

Danvers Historical Society NEWSLETTER

Volume 2 No.2

Making History Fun and Relevant

Spring 2002

TOWN SUPPORTED RENOVATIONS FOR TOWN HALL AND HIGH SCHOOL

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."

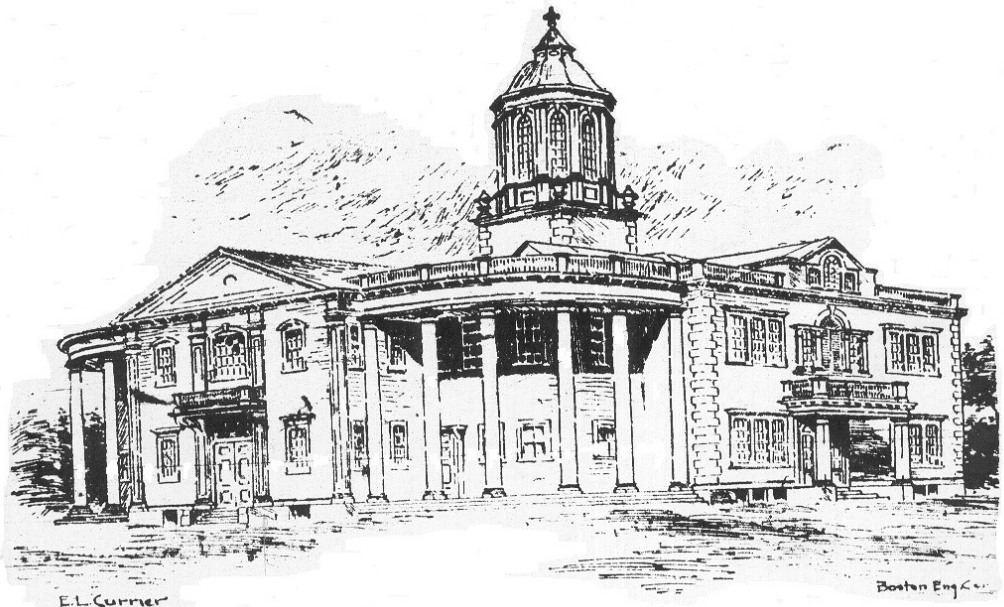
Located principally on the second floor, the High School would be outfitted with 1,500 feet of slate blackboards. Plans called for the installation of electric wiring, bells and speaking tubes. In addition to classrooms, a 2,100 square foot assembly room was contemplated.

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)

Remodeled and Enlarged Town House.



In 1896, a vote at the annual town meeting authorized the remodeling of Danvers Town Hall for use as local government offices and as a high school. The original plans for the building called for the creation of the classically-inspired edifice illustrated here.

(Town Hall continued from page 1)

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. Historian John Jakle observed that the New England town hall usually 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 levels, the building became a center of community life and Danversites 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 director 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 Anniversary Committee. The article includes a reference to current considerations regarding high school construction. For information on purchasing the book, contact Town Hall.

The Danvers Historical Society Newsletter

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The *Newsletter* is a benefit of membership in the DHS and offered to supporters of the Historical Society. Membership categories include: Individual, Household, Student, Senior, Sustaining and Benefactor. For membership information, please contact the Society at the above address.

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The Story of the General and so much more



Work continues on creating a local history museum at the Israel Putnam House

Members attending the special April 14th preview of the exhibits being created at the General Israel Putnam House are in for a rare treat. They will get a behind the scenes glimpse of a museum being created.

More than a year ago, the Danvers Historical Society staff began planning for the Danvers Museum at the Israel Putnam House. In 2000, the Danvers Cultural Council provided seed money through a grant of just under \$500. Last year, the Essex National Heritage Commission awarded the society a matching grant of \$6,000. Putnam family descendants John Emerson and Miriam Peters contributed \$2,000 towards the match and the society is now actively soliciting an additional \$14,000 in contributions to offset the cost of the project.

Preservation technician Rich Lebeouf has been busy repairing woodwork and trim and constructing exhibit panels and podiums. Rich has also refurbished several exhibit cases generously donated by Galo and JoAnn Emerson of Putnam Pantry. Galo traces his ancestry back to the General.

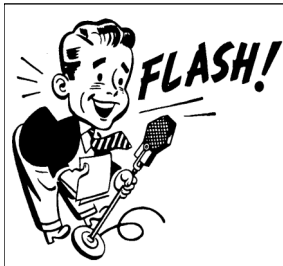
Building and Grounds volunteers Fred Prah, O.D. Taylor and Warren Weed have worked with Rich. O.D. became our principal painting contractor and Warren has been busy restoring the flagpole installed at the Putnam House in 1948.

Grounds Restoration Manager Cathy Cullen has planted spring bulbs and trimmed back hedges and overgrowth to spruce up the grounds before the preview.

Director Glenn Uminowicz and museum assistant Paula Ruta have focused on exhibit design and content. As exhibit installation approaches, they are being joined by collections volunteer Mollie Taylor and consultant Nancy Rexford.

The Danvers Museum at the Israel Putnam House opens to the public on June 1st (see the newsletter calendar listing).

INSIDE NEWS



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.

GROUNDS 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.

Calendar

April

- 4/10 Lyceum Series;** Bill Clarke will speak on the topic; *Demise of the Onion, The Rise of the Malls*. At Peabody Institute Library-Gordon Room, 7-9 PM.
- 4/14 Israel Putnam House Preview Party,** 2 to 4 PM, 431 Maple Street.
- 4/19 Tour Guide Training for Volunteers** with Essex National Heritage Commission for new tour guides at Glen Magna & Israel Putnam House. Call 978-777-1666 for more details.

May

- 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)

June

- 6/1 Putnam House Museum Opening** Saturdays 9-1, Sundays 1-4 PM, till September. Free for members, \$3.00 for non-members.
- 6/3 Annual Meeting** at Glen Magna 7 PM.
- 6/6 Fashion Show** Glen Magna Farms, Noon, \$32.00 members, \$35.00 non-members.

July

- 7/1 History, Hot Dogs and Hills** Endicott Park, 5 PM, vintage base ball match, 6 PM. Donations accepted

August

- 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



Wild Lupine

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

On May 1st, indulge in a
special treat presented by
Shambala Teas at 11 AM.
Featuring custom-blended
teas along with small
sandwiches and pastry.
\$20.00 per person.
Call (978) 777-1666.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

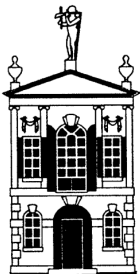
Major appropriation approved to renovate building for use as a new school (page 1)

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 entertainment 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 Gazebo 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.

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