In March 1896, the remodeling of the “Town House” in Danvers for use as a Town Hall and High School was approved at the annual town meeting. The vote stood at 178 for remodeling and 108 opposed to spending an additional $7,000 for the project.

An appropriation of $25,000 had already been earmarked for remodeling in 1895. The additional funds approved one year later were intended to construct “a structure that is ornamental, attractive and imposing on the best location to be found in the town.”

In addition to increasing the town’s stock of architecturally significant buildings, the Town House project appealed to Yankee frugality. Supporters of remodeling argued that combining the High School with the Town Hall significantly reduced construction costs compared to the expense of two separate buildings. In addition, operating costs were lowered, since ongoing maintenance on two buildings would cost more than for one building alone.

As originally envisioned, the Danvers Town Hall was not the seat of local government that we see today. Plans called for an ornamental porch to be added to the Holton Street entrance with a curved colonnade connecting the wings of the building. Atop the slate roof, a tower and dome rose to a height of 35 feet. One newspaper reporter noted that the tower would be both attractive and practical, “adding greatly to the architectural beauty of the building and furnishing light to the schoolrooms below.”

Located principally on the second floor, the High School would be outfitted with 1,500 feet of slate blackboards. Plans called for the installation of electric wiring, bells and speaking tubes. In addition to classrooms, a 2,100 square foot assembly room was contemplated.

For the use of the school, two rooms in the basement were available for “exercise and recreation when desired.” Officials projected that their plans would meet the community’s High School needs for the next 30 years.

For town government, the first floor included 8 offices and a meeting hall with a seating capacity of 700 citizens. In addition to electric service, new wrought iron gas pipes would be installed, as well as a new heating system.

(Continued on page 2)
In most parts of the country, the location and design of a
town hall was surrendered to practical considerations. Writing
in 1923, social critic Thorstein Veblen argued that most town
governments were dominated by business interests connected
to real estate development. In paving Main Street, for example,
a local government acted to enhance the value of business
property. As for a town hall, it was typically located on a side
street, thus reserving real estate capable of generating greater
tax revenues for business or residential construction.

The one region that proved the exception to the above rule
was New England with its tradition of town meetings. Histori-
arian John Jakle observed that the New England town hall usu-
ally occupied a highly visible location in a community such as
beside a village green. The town hall was often grouped with
other local institutions like a grange hall or a church.

In 1896, the New England town hall tradition was alive and
well in Danvers. The remodeled “Town House” stood in one of
the best locations in the community. As opposed to grouping
the building with other local institutions, a new high school
was actually brought into the town hall itself. On several lev-
els, the building became a center of community life and Dan-
versites were willing to spend public money to enhance its
appearance. More than a century ago, our citizens realized the
power of community symbols expressed through architecture.
That realization should not be lost on us today.

This article was prepared by Danvers Historical Society di-
rector Glenn Uminowicz, who can be reached at
dhs@danvershistory.org.

A brief history of Danvers High School is included in the
commemorative book just published by the Danvers 250th An-
niversary Committee. The article includes a reference to cur-
current considerations regarding high school construction. For
information on purchasing the book, contact Town Hall.
EVENTS MANAGER & EVENTS ASSISTANT

Members attending our last annual meeting were informed that a cost-benefit analysis was conducted of the rental operations at Glen Magna Farms. It was discovered that net revenue from weddings and other rentals could not support the then existing two paid events positions at the site. The staff was downsized, with the position of functions manager being eliminated. Kathy Gianoulis was retained as events manager.

To assist Kathy in promptly responding to rental inquiries, June Baser was hired in December as an events assistant working two mornings per week. June is a long-time resident of Danvers, who has been very active in the Danvers Garden Club. She also employs her enticing British accent to record textbooks for the blind for an area school system.

GROUND RESTORATION MANAGER

Beginning in March, Cathy Cullen assumed her duties as Grounds Restoration Manager for the Danvers Historical Society. Cathy served as the former GRM’s assistant last summer and had held the position of Interim GRM since September. She is known to many of our members as the former owner of Cathy’s Flowers.

To enhance her background in history of horticulture, Cathy recently attended an all-day seminar on historic landscapes at the Arnold Arboretum. She will shortly be attending a workshop on using volunteers in historic gardens sponsored by the New England Museum Association.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Call (978) 777-1666, Monday-Saturday, 9AM-2PM

With summer drawing near, the historical society boasts more interesting volunteer opportunities than we have offered in many years.

Newly-appointed Grounds Restoration Manager Cathy Cullen is eager to find gardening enthusiasts to help in the historic gardens at Glen Magna Farms. Volunteers are also needed for the annual plant sale.

The society is also looking for history buffs eager to share the rich heritage of Danvers with both residents and tourists. The Danvers Museum at the Israel Putnam House opens on June 1st. Both guides and admission desk volunteers are needed. Training begins in May.

For the first time in many years, regularly scheduled weekend tours of the mansion and gardens at Glen Magna will be offered in 2002. The tour schedule is from 9AM to 1PM on the second and third Saturdays of the month from May through September. Training for guides begins in May.

Finally, the society is organizing a vintage base ball team that will play according to the rules of 1858. In addition to players, volunteers are needed to umpire, explain the game to spectators, serve as scorekeepers, and staff concessions.


calender


4/14 Israel Putnam House Preview Party, 2 to 4 PM, 431 Maple Street.


5/1 Plant Sale Grand Opening at Glen Magna Farms. Plant Sale continues through June and is open Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays from 9-1.

5/1 May Day Tea presented by Shambala Teas at 11 AM. Featuring tea along with small sandwiches and pastry. $20.00 per person.

5/8 & 5/18 House and Garden Tours at Glen Magna Begin 2nd and 3rd Saturdays from May through September, 9-1. Admission $5.00.

5/14 Essex National Heritage Commission is sponsoring tours for volunteers for familiarization with the Andover and No. Andover Historical Societies and their sites.

5/16 Lyceum Series Dr. Anthony Patton will speak on Toward a New Century: Danvers 1976 –2000, Peabody Institute Library-Gordon Room, 7-9 PM.

5/16 American Textile History Museum Field Trip to see “Uniforms in Fact & Fantasy”, 9-3, $15.00, Call for reservations (limited)

6/1 Putnam House Museum Opening Saturdays 9-1, Sundays 1-4 PM, till September. Free for members. $3.00 for non-members.

6/1 Annual Meeting at Glen Magna 7 PM.

6/6 Fashion Show Glen Magna Farms, Noon, $22.00 members. $35.00 non-members.

7/1 History, Hot Dogs and Hits Endicott Park, 5 PM, Vintage base ball match, 6 PM. Donations accepted.

8/6 August Teas with Shambala Teas, Thursdays, 1-3PM, one eve, TBA. Different themes each week; price includes small sandwiches and pastries. $20.00 per person.
GLEN MAGNA FARMS
Annual Plant Sale

May through June
Mon., Wed. & Sat.
9:00AM – Noon
Perennials, Herbs &
Selected Annuals
Call (978) 777-9165

Wild Lupine

INSIDE THIS ISSUE…

Major appropriation approved to renovate
building for use as a new school (page 1)
Citizens grappled with the costs and discussed the benefits
of making a major investment in public education.

Its about the General and much more (page 2)
Historical society staff and volunteers have been working
overtime preparing for a preview of the Danvers Museum at
the Israel Putnam House. Opening to the public on June 1st,
the museum will include exhibits covering a wide range of
historical themes, including the career of General Putnam and
the lives of his descendents.

A Calendar of Events can be found on page 3.

Danvers Historical Society
9 Page Street
P.O. Box 381
Danvers, MA 01923

All for One & One for All!
Uniforms in Fact and Fantasy

A field trip to the American Textile
History Museum in Lowell

Thursday, May 16, 2002 – 9 AM – 3 PM

The Danvers Historical Society is organizing a field trip and
guided tour to view an exhibit assembled by Nancy Rexford,
former curator of the Danvers Historical Society. The exhibition
features more than fifty military, civic, business entertain-
ment and sports uniforms. The uniforms range from Sec.
of State Colin Powell’s Army fatigues to Commander Riker’s
uniform from “Star Trek”. We will have a guided tour from
10 to 11:30 a.m.. Lunch will be at 11:30 and then you are free
to tour the museum until 2:30 p.m.

Transportation and admission is $13 and lunch in the Ga-
zebo Café ranges in price from $2.95 to $7.00. Reservations
will be taken on a first come basis. Please call the Society
office at (978) 777-1666. If you have any questions, call
Priscilla Curda at (978) 777-0793.

Call (978) 777-1666.