*

It is recommended that a lawyer help in drafting or amending a will. For other bequeathing options, call us and we will send our brochure that covers all the various options available. Thank you.

NOT A MEMBER - please join, ALREADY A MEMBER - how about giving a gift membership*

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