November

The 2016 House Tours Are Coming

As the holiday season fast approaches, the Fitchburg Historical Society has been busy planning and organizing the 2016 House Tours. This year’s tour will be held on Saturday, December 3rd from 11:00am-4:00pm, and it promises a wonderful array of Fitchburg spots that are sure to delight visitors. The tour includes seven private residences, St. Francis Church, the Boulder Art Gallery, Gerry’s Martel’s Classic Carriages, the Fitchburg Historical Society, and the Fay Club that will once again be the venue for our “Tea Room”.

St. Francis of Assisi Church - St. Francis of Assisi Parish was established on September 6, 1903, to serve the Franco-Americans living in South Fitchburg. The church, located on Sheridan Street, was built at a cost of $150,000. Its stained-glass windows and other glass work came from VonGerichten Art Glass Company of Munich, Germany. The interior artwork was created by Professor Gunippo Raggi of Rome, Italy, and the church organ was built by Cassavant Freres of St. Hyacinthe, Quebec, Canada. St. Francis parishioners celebrated the first Mass in their new church on October 16, 1929. For many years during the 1900s, St. Francis provided its own grammar school to educate the children of the parish. On the day of the tour, the church will be opened from 11am-3pm.

The Boulder Art Gallery - Owned and operated by Peter and Ann Capodagli, the Boulder Art Gallery is located on our historic upper common at 960 Main Street. It features original art, vintage art, photography, prints and sculptures. Discover this beautiful gallery, and view one of the area’s most exciting venues for period and contemporary art. You can take a break and stop by the gallery on the day of the tour for coffee and Italian cookies, wine and cheese.

Classic Carriages - Owner Gerry Martel has been a “car connoisseur” for most of his life. At 914 Main Street, you can view his vast collection of car memorabilia on display, and enjoy his stories about classic cars, told with great passion. See for yourself what a true collector has to say about his treasures and hear what he can teach you about collectible automobiles. (continued on pg. 2)
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The Fitchburg Historical Society - This historic H. M. Francis building at 781 Main Street was originally built for the Fitchburg Mutual Fire Insurance Company, and it opened in 1893. It is a spectacular example of commercial architecture that has been historically renovated. The library floor has two original fireplaces, original wood floors, high ceilings and a private reading room. The exhibition hall on the street floor contains original wood floors, high ceiling, paneling and cast-iron columns. Stop by to see our festive display of holiday trees framed by our current exhibit: Fitchburg Faces. These portraits, mostly from our own collection, showcase prominent Fitchburg citizens from the 1700s-onward who made their mark on our city.

The Fay Club - In 1863, George Flagg Fay commissioned Richard M. Upjohn to design and build a Victorian gothic-style mansion at 638 Main Street. The Fay home was designed with stained-glass windows and ornate oak, maple cherry and mahogany built-ins and paneling that remain today. Fay, who had amassed a fortune by investing in Massachusetts railroads, was a charter member of the Park Club, a private men’s club made up of businessmen and professionals. In 1895, after her father’s death, Lucy Fay, his only heir, offered their home to the Park Club, following a marriage proposal that would take her away to live in California. In honor of George, the Park Club accepted her generous offer, moved their club to the brick mansion and renamed it The Fay Club. We are delighted that the Fay Club is once again available to host our Tea Room. Ticket holders are invited to visit the Fay Club during the tour to enjoy refreshments while visiting one of “Fitchburg’s gems”!

Most of the classic homes on our tour this year date back over one hundred years. Three are H. M. Francis designed and all represent a variety of styles found here in Fitchburg. One unique home will carry a medieval theme in the vein of a popular TV show!

The Gill home on Blossom Street was one of H. M. Francis’ last projects. The house was started in 1908 by Francis, but he died that same year, and it took five years for his sons to complete the project. The house is an Art Noveau Style and modeled after many of the Parisian Townhouses of that period. This home reflects the elegance of another era. The Beck home at 60 View Street is another H. M. Francis design. This lovely Victorian home was built in 1904. As you approach the grand structure by way of a magnificent stone staircase, it will lead you up to a wrap-around porch. The 4,865 square foot home has six bedrooms with three floors full of beautifully designed architectural details including coffered ceilings, a fabulous staircase, window seats and a turret room with views of the city. The Beck’s have decorated their home with eclectic and artistic artifacts from around the world.

The Miranda-Goselin home on Water Street, is a beautiful Queen Anne Colonial Revival, was built about 1900 by Waldo H. Lowe of the Falulah Paper Company. In 1905, Mr. Lowe hired H. M. Francis to do a remodel. Today, much of Francis’ original ornate woodwork remains in this stunning home. It features a central dining room that serves as the hub of the living space with a magnificent fireplace and window seats outlining the room. These owners have taken great care to preserve the architectural beauty of this home.

The Pierce home on Central Avenue Ext. is a center door Colonial that was lovingly reproduced by the homeowner himself. The house has a beautifully hand built curved staircase, and the interior is designed for country living at its most functional. The kitchen has been newly renovated to include a hardwood floor. Attention to detail makes this home so comfortable, inviting and special.

The Campbell home on Ellis Street is the youngest home on our tour. It was originally designed as a nine room Executive Cape when it was built in 1965. Two years ago, when the Campbell’s purchased the house, they spend ten months renovating it into their spacious, warm and comfortable seven room “Dream Home”. The cozy fireplace, a central feature of their main room... (continued on pg. 3)
The 2016 House Tours Are Coming (continued from pg. 2)

was redesigned to include tile, custom woodwork, and a unique granite hearth. Their home is decorated in an updated eclectic style.

The Walsh home on Prospect Street was originally built as a guesthouse and ballroom for the Simond’s Estate. It was built in 1905 in the Southern Colonial Style. The exterior of the house has raised plantation style porches and columns. The interior has five beautiful fireplaces, forty-two sets of original French doors and a staircase that leads to a balcony that overlooks the first floor. When it was repurposed into this splendid home, all of its elegant features were preserved.

The Rozell home on Burnap Street is “fit for a king”! When you take a walk through this eclectic “Castle House” you will find a world of dragons, shields, “Camelot” and a touch of “Game of Thrones” awaiting you. This home could possibly be the talk of the tour. The Fitchburg Historical Society would like to thank the House Tour Committee for all of their hard work to make this year’s tour another great event to look forward to.

Special thanks to Charles Sternaimolo (photographer), Anne Giancola (graphic artist) and to Miles Press (printers) who are responsible for our beautiful posters, brochures, and tickets. Thank you also to the places around town that take the time to help us sell tickets. Tickets for the December 3, 2016, House Tours are $20.00 each and can be purchased at Shack’s Clothing, Mill #3, Elliot’s Jewelers, Homestead Primitives, Windmill Florist, the Mayor’s Office, DeBonis & Davin Florist, Slattery’s and at the Fitchburg Historical Society. For further information, please call the Society at 978-345-1157.

Written by: Kathleen Flynn

Welcome to New Board members!

On September 14, 2016, seven new board members were elected to the Fitchburg Historical Society Board of Directors for three year terms. In addition, returning board members Shane Franzen and Kathleen Flynn finished their first term and were re-elected for their second three-year term. Below, you will find an introduction to the new board members:

Brian Belliveau retired as a Deputy Chief with the Fitchburg Fire Department after 35 years of service. He is a lifelong resident of Fitchburg. He and his wife Linda have two daughters. Brian and Linda own and operate the Howarth House Bed and Breakfast, the first bed and breakfast in Fitchburg. Brian graduated from Saint Bernard’s High School in 1976, and, after joining the Fire Department in 1979, completed his Associates Degree in Fire Science from Mt. Wachusett Community College. During his last 11 years with the department, he worked as a grant writer, in addition to his duties as a line company officer. He raised two FEMA “Assistance to Firefighter” Grant awards, worth over one million dollars to transform the department’s radio system and communications network, while also securing approximately $450,000.00 to construct the Rollstone Quarry Communications Tower. In 2002 and 2006, he and his firefighting shift were awarded the Group Citation Award at the Commonwealth’s Firefighter of the Year Awards. He serves as the first vice president of the Massachusetts Institute of Fire Department Instructors.

Dr. John R. Bogdasarian has lived in Fitchburg since 1978, when he opened his practice, Central Massachusetts Otolaryngology, as a surgeon of the head and neck. Educated at Harvard University, with a B.A. Cum Laude in medieval history, Bogdasarian attended Columbia College of Surgeons in New York City for his medical degree. He completed two residencies at the University Hospital in Boston. He is a member of the Board of Health of Fitchburg, and is Vice President and past president of the Fay Club, and President of the Worcester North District Medical Society. He and his wife Sophia live in an historic Crocker residence and are the parents of four sons.

Matthew Fournier is a Fitchburg-based entrepreneur and developer. He is the managing partner of Elite Construction & Design Inc. and Capex Facility Services, which are headquartered in Fitchburg. The companies focus on commercial and residential general construction and specialize in specialty property services throughout New England.
Welcome to New Board members! (continued from pg. 3)

Asher Jackson is the archivist at the Gallucci-Cirio Library at Fitchburg State University. Prior to coming to Fitchburg State, he worked as an archivist and rare book cataloger at the May Morris Library, University of Delaware. He has also served as an adjunct faculty member at Simmons College in Boston where he taught courses on the preservation of digital materials for the Graduate School of Library and Information Studies. Asher earned a B.A. in English and Rhetoric from the University of California, Berkeley and an M.S. in Library and Information Science from Simmons College. He lives in Fitchburg.

Nancy Maynard was born and brought up in Fitchburg. She is a widow; her husband Kenneth died in 2004. He was a Fitchburg detective for 43 years and they had three children. Nancy helped found the College Neighborhood Association; worked at the Dental Arts Center for 16 years as the Office Manager; worked at North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce as Membership Development Manager; was on the Fitchburg Planning Board; Chaired the Fitchburg License Commission; on the Board of Directors for the Fitchburg Rotary Club; and has served on many Fitchburg public committees. She now lives in an apartment close to the Fitchburg Historical Society.

Ernest (“Ernie”) Martineau is Chief of Police for the City of Fitchburg Police Department. Born and raised in the City of Fitchburg, Martineau attended Fitchburg Public Schools, graduating from Fitchburg High School in 1983. Upon completion of high school, he attended Norwich University in Northfield Vermont and obtained a BA in Criminal Justice in 1987. After graduation, he joined the Fitchburg Police Department, where he has served for 29 years. Currently he is an active member of the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association, Massachusetts Major Cites Chiefs Association, and the Central Massachusetts Chiefs Association, and the International Chiefs of Police Association.

Christine Tree was raised in Fitchburg, attending Crocker Elementary, B.F. Brown and Fitchburg High School in turn, and moved back to Fitchburg after fifteen years living in Leominster. An attorney, Christine has practiced estate planning and elder law in Fitchburg for over twenty years, joining the firm of Pusateri & Wilson in 2015. A graduate of Holy Cross and the Catholic University of America in Washington DC, Christine and her husband Michael are currently “enjoying” renovating their historic Fitchburg home and the surrounding property. She looks forward to contributing to the philanthropic and educational missions.

HOLY SMOKE: George Trask and the Anti-Tobacco Movement in 19th Century New England – a Forgotten Cause

Tobacco was introduced to Great Britain in the late 16th century, around the same period as other imported stimulants such as tea, coffee, and chocolate. It was used for relaxation, and physicians and laypeople soon began writing of tobacco as a remedy for a variety of ailments, including respiratory ills (it prompted coughing, which was considered therapeutic).

But as the 19th century began, voices against tobacco were raised, although voices against slavery and alcohol consumption were louder -- and more organized. Enter Reverend George Trask, the self-proclaimed “Anti-Tobacco Apostle” who spent the last quarter of his long life advocating against the use of tobacco “chewed, puffed and snuffed.”

Trask was born in Beverly, Mass in 1798, to a family of sufficient means so that he decided at age 22 to enter the clergy. He attended Bowdoin, and while there, he displayed a keen sense of social justice when a young black student, Russwurm, applied to join one of the literary societies.

"The application was contested by stormy opposition from [future US President] Frank Pierce and other collegians. My enthusiasm for the negro’s rights then and there subjected me to an uncomfortable amount of obloquy,” he wrote.

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HOLY SMOKE: George Trask and the Anti-Tobacco Movement in 19th Century New England – a Forgotten Cause (continued from pg. 4)

His first posting as a minister in Framingham lasted for six years, although he offended one influential deacon by including a prayer for slaves in his Sunday sermon. You can see an emerging social conscience in his “Farewell Discourse”: “It is admitted, that the slaves in our land are entitled to the rights of men. Still, as society is unprepared for the reception of this sentiment, they must hug their chains till their masters, self-moved, set them free.”

Trask, now married to Ruth Packard of Lancaster, spent the next decade as minister at Warren, but his reputation as a progressive preacher as well as one of “recognized ability” prompted members of Fitchburg’s Trinitarian church to offer him the pastorate.

Trask was nearly 50 when called to his final official post in the church, a post he would hold for less than two years before stepping down due to poor health and “a burning impulse to labor in his new field . . .the anti-tobacco crusade.”

THE ANTI-TOBACCO APOSTLE

Trask was uniquely positioned as a proselytizer against tobacco as he was a reformed user himself. “Physicians said I was at the gate of death. I abandoned this poison. The act was an epoch in my life.”

Trask began his efforts by visiting neighbors who used tobacco, and speaking to children at Sunday schools and at the grammar schools. Trask persuaded children by giving them pledges and medals for abstaining from tobacco use.

He was fortunate to attract a benefactor, Amos Lawrence, early on who underwrote Trask’s earliest anti-tobacco publication: the book Thoughts and Stories on Tobacco for the American Lad; or Uncle Toby’s Anti-Tobacco Advice to His Nephew, Billy Bruce by Uncle Toby (1852).

This included letters from notables such as P.T. Barnum. In this 179-page masterpiece of persuasion, Trask’s writing style pirouettes effortlessly between scolding and cajoling. Many of the letters, stories, and essays in Uncle Toby were adapted to the tracts he later published and distributed. Number 45, included an anti-rum and anti-tobacco “call to arms” poem dedicated to military men: “For Our Soldiers and Sailors” by noted Fitchburg poet Caroline Atherton Mason (mother of Trask’s later biographer, Charles Atherton Mason).

“So here goes BOTTLE, PIPE, CIGAR,
The vile confederation!
Hurray, my boys! I’m strong enough
To beat the whole creation.”

Wilson Flagg of the Salem Gazette wrote “The community are not so easily aroused to the necessity of the tobacco reform, though the diseases and physical infirmities that proceed from the use of tobacco, are probably more numerous, if less striking, than those produced by intemperate drinking.”

Trask recognized this dilemma: ills that accompany tobacco usage are less of a spectacle than those of a confirmed drunkard. However, just as he launched a new career as the self-styled “Anti-Tobacco Apostle,” tragedy struck with the death of benefactor Amos Lawrence in 1852.

But Trask was not to be deterred, and for nearly a quarter century, he created a different kind of book: one designed to be shredded, its leaves scattered to a variety of readers. He worked with a Boston publisher and slowly amassed a large collection of plates, publishing one a month on average. He requested a dollar for a year’s subscription, but took what sums his recipients could afford.

Though he aimed his arguments at every possible reader, clergymen who used the weed came in for special scorn: “Is not the edge of a sermon blunted by the consciousness of every hearer, not only that the preacher has a secret quid stowed away in one corner of his mouth, but that he imagines he is deceiving his hearers by his adroit concealment of it?” (Trask “Psalm 33.-2”).

In Tract No. 65, he hit upon a masterful argument: tobacco divides a man from the Almighty. He recounts a conversation with a clergyman: “When I have been praying in my closet for the blessing, something has raised me suddenly from my knee, and I have run to the mantle-piece for my pipe! My pipe has been stronger than God!”

Trask advanced methods used by early Temperance workers and adapted them to fight the insidious lure of tobacco – arguments that the public would not hear again with such vigor until the Surgeon General’s report nearly a century later. Ahead of his time, George Trask deserves our admiration for his passion and creativity fighting “the devil’s weed.”

This essay was drawn from a longer piece written for the Pro-Seminar in Humanities at Harvard Extension School, 2015.

Written By: Sally Cragin
Letter from the Director

Darren Barry spoke about the Civil War and Fitchburg at the Historical Society recently. It was exciting to read his M.A. thesis, which threw so much new light on Fitchburg’s widespread reputation during and after the Civil War. In it, I was thrilled to see this accolade in his acknowledgements: “I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to everyone at the Fitchburg Historical Society...” One would be hard pressed to find a more knowledgeable or dedicated society anywhere in the state of Massachusetts. Their passion for local history is inspiring and bodes well for the preservation of Fitchburg’s legacy well into the future.”

Like Darren, and perhaps like you, I love to research and see the exhibitions, in order to be inspired with new knowledge and new ideas. As our volunteer Shirley says, “I learn something new every time I come here!” and that’s my experience, too. It’s a wonderful place to learn something new and surprising. And the learning experience continues! As a teacher in the Fitchburg Public Schools, Darren is taking his knowledge of the local area and sharing it with a new generation. The expansion of knowledge and understanding keeps happening.

The Historical Society is a place to make connections: we connect today’s city with the past: the recent past that many of us can remember, and the more distant past that we only know from books. This is how we help develop vitality in our city: we remember and share the meaning and history that surrounds us in our buildings, parks, schools, churches and other places. All of us contribute to the life of the city, whenever we go to work, volunteer to help someone, or use a photo or document to remember the past.

Through our exhibitions, talks, history texts and research, the Historical Society brings all that meaning and creativity together, protecting and preserving it for the future, and sharing it with today’s Fitchburg residents. I hope you will enjoy the new research contained in this newsletter. Our goal is to share fascinating people and events from Fitchburg’s history.

I like to picture you settling down with a cup of coffee and losing yourself in the stories we print. At least one of the articles will probably trigger a memory or a new question for each of our readers.

If you are on social media, there’s another way to bring a little extra local history into your life every day. On our Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages, we are posting a daily timeline of Fitchburg’s history, using the hashtag #125DaysOfHistory. It’s part of the celebration of 125 years since we were founded on February 3, 1892. The series will wrap up after 125 days on the exact day of our anniversary, February 3, 2017. If you don’t follow social media, tell a friend or grandchild about it. They can learn more about Fitchburg, no matter where they are in the world.

Because that’s what we try to do every day: bring Fitchburg and its history to the entire world!

Susan Navarre

Come visit us!
Fitchburg Historical Society
Hours of Operation
Monday & Tuesday: 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Wednesday: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Also open by appointment: call 978-345-1157 to reserve a time.
Please remember the Fitchburg Historical Society in your will or estate plan.

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Sept. 2016 - Sept. 2017

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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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Firefighters Show Coming Up

This spring, the Fitchburg Historical Society is organizing the 2017 George R. Wallace, Jr. and Alice Wallace exhibition “Firefighters of Fitchburg: A Long and Storied Tradition.” From Monday, March 20 to Wednesday, June 7, we will display artifacts from our collection that document firefighting and its significance for Fitchburg. We will plan to borrow from local collectors, as well, so please contact the Historical Society if you have documents, photos or objects you would be willing to loan.

FITCHBURG HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL APPEAL

Yes, I am pleased to contribute to the Annual Appeal of the Fitchburg Historical Society. Please accept my contribution of $_____ to be used for your general operations.

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$25.00 provides free research for local students
$50.00 assures clean archival collections storage
$100.00 supports a free local history presentation
$250.00 funds an issue of our newsletter
Fitchburg Historical Society
781 Main Street, P.O. Box 953
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Save The Date

• **Ongoing, through Wednesday, November 9:** “A Time Capsule Reappears”: an exhibition of items removed from a 1950’s time capsule at HealthAlliance Hospital.

• **Ongoing, through February 28, 2017:** “Fitchburg Faces: exhibition of portraits from the Fitchburg Historical Society collection”

• **Wednesday, November 2, 1:30 p.m., Memory Café, “Fitchburg in the ‘Forties”**
Films and photos for those with memory and dementia issues, with a caregiver. Advance registration required: 978-345-1157.

• **Thursday, November 3, 2016, 5:15 p.m.** “Alvah Crocker: Spirit Behind the Hoosac Tunnel,” talk by Clifford Schexnayder, author of **Builders of the Hoosac Tunnel**

• **Saturday, December 3, 11 a.m. – 4 p.m.**: Fitchburg Holiday House Tour, tickets: $20

• **Saturday, December 10, Time TBD:** Historical Society open extra hours. Call for details.

  • **Thursday, February 16, Time TBD:** “Stories of Love and Inheritance,” Wills and inheritance, and how they affected Fitchburg families, talk by Christine Tree.

  • **Thursday, March 30, Time TBD:** Mark Bodanza speaks on the Fitchburg-Leominster football rivalry.