For several years now, the Historical Society has been sponsoring the Holiday House Tours fundraiser, where many of our friends and neighbors have graciously opened their festive homes for a bit of holiday spirit and wonder. This year, the committee asked some of those “old friends” who have participated in the past, to see if they would be willing to open their doors once again. We are so pleased to announce that nine of our most historic homes in town will be on the Holiday House Tours once again!

Linda and Brian Belliveau - This lovely English stucco cottage on Ross Street was designed by the architect Oscar Thayer in 1911 for the Thomas Howarth family. Today, it has been restored as a private residence and inviting inn known as the Howarth House Bed & Breakfast. The beautiful interior invites guests into a formal living room, dining room and sun porch. A glass corridor leads to an exquisite outer building warmed by a huge fireplace. Herbert J. Kellaway originally laid out the grounds of the property in an English style that are still maintained today.

Sophia and John Bogdasarian - on Flat Rock Rd. This lovely stone Georgian colonial, was built in 1929 for Weyman S. Crocker by Edgar and Verna Cook Solomonsky Architects of New York City. The stones that were used to form the outer walls of the home were quarried from the ground in the back woods of this expansive estate. Once inside, you will see beautiful built-ins, dentil molding, original windows, and an impressive entryway and staircase.

Joanne and Tom Donnelly - Built in 1895, this Prospect Street property, known as “The Knoll”, was the original estate of Alvah Crocker II. The first home on the estate was demolished in the 1950’s by Alvah’s daughter, Mrs. Willard Soper, who replaced their former home with this Georgian style mansion. The beautifully decorated rooms exude a feeling of warmth that permeates throughout the home. Outside, the original stables and squash courts can be seen on the well-landscaped grounds.

(continued on pg. 2)
Visiting Old Friends (continued from pg. 1)

Jane and Tim Fluharty - Years ago, Jane’s father Edward C. Healey, a well-known Fitchburg realtor, wanted a colonial house in a colonial neighborhood to raise his family. Unable to find an existing structure to buy, he had this beautiful grand colonial built off on a bend in the road on Appletree Hill. It was built in 1968 by the architect James A. Britton. The home is 4,000 square feet, and a huge barn sits to its left. The residence showcases variable wide width flooring, crown moldings, and three stunning fireplaces.

Jean and Joel Kaddy - The Kaddys built this original log home on Highview Street in 1976. It is an eclectic and amazing arrangement of additions built in slate, tile and stone, sensitively added onto over the years. It is truly one of a kind. This rustic home has a beautiful stone fireplace in the living room, two amazing turrets that offer spectacular views of Rollstone Hill, and exceptionally crafted woodworking throughout. Every inch of this thoughtful home has a point of interest and charm.

Steve Manalan - Mr. Walter Wiley built this stately home on upper Blossom Street in 1929 for a Fitchburg dentist named Frederick Slattery. It is an elegantly restored and well maintained Dutch Colonial that overflows with impeccable style and memorabilia from the owner’s many interests and travels. It has several French doors that lead you from one amazing room into another and a beautiful morning room overlooking the pool area below.

Elizabeth and David Megowen - In April 1911, Harry G. Townsend, president of Fitchburg Savings Bank commissioned H.M. Francis & Sons, Architects of Fitchburg to design this lovely home on Ross Street. Henry Francis’s sons, Frederick and Albert, created a design that highlights eclectic styles, including Craftsman and Colonial Revival elements. In the past few years, the owners have meticulously restored most of the home to its original state. Some of its features include original board and batten wainscoting, a coffered ceiling in the entry hall, crown molding throughout and a mural painted by Victorian era impressionist W.S. Bucklin.

Lisa and Michael McLaughlin - This 1915 Mission Colonial-style home on Bond Street sits atop a beautiful stone wall with a great view of the city below. The home boasts a beautifully designed and updated kitchen and pantry that maintain the integrity and significance of the home’s historical architecture. The front foyer invites guests to explore this gracious home filled with antique light fixtures and craftsmanship from days gone by.
Visiting Old Friends (continued from pg. 2)

Besides the nine residential homes on the tour, we are offering five more places for our ticket holders to visit:

**The Fay Club** – on Main St. If you’re looking for coffee and a sweet or just a place to rest your feet, the Fay Club will again be hosting our “Holiday Tour’s Tea House.” Stop in anytime between 11:00-3:00 for a snack or an opportunity to see the interior of this historic “gem”. The home was designed by the famous American architect Richard Upjohn, for George Flagg Fay, a Fitchburg businessman who had established the Park Club, a business/social club for the more prominent men of the city. In 1910, after his death, Fay’s daughter Lucy offered their home on Main Street to house the Park Club. The men accepted, and to honor George, they renamed it “the Fay Club”. The interior has beautiful stained glass, stunning fireplaces, ornate panelling and antiques donated by prominent old Fitchburg families.

**Applewild School** – 120 Prospect St. This year, the Applewild School is celebrating its 60th Anniversary as an independent New England K-8 day school. It was founded in 1957 on the grounds of the former estate of C.T. Crocker. This Georgian Revival is one of the most prominent mansions in the city. This original structure was built in 1911 and is one of the many buildings on the beautiful knoll that offers some of the most beautiful views of Fitchburg.

(continued on pg. 4)

Brendan McWilliams - Built in 1890 for Charles B. Smith, this beautifully restored 10-room Victorian on Atlantic Avenue became the Universalist Parsonage in 1909. Mr. & Mrs. Albert Sawyer had presented the home to the Universalist Church to be the residence of Reverend and Mrs. Edward Saunders. Since then, the home has been restored to feature original cherry and ash woodwork, three pocket doors, stained glass windows, two fireplaces, coffered ceilings throughout the first floor and a grand main staircase in the foyer. As you enter, you see a home that expresses the pride of years past, and is still very treasured today.

Brendan McWilliams’ House

**The Fay Club, Main Street**

**Applewild School**
Visiting Old Friends (continued from pg. 3)

Boulder Art Gallery – 960 Main St. The Boulder Art Gallery, located in Fitchburg’s historic Upper Common, features original art, vintage art, photography, prints and sculptures. Visit this beautiful gallery, and view one of the area’s most exciting venues for period and contemporary art. Stop by the Gallery during the House Tour for coffee and Italian cookies, wine and cheese!

Gerry Martel’s Classic Carriages – 914 Main St. Fifty-plus years of unique car memorabilia have been collected here, and they are on display for your enjoyment.

The Fitchburg Historical Society – 781 Main St. Designed by H. M. Francis, the Fitchburg Historical Society’s Phoenix building was originally designed and built in 1893, for the Fitchburg Mutual Fire Insurance Co. It is a spectacular example of commercial architecture, and it has been historically renovated by donations to the Society. We thank you for your support!

By your participation in the Holiday House Tours, the Society is able to preserve the rich history of Fitchburg and provide opportunities to share its history with its citizens. This year the tickets are $25/person, and they will be available for sale at the Society, the Mayor’s office at 166 Boulder Drive, Shack’s Clothing, Homestead Primitives, Mill #3, Elliot’s Jewelers, Windmill Florist, DeBonis & Davin Florist, and at Slattery’s Restaurant beginning on November 13. Many thanks to Charles Sternaimolo (photographer), Anne Giancola (graphic artist) and to Miles Press (printers), who created the posters, brochures, and tickets for the House Tours.

If you have any questions about this event, please contact 978-345-1157 or write welcome@fitchburghistoricalsociety.com

Written by: Kathleen Flynn

Whalom Park’s Tragedies

In 1924, Whalom Park was battered by a cyclone that caused extreme damage to the park and its facilities. This was one of the most destructive weather events damaging the popular amusement park, but it was not the last tragedy to strike Whalom Park.

Fourteen years later, on the evening of August 16, 1938, a freak tornado swept the park: blowing down over a hundred trees, wrecking the roller coaster and doing damage to stands, roofs, verandas, power lines, automobiles, and roads. Forecasters saw the storm was coming and evacuated the park, so none of the 20,000 people spending their evening at Whalom were hurt. However, this storm was far more costly than the one in 1924: the total of damages reached $50,000. And then, a scant month later, the unnamed hurricane of September 1938 that swept the East Coast inflicted even more damage on the area.

During the next decade, a fire swept through the park in 1944. It destroyed the entire side of the Midway. Henry Bowen, the park’s president, made the decision to have it rebuilt.

On September 21, 1975, the famous Lake Whalom Playhouse was destroyed by fire. At that time, it was the second oldest summer theater in the United States. When it was headed by Broadway producer Guy Palmieri, the Lake Whalom Playhouse was known for bringing nationally-known stars to central Massachusetts to perform in the renowned repertory series.

On Saturday March 2, 2002, fire raged again at Whalom Park. An arsonist had set a three-alarm fire that ultimately destroyed the 70-year old ballroom inside the Park. The damage was estimated at $50,000. Whalom Park had covered 75 acres. During its prime, over a quarter of a million people a year visited it each season for recreation and a night out in a sophisticated setting.

Based on an article by Robert McDermott, published in the American Deltiologist, with edits and additions made by Susan Navarre.
A Noteworthy Man of Music

If you lived in the Fitchburg area anytime from the 1930’s to the late 1980’s, and ever attended local band concerts, as well as parades featuring marching bands, chances are you enjoyed the fruits of Mr. George S. Talcott...a longtime musical force in the community.

Born in Worcester on July 17, 1904, Talcott moved with his family to Fitchburg when he was about to enter sixth grade, which he completed at the Dillon School.

The following year, Miss Elizabeth Perry, Director of Music at the Fitchburg Normal School (now Fitchburg State University), decided to start an orchestra among the 7th and 8th grade pupils at the Practical Arts Building, which housed the only junior high school in the city. Twelve students, including Talcott, joined the orchestra.

“I started with the bass drum, which I furnished myself,” he explained. After many months of instruction and rehearsals, the group gave its first school concert, followed by two or three public concerts. George was hooked! Upon entering Fitchburg High School, George was encouraged to learn the trumpet by his father, who played alto horn. He later went on to study other brass instruments, reeds, and conducting. His desire to form a band prompted him to write an essay, “Why We Should Have a Band in School,” which was published in the school paper, the “Red & Gray.” The article sparked enough interest in a number of boys, who met at Talcott’s house to practice together. In his junior year, a marching band was formed, and eventually began playing at football games. The FHS marching band was born!

In 1924, Talcott entered Fitchburg Normal School, unaware that kismet was about to open a door leading toward a lifetime commitment and a consequential career in music. Fitchburg High School principal Charles T. Woodbury contacted him with an offer he couldn’t refuse. Mr. Woodbury wanted him to meet with Mr. J. Edward Bouvier, head of the music department at Holy Cross College.

“I remember clearly,” Talcott recalled. “It was 1924 and Fitchburg schools were trying to set up a music program. They called Mr. Bouvier. He had come over to teach part time and he called me to assist him. I guess somebody had told him about me.” He worked with Mr. Bouvier until the early 50’s. Talcott was a music instrument teacher and band assistant for the Fitchburg Public Schools until he retired in 1971. He taught music at seven elementary schools in addition to B.F. Brown Junior High School and Fitchburg High School. When fire destroyed the high school in 1934, he and a group of band members rescued most of the instruments. Until the new school was finished in 1937, he did all the teaching of instruments at his home. After retiring from teaching music in the school system, he remained a local band leader for the remainder of his life.

Marching music was Talcott’s greatest joy. He recalled seeing “some of the greats, including John Philip Sousa... oh, three or four times. I heard Sousa’s own band, and that was tops...excellent!” It could be said that George was the John Philip Sousa of North Worcester County...the Arthur Fiedler of Montachusett bandstands. He was a ubiquitous figure at holiday band concerts and parades for decades. He founded and led the American Legion Post 10 Band in the mid 1930’s, and also conducted the Westminster Town Band, Lunenburg Town Band, Townsend Band, and Ayer Band. He often presented in excess of 100 concerts each summer.

On June 1, 1990, at the age of 85, George S. Talcott, truly a “note” worthy man of music in the Fitchburg community, passed away in his home...some speculated of exhaustion from incessant holiday conducting. Besides music, he was also remembered for his love of children. Over the years, Talcott had a unique way of stockpiling instruments and distributing them to children who could use but not afford them. It was said that a collection of all the instruments he ever handed out would fill a gymnasium.

Written by: Nunzio Nano
Letter from the Director - Standing out from the crowd

At the Fitchburg Historical Society, we are (understandably) proud of our extraordinary headquarters in the historic Phoenix building, located right in the middle of town. They help us stand out from the crowd and may not be what you expect to find at an “Historical Society.” I like to say that, “We put the social in society!”

Our big, warmly illuminated windows invite people to come in and explore Fitchburg’s history, whether they are new to the city or longtime residents, and regardless of whether they remember anything about history from school. We are important to the cultural life of the city and the Upper Common neighborhood, and we try to offer fun and educational programs free of charge to the general public.

Our community involvement is particularly hard to miss at the holidays, when our history exhibition includes elements of an old-fashioned Christmas, along with lights to illuminate the darkness of the longest nights of the year. Last year, we invited Memorial Middle School to decorate one of our windows, and they tied for first place in the downtown decorating contest! This year, we are again planning to host a school group: take a look when you are nearby.

It’s this kind of hands-on public service that makes us so central to Fitchburg’s community life.

However, it’s always challenging for a nonprofit to fulfill its mission and raise money at the same time – just ask any of our volunteers. We are always busy trying to answer questions, create exhibitions, and publicize visiting historians while we also solicit the memberships and donations that are necessary to the survival of an independent nonprofit like us.

During our 125-year history, we have amassed a unique collection that makes New England history real and important to the children of Fitchburg – not to mention their parents and grandparents. It’s only through your donations, memberships, research fees, gift shop purchases, and House Tour tickets that we cobble together the funds to properly care for these extraordinary artifacts and the beautiful buildings that house them.

But there’s another way, for those who plan ahead. A legacy donation from a will, estate or retirement account can make a major difference for the Fitchburg Historical Society. It reflects your love of your city and your desire to animate it by helping the Fitchburg Historical Society grow and thrive. Take a look at the sidebar text on this page, to learn how it works.

And I hope you have a chance to read the articles in this newsletter on the houses on our House Tour, on George Talcott, and on Whalom Park. There’s always something new to discover at the Historical Society, and I hope you will find something in your members’ newsletter to spur new explorations of Fitchburg’s history.

Susan Navarre

Planning Ahead – Please keep the Historical Society in mind

Legacy donations will live on after you, to support our programs and to build our endowment. They will make the Historical Society strong, to share Fitchburg’s history and enliven Main Street. A bequest in your will to the Fitchburg Historical Society will be invested to educate and inspire the people of Fitchburg for generations to come.

When making a gift to the Fitchburg Historical Society in your will or trust, please use the following language: I give to the Fitchburg Historical Society, 781 Main Street, P.O. Box 953, Fitchburg, MA 01420, ___ percent of my residuary estate (or, the sum of $___, or a description of the property, securities, etc.) for its endowment funds.

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Many Thanks

Our business and corporate members help the Historical Society provide historical and educational programming about Fitchburg to local students, families and visitors. We all work together to highlight and preserve Fitchburg’s vibrant history: please stop in and thank them for all they do.

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Membership Type:
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The Fitchburg Historical Society is a 501(c)3, tax exempt organization, and all contributions are tax deductible.
Fitchburg Historical Society  
781 Main Street, P.O. Box 953  
Fitchburg, MA 01420

**Save The Date**

- **Friday, November 10, 2017, 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.**  
  **Annual Volunteer Day: Holiday Tree Decorating**  
  Join us, as we turn your Veterans’ Day Friday into a celebration of community and holiday. Be a holiday helper as we decorate our holiday trees, and get the Phoenix Building festive and ready to welcome the annual Holiday House Tour. Please sign up in advance, if possible!

- **Saturday, December 2, 2017 11:00 a.m. – 4 p.m.**  
  **Holiday House Tour**  
  A beloved holiday tradition celebrating beautiful architecture and decoration. Tickets available at the Fitchburg Historical Society and local merchants starting in early November.

- **Ongoing, through Wednesday, February 28, 2018.**  
  **Exhibition: “Fitchburg Immigrant Experience”**  
  Learn more about the immigrant effect on Fitchburg and its neighborhoods, as illuminated by new acquisitions in the Fitchburg Historical Society collections. This exhibition is supported by a grant from MassHumanities.

- **Thursday, February 8, 5:30 p.m.**  
  **Cultural Heritage Through Image: Finding the Ancient and Medieval in Fitchburg**  
  Interactive talk by Dr. Kisha Tracy  
  Professor Kisha Tracy teaches medieval literature at Fitchburg State. How do you make the medieval period relevant for today’s Generation Z? One way is to connect them with local history and their own families’ experiences. Tracy will present a photo journey through local and other New England history at this talk that encourages you to think about what culture and heritage mean and how the ancient to medieval is related to the local. Participants will participate in a digital exhibition [http://culturalheritagethroughimage.omeka.net/].  
  See also the Facebook group: [https://www.facebook.com/culturalheritagethroughimage/].