



## THE GEORGETOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER WINTER, 2012-13

### *From the President:*

The Annual Meeting of the Georgetown Historical Society was held on December 5<sup>th</sup> at the Georgetown Library Meeting Room. We were especially pleased to see among our many attendees GHS Treasurer Barry Crawford. Barry had to take a leave from his GHS duties to attend to a greater duty. Master Chief Barry (US Navy Reserves) was deployed to Afghanistan, where he spent most of 2012. He had just returned home a few weeks before our meeting. Barry was introduced and thanked for his service to our country. We rejoice in Barry's safe return and look forward to working with him on the Board again. He was certainly missed. A big Thank You goes out to Kathy Sachs, who did a wonderful job filling in as GHS Treasurer in Barry's absence.

After a brief re-cap of our GHS events of 2012, Ed Des Jardins, Chairman of the Nominating Committee, announced the election results. Proposed changes to the by-laws were accepted, and the following officers and Board members were elected: President – Christine Comiskey; 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President – Terry Hart; 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President – Sylvia Johnston; Secretary – Karen Brockelbank; Treasurer – Barry Crawford; Curator – Steve Keene; Board members: Ed Des Jardins, Jeff Lamoureaux, Rick Detwiller, Ralph Chouinard, Chuck Keilty.

Following the brief business meeting, our special guest speaker, Bill Hallett, was introduced. Bill is the author of "Newburyport and the Civil War," and he treated us to a great presentation on some of the interesting people from Newburyport involved in the war. We heard a lot of positive comments about the presentation, and hope to have Bill back for another talk some time soon.

In closing, I would like to thank you all for electing me once again to the office of GHS President. I am proud to serve in this position, and will continue to do my best to preserve, protect and promote the history of Georgetown.



Chris Comiskey, Georgetown Historical Society President

## **DEEP ROOTS**

### ***Brocklebank Descendant Joins GHS***



Our newest Board member, Secretary Karen Brockelbank, has very deep roots here in Georgetown. She is descended from Captain Samuel Brocklebank and his son Samuel, who lived in the Brocklebank Museum. Her 4x's great-grandfather, Job Brocklebank, was involved in the American Revolution and also sold land to the parish in 1805 to expand Union Cemetery. His son, David (Karen's 3x's great-grandfather) sold another parcel to the town in 1845 for further expansion of the cemetery.

Karen is also a direct descendant of John Spofford, whom many local historians believe to be the first permanent settler here in what was then the western part of Rowley. We also discovered that Karen has a local tie to the Civil War by way of her great-great-grandfather, Colonius Morse, who was in the 19<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Company C, Massachusetts Infantry. In the early days, names were spelled the way they sounded, so some names had many different spellings. The early Rowley vital records show ten variations of the spelling of Brocklebank. Around the early 1800s, most families settled on a "proper spelling." Karen's branch of the family chose Brockelbank. We welcome Karen to the Board and look forward to working with her.

## **ENDANGERED GEORGETOWN!**

*By Frederic C. Detwiller*

Two Georgetown landmarks have been slowly deteriorating over the past few years. The Georgetown Historical Society hopes to encourage interest in their preservation and restoration. The buildings at risk are the C.B. Hills residence, formerly the Dunbar Tavern at 34 Main Street, and Adams Hall at 5 Elm Street. Both have unique histories and both played important roles in the story of Georgetown. They are a significant part of the streetscape in both the Main Street historic town center and the Elm Street areas, both recently surveyed with the assistance of Community Preservation Act (CPA) grants. The Dunbar Tavern was the focus of an article several years back, included in the GHS Curator's Inventory file provided by Steve Keene, copies available upon request.

### **Adams Hall at 5 Elm Street**



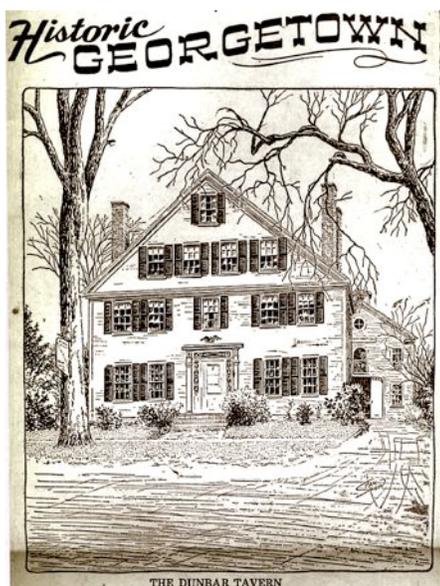
The building at 5 Elm Street was built ca. 1830 - 1840 as Adams Hall, named for owner, Revolution veteran Josiah Adams. It was originally used as a store on the first floor with a social hall above. It was purchased as a vestry by Old South Church in 1849 and subsequently used as a private residence for Rev. John M. Prince in the 1850s. State Treasurer Moses Tenney was its owner around the time of the Civil War.

Adams Hall at 5 Elm Street is a significant Greek-Revival building in Georgetown that is suffering from years of deferred maintenance. It has been vacant for some time since it was last used as a temporary location for the Georgetown Public Library. The building, currently listed by Del Realty, was described by Realtor Kathy Delorenzo: “This stately, distinguished landmark is in need of renovation & restoration to bring this incredibly beautiful building back to what it was in [the] 1800s; original detailing still untouched; grand columns greet you on the covered porch in grand style; spacious foyer, open rooms, high ceilings, large windows, hardwood floors, and walk up attic....” The entire history and description of 5 Elm Street is available in the Georgetown Historical Commission’s Inventory file on-line at the Georgetown website.

### C.B. Hills residence, formerly the Dunbar Tavern at 34 Main Street



This photo, taken a few years back, shows the then well-maintained home at 34 East Main St. The deterioration of the C.B. Hills building and barn is painfully clear from the comparison of the present state of the house with this photo. The house was built ca. 1810 and known as Dunbar’s tavern for its owner, James T. Dunbar, also treasurer of the Universalist Society. It has an earlier ell, and a large barn behind.



Curator Steve Keene provided us with two historic views of 34 East Main Street:

Left - An illustration from an old clipping telling the story of the Dunbar Tavern, later C.B. Hills furniture store.

Right - An earlier view shows the building with a porch on the front, useful for both the tavern and store.

## CURATOR'S CORNER

Steve Keene:



**Dr. Lewis D. Skeirik.** We note with sadness the recent passing of long-time GHS member Dr. Lewis Skeirik. Those remembering “Dr Lew” recall more than 50 years of outstanding dental services respectfully delivered by a man who was “early to rise,” punctual, a good listener and who possessed an outstanding sense of humor.



For 31 years "Moderator Lew" served the town as professionally as he served his patients. But time always remained for wife and family and for enjoyment of abundant personal activities. Let's not forget the Christmas cheer coming from lighting on the tall evergreen adjacent to “the office.”



Love of his home, The Adams - Herrick house at 302 Central St., produced ardent repair and restoration of the house and it's early barn-tannery (subject of a news article last year). Lew and son Peter carried skills learned north to the family retreat at Goose Rocks Beach, Maine.



GHS auction items were often stored in the barn. Mrs. Skeirik worked on several GHS house tours. The GHS appreciates years of support contributed by the Skeiriks. We regret the sadness of Lew's lingering illness at the end. We appreciate the courage and public spirit shown by Lew and his family.



Georgetown Common around the time of the Civil War - View down Elm Street from the Brocklebank House. View by Harriet Tenney showing the Old South Church at the left and Adams Hall at No. 5 Elm St. on the right.

## ***GEORGETOWN'S RADICAL ABOLITIONISTS***

*By Christine Comiskey*

During their annual convention in 1837, members of the New England Anti-Slavery Society adopted a new resolution: “*to leave unresponsive churches and come out from among them and separate.*” Proposed by William Lloyd Garrison, it reflected the general belief among Society members that Christian churches were not doing enough in the fight to end slavery. Those who chose to leave their churches became known as “Come-outers.”

Georgetown’s Young Men’s Anti-Slavery Society was founded in December of 1837. Although many in the group remained loyal church-goers, some chose to leave their churches and become Come-Outers.

The members of the First Congregational Church made their views on slavery clear in 1840 when they passed a resolution stating, “*That in view of the light that is thus upon the path of the Christian at the present day, it is a sin for us as a church and we will not hold fellowship or communion with anyone who claims the right to, or holds his fellow beings as property.*” But that apparently wasn’t considered “responsive” enough for the Come-outers.

On a Sunday morning in 1842, as the congregation sat listening to the kindly old minister deliver his sermon, the door suddenly burst open and a group of angry Come-outers came marching in, disrupting the service and shouting insults at the minister and congregation.

Along with disrupting church services, the Come-outers would also taunt and insult the church-goers on their way to and from church. Annoyed at the disruptions, the congregation passed the following resolution in February of 1842: “*To have the door of the meeting house bolted and barred against all desperados and men going from pillar to post trying to demolish all order and society, pretending to be anti-slavery men and accusing ministers and churches of being thieves, robbers, pirates and adulterers.*”

In December of 1842, several church members who had become Come-outers were called to appear before the church to answer to charges of absenting themselves from Communion and public worship. They put on quite a show. Joseph L. Noyes stated that he did not believe in the church organization or in the authority and sanctity of the Christian Sabbath. Isaac Newton Merrill said that he did not regard it as a Christian Church, but a company of thieves and robbers. Moses Wright believed that the prevailing influence of the church was the devil. They, along with Mr. Wright's Come-outer wife and mother-in-law, were excommunicated.

The Come-outers continued to be a problem for a number of years. In April of 1844, the Church adopted another resolution: *"Whereas we believe there has been for years some in our religious society who at heart have been most malignant enemies of Devine Truth, and believing that the providence of God has placed them of late where their true position may be seen by every man in that they manifest their readiness to defend the open Infidel and laugh and jeer when the church and ministry are assailed, and whereas a move has been made to rescind a vote by which this church has been closed against that class of men whose business it is to assail and condemn the church and ministry, and every true supporter of religious principles. Therefore, Resolved that we will not rescind said vote but endeavor to do all in our power for the sustaining of the principles of said vote and to counteract that most deadly influence abroad in this community against Christianity."*

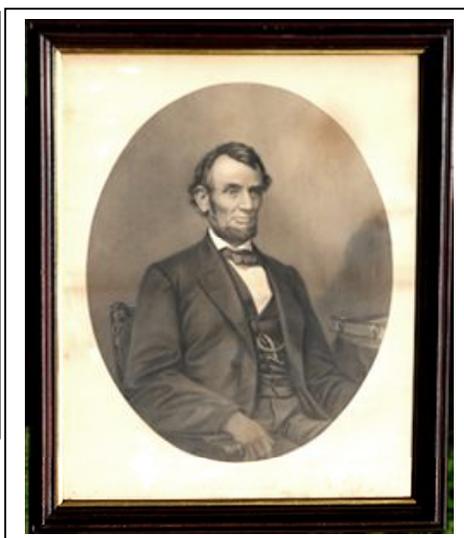
In 1847, at a celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his ordination, Reverend Isaac Braman described that troubled time in this way: *"A certain class of lecturers, mock-philanthropists, under the guise of friendship for the slaves, and pleading their cause, have done immense mischief in this place, causing unpleasant feelings in the church and society, which, it is feared, has not wholly subsided, and divisions which are not, perhaps wholly healed. Some were deceived and led away by them – others were soon convinced that, however great their love for the slave, their hatred of the church, of the ministry, and of all our religious institutions was much greater. The more prominent among them have since become avowed infidels, renouncing not only the church and the ministry, but the holy Sabbath, the bible, civil government, and everything that the true Christian and the patriot hold most dear."*

(Christine Comiskey is the Church Historian at the First Congregational Church of Georgetown)



Left: President Abraham Lincoln as he appeared in 1863 in a tinted portrait photo by Alexander Gardner taken about the time of the Battle of Gettysburg and the Emancipation Proclamation. This is one of several portraits of Lincoln in the Georgetown Historical Society Collection.

Right: Engraving from another Gardner photo shows Lincoln seated.



## **LINCOLN - GEORGETOWN AND THE CIVIL WAR**

By Christine Comiskey

With all of the Oscar buzz about the movie "Lincoln," it seems like a good time to share again some excerpts from the diary of twenty-five-year-old Susan Elizabeth Nelson of Georgetown as she heard about the events depicted in the movie:

**February 5, 1865** Memorable in History, as the greatest event of last week, will be that of Tuesday, January 31,—the passage passing the National House of Representatives, forever prohibiting Slavery in the United States. On Thursday and Friday, the bells were rung, in the cities and towns, in honor of this Amendment to the Constitution. Years since how we should have rejoiced at this Triumph of Freedom; now every stroke of the joyous bells sounded a knell for some dead or dying soldier.

**April 10, 1865** What shall I write, but a Day of Jubilee! Our leader has triumphed gloriously, the proud and haughty Lee has surrendered with his entire army, to our noble General Grant! All day long the merry bells have been ringing, while answering from city to city and reverberating along our hills the deep voiced cannon, from the early morning until now in the dusky evening, have been pealing out their glad song of Victory. O glorious Day long hoped for, and now welcomed, for thou art indeed, the harbinger of Peace.

**April 16, 1865** Like the two last another pleasant Sabbath day; yet what a change from joy to sorrow in one brief fortnight; two weeks ago witnessed the fall of Richmond; a week since the surrender of Lee; and who will ever forget the great rejoicing of the following day, when thousands of hearts shouted their gladness in the clanging bells and booming cannon. To day Alas how different, “the land mourneth,” for yesterday into every city and village the fearful intelligence was conveyed that President Lincoln was dead—shot by an assassin on Friday night while at the Theatre in Washington.

**April 19, 1865** In our country’s history, twice, and now again immortalized to day witnessing the funeral ceremonies of President Lincoln at Washington, while during the hours of their observance, religious services were held in all the loyal churches throughout the land.

Although bright the sunshine; and balmy the air; yet all this beauty, cannot lift the gloom from saddened hearts; the nation like one household mourning as children mourn for a father fondly loved, and whom death had called away; to that land from which there is no return. How suddenly came this sorrow; one moment Life—the next Death—for scarcely had the joyous bells ceased their echo, ere this cloud came shutting out the sunshine. The day of this tragedy too had been one of joy, for Our Flag had been again placed upon Sumter after four years of absence; when night came all the joy of that event was forgotten; for he was dying, the friend of the poor and the oppressed, and whom Orators style The Father of his People.

## **2013 DUES REMINDER - PLEASE**



Thank you to all our members who have already paid their GHS dues for 2013. If you have not yet paid your 2013 dues, we hope you will do so right away. Dues for all GHS members who are not Life Members are due in January. This enables us to budget for special events and saves us the expense of sending out reminders. You can pay online by visiting our website, [www.georgetownhistoricalsociety.com](http://www.georgetownhistoricalsociety.com) and clicking on “Join the Society.” If you prefer, you can download a membership form and mail it in to us.

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## Georgetown Historical Society



### **Officers**

*President :* Chris Comiskey  
*1<sup>st</sup> Vice President:* Terrance Hart  
*2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President:* Sylvia Johnston  
*Curator:* Steve Keene  
*Secretary:* Karen Brockelbank  
*Treasurer:* Barry Crawford

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Jeff Lamoureux  
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Rick Detwiller

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- EMAIL US AT: [info@georgetownhistoricalsociety.com](mailto:info@georgetownhistoricalsociety.com)